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WORLD TEACHER

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"I believe it's proper etiquette
to hold a princess like this.
If you're uncomfortable,
I can stop at any time."

"Oh, not at all!
This... This is perfect!"

A stroll under a starry sky



"You did well, Leus."

My vision, blurred by pain and tears, couldn't deceive me about that figure. It's the back I'm always following... the one belonging to the person I admire.

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Prologue

It's been two years since I began attending school in Elysion. I'm now twelve years old.

I've grown taller and my face has lost a lot of its baby fat... or at least that's how it feels.

My school life has been smooth sailing, and I've gained a lot of knowledge that I wouldn't have been able to obtain otherwise. I've tried my hand at making magic equipment like the machines from my old life, and even created my own original magic circle design.

Of course, our training has become more and more intense, so I'm spending busy but meaningful days balancing studying, training, and watching over my disciples.

"Good morning, Lord Sirius."

It's the crack of dawn, and I've been awakened by Emilia's voice in my room at the Diamond Manor. I used to get up on my own in the mornings, but Emilia's gotten into the habit of rising earlier than me for my morning wake-up call. Given that it's still early enough to watch the sunrise, and also given that it takes a few minutes to get from the school dormitory to Diamond Manor, I'd say she wakes up fairly early. I told Emilia that she didn't need to do that, but she's stubborn and never misses a day. She even wears her maid uniform.

I wanted her to stay at the school dormitory instead of the Diamond Manor, which has rooms available, in order for her to make friends with those outside of our group. She's made friends with someone named Lise, and now we've been chatting with not just our classmates, but with students from other classes as well. Both Emilia and her brother would still like to live in Diamond Manor, and I'm considering whether or not I should permit them to do so.

"Good morning, Emilia. What are your plans for today?"

"I'm going to the Gargan Trading Company after school today."

Over the past two years, Emilia has become even more feminine and beautiful.

Her demeanor has matured, and there are times when even her most casual gestures make my heart ready to leap out of my chest. This is probably because my body is becoming more aware of women, and Emilia has become more alluring. Her breasts are gradually filling out. In fact, she even made a point of telling me when she measured herself with Lise the other day.

Emilia is now also acting as my personal secretary. She begged me for the role, so I let her do whatever she wanted. I'm careful about staying humble, though. Regardless, I'm getting more and more comfortable with her role as my servant. Once she made sure that I was completely awake, she prepared a change of clothes for me and left the room.

"Well, let's seize the day."

After recovering from my initial drowsiness and getting dressed, I made my way towards the kitchen. However, Emilia was already cooking breakfast, so I stood next to her and helped with preparing the meal.

"What's Lise up to?"

"When I left, she was sleeping peacefully, but she should be on her way soon... oh look, here she comes."

Emilia's ears perked up and she looked to the side where the door opened to reveal a smiling Lise. I made her run so hard yesterday that her legs were wobbling, so I wasn't sure if she was going to be able to come over today. By the looks of it, however, she seems to be doing fine.

"Haa... I made it in time today. Good morning, Sirius, and Emilia. Let me help you out."

Two years after becoming my apprentice, Lise has grown to be almost as tall as Emilia. She's still the shortest out of all of us, but her initial shyness has abated and she's much more open now. Lise tied her beautiful blue hair back into a bun and joined us. The kitchen isn't very spacious, so having three people in there at once makes it feel cramped.

"Leave this to us. You go and take it easy, Sirius."

"Oh yes, go outside and wash your face."

Then the two of them pushed me by my back and kicked me out of the kitchen.

It's been like this a lot lately. Whenever they're together, they do my work for me. I'm happy that they're treating me so kindly, but cooking is one of my hobbies, so I wish they'd let me do it a little bit more often.

Feeling like a father on his day off, I headed outside to the well, where a huge bipedal wolf was washing his face. The wolf noticed me and greeted me with a ferocious smile, canine teeth peeking out.

"Oh, hey big bro!"

"Good morning, Leus. Why did you transform?"

"It feels good to be in my wolf form and run with all my might."

As soon as he said this, his wolf form shrank down, and he returned to demihuman form. He's beginning to look a lot tougher than he had two years ago. He's already surpassed me in height, and his face is sharper and more mature. However, his behavior and wildness haven't changed much. His swordsmanship has improved by leaps and bounds, and he occasionally strikes with moves that catch me off guard.

"Where were you running today?"

"I ran all the way down that mountain. My body feels so light when I'm transformed, it's a blast!"

The mountain Leus was pointing to is quite large, so running around it would have been a considerable feat. The fact that he could do that in a short period so early in the morning showed that his transformed physical ability was tremendous.

"Don't get cocky. It'll only lead to carelessness."

"There's no way I'd ever get careless! Plus, even if I'm in my wolf form, I still wouldn't be able to beat you."

We made idle conversation while washing our faces, and I then returned to Diamond Manor with Leus, whose stomach was rumbling at the smell of breakfast. Now that we've had breakfast and taken it easy, it's time for our

morning training session.

Today, Emilia and Lise will be practicing magic on their own while Leus and I spar. We switch partners daily and have gotten used to training in ways that suit each of our preferences.

“What’s wrong, Leus? Your arms are too low.”

“Huff... huff... dammit!”

Leus has been holding his wooden sword for a long time, but I still haven’t been able to take him down in one shot because I keep having to dodge his attacks. He wastes his energy with unnecessary movements and is starting to expose his weak spots.

“Keep an eye on your footwork.”

“Gahhh, take this!”

He avoided my attempt to slash across his shoulder, but let go of his defensive stance and forcefully swung his wooden sword at me. I appreciate his quick-wittedness, but that last-ditch attack didn’t have enough power behind it. Once I lightly blocked the blow, Leus was sent tumbling to the ground with a frustrated expression.

“...Looks like our match is over.”

“Damn, looks like I lost again...”

After our match ended, I helped Leus to his feet, as he was curled up on the ground rolling around, and lectured him about his weak points. In his case, he’s much more of a visual and physical learner. However, it’s high time that he starts to think about his actions, so I also provide explanations.

I finished pointing out the obvious, but our training still ended too early for my liking. We don’t have enough time for another sparring round, so we cut it short to go and check on Lise.

“Good job, Sirius. Here’s a towel. Here’s one for you too, Leus.”

“Thanks, Sis!”

“Thank you. By the way, how is Lise doing?”

“She’s practicing some new spells over there.”

As I wiped the sweat off my face with the towel, I turned my attention over to Lise, whose eyes were closed in concentration.

Lise can see spirits, and has an incredible amount of magical power, so we keep her strength training to the bare minimum, and she spends most of her time practicing magic. I say the bare minimum, but since endurance takes top priority, I make her run up and down a nearby mountain every day.

At first, Lise couldn’t keep up with us and we often saw her crying tears of frustration. However, with the encouragement of Emilia and Leus, as well as her own grit and determination, she’s become capable of keeping up with us.

Leaving Emilia behind to look after Leus, I approached Lise, who opened her eyes and smiled. My surroundings felt off, which is why I had a feeling that there were water spirits gathered nearby.

“How are you doing, Lise?”

“It’s going well. Watch this... water, I call upon you, Aquamist!”

Once she finished her chant, a thick fog enveloped Diamond Manor in its entirety. The mist was so opaque that I was not only unable to see any nearby buildings, but even Lise, who was standing right in front of me, appeared hazy.

“What’s going on?! Bro! Sis! Where’d you go?!”

“Calm down, please, Leus. Don’t make any sudden moves.”

As they kept up their conversation behind me, I continued to observe the fog. “Search” is still effective, meaning that the spell only obstructs one’s vision.

“...Does this count as a failure? The mist is too thick, and it makes things more dangerous for you all.”

“Hm? You can see us, Lise?”

“Ah, yes. I can see everyone clearly.”

“If that’s the case, imagine us being able to do the same and call upon the water spirits. They might help out.”

“Okay!”

Lise mumbled something about images and closed her eyes. In this world, it would be common sense to scoff at the word. However, I've been teaching Lise the importance of visualization for the past two years, so she understands.

As I watched her, I felt someone tugging on my clothes from behind. Turning around, I see Emilia standing behind me, smiling.

"Hehe, I found you, Lord Sirius!"

"Oh. How did you find me in this fog? Did you memorize where I was standing?"

"No, it was your smell. I can track your scent even if you're on the other side of a mountain."

Setting aside Emilia's wolf abilities, seeing as this fog didn't interfere with one's sense of smell, it could also be easily blown away with some wind magic. There's a lot of room for improvement, but if used the right way, this type of magic would be extremely useful.

"Everyone please... be under the same effect!"

No sooner than Lise yelled out, the white world in which we were enveloped suddenly disappeared. I could easily see Leus, who was further away and trying to find the rest of us. We were no longer under the illusion that we were trapped in a thick fog.

"Good job, Lise. I can see your face clearly now."

"I can see you, too."

"Yes, we did it! Thanks a bunch, spirits!"

She bowed her head towards where the spirits must be, thanking them, and then deactivated her spell.

She really does use spirits to boost her magic abilities... The power of spirit magic is unbelievably strong. Even though she just created a thick fog, that would certainly deplete the mana of an ordinary person. Lise, on the other hand, had barely broken a sweat. If this is how she is while she's training, I can't imagine how strong she'll be in the future. It's no wonder that powerful people wanted to keep her for themselves.

“What do you think?”

“It was quite good. There are some weak points that you need to work on, though. For example...”

Lise nodded her head in agreement as I pointed out what I noticed earlier.

“It looks like you’re finally getting the hang of visualizing things. If you can imagine them and instantly put them to practical use, that would be sufficient.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. You’ve been working hard on this, so it’s only natural you’ve gotten better. I was thinking, if you can add a restorative effect to this fog then we could create some sort of ranged recovery.”

“Yes, I think I’d be able to do that!”

“On the other hand, though, it would seriously deplete your mana.”

“Don’t worry. Being able to heal as many people as I can makes it worth practicing!”

Two years ago, she would have said it was impossible. She truly has grown up.

She’s now actively challenging herself and spending her time bending the rules of magic. It was difficult for me to redefine the concept of common sense that she had previously cultivated, but I’m sure that the breadth of magic she learns to cast will expand immensely. This is where her true learning begins.

... It's been like this for my disciples over the past two years.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that you can’t let your students outgrow you, so I must aim higher to become a better teacher.

Afterward, we finished our morning training, tended to ourselves, and headed to school.

Chapter One

Labyrinth

“Good morning, Emilia, Lise.”

“Good morning, Leus!”

“Emilia, I just heard the news! Is it true you turned down Lady Maia’s invitation the other day?!”

“Hey Lise, I’m having problems wrapping my head around water magic. Could you help me out?”

We were immediately surrounded by our classmates once we walked into the classroom. This has become a regular occurrence every morning. For some reason, no one ever gathers around me. According to Lou—Leus’ roommate and the youngest in the class...

“There’s a rumor going around saying that you’ve gotta talk to Leus and Emilia before you can approach the big boss. Since he can easily give orders to strong people like those two, you’d better not talk to him unless you have a good reason.”

I was indeed ordering those two around during my fight against Astro two years ago. I bet the students saw that and understood that there’s a hierarchical relationship between Leus and I. Those ideas were twisted up by rumors, and people naturally assumed I was unapproachable. But I have someone in class who always talks to me, which is why I don’t feel lonesome.

“Good morning, Sirius. I see your servants are as popular as ever.”

Mark walked in with a refreshing smile on his face. He walked towards me elegantly, his silky red hair flowing behind him.

“Good morning, Mark. It’s only natural that they’re so popular. That’s a good thing, don’t you think?”

“You never change. Normally people would get jealous if they saw that their servants were more popular than them.”

“I may be their master, but popularity is earned on an individual basis. It wouldn’t be very noble of me to be jealous of that.”

“Hahaha, you’re right about that. By the way, the cake you gave me last night was... absolutely delicious.”

Yesterday was Mark’s thirteenth birthday. We were invited to a party at his parents’ house, along with a substantial number of nobles. Since it was his birthday, I gave him a birthday cake. For some reason, even though an entire day passed, Mark couldn’t stop thinking about the cake. He stared out the window, squinting his eyes in happiness.

“That cake was shocking... I’ve never tasted a cake like that before. You really are an amazing guy. I’ve invited Emilia before, but if you’re okay with it, why not come and be a servant at my house? If you don’t wanna serve, then I’ll allow you to work as a friend of mine!”

“I appreciate your offer, but I’ll have to decline.”

“Is that so? I understand where you’re coming from, it’s just a shame. Let me know if you ever change your mind. There’ll always be a place for you.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. By the way, do you think you’ll ever make that cake again? I hope you do. My siblings are all clamoring to have it again.”

And so, the number of cake addicts has increased. I have a feeling it’ll keep increasing one after another. While I was discussing cakes with Mark, the number one addict of them all, Professor Magna entered the classroom. Before we knew it, it was time for class to begin.

“Good morning, class. I have an announcement to make, so I’ll be cutting our morning class a little short to answer any questions.”

This morning’s class was centered around practical skills, meaning that whatever needed to be said must be important. The serious look on Professor Magna’s face made everyone in the classroom nervous.

“You’ve been enrolled in the Elysion school for two years now. Starting next week, your morning classes will remain the same, but in the afternoons, you’ll

be taking specialized classes to gain expertise in the subject which interests you the most.”

As for our desired specialties, I chose to be a magical engineering teacher. Leus desired to become a sword master. Emilia wanted to focus on becoming a wind magician, whereas Lise wished to be a water magician. Professor Magna already mentioned these classes last week, though. There’s no way she'd cut down class time just for another explanation. This was just the beginning of what she had to say.

“Furthermore, as soon as these specialty classes begin, our school’s labyrinth will open.”

Once the word “labyrinth” left her mouth, the entire class reacted. Classmates were making eye contact with their seatmates and friends to form alliances.

“I am sure that some of you may know about the labyrinth, but let me clarify and explain some things. The labyrinth refers to a cave system to the northwest of the school.”

I was impressed to hear that our school was home to both an arena and a labyrinth. This place was truly state-of-the-art.

The caves are ten stories deep. There aren’t any monsters down there, but there are countless traps and golems. Arrows pierce the air, and pillars of flame erupt from the ground. All sorts of traps are set to attack careless travelers.

The traps are made of magic circles that were created by powerful people long ago. They disappear once triggered, but will re-materialize after some time. In fact, I believe the entire labyrinth may be one magic circle. Upon hearing that past powerful people were involved in the labyrinth’s creation, I couldn’t help but think how our school principal, who happily devoured each cake I brought him, was among that group.

Its purpose is to provide intense, hands-on training for the school’s students. Going through the labyrinth is a highly dangerous activity that can result in death. It tests one’s physical strength, determination, and wisdom.

The labyrinth was made so both nobles and commoners alike could see which

mistakes they could possibly make that would endanger members of their party. It also reinforces that constant vigilance is required to prevent setting off traps. Only one group can participate at a time, and each group can have no more than four people.

Exploring the labyrinth is not a graduation requirement. However, doing so will provide a wide variety of benefits. You are given access to priority use of facilities, access to forbidden books, and more once you break through.

Furthermore, the first group to break through the labyrinth is awarded a special cloak of honor by the school. It may look like a normal cloak, but it's custom-made and provides more protection than the average school uniform.

The most important aspect is that you make a name for yourself at the school. Leaving your mark at a famous school like Elysion means becoming a great asset for the upper echelon of society. This is why so many noble students participate in the labyrinth.

"...And that's all you need to know about the labyrinth. I know we ran a little late, but let's head outside and start working on your practical skills."

Hearing those words, my classmates got up and headed towards the training ground. Naturally, the only thing anyone talked about was the labyrinth.

Friends were teaming up, recruiting here and there for parties that would help them break through the labyrinth. No one was coming to recruit my siblings, who I expected to be mobbed by our classmates. It wasn't until later that I learned the siblings and Lise had strongly declared that they weren't teaming up with anyone besides me beforehand.

"Hey big bro, we're gonna attempt the labyrinth, too, right?"

"Of course. This should make for good training."

"Since groups can only have four people, it looks like ours has been decided."

"Let's do our best and not hold back!"

Going through the labyrinth would be a good challenge, but it'd be better to wait a while before doing so. There will probably be a line of nobles fighting to be the first to break through.

As we were debating when to start the challenge to avoid those idiotic nobles, two classmates who were eavesdropping on us cut in.

“Hey, hey. If you’re going to do the labyrinth challenge, why not try to earn the special cloak of honor?”

“Right? You’ve got Leus and Emilia, so you’ll definitely be the first ones to succeed!”

“We’ll have to consult Sirius... what’s our plan?”

“It’s too much of a hassle. Let’s wait it out.”

The custom-made cloak sounded useful, but it would most likely only antagonize the nobles, and thus become more trouble than it’s worth. Waiting towards the back of the line in order to get a feel for the labyrinth would be best.

“Ugh, what a waste...”

“There’s nothing we can do. The nobles in Airone are such a pain.”

“I guess you’re right. What are we gonna do?”

“We’re still gonna try to beat the challenge! We’ve gotta find two more members!”

The two of them left the classroom, talking with other classmates in search of two more members.

As we were about to exit the classroom, Professor Magna motioned for me to come speak to her.

“Is everything alright?”

“Sirius, you’re going to enter the labyrinth, right?”

“Yes, that’s my intention. Is there something wrong with that?”

“No, there’s nothing wrong. I was instructed to give this to you if you were planning on entering.”

She handed a medallion to me as she spoke. Engraved on it was the school’s emblem.

“Hand this to the receptionist to skip the detailed screening process and start the labyrinth challenge immediately.”

“Okay, so what’s the catch?”

“There’s nothing like that. The headmaster is giving you this out of the kindness of his heart.”

Professor Magna responds with her usual soft smile, but it doesn’t quite match her eyes. She knows something, but for some reason isn’t allowed to tell me.

“Hey professor, next time I’ll be making a fruit cake with aps—”

“If you try that, it’ll take you to an even harder labyrinth that was especially designed for you. The headmaster has sole discretion.”

Whatever power she was under, it stood no chance against cake.

But still, a special labyrinth? They’re probably testing a new magic circle and want to try it out on me. This sort of thing has happened multiple times before, so I’m starting to get used to it. I let out a sigh of relief.

Nonetheless, it’s wrong to try to pull one over us. Each month, I offer a few cakes to the headmaster and Professor Magna. I made a mental note to stop providing them to the headmaster.

The next day, the headmaster was allegedly inconsolable once he found out the news. That’s none of my business, though.

After classes finished, we went to a branch of the Gargan Trading Company in Elysion. The area and building are much larger than the stores around it, and it’s always bustling with customers. We entered the shop through the backdoor. We’re already regulars here, so even if an employee were to spot us, they’d smile and look the other way.

When we entered the office’s backdoor, we saw employees lined up along rows of desks glaring at account books and purchase lists. Then, a man noticed our presence and approached us.

“So I see you’ve decided to drop by, boss! Alright, alright, let’s get you to the back room!”

That man was Zack, the one who accompanied us to Elysion on our initial trip. He was originally a delivery person, but has since become the head of this branch.

That all happened a year ago... Zack and Gad suddenly visited me in the usually isolated Diamond Manor to thank me.

“We were able to crush those who were interfering with our business thanks to the information you obtained, boss. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

He was talking about the bandits who attacked us on our way to Elysion. The information obtained from those bandits gave them a foothold to defend against the merchants who were treating them with hostility.

“We only got rid of those bandits for our own self-preservation. At any rate, the problem has been solved. There’s no need for formalities.”

“Is that so? Are you implying that you don’t need our money or that you’re not greedy? Wow, you’re just as Dii described. Once again, I look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with you, boss!”

Zack was the first to accept me, and then Gad followed suit. They’ve treated me as an equal ever since, and we speak casually to one another.

We then talked about how Dii safely arrived at Noel’s hometown and the portable food we were using. Gad thought the concept of dried noodles and soup was revolutionary, and his partners were all excited to open a new line of business.

“I wrote down the soup recipe and how to dry it out. Here.”

“I can’t thank you enough. But, boss, are you sure you’re okay with us deciding on how much of a cut you get? I bet that’ll sell like crazy, and you’ll lose out on a lot of money if you don’t negotiate.”

“We’re going to be full-time students, which is why we’re not in dire financial straits. Besides, you’ve been looking after Dii for a long time.”

“...I understand. If you go so far as to say that, then you won’t change your mind. Okay, then...”

After several discussions, it was agreed that I'd receive a percentage of the sales every month for one year. I even opted to take half the amount offered.

The other day I received a letter from Noel saying that they've successfully opened a restaurant in her hometown. The food that I taught them to make requires ingredients and seasonings not widely available, and they rely on the Gargan Trading Company as their supplier. I told them I wanted half of my share to go towards supporting them.

"You're such a sweet kid, boss. Okay, since it's for them, I'll add it to the contract. I'll talk to them for further details."

Gad pushed his brother forward with a pat on the back. I noticed that Zack was smiling strangely.

"And from now on, this guy will be the head of the Elysion branch of the Gargan Trading Company. If there's anything you need or want to sell, feel free to ask him."

"Alright, I look forward to working with you, boss!"

I see... so that's why you were grinning like that.

That's how I ended up signing a contract with the Gargan Trading Company. I've had a business relationship with Zack for a full year now.

I occasionally show up, like I did today, to receive my share of the profits, make small talk about new products, and offer advice. I'd say our relationship is a good one. We were shown to the back room and sat down on a sofa. Zack was sitting across from us and handed us a bag full of gold coins.

"Here's this month's share. Our dried soup and noodles went on sale a while ago, but there's no sign of sales slowing down. Ahh, I can't stop smiling!"

"Well of course it's doing great! It's big bro's idea after all!"

While conversing, I open up the bag that Zack gave me and count the money to make sure it's what we agreed upon. This isn't a matter of trust: it's polite to count out money when dealing with merchants.

"Yup, it's all there. By the way, this is the last payment under our contract, right? Thanks for letting us do business for as long as we have."

“That’s what our contract’s for. But since the boss has taught me about all sorts of items I’m now selling, let’s continue to work together.”

I made small talk with Zack once the business side of our meeting was over.

Zack’s friendly with me, even though he’s older, and I never tire of conversing with him. Due to his occupation as a merchant, he knows the ins and outs of the marketplace, and has valuable insights on various aspects of it.

Today, however, our conversation was less about the town and more about the school’s labyrinth.

“Have you reached the age where you can enter the labyrinth, boss? If you have, why don’t you try to win the special cloak?”

“No, I don’t need the cloak. Is it well-known even among merchants?”

“The nobles, to be more precise. The cloak is made of valuable materials that are worth more than your school uniform. It’s also extremely practical, due to the special magic circle on it that was drawn by a famous academic magician. Merely wearing it can make you famous around these parts. Some still wear their cloak even as adults, y’know.”

“So that’s why the nobles want it so badly.”

“According to those who’ve tried it in the past, the labyrinth is a considerably difficult place to go.”

“That’s right. This is only hearsay, but there were even times where nobody could clear it for nearly half a year.”

“Lou says there have been many instances of commoners beating the labyrinth.”

The story behind how they did it is probably different, but the end result is most likely true.

It took half a year because the difficulty level was too high. The reason why commoners broke through it so easily was that they entered just as the difficulty level was lowered. The cause seems to have been a mistake on the headmaster’s part.

That same irregular labyrinth maker designed a special labyrinth made

exclusively for me.

I wonder what's really in store for us...

Afterward, Zack invited us out to dinner at a certain restaurant. He found a good one, and the sight of Leus getting hyped up over the thought of food, as well as Emilia and Lise attempting to soothe him, made us look like a close-knit family, despite our differences in species. As I watched the heartwarming scene unfold in front of me, Zack suddenly whispered into my ear.

"Boss, there's something I'd like to report that worries me."

"Go ahead."

"Lately, I've heard some strange rumors. There are lots of magic tools flowing into the market for no good reason, and suspicious outsiders have been making their appearance known. Those people all speak of one thing... revolution."

For merchants, information is wealth. That's why I asked Zack, who gathers intel on the goings of the city, to let me know if he hears anything concerning. He was reluctant at first, but after I told him of a few peculiar stories that I was looking into by running around in the middle of the night, he agreed. Ever since then, we often secretly discuss these matters without my students knowing.

This story, however, seemed dubious. Zack wasn't convinced on the matter either.

"The king's skills are completely balanced from head to toe, though. I don't see any reason for them to start a revolution."

"This tale has been told before. Didn't it end up being a false rumor started by a demihuman-hating noble?"

"That's right. It's probably just the same thing.. Anyways, I thought I should let you know."

"Thanks for doing so. You're such a big help."

I stored the information in the back of my mind. Sometimes, information that seems useless can come in handy at unexpected times. As I mulled it over, my students, noticing the growing distance between us, turned around. Emilia and Lise grabbed my hands as Leus pushed my back.

“C’mon, big bro! Quit dawdlin’ and let’s go!”

“Calm down a little, Leus. Lord Sirius, please give me your hand.”

“I wonder what we’ll be eating tonight. I’m so excited!”

The most significant change in the past two years since we enrolled in school is... the new addition to our family. Lise, in particular, never used to touch me, but has now grown so comfortable that she’ll pull my hand along.

“Hahaha, it’s a very popular place, boss.”

“That’s lovely, I wish everyone would calm down, though.”

I strolled through the town with my family, while thinking how nice it’d be if such peaceful days would never end.

*

Half a month has passed since the labyrinth was first opened.

It sounds like the nobles are attempting it every day, but no one has cleared it yet.

Those who’ve done the challenge said that the difficulty level was high, of course. The labyrinth was especially tough due to the golems automatically moving once their magic circles are activated, and their sheer numbers are too overwhelming.

After half a month, some nobles had already given up, so we were preparing ourselves to take on the challenge.

“...Wow, there’s still lots of people, huh?”

“I’ll say. Shall we wait until there are fewer challengers?”

“No, we’ve come this far. Let’s do this for the experience, at least.”

There were easily two dozen groups. It would take some time before it was our turn. However, we couldn’t wait around forever for more people to drop out...

“We should check our equipment while we’re waiting. Are everyone’s weapons and materials ready?”

I'm carrying my usual sword and Mithril knife, along with a belt storing a few throwing knives. The only armor I have on is my school uniform, which is fine because it's presently the most flexible protective gear I own. In fact, most of the student challengers are wearing their uniforms, even though we're free to wear whatever armor and carry any weapons we want. It's comfortable to wear, and I find it to be a truly excellent piece of clothing.

Additionally, the small backpacks we're carrying are stocked with food and water in case of an emergency.

"I don't have any problems. I'm ready to go at any time."

Emilia's weapons of choice are two knives, and she also hides throwing knives at various other places on her body. She mainly relies on agility for her attacks, so like me, her only armor is her school uniform.

"I'm ready big bro."

Leus is carrying a greatsword and a bag of food on his back. He's also wearing an iron breastplate over his uniform. The greatsword he's carrying across his back is very heavy and sturdy, as it was forged by Grant, a blacksmith that he had met a while ago. The biggest benefit is that it won't bend or snap even if Leus swings it with all his might. This increases his fighting ability tenfold.

Come to think of it, Leus shouted for joy when the greatsword was completed. Emilia got really upset with him...

"Yes, I'm also ready."

Lise is carrying just one small knife and is only protected by her school uniform. She's not in the vanguard because she's there to provide magical support, which is why she doesn't need anything else.

It was nearly our turn by the time we finished inspecting our equipment. Leus, who was checking out the surroundings, tilted his head.

"Hey big bro, if so many students enter through here at once, the whole place must be filled to the brim with them, right?"

"That's not necessarily the case. Take a look at the labyrinth's entrance."

The direction I pointed had a cave entrance, but that wasn't the only one.

“They’ve installed multiple structures within each entrance to keep us completely separated from other students.”

It wasn’t just the external structures that differed. The layout of the labyrinth changed as well. For example, the third labyrinth entrance leads to a room full of traps, whereas the fifth labyrinth entrance leads to a room full of golems. The receptionist randomly selects the challenger’s entrance, which means that parties can enter as many times as they like. Furthermore, since other parties can’t enter until a certain amount of time elapses, there isn’t much trouble with students bumping into each other within the labyrinth. That also shows how easy it’d be for students to run away because of its difficulty.

Rumor has it that the tenth floor has only one entrance. If we were going to bump into students, it would be there. The challenge is officially complete once we complete the final trial there.

“We’re strictly forbidden from assisting or interfering with other students. Plus, if we see any nobles, staying away from them is our top priority. They could cause trouble.”

“Understood. Leus, keep that in mind too, ‘kay?”

“Got it. But if they talk smack about my big bro, I’m not gonna take it lying down!”

“I agree. I don’t think I could stay calm in that situation.”

“...Then I’ll act as the negotiator.”

“Ah, it looks like I’ll have to hold you two back.”

I took a deep breath, and finally, our turn came. We showed the receptionist the medallion. The man behind the desk looked upset for a moment, but then he handed each of us a pendant and began his explanation.

“You must keep this pendant with you at all times within the labyrinth. If you get stuck in a trap or are in a dangerous situation, channel some of your magic into it and it’ll reveal your location so we can come to rescue you.”

Huh. So the pendant acts like a transmitter.

With that in mind, I saw various similar-looking pendants hanging from the

back of the reception area. As I was looking at them, one started to blink red, and an arrow lit up. A woman standing in the back of the room checked the pendant's number and looked at a piece of paper in her hand.

"We have confirmation that Signal 18 has been activated. Team Wind of Hope, please help them."

"Roger that. Let's roll out."

The voice of the person that responded to her belonged to a member of a group of adventurers in their twenties. They were probably hired to rescue challengers. Once they finished their preparations, the woman handed them the flashing pendant and a white medallion, and they entered the labyrinth.

"You've got good timing. Once you channel your magic into the pendant, it'll flash at the same time as the pendant over there, like it just did now. Then our rescuers will use that as a marker to go save you."

"Isn't it possible for the rescuers to get hurt in the labyrinth, though?"

"That's not a problem at all. The medallion I gave them deactivates all traps. The golems don't even attack those who carry them, either."

"What if we steal that medallion? Wouldn't it be easier to complete the challenge?"

The receptionist gave a wry smile to Emilia's reasonable questions.

"Well, some nobles have offered me a lot of money for one. I refused of course, and they gave up once I gave them more details. If you get to the tenth floor with it in your possession, then the labyrinth's facilities will shut down and you won't be able to finish. It's not right to play dirty."

"Wow, you have all your bases covered. By the way, is there anything different between that medallion and the one big bro has?"

"Wait a moment. Umm... here it is. The headmaster instructed me to take whoever's holding that medallion to a special labyrinth."

The man read off a chest nearby and then worriedly looked at us.

"What's your plan? The rule isn't set in stone, so you can enter the normal labyrinth if you'd like."

I turned around to check on my disciples. Emilia trustingly nodded her head towards me, Leus wore a big smile on his face, and Lise had her fists clenched in motivation. No one seemed to object.

“Challenge accepted.”

Thus, we decided to enter the special labyrinth. The labyrinth’s interior wasn’t that of a rugged cave. Instead, it was a flat passageway lined with brick walls. The walls were decorated with magic circles that automatically collect mana from the air and periodically glow. The glowing light ensured the passageway was bright enough for us to see a little bit further. We didn’t need to make our own light.

“Alright, let’s do this!”

“Wait.”

I grabbed Leus by the nape of his neck before he could take another careless step forward. His foot was still up in the air as he turned his neck to give me an unhappy look.

“What’s wrong, big bro?”

“Keep in mind that this is a place that was specially created by our headmaster.”

I’ve known the headmaster for two years now, so I know that he’s pretty mischievous and has a tendency to take things a step too far when it suits him. Knowing that such a wily person made adjustments to the labyrinth... gives me a bad feeling.

As soon as I warned him about my misgivings, Leus turned his head, stepped forward... and disappeared.

“Leus?!”

“I-I’m down here, sis...”

Leus didn’t quite disappear. Rather, he fell into a pit underneath the floor that had given way. The flowing water in the pit didn’t seem dangerous, but definitely would have soaked him to the core. Fortunately, I had cast “String” around his waist in advance, which suspended him in the air and kept him out

of the water.

After retrieving Leus, the hole slowly closed up and a magic circle appeared. I didn't feel any magical reaction to it on closer inspection, so I tested it by stepping on it. Nothing happened.

"Yo-You saved me! But still, what the heck is going on here?"

"The magic circle will remain inactive for a while after it's been used. It probably absorbs mana from the atmosphere gradually, and activates again after some time has passed."

I used what I learned from my classes to make that assumption. The magic circle was highly advanced but... it was such a waste of space.

"Ugh, what a pain. One wrong step and you're dumped into the water."

"You don't happen to have a change of clothes, do you?"

"Stop moving so much!"

"Huh?"

But it was too late. Once Emilia took a step towards Leus, a magic circle rose from beneath her feet and illuminated. The siblings nervously waited with their ears perked up. All of a sudden they heard the whistle of wind coming from the depths of the passage and an arrow with a rounded tip came flying towards them. Emilia and Leus were briefly stunned, but immediately swung their weapons, slicing apart the arrows.

"A-Are you okay?!"

Lise, worried for their safety, stepped forward and a magic circle appeared at her feet, as well. A gust of wind erupted beneath her.

"Huh?! Kyaaaaa?!"

Lise was wearing her school uniform, so the wind was about to blow her skirt up...

"Not on my watch!"

Before anything could happen, I cast "String" and tied her skirt to her thighs. The wind died down quickly enough, but Lise was on the verge of tears as she

collapsed to the floor.

“I ca-can’t thank you enough...”

“Don’t worry about it. Everyone, form a line.”

“Yes, sir!”

They’re too susceptible to traps! Even though these are extraordinary circumstances, they shouldn’t be overlooked. I decided to line up my disciples in a place free of traps to give them a quick lecture on what lies ahead.

“Okay, does anyone here know why you’re all lined up?”

“Because we got caught in traps... sir.”

“That’s right. I’m not mad, I’m just concerned about your lack of caution. I’ll begin my explanation now. Please don’t make any unnecessary movements.”

“Understood.”

I took the lead from that point on and explained each trap one by one. I also intentionally let them experience some of them first-hand.

“Traps aren’t limited to floors. They’re also set on the walls, too. Keep away from walls whenever possible. It’s not uncommon for people to subconsciously touch the walls and end up triggering traps!”

“That’s dangerous! I was just about to touch them, too.”

“Look closely at the floor. Do you see how there’s a faint, unnatural break in the dirt? That means a magic circle is probably concealed under there.”

“Yo-You’re quite observant. I understand your reasoning, it’s just hard to put into practice.”

“You might see nothing at first glance where a trap is actually hidden. There are three paths you can take. Go in the direction that you think doesn’t have any traps.”

“I’ve got a bad feeling about the right, so I’ll take the left—Wahhh?!”

“Lord Sirius! Leus fell into the pit!”

“The correct answer was the center path. I never said that there was only one trap. You shouldn’t base your decisions off of your limited knowledge.”

By the way, I’ve yet to activate a trap since entering the labyrinth. I have intuition and experience thanks to my former life, and since the trap is triggered by a magic circle, I can use “Search” to find the position of each one. However, I’m trying not to rely too much on “Search.” I’m thinking of this as a proper training area.

After that, we continued to learn more about traps and finally made it to the fourth floor. My disciples had a solid understanding of traps by then, but...

“I’m... starting to hate our headmaster.”

“I agree. I think he’s too childish.”

“And he’s got something against us girls.”

Our opinion of the headmaster was dropping with each level we cleared in the labyrinth. It was filled with offensive traps such as constant pitfalls, and countless elementary magic attacks from each attribute. I’d love to give him a piece of my mind but have a feeling he’d just laugh and brush it off.

I was patting the siblings’ heads to soothe them as we walked down the passageway to the fourth floor. Then, we felt a strange presence and stopped in our tracks.

“Something’s coming, big bro!”

“I thought there were fewer traps on the fourth floor... could that be?”

As I gazed cautiously down the passageway, a humanoid golem whose body was made of sand appeared. It was about the same size as me, and even though its form was humanoid, it didn’t have any joints and moved stiffly. It slowly approached us.

“So we’re gonna have to deal with golems from now on, huh?”

“Leave it to me! Eat this!”

Leus rushed forward and, as if releasing all his pent-up anger, swung his greatsword down onto the golem. It was easily sliced in two with an explosion that released a thunderous sound.

“It’s made of sand, so it reacts differently. Still, it’s easy to defeat.”

“Behind you, Leus!”

“Behi—? Woahhh!”

Leus had cut the golem in half, but it regenerated in reverse, gathering sand and immediately returning to its original shape. It then attacked Leus, who had turned his back on it, but thanks to Emilia calling out to him, he managed to jump away.

“Wha-What is this thing?! I know I just split him in half...”

“Leus, cut the elbow of its left arm!”

“Will do!”

Despite its ability to regenerate, the golem was still slow. If Leus was able to avoid its large, swinging fists and slash at the part I pointed out, its body would crumble apart and leave only fine sand in its wake.

“Hey, why isn’t it regenerating this time?”

“The spot you slashed had a magic circle painted on it. It's animated through the magic circle, so breaking it would mean it wouldn’t be able to maintain its form.”

There’s magic associated with the earth attribute that can create and control golems. I think the current golem was probably created from that type of magic. If the body is made of sand, then it’s easier to destroy. And we have someone strong against sand.

“Lord Sirius, three more are headed our way!”

“Lise, it’s your turn.”

“Got it! Water, I call upon you... ‘Aqua Shot!’”

As soon as Lise held her hands out, small spheres of water were created and attacked each approaching golem simultaneously. The water easily penetrated the sand and took down the golems. Only two were down for the count, the remaining one was still standing.

“Ugh, it’s hard to aim for the magic circle.”

“It’s not, Lise. Spirits are more attuned to sensing magic, so ask them to shoot. Give it another try.”

“Yes, sir. Spirits, I call upon you... ‘Aqua Shot.’”

Another sphere of water pierced the golem’s right-hand side. It didn’t regenerate this time.

“Amazing... we took it down in one shot. Thanks, spirits!”

Lise said her thanks to the spirits while the siblings and I kept our guards up, staring toward the end of the dimly-lit passage. She stopped rejoicing when she noticed our tension and tilted her head.

“What? Don’t tell me there’s more...”

“There are. There’s at least thirty this time.”

Then, a huge number of golems appeared. They were in a military-like formation of three rows and all walked in step. As one could expect, it would be difficult for a single person to take down all of these.

“Let’s work as a team this time. Is everyone ready?”

“I’ve gotten the hang of it, so I’m ready!”

“I can fight anytime.”

“I-I’ll do my best!”

“Okay. Don’t let them surround you! Aim for their weak points! It’s go time!”

We all ran forward at a breakneck speed. Leus accurately slashed at the magic circles, while Emilia pierced them with a knife to take them out. Meanwhile, Lise was using “Aqua Shot” from behind to reduce their numbers. The siblings were used to fighting goblins in groups, but Lise lacked fighting experience, which made her movements stiff. I kept my eyes on Lise and finally found the staircase. By then, the three of them had defeated over a hundred golems.

Exhaling a sigh of relief, my disciples were ready to go down the stairs. They stopped in their tracks, though, when they saw I wasn’t moving.

“What’s wrong, big bro? We’ve gotta get a move on.”

“We should call it a day. Let’s quit for now.”

“But we’re only on the fourth floor, right? We’ve made it that far and it didn’t even take that long.”

“It’s hard to tell how time flows in a place like this. I think it’s already evening outside.”

The lack of sunlight and the steady temperature made it difficult to catch on to any changes outside. When I told them it was around evening, Leus’s stomach let out a long rumble.

“Are you serious?!”

“We entered before noon. Time really does fly, doesn’t it?”

Apparently, the lesson involving the traps ate up more time than I had anticipated. However, that wasn’t a bad thing, because the traps provided an important lesson, even if it made us all hate the headmaster.

“Are you tired, Lise?”

“I’m sorry. I can’t move as well as you all...”

“Why? You can’t help the fact that you don’t have a lot of real fighting experience. More importantly, what should we have for dinner?”

Since there isn’t any type of transfer device like they have in stories and video games, it’s up to us to get back to the start. It sounds like a pain, but pressing the switch at the front of each staircase deactivates the traps and golems of that level, securing our way back. Incidentally, the door to the tenth floor locks when a switch gets pressed. That way, it’s impossible to cheat by having one strong fighter go ahead of the rest of the party to deactivate everything.

As we headed back to the entrance, I asked my disciples what they wanted for dinner, and they excitedly expressed their opinions.

“I want meat!”

“Not just meat, I want veggies, too. How about a stew?”

“Or, how about we have some curry rice?”

“Curry, huh...”

I’ve been requesting various herbs and spices from the Gargan Company,

tasting each item that arrived. I've tried to recreate the meals I ate in my previous life, and finally succeeded in recreating curry powder. Looking back, it was a long struggle. I searched for spices that had a similar taste and Leus, who failed to properly mix all the ingredients, cried, and ran away when he tasted the curry powder because it was so spicy. After some trial and error, the finished curry has a strange red color—but isn't as spicy as it looks—and tastes fairly accurate to my memory.

More important than the curry is the rice, which the Gargan Company found. It was curiously elongated, yet when cooked in a pot, it tasted exactly like rice. Thanks to that, I've been able to reproduce curry rice, and my disciples devour it whenever I make it.

"So it's been decided. I'll have to do some shopping."

"Wahoo!!"

"We're having curry rice! I'm gonna eat it all up!"

"Please calm down, Leus. We're not even out of the labyrinth yet."

Emilia spoke calmly, but her body language betrayed her. Her tail wouldn't stop wagging, and she had a big smile on her face as we left the labyrinth together.

The next day... I arrived at school for our usual morning gathering, but was met with a different scene today.

"Hey hey! Is it true you went into the labyrinth yesterday?"

"Judging by the look on your faces... you didn't clear it. Man, it's so difficult this year."

"If big bro and boss couldn't get through..."

Looks like everyone knows that we tried to conquer the labyrinth. Questions were flying at us left and right. As I watched the hectic spectacle unfold, the classroom door suddenly flung open. Ladies and gentlemen who looked to be nobles with their servants flooded into the classroom.

"Gotcha!"

"We found you!"

I thought they were calling out to me, but the nobles stood in front of the siblings and pointed at them.

“Leus Silverion! I, Hart Arcado, challenge you to a duel!”

“Emilia Silverion! I, Melulusa Mistria, declare that we shall have a duel!”

“Huh?”

Leus and Emilia tilted their heads in confusion simultaneously. Hart and Melulusa ignored them and carried on.

“Why are you shocked? Don’t you remember how you beat me in our sparring match a couple of days ago?”

“A couple of days ago? Oh yeah, now that you mention it... so?”

“Same with you, Emilia. I won’t forgive you for casting magic without observing my superb chanting!”

“I think it’s only natural to want to cast magic before your opponent...”

Apparently, a couple of days back those two lost while sparring against the siblings in an afternoon elective class. They weren’t convinced by their own defeat, so they came here to challenge them again. Looks like a storm’s brewing.

“We, as nobles, cannot accept the fact that we lost to commoners. Therefore, we want a rematch!”

“We’re gonna have a sword fight again?”

“No. Whoever goes deeper into the labyrinth is the true winner!”

“Nobles must be well-rounded. It’ll be an even match in the labyrinth. C’mon, accept our challenge!”

After witnessing such a self-centered display, the siblings looked at me for guidance. Seeing that, the nobles burst out into laughter.

“Those pitiful servants have to rely on their master for everything!”

“How pathetic. It’s even more pitiful for the master to have such servants.”

“Grrr!”

Even though they were just trying to provoke them, the siblings didn't retort and just kept their heads down in frustration. Ugh... even if it was meant to rile them up, making fun of my disciples right in front of me is unforgivable. Besides, I don't know anyone who works harder than those two. There's no way they could be called pitiful.

For a moment, I contemplated teaching those nobles a lesson that would have them fleeing the classroom in tears, but I knew this was the siblings' fight. Without stealing their thunder, I put a hand on each of their heads and nodded.

"Don't worry about me. Do what you think is best."

"Lord Sirius... understood!"

"Hey sis, I know what I'm gonna do!"

"I do too. We accept your challenge!"

Emilia's declaration sent a ripple of excitement throughout the classroom. Hart and Melulusa nodded in satisfaction.

The rules of the match were confirmed, and it was decided that everyone would gather in front of the labyrinth this afternoon.

"...Okay, now that the rules are set, we'll be waiting for you by the labyrinth entrance!"

"We won't let you get away with this!"

Everyone seemed hyped up, but since we didn't have any particular plans for today, it was fine. The tension in the classroom subsided once the nobles left and our classmates rushed over to encourage us. Their support was greatly appreciated.

"It's so rare to see nobles go that far."

Emilia asked what would happen if they ended up losing, but the two nobles said that the loser tasting defeat would be the only consequence. In other words, they clearly stated that it doesn't matter who wins, they only visited them in order to regain their pride as nobles. Looking from an outsider's perspective, those two are weird, but I don't dislike their straightforwardness. Plus, unlike other nobles who hold prejudices against demihumans—like

Gregory—I have a feeling these two have pure, child-like intentions. At the very least, they’re not like those who tried cheating against us two years ago.

That’s why I’ll trust the siblings to make their own decisions. Even if they end up losing, it would still be a good experience for them. They’ll be able to use their frustration as a springboard and become stronger.

I thought about that as we waited for Professor Magna to enter the classroom. Leus and Emilia finished talking with our classmates and turned to me and bowed.

“Lord Sirius. I have only one request regarding the challenge we just received.”

“What is it?”

“This afternoon, could you let us... fight by ourselves?”

“Those two had a point. We’re always counting on you, big bro. We wanna win this one on our own!”

A smile almost spread across my face, and it took some effort to hold it back. I thought it would be better left unsaid, but I guess I should say it for their sake.

“Got it. Do as you wish.”

“Yes, sir!”

“I’ll come with you! It should be fine because Sirius isn’t my master, he’s just my friend!”

“Thanks, Lise. It’ll be nice to have you around.”

“There’s no way we can lose with Lise around!”

“Ah, haha... don’t get your hopes up too much.”

And that’s how the battle between the nobles and my students began.

Then, around our lunch break...

I returned to Diamond Manor and saw my disciples off, who still had many preparations to make. After that, I was invited by Professor Will to visit Professor Magna’s office. Professor Magna wasn’t present in her office for some reason, however, it wasn’t an issue as Professor Will was already there.

He called me in to ask for our thoughts on the labyrinth we tried out yesterday. Before that, however, he wanted to know about this morning's commotion, so I provided an explanation.

"...So that's why. Your would-be challengers, Hart and Melulusa, are too impulsive and can't see the forest for the trees, but they're not bad kids. They're nobles, which is why they think that way."

"Mark said the same thing. That's why I'm able to explain the situation so calmly. Plus, if they go into a normal labyrinth for this match, they'd easily win."

"Yes, those are my thoughts as well. Nevertheless... to go so far as to hire an adventurer to help them win... they must have felt very frustrated losing to Emilia and Leus."

When the siblings and the nobles were setting the rules for their match, Melulusa wanted to hire an adventurer group who was by the labyrinth's reception desk. She said that she had an eye for spotting capable adventurers and had the financial resources to hire them out. While I was tilting my head in confusion at what she meant by that, the siblings permitted her to do so. Well... my disciples said they didn't mind, and I don't want to interrupt their bonding time.

"I was hesitant at first, but then I realized that they could learn from those adventurers, which is why I allowed it."

"By the way, did your disciples hire an adventurer, too?"

"No, only the three of them will participate. It's easier to fight alongside known comrades. Also, they want to prove that they're fine without my help."

"Students that always put their best foot forward are so cute. Oh, and this is changing the subject, how did you like yesterday's labyrinth challenge?"

It was so difficult... I can't help but feel annoyed at Professor Will, who was laughing like a child who successfully pulled off a mean prank.

"It was moderately difficult and amusing, but... the disciples gave it a bad review, and their faith in you has dropped dramatically. The girls especially hated the wind traps that blew their skirts up."

“I see. That was meant to raise the stakes to prevent people from falling into more traps, but... I’ll just let it go.”

I guess his saving grace is that those traps didn’t have any erotic undertones. Whatever the case may be, he seems to have some regrets, so I’d say it was worth reporting.

“Oh, also, with regards to the golems down there, did you ever feel unsafe when going up against them? They were quite strong, and getting hit by one could keep you down for the count, so it must have been dangerous, right?”

“I see. May I have one and provide an analysis for you next time?”

“I was told that if my magic circles ever made an appearance outside of our country...”

“The other day I made a cake with several layers of whipped cream...”

“I don’t think that you’ll use them for anything bad, so go ahead and analyze them! So... just how many layers of whipped cream did it have?”

Just as I was buttering Professor Will up, who was starting to breathe heavily, Professor Magna burst into the room in a panic.

“Headmaster! It’s an emergency!”

“Professor Magna, please calm yourself and report.”

“O-Okay. As you ordered, I asked the adventurer’s guild about those suspicious people seen around town...”

Hmm... So he’s not just working as a headmaster, he seems to have a finger in every pie.. He said he’s monitoring Gregory, and also seems well-versed in the underbelly of society. As I watched the two interact attentively, Professor Magna looked at me and hesitated. I had a feeling what she was about to say was pretty gruesome.

“It looks like you two are busy. I’ll leave you to it.”

“No, you’re fine as you are, Sirius. Professor Magna, please continue with what you were about to say.”

“Understood. According to my report, the suspicious group of people appears

to be the Fresh-Blooded Dragons.”

“What did you say?!”

Huh? It’s rare to see such a calm guy like Professor Will get so rattled. Judging by how he leaped up and raised his voice, this must be important.

“Hurry and contact every teacher! If you see anyone suspicious, do not approach them and contact me immediately!”

“Yes, sir!”

Once Professor Magna left the room, as hurriedly as she had burst in, I questioned Professor Will, who was sitting back down on the sofa.

“Professor Will, who are these people with such a disturbing name?”

“Allow me to explain. The Fresh-Blooded Dragons are a group of four people who are wanted by the adventurer’s guild for the crimes and murders they’ve committed across the country. They’re distinguished by having a red dragon with piercing blue tattooed on the back of every member’s hand.”

As soon as I heard his explanation, a thought ran across my mind. This afternoon... when I was seeing off my disciples as they were entering the labyrinth. I saw some people next to Hart and Melulusa at the reception desk a little bit earlier. From what I caught of their conversation, it seemed like Hart and Melulusa were going to take on the challenge in separate groups. They formed two groups of four: these groups consisted of a noble, one of their servants, and the two adventurers that they hired.

The four hired adventurers all wore robes that covered their entire bodies. Their hands, which poked out from time to time, were suspiciously wrapped in bandages, so I kept a close eye on them. After confirming the details surrounding the match, and just before everyone entered the labyrinth at the same time, one of the adventurers moved his hand and the bandage loosened, which he quickly readjusted. No one else but me seemed to notice. On the back of his hand... was a tattoo of a red dragon.

“Professor Will, who exactly are those people?”

“The Fresh-Blooded Dragons are a group of... pure, bloodthirsty killers.”

| Leus |

After being roped into a fight with some nobles we hardly knew, we were about to enter the labyrinth without my big bro. We're here to prove that we can still fight without him around. Honestly, I'm a bit worried that he's not here to look after us. My sister felt the same way, as she'd always look over to where he'd stand over and over again and secretly sigh.

Because he wasn't here, she gave me a bunch of instructions to fill in the gaps that big bro left behind. We moved smoothly through the labyrinth and made it to the ninth floor.

"Phew... we finally made it. How are you two holding up?"

"I'm fine. I still have plenty of mana left."

"I'm also doing great!"

We made it down here in one fell swoop, but since there was only about one trap per level and no more than ten golems attacking us at the same time, we weren't too exhausted. Compared to yesterday's labyrinth—with traps set every two to three steps, and fifty golems attacking us at the same time—this was a total piece of cake.

"This was a walk in the park, wasn't it sis? Do you think big bro will compliment us for clearing the labyrinth like this?"

"Keep your guard up, Leus. Watch where you're walking."

"Oh... thanks for the heads up."

I slowly retreated my foot which was about to take a step forward and managed to avoid setting off the trap. This one was really well hidden.

"You're good at this, Emilia. I still can't tell where the traps are."

"If you pay attention to the way Lord Sirius spots them, you'll get the hang of it."

"I don't know how he does it. Hey Leus, do you know how?"

"Umm... I don't know either. He explained that it was like a sixth sense."

“Now I’m even more confused!”

Actually, I didn’t know what that meant either. But anyways, whenever I felt like I was in danger or that something was off, a chill ran through my entire body. Big bro told me to pay attention to that feeling without getting too cocky. He said that controlling that intuition would make me stronger, and to never stop thinking about it. That’s easier said than done, but I tried my best to follow his advice.

“Enough chit-chat! Let’s keep moving!”

“Leave it to me, sis!”

As I kept thinking while I was walking, some golems appeared at the end of the passageway. There were a bunch, about twenty of them, which was no problem for us.

“I’ll lead the way. ‘Aqua Shot!’”

“Keep going, Leus! ‘Air Slash!’”

Our first order of business was to reduce their numbers by using my sisters’ magic. Then, I would swoop in to attack. My most important task was defeating enemies while keeping them away from Lise, who’s behind us. I had to be careful not to charge in too much.

Yesterday I failed to cut through some of the weakest magic circles, but now I’ve gotten the hang of it. I was taking out golems one after another. There were a few that I couldn’t reach and that slipped through, but either my sister would cut them down with her knife, or Lise would use her magic on them before they could get near her. My big bro wouldn’t let a single golem get past him if he was here. I couldn’t wait to become strong like him in order to protect my loved ones.

“This is it!”

Then the last golem fell apart underneath my sword. I was sweating from exhaustion and my sister immediately handed me a towel.

“I know how you feel. You’re getting impatient. Take it easy.”

“Thanks, sis. But I don’t want you two to have to fight at all, not even a little

bit.”

“Sir Sirius is always telling you to know your limits, right? Emilia and I can fight too, so don’t overdo it.”

“That’s right, Leus. We’re his disciples as well, we can handle it.”

“I get where you’re coming from. I’m sorry.”

Damn, I almost forgot the basics. I usually forget stuff when my big bro isn’t around. With that in mind, I continued forward, and soon found a staircase leading further down.

“We finally made it this far. Once we finish this last trial, we’ll have officially cleared the labyrinth.”

“I wonder what exactly we’ll have to do?”

Maybe this time, instead of sand golems, there would be rock golems? Even if there were, my greatsword could cut through rock. Plus, with the support from my sisters, I was sure we could defeat them. As I was forming those plans in my head and descended down the stairs, I heard my stomach growling. *Ah... I’m so hungry. I wanna get this over with and eat my big bro’s cooking.*

“Hehe, you’ve been on the move all day, haven’t you, Leus? Want some dried meat?”

“You’ll let me have some?!”

“Of course. We all need to be at our best.”

“Leus, don’t forget to stay hydrated.”

They could be scary sometimes, but deep down my sisters were kind people.

I finished eating the dried meat just as we arrived at the tenth floor. It didn’t have any traps or golems. Just a long, winding passage. After making who knows how many right turns, we came upon a giant room. Big bro once said that we’d bump into other students on the tenth floor, and now that I was here, I could see why.

“Wow... there are a lot of entrances.”

“Isn’t it weird how many of them there are?”

There were lots of entryways along the walls of the spacious room, which was shaped like a circle. It made sense, given that the students who entered through the separate passages were all supposed to arrive here. I walked around, thinking about how strange a place this was when suddenly I felt someone's presence at the center of the room.

"I've been waiting for you, Leus."

"And I've been waiting for you, Emilia."

Waiting for us over there were the same two that challenged us in the first place. Ha-Har-Hart, was it? Anyways, Hart and the others stood at the center of the room.

"I knew you'd come. Still, I thought you'd get here a little quicker."

"We won, Hart!"

"You cleared the labyrinth already?!"

The winner was determined by how deep each party could dive into the labyrinth. However, if everyone reached the tenth floor, then the winner was decided by whoever cleared the final trial first. Did that mean... they already finished the final trial?!

"No, we haven't started the final trial yet."

"...Huh?"

"We were waiting for you! We wanted you to watch us with your own eyes as we completed it."

Don't tell me they wasted all their time waiting just to show off to us. I'm super frustrated, but whoever succeeded first was the winner, so I had to give it to them.

"Sis..."

"I'd like to say that we haven't lost yet, but... I don't think there's much hope."

They were faster than us, even though we worked without taking a break. I didn't think that someone of that caliber would fail the final trial. And since the

nobles weren't very strong, I thought they made it here before us thanks to those adventurers. I silently let out a sigh when big sis Lise, who was watching the nobles, muttered something to me.

"Those adventurers over there... who are they?"

"I think it's best we stay out of their way as much as possible. Especially you, Leus, stay on your guard."

"You don't have to tell me twice. I've got a bad feeling about them."

I couldn't tell what they looked like under their robes and hoods, but I knew they were strong. The moment I had that thought, one of them turned and met my gaze.

"Heh."

Did he just... laugh?! It wasn't a disdainful laugh that'd come from Gregory or one of those foul nobles. It was much darker... an extremely unpleasant laugh that words couldn't describe.

"Now, we'll go ahead. Our victory awaits us."

The nobles bragged as they headed towards the extravagant door. Then, one of the adventurers who was in the back earlier stepped forward and stood in front of the two.

What's... going on? Why do I feel so uneasy?

"What are you doing? Get out of our way."

"...I want compensation."

"What are you talking about? I told you you'd get it once we finish the final trial."

"That's right! Please don't stand in Lord Hart's way!"

"Huh?!"

In an instant, I instinctively jumped and kicked Hart's back, who was caught by the adventurer. Since it was a reflexive action, I couldn't get to Hart's nearby servant. Before the servant had time to process what I did and get angry...

"Nope, I want it now. I want to hear... your screams of despair."

His icy tone was somehow filled with mirth. When the adventurer took off his robes and waved his arms... both of the servant's arms fell to the floor.

"AHHHHHHHHH!"

"Hmm... looks like going into the labyrinth was a good decision. Your screams echo so nicely... How pleasant!"

The three remaining adventurers took the servant's screams as their cue to remove their robes and attacked Melulusa and her servant.

"You scum! What you're doing is unforgivable!"

"I don't need your forgiveness, brat!"

"Go ahead and cry your hearts out, you spoiled brats!"

"Miss Melulusa! Put her down!! ...AAAH?!"

It felt like I was once again plunged into that hell. This reminded me of the nightmarish scene where my village... my friends... my family... were all eaten. The servant that rushed to protect the noblewoman not only had her body torn apart by the adventurers, but her arms and legs were crushed, causing her to emit a terrible scream. Melulusa, who saw the entire scene unfold in front of her, was unable to move her legs.

"N...No..."

"I won't let you get away, little girl. C'mon, go ahead and wail."

"I will do no such thing!"

Before that monster's arms could cut her apart with his sword, Emilia cast "Air Shot" and blew Melulusa out of the way. We weren't out of the woods yet. The noblewoman hit the wall on the other side and didn't move. She must've been knocked out cold. And because I kicked Hart in the back, he was knocked out on impact with the wall.

"Wow... you guys don't seem to be the same as the other toys over there."

The adventurers were having fun... messing with the servant... She was unable to scream anymore and turned to face us. Her face looked so gentle... I won't let these people get away with this. I stood in front of my sisters and pulled out

my greatsword. Emilia slowly spoke to the adventurers, with Lise at her back.

“Who are... you two?”

“What’s this? You don’t know who we are? Can’t you tell by our blue-red tattoos?”

“...I express my sincerest apologies. I am not that interested in other men besides one gentleman. If it is okay, may I ask you your names?”

She spoke slowly and deliberately, as sis Lise was holding her mouth and trying to recover. Emilia and I could handle this because of our past experiences, but this scene was tough on our dear Lise. Whether it was to run or fight, I had to buy some time until Lise recovered.

The adventurer, who was showing off his reddish-blue dragon tattoo, happily grouped up with the other three in response to Emilia’s question.

“Marvelous! Lately, people have been running away at the sight of us, so this is refreshing. Well then, shall we introduce ourselves, as you requested?”

The guy who had been doing all the talking was... this was the first time I’d seen a creature of its kind. Although it looked human, its body was covered with small scales, horns grew out of its head, and a lizard-like tail sprouted out from its behind. The most alarming thing was... its eyes. He smiled warmly, but his eyes harbored a sickeningly deep, dark emotion inside.

Of course that’s what dwelled within. Why else would they be killing people so happily?

“I am the leader of the Fresh-blooded Dragons. I am Goraon, of the dragon tribe. This wolfman here is Ash. Are you familiar with the unusual Golden Wolf tribe?”

The Golden Wolves were the same species as me, only their hair and fur were gold, not silver. However, their way of life was completely different from ours. The Silver Wolves cherished their friends and family and lived in packs. The Golden Wolves were a solitary tribe and were tossed aside once they matured. They’re said to be a strong but unusual tribe, due to their unique way of life.

Ash, who had just been introduced, watched us while licking his lips.

“Sometimes it’s good to cut through meat that has a crunchy texture.”

“Wait. I haven’t finished my introductions. This short old man is Ed the dwarf. He’s extremely powerful.”

“You didn’t have to mention my height!”

The dwarf, who was a little smaller than me, was swinging a heavy shield and ax as if they weighed nothing. The shield in particular was so huge that it covered his entire body. I doubt that my greatsword could cut through it.

“And last but not least is the human, Romios. He’s a magic user with an affinity for the earth attribute.”

“Nice to meet you, demihuman and human children.”

He looked like a polite young man as he bowed his head courteously, but when I looked at that face, the fur on my tail stood straight up. These guys were dangerous. If we were in any other situation, I would have ran right about now...

“The four of us are the Fresh-blooded Dragons. It’s nice to meet you, even if it’s for a short time.”

“And what d’ya mean by that?”

I spoke to them and held up my sword as I tried to position myself between my sister and big sis Lise.

“Huh? Well of course it means you’ll be dead soon. I mentioned before that we love killing people, thus we have no intention of letting you go.”

“Are you a group of bandits? If you are, I’ll ask you one more question: why are you here?”

My sister rubbed Lise’s back as she tried to buy us more time. I didn’t think he’d actually answer the question but the leader, Goraon, started answering gleefully.

“Well, I was drinking in some town, and an old guy named Gregory invited me to go and kill a bunch of people. That’s why we came to this town, but when we arrived he curiously told us to do nothing but wait. I held out until about halfway through, but couldn’t bear it anymore, so we came to kill you. They say

that patience is poison to the body, after all.”

“The sounds of your screams and the feeling of slicing through your skin are simply delectable.”

“You all cry out in such lovely voices.”

“Those brats are mine!”

Killing is the only thing they thought about, so they didn’t even bother hiding their murderous intent. But still, it was because of that Gregory guy again. What was he thinking, inviting those types of people here? I was just thinking of the ways I’d hit him after we got back when Goraon suddenly clapped his hands.

“Hey, it’s okay to kill them quickly, but don’t you want to hear their cries of despair?”

“Ha... another bad habit of mine. It’s fine, let’s get this over with.”

“But isn’t the crushed expression of someone who gave it their all the best? You guys get it, don’t you?”

“Ugh... I guess you’re right. Shall we follow our leader’s advice?”

“We’ll give you a little more time. Oh yeah, and if you try to run away, we’ll kill you.”

Before we could say anything in response, the group started rummaging through the stuff belonging to the servant—who had stopped moving—to find water and food, then took a break. They were totally playing with us, but for now, we couldn’t help but feel grateful. Still keeping my guard up, I turned to check on Emilia and big sis Lise.

“How ya holding up, big sis Lise?”

“Ugh... I’m sorry. I’m fine now.”

“I sent out a request for help through our pendant, but I have a feeling they won’t be arriving any time soon. We’re in hot water here.”

“Ahh, and they’re so much stronger than us...”

We haven’t fought yet, but I know that we’re outnumbered, which puts us at a serious disadvantage. Big bro said that we should run away without hesitation

if we were in a bad situation, but I don't think these guys would let us get away so easily.

"They're stronger than... you and Emilia?"

"If we were taking on just one person, Emilia and I could cause some sort of damage, but there's no way we can fight all four."

"If that's the case, let's run away! If I use my 'Aqua Mist' we might be able to get out."

After hearing that, I turned my attention to the downed Hart and... gave up on that idea. We didn't have the means to escape, and right now my sisters took top priority.

"...That would be difficult. They have a wolf who has a keen sense of smell. Even if we get away, it wouldn't be long before they catch up. If they catch either you or Emilia... it'll be over."

"So we fight...?"

"It's a tough decision but the only one we can make. Lise... we'll buy you time so at least you can run away."

"Yes, go and tell big bro what's going on."

"I... can't do that."

Lise's face was pale and she was shaking all over, but she clenched her fists and shook her head.

"If I run away from here, I'll always regret it. It'll leave permanent scars within me."

"But you might die if you stay!"

"I'm scared. I don't want to... die! But leaving you two behind as I run away would be worse..."

Lise had tears streaming down her face as she faced Emilia and I directly. She really wanted to run away, but for our sake, she refused to leave us behind.... which gave me the courage to go on.

"I'll stay and fight! Maybe we can all go home... together?"

“...Thank you. Let’s all... go back to Lord Sirius.”

If big sis Lise made up her mind, there was nothing more for me to say. We shifted gears and discussed different survival strategies.

“If we face them head-on there’s... no chance of us winning, right?”

“None at all. But they don’t know how powerful we are. Our first plan of attack should be... taking advantage of this opportunity and reducing their numbers. If that goes well, there’s a chance we can escape.”

“In other words, a surprise attack. Who should we aim for?”

“We should go after the leader, the dragon tribe member, first. Leus will hold back the Golden Wolf and the dwarf. The problem is, I’m not sure if the blade from my wind can cut the dragon...”

A book I read at school said that dragon’s bodies were very sturdy. My sword might’ve worked, but I had to hold back the other two, and we had no way of knowing that Emilia's magic would be of use. We only had one shot for a surprise attack, so what would be a surefire plan for success?

“Then... I’ll do it!”

“Lise?”



“I can... do it. If I use the magic that Sir Sirius taught me, then...”

“That’s right! Using that magic will definitely work.”

“But Lise, you have to get really close to them to make it work, right? You don’t have to do something that dangerous...”

“No matter where we go, or if we lose, we’ll stick together. That means we have to give it our all, even if the chances are slim.”

Lise’s body began to tremble again, so much so that she could barely stand up. Even so, she stubbornly declared that she, someone who usually stood in the back, would come forward. My sister and I nodded at each other and we put our hands on hers.

“We’ll leave it to you, Lise. Leus and I will definitely hold back the others, so you only need to worry about him.”

“I’ve got your back, big sis Lise!”

“I’ll d-do my best!”

How could we not respond to Lise after she had been so courageous?

“That’s our game plan, but...”

She looked fine, but I could tell that Emilia was putting on a brave face. I noticed when we put all of our hands together that she too was trembling. Her tail was also lowered, and I noticed that when she let her guard down, she started shaking again. But... we had no other choice. We needed to get back to our big bro. After we listened to the strategy that my sister came up with, we prepared ourselves to fight. That’s when they noticed us.

“It’s about time, isn’t it? Okaaaay... What kind of fight are ya gonna show me?”

They laughed at us because we were children... but they wouldn’t be laughing for much longer.

“Water spirits, I call upon you... ‘Aqua Mist.’”

First, Lise’s magic blocked out everyone’s vision. Then, at the same time, my sister and I lunged to attack and engaged our opponents. The two opponents I

was holding back were the Golden Wolf and the dwarf. It should've been hard to see anything in the thick fog, but thanks to big sis Lise, we could clearly see them. I activated "Boost" and swung my fist at the dwarf, who was shaken by the fog.

"I'm over here! 'Flame Knuckle!'"

"What kind of an attack—UGH?!"

I aimed my flaming fist at the dwarf, but he quickly blocked it with his shield. However, I wasn't trying to defeat him, just to distract him, so this was fine. That's why I used magic: I got the dwarf to move back a little because of the blast and impact generated by my fiery fist.

"Don't say anything! Over there!"

Detecting us by our smell and the sound of the explosion, the wolf attacked us from the side by swinging its claws. The Golden Wolf tribesman didn't fight with weapons, he used his long claws. They were ridiculously tough, and didn't even break after I hit them with my greatsword. I keep strengthening my body with "Boost," yet this guy was more powerful.

"Such childish tricks... I'll blow them away. I beg of you, Wind..."

"I won't let you!"

My sister closed the distance to the human who was trying to blow away the fog with magic. She snuck up under the cover of fog, and swung her knife to kill him in one shot... but he dodged.

"Oh, I bet you know this move, 'Air Slash!'"

"I'm surprised you don't need to chant, but... the fog allows you to see the wind's movements, right?"

My sister managed to hold him down, but I didn't think I could keep it up for long since I was holding back two people.

The dwarf's movements were slow, but the wolf was much faster than I'd expected.

"Move, Ash! You're in the way!"

“Shut up! I told you this guy was mine!”

Even so, I managed to endure because they kept bickering between themselves. They’ve attacked each other a few times, so I was able to take advantage of that to get some breathing room. Looks like good teamwork was important, after all. While we were keeping the others distracted, Lise quietly circled from around the side to sneak up on Goraon.

“Heh... this is some interesting magic. I can’t see a thing.”

“Your carelessness... will prove fatal!”

She then leaped towards Goraon’s back and activated her magic at once.

“Spirits, I call upon you... ‘Aqua Cutter!’”

This was a magical water blade that big bro thought of. It was an amazing type of magic that cut through not only rocks but also iron, by hurling thin slices of water with tremendous force. Big bro said that it would blow away opponents, not cut them, and that this kind of magic was possible thanks to the spirit’s strength. On the other hand, it wasn’t very strong when used from a distance. Lise, who wasn’t good at close combat, didn’t use it very often.

Goraon, who had underestimated us more because of the surprise attack, reacted slowly and couldn’t escape from the blades of water fired from Lise’s fingertips. Once she shook her hand, the dragon’s left arm and leg were cut off and rolled to the floor.

“...Heh.”

“Ne-Next thing I cut will be your head! If you want me to stop, let us go home!”

Lise acted brave, but her body still trembled. That couldn’t be helped, though. Even if the other person was the enemy, cutting up someone’s body wasn’t something she’d wanted to do. But... Goraon, even with an arm and a leg cut off, only laughed when he saw her.

“Wh-why are you laughing?! Quickly, let us...”

“It would’ve sounded better if you ordered me to stop laughing. Don’t tell me, is this your first time cutting up a body?”

Then Goraon picked up his fallen arm and stuck it back onto his body, all while ignoring Lise.

“I haven’t been hit this bad since I was on the battlefield. And even so, I never thought I’d get hit by a little girl.”

“That’s...”

Even though it was supposed to be cut off, even though he didn’t use magic, his left arm was moving.

“Surprised? My regenerative ability is off the charts compared to other dragons of my kind. I can fix my legs, too!”

“A-Ah...”

He attached his leg the same way, stood up, and looked down on Lise. She was completely swallowed up by the murderous rage unleashed before her eyes, and couldn’t take a single step. Because of that, her magic disappeared, and the fog dissipated.

“Yes, yes. That expression of despair... it’s the best! But, since you cut me up, it’s only fair I return the favor, right?”

Goraon gleefully swung his arm towards Lise, but she didn’t move... she couldn’t move. I knew I needed to step in, but I was holding back the others, so I couldn’t reach her.

“Stop looking away and come play with me!”

“How dare you hit me, brat!”

“Damn it! Get out of the way! Sis Lise!”

I managed to parry the attacks from the Golden Wolf and dwarf, and headed towards her when Goraon’s arm swung down.

“LISE!”

At that moment, she jumped. She flew into the air and caught the swinging arm with her knife. However, she couldn’t hold off Goraon’s momentum and was repelled back. If she hadn’t been using a knife forged by that old guy Grant, the knife would have shattered and she would have been killed. Emilia, who

had been knocked back, managed to regain her balance and tried to fight back, but...

“Don’t get in my way anymore!”

“Aghh?!”

The opponent was faster than her, and was blown away by the kick Goraon released. Emilia’s back slammed against the wall and she fell to the floor, motionless.

Now that was... a kick unleashed with killing intent. My sister, who received such a powerful kick was...

“Emilia!”

Lise shouted out my sister’s name while running, but I...

“Emilia...?”

That can’t be...

Emila was... because of these... guys...

“What’s this? We get to have more fun!”

“C’mon, gimme one of your arms!”

“SHUT UUUUUUP!”

The shift was instantaneous. My body swelled, fur sprouted from my body, and power surged through me. My body felt unbelievably light, and I swung my sword at the Golden Wolf headed towards me with all my might.

“Guh?! What the hell is going on?!”

I wasn’t strong enough before. Now, my sword blew away not only his claws but his entire body as well. I wanted to take out the dwarf the same way, but he had already raised his shield.

“As if you could break through my defenses!”

“Take thisssss!”

I swung my sword regardless, and it collided with the dwarf’s shield. The sound of the impact reverberated throughout the room. I couldn’t cut the

strong shield, but I still managed to blow away the dwarf immediately.

I can do this. I can... fight!

I need to get them outta here and take my sister back to our big bro.

“What brats. I didn’t think they could take me out head-on.”

“That’s true... It’s not in the nature of Silver Wolves to act this way. We should probably stop thinking of them as mere brats.”

“I can’t help but agree. Looks like it’s time to get serious.”

I didn’t have a clue what they were saying... I didn’t care, either. Hurry... I gotta hurry to my sisters...

“I’ll give you the boy and the girl, leave the blue-haired one to me.”

Every time they spoke, the feeling of unease within me grew. I lunged at them with a fully charged “Boost.”

“Here, over here, you brat!”

The dwarf was the only one nearby, so I swung my sword down towards him. However, he parried my hit with his shield, which he held at an angle, and I was sent tumbling to the floor.

“If this were just regular stupidity, we’d let it go!”

I immediately tried to grab my sword, but the dwarf rammed against me with his raised shield. I was taken aback and had a delayed reaction. I was pushed back by this, but thanks to the transformation, it didn’t hurt much.

“Damn! Next time I’ll—”

“Hey, look over here. Aren’t your friends in danger?”

“What?!”

When I turned around at that voice, I saw the Golden Wolf closing in on Lise and my fallen sister. Lise was so focused on using healing magic on Emilia that she hadn’t realized that the enemy was approaching. *I have to... protect them!*

“Stay away from my sisters!”

I immediately ran out and swung my sword at his back, but the Golden Wolf

turned my way with a smile and easily dodged my sword. I had been landing hits on him with my claws earlier, so why was he avoiding me so easily... was it because he had anticipated my attack? The moment I thought that, I felt a strange sensation and turned my head. I saw a chunk of rock about the size of my head... flying straight towards me. This was an elementary earth-attribute spell called “Rock Bullet,” which tosses masses of rocks.

“Children are so easy to handle.”

The one who cast the spell was the human. Try as I might, it was an unavoidable attack. That meant... I had to cut through the rock! I just swung my sword down, in order to slice upwards next time. I had to do it just like big bro instructed... by visualizing powerful images. I could do this. *I can do it...now!*

“Here it comes!”

My blow definitely caught the magic and sliced the rock in two. However, I was caught off guard. By successfully intercepting the spell, I was too late in noticing the other rock headed my way... from right behind the one I had already cut. Not one, but two rocks were sent out at once. I thought there was only one, and even if I were to swing my sword now, it'd be too late. I could try evading it by jumping to the side as fast as I could while turning my body, but I knew that was out of the question. That's because... my sister was right behind me.

“Gah?!”

I gritted my teeth and... a chunk of rock hit me square in the chest. I heard something break. I knew it was a bone... however, if I wasn't wearing an iron breastplate, then surely my bones would have been much worse off because the rock would have pierced my chest. I was shoved back by the violent impact and rolled on the floor several times before coming to a stop, looking at the ceiling.

“Uh...ugh...”

I was still... conscious. My chest hurt like hell, and I coughed up blood. Craning my neck, I noticed that my iron breastplate was dented, and my sword arm was back to its original state. I was hit directly. No wonder... I transformed back.

“Leus!”

Apparently, I rolled close to my sister and Lise. I turned my head to face the voice I heard and saw Lise crying and looking at me.

“Lise... you’re safe...”

“Don’t speak! Water... heal this child... please!”

Lise’s magic helped a little with my chest pain but she began to sweat and had a pained look on her face. We had made it to the tenth floor of the labyrinth and on top of fighting those guys, she’d been healing Emilia and me. Her mana level must be...

“I’m fine... Lise, run... away...”

“No way! I’m not... leaving you two behind!”

Lise didn’t stop the flow of her magic even when she was about to faint from mana exhaustion. Emilia wasn’t moving at all, and I blankly stared at the Golden Wolf who was approaching us with a smile.

“Now then, this is when the real fun begins.”

I... couldn’t do anything. But, I... did my best, didn’t I? Even if I passed out, I’m sure big bro will come and help us soon, right?

The next time I opened my eyes, Emilia and Lise were peeking over at me with concern. So... I already...

But... what if big bro didn’t make it in time?

If I passed out... they’d attack my sister. No! I’d never... let that happen! Think about... why I decided to become strong! To protect my sister! I’d rather die... than let my sister get attacked!

“AHHHH!”

I stood up, using my sword as a cane... I didn’t have the strength to wield it. Even so, I ignored Lise telling me to stop and the pain in my chest as I walked, dropping the sword along the way. I stood in front of the Golden Wolf.

“I can’t say you didn’t try. But what can you do in such a condition?”

“Shut up... come and find out.”

“Heh, I admire your spirit.”

Before I could raise my fist, I was grabbed by my hair and lifted to see eye-to-eye with the Golden Wolf. That felt a little nostalgic... Back when I was a slave, I'd mouth off and get my hair grabbed like this and beaten. Back then, I'd immediately cry and apologize, but now... it was different. I still had...

“A weapon!”

“HUH? Yo-You bastard!”

I bit into the arm of the Golden Wolf. If I tried my best, I could at least keep him away from my sister and Lise.

“Shit! Let go of me, kid!”

“GRRR!”

I'll never... let go! No matter how hard it gets, we'll survive, and... go back to our big bro!



“I said let go of me!”

He hit me with his other arm, and I rolled onto the floor again, landing in front of my sister. I never thought I’d let go. I took out a piece of his flesh, but didn’t wanna eat it.

“L...eus.”

“Emilia?! You’re awake!”

I turned towards the familiar voice to see my sister laying down, her eyes barely open. That’s good... she’s alive. That’s such a... relief.

“Stop...already...You’ve done...enough...”

“T-that’s right! I’ll try to do something, so take a break!”

You’ll lower my resolve, please stop saying things like that. Look, he’s coming closer. He looks angry.

“You bit my arm. Do you think I’ll let you die peacefully?”

“Come... here.”

I’ll... bite him again. Over and over again... I’ll keep biting him. Even if my fangs break, even if I die, I won’t give—

THUDDDD!!

At that moment, a sudden thunderous roar caused everyone to freeze in their tracks. Turning my attention to the noise, I spotted a bunch of holes in the nearby wall. They drilled in a circular pattern, and I could tell someone was trying to smash through the wall. I started crying. I could only think of one person... able to do such a thing.

“What’s going on?”

“Watch out! Something’s coming!”

Just as they were alerting one another, the wall had been smashed open, and a large shadow flew in. Pieces of the wall flew towards Goraon and the others. Meanwhile, the entering shadow headed for the Golden Wolf, who was getting out of the way.

“What the hell?!”

The Golden Wolf reflexively swung his arms at the incoming shadow, but it not only dodged him with ease, but also sent a kick that sent him flying in the opposite direction. By the time we had all regained our balance, we could see that person’s back clearly. My vision was blurred by the pain and tears, but there’s no way I was mistaken about whose back that was. It was the one I’d always stand behind... it belonged to the one I looked up to...

“Big... bro...”

“Leus. You... did well.”

Chapter Two

The Man Once Called the Strongest

| Sirius |

“Have you seen people who fit that description?!”

When I heard that the Fresh-blooded Dragons were a murderous group, I told Professor Will about the adventurers wearing robes that covered them from head to toe.

“It was just for a moment, but I could see a bluish-red dragon on the back of their hand.”

“If that’s true, then we’re in a state of emergency. I need to reach out to others for confirmation, but how could such dangerous people get here so easily...?”

I closed my eyes and activated “Search.” Professor Magna, who had just run out of the room, returned for some reason.

“Ah, Magna, I’m glad you’re here. There’s something you need to pass on to the oth—”

“I forgot to mention one more important thing!”

“Calm down! Let’s hear the report first.”

“According to the adventurer’s guild, the corpses of a party of four people were found in the street. That party was supposed to be made up of adventurers hired to help the students in the labyrinth...”

“...What Sirius said just became even more credible.”

While they were talking to each other, I extended the range of “Search.” The labyrinth was a little out of range, but I could reach its distance by pinpointing the location rather than having the spell examine the entire surrounding area.

“Actually, there’s one more thing. The shadow that was sent to monitor Gregory was also found dead. They were left in the same merciless state as the

adventurers...”

“Is that so... how regrettable that they died. Do we have their corpse?”

“Yes, we’ve recovered it. There are countless wounds and missing body parts, which indicates someone was toying with them.”

“Sounds like the work of a blood-thirsty killer. Please bury the victims with great care. However, when it comes to the shadow sent to watch over Gregory... I feel like that’s connected in some way.”

“I think he guided them into town.”

“Yes, I had the same thought as well. Immediately secure Professor Gregory... no, just Gregory, at once! Meanwhile, send guards and adventurers to the labyrinth. Sirius, you...”

Found them!

“Professor Will!”

“Wha-what is it?”

“Where’s the shortest route to get to the tenth floor?”

“Are you referring to the labyrinth? I believe it’s... entrance number nine. It’s a straightforward route without any forks in the road, but there are tons of golems... Sirius?”

Even though they were quite a distance away, I succeeded in finding them by relying on the magic used by my disciples and the use of “Search.” The response came from quite deep within the labyrinth... probably the bottom level. Once I knew the shortest route, all I had to do was head through it. I didn’t listen to the entirety of what Professor Will had said, I headed towards the window while picking up items along the way.

“I’ll head over first and will leave the rest to you. Also, I’m borrowing this.”

“Sirius! We’re not on the first floor—...”

I ignored the voice behind me and jumped out the window. Professor Magna’s office was on the fourth floor, but I jumped to the next roof over and made for a gradual descent. Finally, I created a foothold with “Air Step,” landing

safely on the ground and ran as fast as I could. Due to the severity of the situation, this was not the time to hide my abilities. I activated “Boost” and sprinted with all my might. Specks of dirt flicked out of the ground.

I arrived at the labyrinth a few minutes later, soared over some surprised people, and jumped to the entrance marked number nine. A golem appeared as soon as I entered the labyrinth, but I avoided fighting it by jumping over its head. It was a slow-moving golem, so there was no need to take it out just to proceed.

I repeatedly activated “Search” while running to monitor the situation with my disciples. They were currently engaged in a fight with multiple mysterious magical presences, but seemed to be safe so far. Those presences must’ve been those people. I thought about calling out their names on my way, but they might’ve lowered their guard in the middle of a fight if they heard my voice. It was tough to resist the urge, but I held back my words and ran with all my heart.

Whenever the golems formed a long line I couldn’t jump over, I’d kick through that wall and keep moving forward. If a gigantic one attempted to block my way on its own, I’d use “Magnum” to shoot its magic circle without slowing down.

Eighth floor... Emilia had been taken down by a certain magical presence and stopped moving. What’s more, Lise’s mana levels were gradually being depleted.

Ninth floor... Leus’ magical ability swelled up, but soon diminished and his situation had turned precarious.

Tenth floor... Leus took a bite out of one of the presences. Then, he was knocked back and three of them were all piled in one spot.

I was closing in on the scene by then, just one wall away. My disciples were behind the wall in front of me. However, the magical presences were approaching them fast and, had I traveled along the wall, I surely wouldn’t have made it in time.

This called for a frontal assault.

I made the decision instantaneously while running to ready my right hand and

fired a series of “Magnum” bullets. These were designed to pierce armor, and their penetrating power was their special property. The bullets cut through the wall as if it was paper, and created a perforated line. When the countless holes made a full circle, I delivered a flying kick to the wall. The chunk of wall that was hollowed out flew towards one of the presences that seemed to be an enemy. I paid it no mind and ran towards the one approaching my disciples. A wolf with golden-blond ears... could he have been a part of the Golden Wolf tribe? Well, it doesn't matter to me. He was trying to attack Leus, so nothing would change my mind about him.

“What the hell, you bastard!”

“Hey, that's my line!”

Just what... were you planning on doing to them?!

I dodged the fist he threw at me and moved to sweep his legs. Once he had lost his balance, I slammed a kick against his side and knocked him off his feet. I glanced back to check on everyone's safety, and saw my fallen students looking up at me with tears in their eyes.

“Lord Sirius...”

“Are you okay, Emilia?”

“...Yes, I am.”

I didn't see any external injuries, but based on the fact that she couldn't move, I'd say there was something wrong with her, most likely.

“You came... for us...”

“It's only natural, isn't it?”

I didn't see any visible wounds on Lise, but she looked like she could pass out at any moment from mana exhaustion.

“Big... bro...”

And there's... the one who fought up until the very end. Leus was bleeding from all over his body and was covered in bruises. I knew this because I was able to capture the details using “Search” during my trek here.

You protected Emilia and Lise this whole time. You're an... amazing man.

"Leus, you did well... enduring it all."

"I... tried... my best."

"You did. Leave the rest to me. It'll all be over by the time you wake up."

"...Okay."

Then, with my disciples' gazes on my back, I made a declaration to the group standing in front of me.

"I won't let you... ever lay a hand on my students again!"

As if in response, three rocks came flying towards us. These rocky projectiles were moderately large for a "Rock Bullet," but I unleashed "Magnum" to shoot and pulverize them mid-air.

"Nice job!"

However, hidden among the rocks was the guy I had sent flying with a kick. He swung his unusually long right claw but, perhaps because he had let his anger get the better of him, he left his sides open and vulnerable. I pushed up at his side with my hand and his right arm briefly stopped moving. Then I slammed my fist into his face while he was still surprised. I felt something in his face shatter, but it was nothing compared to what he did to my disciples. As long as he didn't die, it was fine. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to make him live to regret it.

I was on the lookout for a follow-up attack, but for some reason didn't see anything else coming. Instead, they had surrounded the fallen Golden Wolf and were smiling. I didn't know whether or not they were healing him, but there was no need for me to rush. I used "Search" to turn back and examine Leus on the ground.

"Sir Sirius! Leus did everything he could to protect me! And Emilia protected me, too!"

"Lord Sirius, Leus is..."

“Yes, I know.”

Smiling reassuringly, I touched Leus’ body and activated “Scan.” Hmm... he had several cracked ribs and he’d also sustained damage to his internal organs. I could see rock fragments in some of his bruises, so I’d say that he took a direct hit from “Rock Bullet.” Leaving him as-is would be dangerous, so I handed Lise that container I brought from Professor Magna’s office as I started working on Leus.

“P-please focus on Leus, not me!”

“Your mana levels will quickly recover if you drink that.”

“Huh?!”

Perhaps due to how the quality of mana differed from person to person, there was no such thing as having an instant recovery after ingesting something. However, some things sped up recovery, which was what I had given to Lise. She put the container to her mouth immediately, and after drinking it all up, she had an extremely bitter look on her face.

“Bitter... but I drank it all.”

“Good job getting through that. Pardon me.”

Meanwhile, I touched Lise’s head with “Scan” and saw that she was suffering from mana exhaustion and light bruising. Her cheeks turned red, probably because I touched her out of the blue.

“Um... Sir Sirius?”

“I’m checking to see if you have any injuries. I’m glad to see you weren’t too hurt.”

“You’re... I didn’t do anything useful. Even now, I... can’t do anything.”

“There is something you can do. Listen, Leus’ condition is...”

Lise had a strong appetite for healing others, so I taught her as much as I could using the medical knowledge I knew from my previous life. She knew the body’s anatomy, such as bones and muscles, which wasn’t seen as necessary knowledge in a world that relied on magic. In other words, if Lise, who had a talent for healing, knew about the affected area, she could then focus on that

area. I explained to her which areas needed to be fixed, and instructed her to start working once her magical power recovered.

“Leave it to me!”

Lise kept lamenting that she couldn't do anything, but it was thanks to her treatment that the siblings' injuries weren't worsening. I was very grateful for her. The enemy hadn't shown any signs of attacking yet, so I checked on Emilia's condition.

“Thanks for waiting, Emilia.”

“Lord Sirius...”

Emilia seemed a bit out of it and didn't respond well to my questions. There might have been something wrong with her brain, so I activated “Scan.” Upon doing so, Emilia reached out and touched my hand.

“Lord Sirius... I'm... sorry...”

“Why are you apologizing? You helped Lise. If anything, you did great.”

She smiled pleasantly when I gently stroked her cheek. I determined that she had severe bruising on her body, but it wasn't bad enough to break her bones. She could mostly be healed through Lise's treatment. I didn't see any ruptured blood vessels in her brain or any other aftereffects, so she'd recover if she continued to rest. When I reported my diagnosis to Lise, who was concentrating on recovering her magic levels, she let out a huge sigh of relief.

“Really? That's great... That's really great.”

“You don't have to... cry about it.”

“Of course I'll cry. If anything happened to Emilia while she was protecting me...”

“I'm sorry for cutting you off mid-story, but I have to do...something that needs to be done.”

“Yes, sir!”

Lise's magic levels must have recovered a little because she activated her magic to start treating Leus. Finally, I patted Emilia's head and stood up. She

grabbed me by the hem of my shirt with a trembling hand.

“Come on, you need to rest up.”

“But there are...four of them and... you’re by yourself.”

“Those guys are no problem. I’ll finish this soon, just rest up for a bit.”

“...Okay.”

Gently removing her hand, I smiled reassuringly at Emilia before turning around. My only weapon was the Mithril knife I always kept on hand, but it should be enough to take them on. As soon as I was in a clear view of them, a man with horns and a lizard-like tail growing from his rear end turned around and shot me a friendly smile.

“Are you all done? That was so sweet it made me wanna puke. I was patient, so you should be thankful. It’ll be the best when I crush those kids’ hopes!”

“Is that so...?”

So he’s the rumored dragon tribe member. There was also a dwarf and a human... all of them had disgusting smiles plastered on their faces. They all deserved to be called murderers. I’d seen my share of lowlifes in my previous life. It didn’t seem like they were any different in this world, either.

“Look at that. His nose was broken from your last attack. What should we do to repay the favor?”

“How am I supposed to know...?”

“I see. By the way, do you know who we are? I gave my introduction to the kids over there, but should I do it again? I go by the name of Goraon—”

“I don’t care about your name. You’re the Fresh-blooded Dragons, aren’t you?”

“So you’re familiar, what a shame. Yes, we go by the name Fresh-blooded Dragons—”

“I have just one question for you.”

He was about to prattle on about inconsequential stuff, so I interrupted him to ask a question of my own. He looked displeased at the interruption, but

quickly smiled again and pointed his hand at me.

“You should learn to listen to what other people say. I’m an adult, so I can’t forgive that easily, but I will answer your question. So, what is it you wanna know?”

“My students...the children behind me. What did they ever do to you?”

They looked at one another, and all of them but the Golden Wolf smiled.

“They didn’t do anything to us. We just attacked because it was fun to make them cry and scream.”

“I have a reason! Biting and shredding someone’s arm... I won’t be able to calm down until I tear that kid up! And of course, you too, bastard!”

“Ah, and the cries of little brats are out of this world. I could listen to them every day and not get tired of it.”

“I want them to cry out in their lovely voices.”

That confirmed it. Our party was not at fault in any way, so they were clearly... my enemy.

“So? What are you gonna do? Are you gonna try to take us all on your own? Ooh, I wish you would. I wonder, what will your screams sound like?”

“Ah, I’ll grant your wish and fight you. Then, I’ll take down the rest...”

My body was already warmed up, so I could fight whenever. I took a step forward while increasing my magical power and—...

“Let’s make him regret ever being born.”

The switch... was flipped.

*

In front of me are the sinners who hurt my students. There were four of them. They were wanted murderers, but they hadn’t been caught until now, so I knew they had considerable skill. I didn’t let my guard down once.

“Huh... weren’t you going to make me regret being alive? If you can do that, I’d love to see you try.”

“You’re the one full of regrets, aren’t you? You’re just a damn brat...”

“Is that mouth just for decoration? Come and fight me.”

“A little brat like you needs to be taught a lesson!”

At my provocation, the Golden Wolf and the dwarf rushed me at the same time. The human began chanting in the back. As for the dragon demi-human, he just stared at me gleefully. The Golden Wolf left the slow-moving dwarf in the dust and... suddenly took a big leap off to the side, right in front of my face.

“It’s such a shame you have to protect them! Hey!”

He looked angry but was actually calm—... No, just rotten to the core. He circled around to avoid me, so I thought he was aiming for my students. However, if I chased after him, my disciples would be left to deal with the dwarf and then be fired upon with a follow-up magic attack from the human.

I hate to say it, but I’ve fought with loads of lowlifes like you in my previous life.

“Hey, look over here! Your precious little—HUH?!”

“Too slow.”

Facing forward, I jumped back and landed alongside the Golden Wolf. He was upset and swung his arms at me, but I was faster. Avoiding the flailing arms, I flipped my body up and kicked away, lifting his lower body from behind. He was sent flying forwards through the air.

“What?!”

Keeping up the momentum, I spun on the axis of one leg and landed a spinning kick on the Golden Wolf's back, which was temporarily open. By the time I landed the kick, the dwarf was getting closer and quickly used his shield to catch the flying wolf.

“Hey! What are you doing?!”

“Shu-Shut up!”

The Golden Wolf reflexively clung to the shield and snapped back to the dwarf. In the meantime, I was preparing for my next action. Running after the

wolf that I kicked away, I touched him with my right hand, as he was clinging to the shield, and concentrated my magic power. Once my hand made contact with the Golden Wolf, who was quarreling with his ally, he looked back at me but... it was already too late.

“Yo-You bastard...”

“What?! I can’t see anything ‘cause you’re in the way!”

“Get away.”

I hit them with “Impact” at close range. The resulting force cut through the Golden Wolf and reached the dwarf, knocking them both backwards. At the same time, I turned my left hand to the side and shot down all of the rocks that were closing in on me with “Magnum.”

“How?!”

Other than Professor Magna, I couldn’t think of anyone who could shoot ten “Rock Bullets” at the same time. To put it another way, this human seemed quite competent, but... the results were damning.

“Is that it?”

“Using different magic from both sides at the same time... impossible! How exactly did you get those rocks outta the way in the first place?”

Even if the magic was of the same attribute, few people could unleash different spells with their right and left hands. However, and this was dependent on one’s training, the most surprising move I made was intercepting the flying rocks without even looking at them.

“I have no reason to answer you.”

To put it simply, I thought of three things at the same time and made the appropriate movements for each situation: dealing with the Golden Wolf and the dwarf, understanding the information shown to me through “Search,” and staying on high alert... for the dragon waiting behind me. The brain's thought centers are practically divided into multiple parts and operate simultaneously. The body then moves as desired according to the situation at the time... I was

the only one in my previous life to master this skill. I called it “Multitasking.”

In short, I realized a convenient and childish way of rapidly thinking of multiple things at the same time. By combining this machine-like speed of thought with the skills and experience I cultivated through training under my master, I was able to claim victory without ever knowing defeat. Before I knew it, I came to be known as the strongest in my previous life. I considered myself to be the king of thinking machines, designed to beat my master. It was like I had a split personality that had a lot of knowledge, but never came out into the open. I was merely a thinking being—calmly observing my surroundings and providing advice to myself—and I was also the one who alerted myself to the incoming rocks. Well, even after I gained this ability, I still could not surpass my master...

“Damn you! You’re really pissing me off! We’ll attack you at the same time!”

“Hmpfh! Looks like I have no choice.”

The Golden Wolf and dwarf, who had been knocked down, stood back up and came at me in unison. They were wielding their claws and ax, respectively, and I continued to dodge them by using “Multitasking” to anticipate their trajectories, parrying their attacks with my knife. It wasn’t difficult, because they were too eager to kill me, and their coordination was poor. They seemed like the type to enjoy cutting people up, meaning they’d target weaker opponents. I guess they haven’t fought many strong fighters. What’s more, they relied too much on their races’ unique physical abilities.

“Try and avoid this!”

Chunks of rock were repeatedly released as if they were weaving through the gaps in one’s defense. I not only intercepted them with my “Magnum,” but also...

“GUH!? What the hell are you guys doing?!”

“You just jumped in.”

“HUH? Hey, stop your magic attacks! Don’t you see how it’s being used?!”

Guiding their movements, I used “String” to occasionally pull them by their arms and legs, and even directed a flying rock to hit them in the head.

“Grr... I guess I have no choice. I beg of you, as someone born of the earth...”

“Now! Stop your magic!”

“You can’t do any counterattacks, can you, brat? All you do is dodge our moves.”

“...You have no idea.”

I was able to concentrate on avoiding attacks because of the magic support. The fact that there was a slight break in the human’s chanting—and one person stopped their attacks—gave me more leeway to make my move. They tried sandwiching me from both of my sides, but I first crouched to avoid the Golden Wolf’s claws, then quickly circled behind him to kick his back with all my might.

“...Move!”

“Bah?! Get outta the way!”

“Wha-...UGH?!”

The Golden Wolf who had been kicked away landed on the dwarf’s swinging ax, tearing into his body. However, the dwarf adjusted just before the attack, so the ax only gave him a shallow, non-fatal wound.

“Cut...the... crap...”

However, I wasn’t done yet. As the opponent was shaking, I attacked by kicking him in mid-air using “Air Step” and driving my Mithril knife through the Golden Wolf’s neck. The Mithril knife could cut through iron, so it ran through his neck without resistance. The shocked Golden Wolf fell to the floor with fresh blood gushing from his neck.

“That little boy... is definitely... AAH?!”

“If you can scream, then why don’t you defend yourself?”

I jumped to the dwarf’s chest while yelling and launched my fist under his chin. I put quite a bit of power into it, but he hardly reacted, as if his neck was as sturdy as steel.

“Guh... how annoying!”

His ax didn’t hit me, so he started swinging his shield. His movements were

slow. This guy's equipment and physique made him a tank, so he should have stood in front of me, blocking my movements. I took a step back to avoid his swinging shield, then jumped forward again to close in on the dwarf.

“This kid!”

“You shouldn’t wield your ax with brute force alone.”

I avoided the ax that was coming straight down, and jumped towards his chest. Then, I grabbed his neck and slammed him to the floor as hard as I could. The dwarf had the wind knocked out of him from that attack, and I put my hands on his neck and applied pressure, while also placing one foot onto his stomach. I looked into the dwarf’s eyes.

“Guh... I can’t believe... just one kid...”

“You’ve been looking down on me all this time because I’m a kid. But what about you, who’s about to be beaten by one little boy?”

“Tch...”

He must’ve understood that if he tried to make a move, I’d crush his neck or cast a spell on him. He only clicked his tongue in frustration at my words.

“Punish this transgressor with a chain of binding! ‘Earth Bi-...’ GAH?!”

Judging from the chanting, I’d say that the human’s magic was probably going to bring chains of earth out of the ground to bind my movement. I hit him directly in the face with “Impact,” forcing him to stop his incantation. Unlike some novices, he was able to chant and move at the same time. He aimed for the slightest opening to cast his magic. With “Multitasking,” however, this wasn’t an issue.

“Be quiet. I’ll deal with you later.”

“Gr... I’ll drill you with rock fragments. ‘Rock Bulle—’ UGH?!”

No matter how fast he chanted, he still didn’t stand a chance against me, as someone who didn’t even have to. I released “Impact” again to shut up the human who hadn’t learned his lesson, and the dwarf, who was glaring at me, sighed in resignation.

“Haha, we totally lost. Hey, we promise not to do something like this again, so

can you let us off the hook?”

“Are you begging for your life? You’re a pathetic man.”

“Heh... well, life is precious, after all. Plus, if we lose to a kid like you, it’s over for us. We’ll do whatever you want if you let us go. I’ll give you all the money we have. You’ll be drowning in gold coins, what d’ya say?”

“...If we leave the labyrinth, do you promise to turn yourselves into the adventurer’s guild?”

“I’m a man, I’ll maintain my word. Look, I’m dropping my weapons, too. Let go of my hand.”

“...Fine. If you’re lying, you know I’ll shoot magic at you, right?”

“Ah, but I’m not lying.”

I let go of the dwarf’s neck once he threw down his ax and shield. At that moment...

“You idiot! I’ll throttle you!”

“...You’re the idiot here.”

“You’re too slow—GAHA?!”

He stretched his arms out to choke me when I let my guard down. Before that, I shot “Impact” from the leg that was on the dwarf’s stomach. It was light, just like “Air Step,” which also emitted magical power from the feet.

“Did you think that I could only cast magic from my hands? Also, if you’re going to lie, you should at least put some effort into it.”

“Ugh... ahh... you dumb... little...”

“I could say the same thing to you. I told you that I’d unleash my magic if you lied, didn’t I?”

“Stop... GAH?!”

The “Impact” that I fired from my feet was strong enough to crush his bones, pierce through his body, and form cracks in the floor. Despite all that, he still drew shallow breaths. Judging from the amount of blood he was losing, it was only a matter of time.

“Well, thanks for waiting. It’s your turn now.”

“...Please don’t get all full of yourself just because you defeated those two. Now that I don’t have to worry about hitting my allies, I can use my magic to its fullest ability!”

The human waved his arms, and twenty masses of rock rose into the air. Since it was a one-on-one fight, I purposely let him finish his chanting, but couldn’t help but let out a sigh. Seriously... I didn’t know that such magic could be used for murder. What a waste.

“Try to block *this* many rocks at the same time—...”

“Is that all you’ve got?”

“Huh?”

I fired a series of “Magnum” shots from both of my hands, shattering all of the rocks that were previously produced. Even I was stunned at the sight of this, and I put my hand on the human’s stomach and asked quietly, “Did you hit the Silver Wolf with this same type of magic?”

“N-No that’s not tr– GUH?!”

The other two guys that I dealt with seemed like they preferred to chop people up. From the state of Leus’ wounds, I’d say this was my guy. He was dripping with fear as I glared at him and lightly gouged his stomach.

“I’ll ask again. Was it... you?”

“Yes, that’s correct. But he’s still alive. I never intended on killing...”

“You people like to laugh as you take people’s lives, but you’re not prepared to be killed? Calm down. I’ll let loose a blow that brought as much pain as you did to that child. You won’t die, if you’re lucky.”

“Wait– GAH?!”

I wanted to interrogate him later for more information, so I released a certain amount of “Impact” at point-blank range. He was blown back with tremendous force, and rolled near the dragon demi-human before passing out.

There’s only... one left.

I had kept using “Search” to check for a surprise attack, but the last member, the dragon, didn’t move at all, even though his allies were defeated. On the contrary, he seemed as if he liked watching the battle. He even applauded when he saw that I had eliminated all three men.

“Amazing. My friends were no match for you. What the hell are you?”

“I’m human, as you can see. I’m also the teacher of those kids you tried to kill.”

“Hmm... I don’t really care about who you are. Just show me a good fight!”

“Then quit blabbering and come over here.”

“So boring... let’s see who comes out on top!”

The dragon demi-human’s body grew larger, his whole body turned red, and horns grew from his head. His face, which had looked human-like, shifted into a more dragon-looking one as he transformed into a blood-red, bipedal dragon. He didn’t have wings, and oddly enough, only the claws on his right arm extended. He appeared somewhat distorted. Was this transformation similar to Leus’?

“Aha...ahaha...hahahahaha! It’s been a while since I’ve felt like this!”

While he was preparing to attack, the dragon demi-human suddenly swung the claws on his right hand at the passed out human in his party. Blood sprayed everywhere.

“...What are you doing?”

“Huh? Oh, I’m sorry Romios. I just lost control of my body for a bit... oh, you can’t hear me anymore? Then that’s perfect.”

...Looks like he’s gone completely berserk. He seemed to be too powerful: he was losing his ability to reason and moved according to his instincts. The dragon—who was completely unconcerned with the fact that he had disposed of his allies with his own hands—pointed at me and laughed.

“I think you’re fairly strong. However, I’ve experienced and lived through many battles. I’ve fought against strong people like you countless times.”

“What a coincidence. I’ve also survived my share of wars and battlefields.”

“How many? Hahaha, quit lying. I can’t even smell any blood on your hands. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

They’re just memories now, but I fought in nearly fifty battles in my previous life, but it’d be useless explaining that. My scent didn’t reveal anything because I’ve been reincarnated.

“Who cares about that? Let’s get started. Don’t die too easily, okay?”

He jumped, aiming for my torso right away, his claws extended. I quickly jumped backward to avoid him, but when I looked at my stomach, I saw my uniform was slightly torn.

Even though he was twice as tall as me, his movements were faster than the Golden Wolf’s.

“Impressive, I thought my claws would slice through your flesh. But even if you’re skilled at dodging, I’ll still win in the end. What do you think?”

The dragon approached again and swung his claws once more. This time I completely avoided him whilst using “Multitasking” to keep an eye on his movements. Keeping the momentum, I dodged another swing attack and, aiming at his joints, fired “Impact” point-blank range, crushing his right arm. But... he didn’t even flinch. He stretched out his left arm and grabbed me by the stomach.

“Gotcha! I’m gonna beat you to a pulp...”

“Phew!”

I cut off his left arm by swinging my Mithril knife in a flash. At the same time, I kicked him right in the stomach. As soon as that kick landed, I released “Impact” from my foot, so he was blown away, despite the difference in our physiques. I then completely crushed the left arm that had fallen at my feet with “Impact.” He shouldn’t have been able to use either of his arms, but the dragon, who got up again, didn’t seem affected by this turn of events.

“Oh...my left arm? That’s fine. It looks like you’ll notice my wounds soon enough.”

He concentrated his strength and the cut surface around his left arm swelled. Within a few seconds, it grew back to its original state.

“Did you see that? I’ll be able to win because I’m able to regenerate. No matter how many times you cut me, how many times you hit me with magic, I’ll bounce back quickly and return to normal. I’m invincible!”

What’s more, the right arm, which should have been broken, was moving without issue. Everything seemed back to normal, just as he described.

We resumed our fight. I dodged another of his attacks and fired “Magnum.” The dragon didn’t bother dodging “Magnum” and kept up his attacks. Naturally, he was riddled with bullet holes, but they immediately closed up and regenerated. I tried shooting him in the face but that had the same result.

“That’s why it’s useless! C’mon, how long can you dodge my attacks? Unlike me, who can recover time and time again, you can’t dodge forever, right?”

I’m good at dodging, so I could avoid his attacks without a problem now. But it’s just like he said: it was only a matter of time until I got tired.

“Ahaha! What’s the matter? Keep attacking and despairing—UUH?!”

In order to start from square one, I dazzled him with “Light” that I created while visualizing the image of a flashbang grenade. It gave me some time to put some distance between us while the dragon was dizzy.

“Ugh... my feet hurt... Huh? Why are you so far away?”

“Just wanted a change of scenery.”

I stood in front of the passageway corridor and waved at him to provoke him.

“That’s a passageway over there, isn’t it? Isn’t it dumb to go all the way over to such a narrow place?”

“I’ll go ahead and say it: if you chase after me, it’s over for you. Think it through before you make a decision.”

“What the hell... are you trying to provoke me? Okay then. I’m looking forward to this!”

The dragon, who had complete confidence in himself, easily fell for the light

provocation.

After confirming that he wouldn't attack my students, I jumped into the aisle and started running, keeping an appropriate distance from the dragon. Then, I stopped in the middle of the moderately narrow passageway, purposely slowing my pace.

"Would you look at that? I've caught up with you!"

He laughed at me, as I stood in the middle of the hallway, and raised one of his arms... However, it got caught somewhere and halted. Surprised, he swung his other arm but, just like his left one, it got caught midair and halted.

"Huh? What this hell is..."

The dragon fell into the trap I set. If he had been able to see the magic, he'd notice the countless "Strings" that were tangled around his arms, with the tips of them sticking out of the walls in the passageway. His power was tremendous, but this "String" was created in the image of special wires I've used in my previous life. They wouldn't break easily. Incidentally, the actual wire I imagined was less than a millimeter thick, but was able to hold up to a hundred kilograms, truly an excellent material. While he was still upset, I ran around him and wrapped more "String" around his body. Right now, I was like a spider that had ensnared its prey.

"I don't know what this is, but I'll tear it off right away!"

"Go ahead and try."

I not only tied him up, but also fastened down his joints and wrapped his entire body so he couldn't apply any force. He was left hanging in the air, completely immobilized.

"Guh... What is this?! Why can't I move my body?! Damn... I can't even bend my arms!"

"Don't you see... even if you put all your energy into it, you won't be able to move."

Everything must have an end. I didn't think it was entirely possible to regenerate indefinitely.

It would be best to attack him while he's in this state, but since I worked so hard to block his movements, I decided to first uncover the secrets behind his body. I touched the back of his head and cast "Scan." By examining his body using this magic, I could confirm that there were sources of particularly strong magic located in his head and chest. When I stabbed a knife into the dragon's body, it became clear that those presences would emit magical power and regenerate his wounds at the same time.

"...I see. So that's the secret behind your nearly endless regenerative ability."

In the past, I'd learned through making small talk with the headmaster that inside the body of dragons was a crystal called the "Dragon Heart" which contained a mighty power. Thanks to this, dragons possessed enormous power and had a regenerative ability that quickly healed simple wounds. I've never met a member of the dragon race, but from the feel of his body, I believe this was a "Dragon Heart." Furthermore, he appeared to have two of them. The dragon race had high regenerative capabilities with just one "Dragon Heart," yet he had two. This must be the cause of his bizarre healing abilities.

"Shit, get your hands off me! Don't touch me!"

"I'm done with my experiments. Does that hurt a little?"

"Wha-What are... GAH... AHHHH?!"

I poured a vast amount of magical power into his body through my hand that was touching him. He let out a cry that echoed throughout the labyrinth. Unlike the regenerative ability used for treating wounds, if you cast offensive magic, you can simultaneously stimulate all of the body's nerves and inflict unbearable pain. To put it in a simple analogy, it was like being unable to faint while having an electric current continuously flow throughout your body.

After a while, his body transformed back to its original state, but I didn't stop the flow of magical power. When I confirmed that he had stopped regenerating, I ceased the flow and thrust a knife into his body.

"Ha... Ahaha! I already told you that it's useless to try and hurt me, didn't I? Look, the pain from before is going away, and so is the knife wound..."

"I'm not seeing anything go away."

“Wh...at? Why... Why hasn't the bleeding stopped?! And I still feel pain... Why is this happening?!”

I didn't pour all that magic into the dragon's body to make him suffer. I did it to destroy the two “Dragon Hearts” inside his body.

Even if one of them was destroyed, the remaining one would immediately regenerate it, so they had to be destroyed at the same time. I had thought of using “Magnum” to shoot them at the same time, but opted to experiment with using magic for torture.

“No way?! Quit messing around! You took away my power... unforgivable!”

“I do not require your forgiveness. More importantly... aren't you forgetting something?”



I punched the ranting dragon in the face with no hesitation. His body was still strong, despite the transformation being lifted, but I strengthened my fists with “Boost” and managed to hit him hard. I grabbed him by his horns, blood pouring from his mouth, and stared into his eyes as I made my declaration.

“You’re no longer invincible. Now then... are you ready?”

“Sto-Stop it! Don’t... don’t touch me!”

“You’ve had quite a bit of fun murdering all those people. I don’t feel the slightest bit of sympathy for you.”

I could kill him right now, but I need answers first. I needed him to confess to his crimes, tell us the whereabouts of his victims, and the nature of his collusion with Gregory that Professor Will was talking about. Since the passageway wasn’t within earshot of my students, I could ask all of these questions without reservation.

However, before that, there was something else that I needed to do. This was the man who... put Emilia in that state.

I hadn’t confirmed anything, but I had gleaned enough from using “Search” on my way there to figure out who the culprit was. There was no way I could forgive this guy for hurting my cute apprentice, Emilia. Time to let my instincts take over for a bit.

“This is for what you did to Emilia. Try not to break... too soon, okay?”

| Sirius |

After the interrogation, and doling out some appropriate punishment, I returned to the wide room, having accomplished my goal. Incidentally, the dragon was tied up with rope and left a husk of his former self. He didn’t have the will to fight anymore, let alone get up. Not only had his extraordinary regenerative ability disappeared, but his hearts were so extensively damaged that, even if they were to recover, he could never fight properly again. Leaving him alone for a while was no big deal.

On my way to my students, I found Hart and Melulusa, the nobles who had quarreled with the siblings. I checked on them and found they were simply

unconscious. There seemed to be no problems, so I left them alone as well. Besides, using “Search,” I saw that there were many presences headed our way. That must have been arranged by Professor Will, so I leaned the nobles near the wall and left the rest to them.

The two nobles had brought some servants with them but, judging by their corpses, it seemed as though they had sacrificed themselves. I prayed for their repose and quietly left that area.

I also checked on the three people I had defeated. The Golden Wolf was beheaded, and the dwarf was no longer breathing, so they were both dead. The same goes for the human who fell prey to the dragon's claws when he lost control.

In other words, I’ve killed people, but I’m used to it from my previous life, so I don’t feel any guilt. Besides, judging from their behavior and nickname, it is safe to say that this group has murdered tons of people. They deserved to be killed. This was karmic retribution. If you’re going to kill, be prepared to be killed yourself. I taught this to students in my previous life, but not to the students in this life. I’ll have to impart that teaching to them sooner or later. That is, if they still wanted to follow me after seeing how I killed without hesitation.

As for the disposal of the bodies... I should leave it to those who are on their way.

Depending on how you looked at it, it didn’t look like they had a falling out with each other. On top of that, if the dragon ran his mouth about what I had done, then... I’d better make sure he did not talk about me. If anyone found out... well, that’d be a problem for another day. At the very least, I saved those students, so I could negotiate with the headmaster and reach a mutual compromise.

After finishing up everything I could do at the moment, I returned to my apprentices.

“Lord Sirius!”

“Sir Sirius!”

When I returned to them, I was greeted by Emilia, who was leaning her upper half against the wall, and Lise, who was wiping up Leus' blood with a towel. They both looked relieved once they saw me. I nodded my head and smiled back at them.

"Lord Sirius, I'm so glad you're not hurt..."

"Yeah, it's all over. How's Leus doing?"

"He's unconscious, but his breathing is normal. I think he'll be fine if he gets some rest."

Just in case, I touched Leus to make my diagnosis, but found that his cracked bones were mostly healed. Lise is a genius for being able to do so much with so little magic.

"Yes, that's what I think, too. Let's hurry up and get out of the labyrinth. Lise, can you walk?"

"Yes, I can walk."

Lise was struggling due to mana depletion, but Emilia couldn't walk properly right now. After checking on Lise, who stood up despite her lack of balance, I bent down in front of Emilia and turned my back to her.

"C'mon Emilia, get on my back."

"...Yes, sir."

I secured Emilia, who happily climbed on my back. I used "String" to prevent her from falling off. I held Leus close to my chest and started walking. If I returned from the passageway I had come from, I'd likely bump into the people heading this way, so I opted to go back through another passageway.

"Sir Sirius, are you going to leave Hart and Melulusa behind?"

"The teachers sent more people this way, so they'll be fine. Let's run away before we're found out."

"Why do we have to run away? Shouldn't we be under their protection, too?"

"I'll explain more as we head back. Anyways, we saw the murderers and managed to escape, even though we were left in tatters... let's go with that

story.”

“O-Okay... Got it.”

Lise nodded in confusion at my serious expression. Then, as we were making our exit from the labyrinth, I told her the reason for our escape. My magic and skills were abnormal in this world, and I would be seen as quite powerful if people saw me use them. If it became widely known, then it could attract some dumb nobles who would target not only me but also the siblings, as well as Noel and the others. I gave several reasons, but Lise, who’s known me for two years, understood.

“If anyone catches wind of this and it becomes a big deal, I might not be able to spend as much time with you guys.”

“...That’s right. I also... love spending time with the three of you.”

The conversation ended, and we walked down the passageway in silence. I checked on the disciples along the way. Leus was still unconscious, and Lise was okay and walking, slowly but surely. Emilia, still on my back, occasionally rubbed her cheek against my neck. It tickled a little. I kept everyone’s physical condition in mind, and when we returned to the fifth floor, Lise stopped and looked at Emilia.

“...Um, I feel a bit better now. Shall I take Emilia?”

“No... I want to feel her weight. It reminds me that these two are still alive.”

Since my reincarnation in this world... that was the first time I lost my temper. Without hesitation, I used “Multitasking,” and the other personality I had developed to defeat my master fought my opponent with murderous intent... and ended up killing them. Although I was used to it from my previous life’s experience, killing was never a pleasant thing to do.

At times like this... being in contact with my students was calming. Hearing their breath and heartbeat next to me, in my arms and on my back, gave me a deep sense of relief from the bottom of my heart, and I was glad they were alive.

By the way, I wished Emilia would quit nibbling on my shoulder so much. I was smiling at her, doing my best to spoil her, when I suddenly felt a tug on my

sleeve. I turned to find Lise staring at me with a somewhat pensive look on her face.

“Sir Sirius... How can you stay so strong? They were terrible people, but what you did to them...”

“Ah... yes, I killed them.”

“...I knew it.”

“Are you scared of me?”

“I don’t know. You did it to save us... and I should feel grateful to you... I don’t know how to feel.”

Gripping my sleeve, Lise was conflicted. I had my reasons, but regardless, murder was unacceptable. While I was thinking of what to say, Emilia—who was nibbling on my shoulder—reached out and put her hand on Lise’s shoulder.

“Lise... There’s no need to overthink things. After all, your thinking aligns with Lord Sirius’.”

“That can’t be... true! I’m a coward who, even in a crucial situation where lives are at stake, can’t kill anybody.”

Then Lise let out a shout as if to vent for her mistakes. She said she was going to fight, but when she came face-to-face with the dragon, she hesitated. Then she confessed that the dragon hurt Emilia because of her actions.

“That’s why... I’m nothing like Sir Sirius. I’m just a regular... coward.”

“Then why didn’t you run away? You were scared, you thought you were going to be killed, so why did you say you’d stay and fight for us?”

“T-that’s because... You and Leus are my precious friends. You’re like... my family to me.”

“Yes, that’s how we feel, too. Lord Sirius, if we all went up against a powerful enemy and we told you to run away... what would you do?”

“There’s no way I’d run away. We’d decide on either fighting together or running away together.”

“There... “together.” Lord Sirius and you share the same train of thought.”

“But...”

“That’s enough, Lise. Besides, there’s nothing wrong with being a coward. If anything, if you’re easily capable of killing someone, that’s even worse.”

I’d be devastated if Lise grew capable of killing people without hesitation in the future. She was the type of girl who’s best suited for healing people, eating delicious food, and laughing. I honestly didn’t want her kind heart to change.

“I care about your lives more than theirs. Because they were murderers who enjoyed killing, I took their lives without hesitation. If something like this is unforgivable for you, I don’t mind if you no longer wish to be my apprentice. The decision is yours, Lise.”

“I... don’t want that. I like being around all of you too much. I never want to leave. However, if we’re ever in a similar situation again, then I wonder if I’ll be able to act without hesitation... it worries me...”

I see... it’s not that she was scared of me, Lise just couldn’t forgive herself for acting cowardly. Maybe I looked dazzling to her for acting without reservations, even when it came to killing someone.

“Lise, you must walk your own path. Don’t think about imitating me.”

“Then... what should I do?”

“That’s not up to me or anybody else to decide. It’s okay to ask for advice, but you must search for the answers yourself. If you do that, then no matter what happens, you’ll be able to walk down a straight and steady path.”

“I wonder if... I’m able to do so?”

“You are. So from now on, get into trouble and get lost along the way a lot. Find your own way of living. Even if you fail, we’ll have your back.”

“...Thank you.”

Then she pressed her face against my shoulder and quietly wept. If I could, I would have let her cry on my chest, but it was impossible with the siblings clinging to me. I wanted to leave the labyrinth as soon as we could, but decided to wait a bit until Lise calmed down.

“Munch munch nom nom nom~”

“Emilia... stop nibbling on my shoulder.”

“Hehe, it was so scary, I wanna spoil you.”

For the Silver Wolves, biting someone’s shoulder was their way of expressing affection. The stronger the bite, the deeper the affection. At this rate, my shoulder might get bitten off someday. Perhaps I shouldn’t let Emilia ride on my back anymore.

We finally left the labyrinth, but the area in front of it was crowded with people. Most were armed, and there were ropes at the entrances to prohibit entry, as well as guards keeping watch. We came out in the middle of such a crowd, so naturally, the place erupted in an uproar.

“Are you okay, Sirius?”

I was relieved to see Professor Magna appear from the crowd as I was looking around. This would save me a lot of extra trouble.

“Yes, we somehow managed to come back. But before I explain more, I’d like to have Emilia and Leus taken somewhere for treatment...”

“They sustained injuries, didn’t they? Understood, let’s take them to the school infirmary. Someone, please get them some stretchers.”

A few other teachers and adventurers arrived at the direction of Professor Magna and carried Leus off on a stretcher. I was going to have Emilia carried away next, but she was clinging onto my neck and refused to come down.

“Emilia, it’s time to get off.”

“Just a little longer...”

“No. You’re injured, you need to rest.”

“...Okay.”

I managed to get her off my back and put her on a stretcher. I patted her head as she gave me a pitiful look.

“I’ll drop by and visit you later. Get some rest.”

“...I’ll be waiting for you.”

“Lise, I have to go and explain the situation. Could you accompany Emilia?”

“Yes. I can. For some reason, I’d feel uneasy if I let Emilia out of my sight right now...”

She wasn’t injured, but Lise must’ve been worn out. I let out a deep breath as I watched Lise follow the siblings on foot with a pained look on her face as they were carried away. That should be the end of that...

“I’ve never seen you spoil Emilia so much before.”

“Haha... please pretend you didn’t see anything.”

“You must’ve had a rough time, so I’ll keep it to myself for now. I understand you must be tired, but do you mind explaining what happened?”

“Not at all. After I left... I immediately went to the labyrinth and found the injured students in front of a bloody dragon down on the tenth floor.”

I explained to Professor Magna the false story I had made up while leaving the labyrinth. After arriving, the Fresh-blooded Dragons broke up, and the dragon leader had transformed and was running amok. Then, perhaps as a result of the transformation and losing control of himself, he killed his companions. But then he started screaming, going on a rampage, and collapsed after a while. He stopped moving, so I had him restrained and left him in the passageway.

“Wow, that sounds dangerous. I know you’re extraordinary, but please refrain from doing something like this again.”

“I sincerely apologize. Afterward, I returned with my disciples, who survived. The two nobles they were originally up against were also safe. However, considering Leus’ injuries, I figured I should hurry back. I left them in the passageway on the tenth floor.”

“It looks like the energetic Leus is unconscious. You can leave the rescue of the other two to the team we sent to the labyrinth. Hart and his friend are already safe and sound outside, but the other two are...”

“Just as I imagined. The two servants were already...”

“...Is that so? I’m glad that the two nobles are safe, but I’m very sorry for the students who were sacrificed. I’m sorry to ask this of you, but could you please

go to the school and tell Professor Will... the headmaster? I believe he's waiting for you in his office."

"That's no problem at all. However, is it really okay for me to leave now?"

"Yes, I'm waiting on some more insider information, so leave the rest to me."

Professor Magna turned her back to me and gave instructions to the people in the surrounding area. I headed to the school to follow after my students. When I returned to the school, I first stopped by the headmaster's office, as Professor Magna instructed.

Unlike Professor Magna's office, the two swinging, high-class doors were strangely intimidating. I met and talked with Professor Will multiple times, but this was my first time going inside his office. What jumped out to me as I entered was the sight of Lordvel sitting at a large desk. Not the usual cake-loving Professor Will, but the dignified Lordvel who acted as the headmaster of the school. I couldn't sense any other presence in the area, so I assumed it was just the two of us in the room.

"First of all, I'm glad you're safe, Sirius. Ah, let's have some tea before we talk. Please sit and wait on the sofa over there."

The headmaster's office was a moderately splendid structure, featuring a vast collection of books, as well as a small cooking table at the end of the room. As I sat and waited on the luxurious sofa as he'd instructed, the headmaster handed me a cup of tea that he had brewed himself.

"It's not as good as Professor Magna's, but it'll do."

I hadn't drank anything at all since leaving, so I was extremely grateful for the opportunity to do so.

"It's delicious. So, about why you called me here..."

"Yes. Please give me a detailed explanation of what happened in the labyrinth."

Once I finished telling him what I had told Professor Magna, the headmaster turned his gaze to me with a serious look.

"According to my research, it's likely that the one who led the murderers to

ElySION was Gregory. I'm very sorry that someone working for me ended up hurting your students."

"...Where's Gregory?"

"He hasn't come to school for a few days now. I've already sent someone to his house. Leave the rest to us."

"Is it really okay for me to do that?"

"Even if he did such a terrible thing, he's still a noble. If you made one wrong move, there's a risk that I may not be able to protect you. Please bear with me here."

"...Understood."

I interrogated the dragon and already knew that Gregory was the main perpetrator behind this. I was planning on sneaking into his house tonight, but if the principal was already involved, I should hold off. Besides... the headmaster seemed extremely angry. I chose to concede because I felt intimidated. The anger he showed during our first interview made him seem cheerful in comparison to what I saw before me.

"We must interrogate the surviving dragon demi-human, and gather evidence to prove Gregory's guilt no matter what. He's not a teacher, he's a criminal."

The man who was teaching students turned into a criminal. He had to be the stupidest person in the world to recruit such monsters.

"That's all I can tell you at the moment. If anything happens, I'll let you know. Please, get some rest."

"Understood. I'll go check on my students, and then return to Diamond Manor."

With one final bow, I exited the headmaster's office. I was told that the sibling's treatment had already finished and they were taken to separate rooms, so I visited Emilia's room first.

"Oh hi... Sir Sirius."

I knocked on the door and Lise appeared. She broke out into a wide smile once she saw it was me.

“I came to check on Emilia. Is it okay for me to come in?”

“Yes, it’s fine. Emilia, Sir Sirius is here.”

“Really?!”

Emilia’s reply was strong, so it seemed like she had mostly recovered. When I entered the room, Emilia, who had been sitting upright on the bed, greeted me with a big smile.

“How are you feeling?”

“I’m a bit dizzy, but other than that, I’m fine.”

“...Alright. You look a lot better now. Still, don’t overdo it. Rest here for today, okay?”

“Huh?! But I haven’t finished cleaning Diamond Manor. Besides, I need to take care of you, Lord Sirius...”

The urgency in Emilia’s voice matched the expression on her face that one would expect to see if the world was about to end. When I stroked her head, though, her expression softened.

“You can start cleaning and taking care of me tomorrow... okay? Please don’t worry about me.”

“...Okay.”

Emilia seemed reluctant, but acquiesced all the same. Seriously... she acts like she’s my mother sometimes. As I was taken aback by her subservience, Lise opened the door and was about to leave the room.

“Umm, I’m gonna go check on Leus.”

I appreciated her being considerate, but didn’t think that her suggestive delivery with a smile was necessary. Professor Magna must have arranged for us to have a private room, so Emilia and I were alone together. It was already late in the evening, so there weren’t a lot of visitors coming to see her. I looked into Emilia’s eyes and patted her head.

“Now then, since Lise is gone, is there anything you’d like to say to me?”

“...Lord Sirius!”

Her expression twisted and she leapt into my chest, bursting into tears.

“I was so scared... I was so scared! Leus was... just like my mother... he stood in front of us... I didn’t want someone else in my life to leave... Wahhh...”

Losing her parents right before her eyes was still an unhealed wound in Emilia’s heart. This time... she ended up in a situation that reminded her of those wounds. She really wanted to cry, but desperately continued to endure, to survive, and keep Leus and Lise calm. Emilia was doting on me because she was trying to hide those feelings. When I was alone with her, though, everything she kept bottled up came rushing out. Rather, I opened up that bottle because I knew it’d be worse to keep it locked away.

“I...thought I’d never see you again...but I needed to support them! I’m so glad Leus is okay! I’m so glad Lise is okay! I’m so glad that you... patted me on the head again...”

Emilia’s words were spat out with a mess of emotions... but that was okay. It was just the two of us, so she didn’t have to put on a brave face anymore. I wanted her to let all her emotions out. I hugged Emilia and continued to stroke her head.

“You did great. It’s thanks to your support that both of them are safe.”

“But... I was knocked out and couldn’t do anything. Leus was trying his best to protect us, but all I could do was watch...”

“You protected Lise, didn’t you? Besides, it’s enough that everyone made it back safely.”

“Lord Sirius... *sniff*”

Come to think of it, I’ve comforted Emilia in this way before. At that time, Emilia was just crying normally... this time it was different.

After crying her eyes out, she raised her head, wiped her tears, and looked at me with a serious expression.

“Never again. I’ll never be put in such a shameful situation again. In order to protect my loved ones like you do... I must become stronger!”

“...Even if it’s tough?”

“Yes. I can’t stand not being able to do anything but watch...”

...You’re growing to be a wonderful woman, Emilia. With that powerful gaze and the determination behind it, you’ll become even stronger.

“Hearing those words makes me happy as a teacher. I won’t be satisfied unless I give you some kind of reward.”

“Really? If so, I do have one request...”

“What is it? Say whatever you’d like.”

“Can we stay like this... just a little longer?”

“Ah, sure.”

I obliged her request and hugged her back. Emilia snuggled up against me happily. After a while, she peacefully fell asleep, and I tucked her into bed and silently left the room. Then I headed to Leus’ room, just as Lise was coming out.

“Oh, Sir Sirius. Is Emilia okay?”

“She finally calmed down and just fell asleep. How’s Leus?”

“He’s awake now. He’s excited for you to visit him.”

“I see. I’d better show my face, then.”

I put my hand on the door and when I looked to my side, I saw that Lise had a strange expression on her face.

“What’s wrong, Lise? Did something happen?”

Ah, no... I thought Leus was a bit off when I saw him earlier. He looked energetic, but he had an air of sadness about him... he seemed different than usual.”

Somehow, I had a feeling I knew why. I was more surprised that Lise was aware of Leus’ subtle changes. What’s more, it was surprising to see that Leus was close enough with Lise to be so open with her.

“It’s fine, I’ll take care of it.”

“Yeah, I imagine it’s easier for boys to talk to each other about these sorts of things.”

“Even so, you two really get along well. He’s friendly with everybody, but there are only a few people he truly cares about. You’re one of them, Lise.”

The only ones Leus is attached to are Emilia, Noel, Di, and me. Now, however, it seems that there’s been an addition to that list.

“Oh really? Hehe, that makes me happy.”

“Yup. I hope you continue to support him with Emilia. Now then, I’m off to see Leus.”

“Please cheer him up.”

After parting with Lise, I knocked on the door and heard Leus’ reply. He seemed to know it was me, even through the door. I entered the infirmary room to see Leus lying on the bed, looking happy as ever.

“Big bro! You’re here!”

He was lying in bed with his upper body upright. Bandages were wrapped around his chest and arms, but he appeared to be in good health. He stared at me intently as I entered the room, his eyes shining.

“How are your injuries?”

“I’ll heal in no time. More importantly, you’re amazing, big bro! We couldn’t even get our hands on the guys you easily beat up!”

“But I killed two of them, even though they were murderers. Aren’t you scared?”

“No way. You did it to protect us. I might respect you, but I’m not afraid of you!”

He’s always been a very straightforward student. His frank words came out effortlessly and made me feel at ease. Just like Lise said, I detected a hint of darkness in Leus’ smile.

“I... learned a lot about how difficult it is to protect someone in a fight. Even though it’s such a hard thing to do, you’ve always had our backs.”

“That’s my responsibility as your teacher.”

“That’s why, big bro... I’ll definitely get strong enough to stand shoulder to

shoulder alongside you! Losing to those guys was so frustrating, but I learned a lot.”

“Hmm... could you tell me what you’ve been studying?”

“Oh!”

Up until a few minutes ago, he was reflecting on the mistakes he made today. He reported to me methodically how, when he jumped forward to protect Emilia and Lise, he only wielded his sword with brute force because of the power flowing through him after the transformation. But, as he continued to inform me, his energy had started to wane. Finally, he broke his gaze away from me and looked out the window.

“Hey... Big Bro. The girls are safe, I’m alive, and to top it all off, I’ve gotten to see how awesome you are. I’ve lost so many times to you and Grandpa Liore, I didn’t think I’d get disappointed by losing to someone else. But still...”

Leus gritted his teeth and tried to keep his emotions in check. However, he couldn’t suppress the overflowing tears that fell onto the bed.

“Why... why do I feel so frustrated? Have I lost my mind?”

“No, you haven’t. You’re having a natural reaction as a man.”

“But, it’s more frustrating than not being able to protect my sister. I shouldn’t be comparing these things but... I think it’d be more frustrating if I lost altogether, y’know?”

I patted Leus, who couldn’t stop crying, on the head. He lost the fight, but the enemies were taken down, and everybody survived. If we only looked at the result, we could say we won. Leus, though, wasn’t satisfied with such an outcome.

“Do you truly want to protect Emilia and Lise?”

“Of course! I’m really glad those two are safe and sound.”

“Then, you’re fine. You won’t have to choose one over the other. Don’t forget these feelings of frustration. They’ll make you stronger.”

“...Will it be okay?”

On the outside, he seems more frustrated than his sister, but that's probably because Emilia and Lise escaped without any lingering injuries.

"No matter what, you'll never forget your desire to protect Emilia and the others. Leus, why did you want to become stronger? Enlighten me, again."

"To protect my sister!"

"Exactly. So heal up and get stronger. As long as you keep wishing for that, I'll do my best to train you."

"Will do!"

Then, after wiping away his tears, Leus wore a clear smile on his face. He had the eyes of a man who's overcome a lot and who's got a stronger will than ever before. *That's right... Leus, you're a strong kid. Someday you'll surpass old man Liola... and then, even me.* I looked forward to watching Leus grow up.

I left his room, sat down on a chair in the corridor, and exhaled. I could have lost my students from this incident if I didn't give it my all. I was so glad they were safe.

Now that they've faced defeat, they'll grow to be even stronger. Their strength, and the fact that they didn't seem to fall apart from fear, has been very encouraging.

However... they were quite exhausted. My body also felt fatigued from the hours I had spent maintaining "Boost." I had made plans for the rest of the day, so I'll be taking a short break before heading back... I leaned against the back of my chair and quietly closed my eyes.

| Lise |

I parted with Sir Sirius and went to check on Emilia, but... she was fast asleep. She occasionally giggled and muttered Sir Sirius' name in her sleep. What the heck was she dreaming about? I couldn't help but shake my head.

After killing some time, I left her infirmary room and headed to Leus' room in search of Sirius. Leus was somewhat listless, but I thought that Sir Sirius would look after him well. I was walking around and thinking it was about time they wrapped up their conversation when I saw Sir Sirius sitting in a chair in front of

the room.

“Sir...Sirius?”

Was he by chance... asleep? What a strange sight. I'd known him for two years, but had never seen him look so defenseless. But... it was only natural. He ran with all his might to come and save us, then fought those incredibly strong guys. It was scary to see him take their lives so calmly, but Emilia explained it was due how furious he was that they were hurt. That's how important we were to him. Compared to Emilia, I hadn't known him for all that long, so she understood. I just knew he wasn't the type of person who liked murdering, unlike the other guys. That's why...

“I'm not scared of you, Sir Sirius.”

That's all.

“Mmn... Is that you Lise?”

“Ah, I'm sorry. Did I wake you?”

I got too close to him. I shouldn't have done that when he was trying to get some rest.

“No, I woke up on my own. If it wasn't for you, I would've woken up faster.”

“If it wasn't for me?”

“Since it's you, I know there's no need to be cautious.”

I... was very happy to hear those words. But still, Sir Sirius was such a strange person. He was a year younger than me, but extremely powerful, and knowledgeable about so many things... I couldn't help but respect him. He had a well-trained body, although it was still small compared to adults.

“Emilia and Leus are staying here tonight, and I'll be heading back to Diamond Manor soon. What are you gonna do, Lise?”

“I'll watch over those two for a little longer, then head back to the student dorms.”

“I see. I'm sorry, but I'm tired, so I'll head back now.”

Wow... Sir Sirius' back looked so broad as he walked away. It was normal-sized

for a boy of his age... but the more I got to know him, the broader it seemed, and the more reliable I thought he'd be. I understood why Emilia and Leus loved and respected him like a parent. Like a parent... huh.

"Yes, you must be tired, father."

"...Since when am I your dad?"

"Ah?! Um, well that was... just a joke!" Ah,ahaha..."

"Well, I think having a child like you would be a blessing. See you tomorrow."

"Okay. See you... tomorrow."

I let out a deep sigh once he smiled cheerfully and turned the other way. Oh geez... I let my guard down. Now that I'd seen his back up close, I thought it was broader than all of the other teachers and adults. He seemed to be the type that would be... a dad you could depend on. He was so different from my real father, who barely spoke to me and never faced me.

"I hate... keeping secrets."

Soon would come the time to tell them about the real me. But if I told them, the comfy atmosphere would change... I was scared. Even so, I didn't want to hide anything from them.

It's okay... Compared to what we went through today, this is nothing. I'm sure they'll accept me for who I am and keep treating me the same way... I've made up my mind. Even if I regret it, I want to walk straight ahead on this path, of my own free will.

| Sirius |

The next morning, after the incident in the labyrinth involving the murderers, I woke up alone... or not.

"Good morning, Lord Sirius."

I thought she'd at least have taken it easy today, but... Emilia was acting as she normally did. No, if anything, she seemed to have powered up.

"I've prepared your change of clothes here. And here's a wet towel to fix your bedhead. I've already made breakfast, so if you want to eat in bed, I can bring it

to you.”

She completed all of the morning preparations by the time I’d woken up. I checked how high the sun was in the sky and it appeared that it was my usual wake-up time.

“Emilia... When did you get here?”

“Just a little while ago. You hugged me yesterday and that made me so happy that I slept until this morning. Thanks to that, I was able to get enough rest and am in perfect physical condition.”

Considering that all of the housework was done... did she get here an hour ago?

She was blushing and wriggling around with happiness. As she said, she looked fine, her skin was shiny and, judging by the way she was moving around, there wasn’t anything particularly wrong with her. When I beckoned her over to examine her just in case, Emilia appeared right in front of me in a momentary blur. I wished she wouldn’t cover such a short distance at full speed.

“You wanted to see me?”

I called her over like I normally would, but she was wagging her tail with a big smile on her face, waiting on my word. I reached out my hand and Emilia, sensing it, bowed her head. I put my hand on her head and activated “Scan.”

“There doesn’t seem to be anything wrong.”

“Of course! I could do anything now.”

She was as happy as could be and kept grinning and wagging her tail. Afterwards, we ate breakfast, which Emilia had prepared, in the living room. I was worried she would go all out with a lavish spread, so I was relieved to see it was just an ordinary meal.

Seeing as Emilia was still recovering, we decided to skip out on our morning training and took our time eating breakfast. After a while, though, Lise burst in impatiently.

“Hah... hah... You’re already here, I see.”

“Good mor— wait, no! Why did you sneak out of the infirmary?! I was shocked

to find you missing when I visited earlier this morning.”

“My place is by Lord Sirius’ side.”

“That’s not the problem! I fooled the healer, but don’t act so selfishly! Still, I’m glad you’re feeling better.”

Lise had her head in her hands but soon returned to her kind countenance. Emilia had finished preparing everything for breakfast while they were arguing. Lise sat down in a chair that had become her usual spot for the past two years and held her hands together. She’s learned to join her palms together and use chopsticks at will, just like the rest of us.

“This looks so yummy. Thanks for the meal!”

Lise ate so elegantly. She never opened her mouth too wide, and never slurped when eating her soup. However, she could easily eat as much as Leus, who was a big eater in his own right. She ate elegantly, and at a tremendous speed. It wasn’t unusual for a chunk of steak to disappear before we even realized it was gone. Leus worked out all the time, which was why he didn’t gain weight, but it was a mystery to me where all the food was going in Lise’s case.

“Um... you’re worrying me by staring at me like that.”

“Oh, sorry. I was just thinking how you eat so well.”

“That’s because... the food is so good.”

“Thanks. That makes cooking worth it.”

Once I resumed eating, I heard a noise coming from our entrance, and once again heard the living room door open.

“Big bro, big sis, good mor– ouch ouch ouch!”

So you too, Leus.

Leus walked in covered in bandages from head to toe. He grabbed his chest in pain as soon as he walked in. Couldn’t those siblings be a little more civil?

“Hey, Leus! You should be in the infirmary, sleeping!”

“I can’t help but come here, no matter what you say, Emilia.”

“I already said that it’s boring all day and the food is terrible.”

“Ugh, geez, I guess it can’t be helped. Emilia, I’m sorry but...”

“Yes, I’ll prepare it right away.”

That was how Leus also arrived at the table and joined us for breakfast. In no time at all, he had eaten enough for two people and was still hungry. He’d lost a lot of blood yesterday, so maybe his body was craving nutrition.

“Refill please, sis!”

“Please refill mine as well.”

“Hehe, okay. Would you like some more, Lord Sirius?”

“Sure, if you don’t mind.”

And just like that... our daily life resumed. I reflected on these normal, but happy, days as I ate my meal from Emilia.

We went to school, sat down in our chairs, and were immediately swarmed by our classmates. This usually happened, but today it felt different.

“Hey hey, so you were a part of what went down yesterday, weren’t you? What happened in the labyrinth?”

“Big bro?! What’s with your injuries?! Who did that to you?”

“What the hell happened to you? Don’t you think the golems went too hard on you?”

Rumors of yesterday’s incident must have spread across the school, and my classmates were asking all sorts of questions about it. The word was that something had happened in the labyrinth and that my students and I were involved. However, the most important part, the fact that the Fresh-blooded Dragons were there, wasn’t made public yet. The headmaster instructed me not to give any details until he made an official announcement, and I also informed my students of the same.

After a while, a flustered Mark burst into the classroom, but as soon as he saw us, he looked relieved.

“Good morning, Sirius. I heard as I was coming to class that you were involved with some sort of incident... I’m glad you’re okay.”

“Good morning, Mark. A lot happened, but as you can see, we’re safe, so please don’t worry.”

As I continued with Mark— who had since calmed down— there was an audible thump as the door of the classroom was opened. It was too early for Professor Magna to arrive, so I turned my head and saw...

“Excuse me.”

“Pardon us.”

The nobles who survived the murders, Hart and Melulusa, appeared. According to the rumor mill, they were also victims, so the classroom went as silent as still water when they entered. Despite their circumstances, the two walked in with their heads held high as they stood in front of the siblings, striking poses, similar to the ones they held the first time they had confronted them.

“Leus Silverion. I have something to tell you today.”

“Emilia Silverion. I’d like to make a declaration.”

There was a strange tension in the air as the two nobles... faced the siblings and quietly bowed their heads.

“My memory’s fuzzy, but you saved us. Thank you.”

“Emilia. I was saved by your magic. I came here to offer you my thanks.”

“Uhhmm...”

Those two, who had been so pompous and bossy, actually thanked them with the dignity befitting of a noble. The atmosphere was clearly different from that of yesterday. The siblings, unable to hide their confusion, could only respond curtly.

“There, I thanked you. Now, if you’ll excuse me.”

“If possible, I’d like you to hold back your magic a bit. Good day to you.”

Having finished their business, the two left the classroom with the same air of dignity with which they came. Then, as the classroom was still silent, Leus turned and muttered to me.

“Hey... what just happened?”

“It’s just as they said. Those two merely came to thank you. They’re nobles: they properly acknowledge their debts.”

“I don’t know how to feel.”

“It’s complicated, but there’s one thing I can say. You guys didn’t do anything wrong... That’s all.”

I patted his head and the siblings smiled in understanding. As the classroom regained its previous liveliness, Professor Magna arrived. It was time for class to begin.

“Good morning. I have something to tell you all right away, so please settle down.”

Professor Magna scanned the room and, once she saw that we had quieted down, began to speak. Perhaps it was merely my imagination, but I could have sworn she made eye contact with me.

“I’m sure you’re all well aware of what happened yesterday. I’ll provide more details about it in the auditorium this afternoon. Please refrain from spreading unconfirmed rumors. Now, Sirius.”

“Yes?”

“The headmaster would like further information about what happened in the labyrinth. Please head to his office right away.”

When I was suddenly singled out by name, the siblings immediately rose from their seats and objected.

“Professor Magna! Why should only Lord Sirius go?”

“That’s right! He should be asking us, the victims, too!”

“Ca-Calm down you two!”

“It’s natural for you to want to object, but you two are Sirius’s servants. Therefore, Sirius, who’s in charge, should be the one to explain the situation.”

Professor Magna made a good point, and the siblings sat back down in their chairs. But then they turned and gave me their saddest puppy dog eyes.

“...Why are you looking at me like that? We’re just going to have a normal conversation, okay?”

“Yeah, but still. I have a bad feeling about it.”

“Me too. If anything happens, let us know. Even if it’s during class time.”

“It’s quite troublesome that you declared your intention to leave so openly...”

I left the classroom by myself, walking behind Professor Magna, who was wryly smiling at the siblings. Afterwards, I went to the headmaster’s office.

The headmaster looked very different compared to yesterday. Acting as the head of the school yesterday, he appeared very serious, but today he seemed tenser than usual. It felt like... a fight could break out any second.

“It’s nice to see you again. Alright, please sit on the sofa over there.”

“...If you’ll excuse me.”

He didn’t say anything as I sat down on the sofa, per his recommendation. The headmaster sat across from me. However...We didn’t strike up a conversation— opting instead to stare at each other in silence. After a heavy silence, he finally opened his mouth and confronted me.

“...I’ll cut straight to the chase. I called you in because I had something to ask you about your report yesterday, Sirius.”

“You wanted to... ask me something?”

“Let’s save that for later. First, let’s recap: according to those who investigated the labyrinth yesterday, three members of the Fresh-blooded Dragon party were found dead, unfortunately. However, the leader, the dragon named Goraon, was captured.”

“So you’re saying you finished interrogating him?”

“Exactly. Thinking he’d act violently, I took him to the school’s arena and interrogated him to gain information.”

The headmaster was present during the interrogation process, and explained everything to me. He said that the teachers and adventurers who accompanied him from the labyrinth to the arena spoke with Goraon multiple times, but were

unable to converse with him at all. That's because...

"I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry..."

Staring into the void, he wouldn't respond to any of their questions; he just held his head and continued to frantically apologize.

"He's been like this ever since we found him in the labyrinth. He just apologizes and refuses to converse, no matter what I ask."

"This is a major problem. There were lots of things I wanted to ask about..."

"Isn't there any magic you can do to fix this, Lordvel?"

"Lord... vel? Are you Lordvel?!"

Once Goraon learned that Lordvel was right in front of him, he panicked and tried to cower away from him. Since he was completely bound, however, he just rolled around uselessly.

"...I am Lordvel. Why do you ask?"

"I won't answer any questions other than the ones you ask... gah, I'll tell you anything, so ask away!"

"Wha-What's this? Did you just submit to Lordvel's authority?"

"Hmmm... I don't know exactly what's going on but I won't mind if you answer a few questions. Firstly..."

It was strange how he had answered each question honestly. He began by talking about being in cahoots with Gregory, how many people he'd killed since coming to town, what he did with their corpses, his personal history, and his abilities. He even confessed to other trivial matters, such as his favorite things, even though they didn't ask. He kept on rambling desperately in order to get everything out.

"Okay, that's enough. You don't have to say anything further."

"That's all you want to hear?! Really... that's it?"

"Ye-Yes. Why the hell are you so worried?"

"Ah, that's a relief. I can finally..."

And then Goraon appeared to have passed away.

“Did he just die?”

“It would’ve been a pain if he escaped either before or after we handed him off to the adventurer’s guild. We originally intended on killing him in “self-defense,” which is why we took him to the arena. We heard the evidence, and as a murderer of his caliber, all we had to do was turn in his head.”

That sounded garish, but since he was a notorious murderer, I had a feeling that the result would be the same if they had handed him off to the adventurer’s guild. There wasn’t any bounty on him, so the headmaster took advantage of his authority to deal with Goraon quickly. As the headmaster of a school, he could tolerate some evil.

“But... I wasn’t the one to finish the job. After he finished his speech, his head suddenly exploded and he died.”

“His head exploded? Did you hit him with some kind of magic?”

“I didn’t do anything. As soon as he screamed, a bullet burst from his neck and he was turned into a lump of meat.”

“What a terrible measure.”

I furrowed my brow and the headmaster suddenly shot me a murderous glare.

“Let’s get straight to the point. Sirius... What did you do?”

“What did... I do?”

“Let me tell you what I’ve deduced through experience and intuition. The one who annihilated the other Fresh-blooded Dragons and Goraon was... you.”

...So he figured it out, after all.

Yesterday, after Lise and I parted, I didn’t return to Diamond Manor. Instead, I went to see how Goraon was being handled. When Goraon, who was secured, was brought to the arena, I made sure he told everything to the headmaster and then... I shot him from a distant hill using my long-range sniping magic, “Snipe.” I took care of him for the exact same reasons as the headmaster had intended. However, I wanted to kill him myself.

I couldn't tell if he sensed it via the magic's movement or by its mysterious nature, but I activated "Multitasking" in response to the killing intent emanating from the school principal.

"...What are you talking about?"

My first plan of action is to buy time. I can probably bluff my way out of this. I'm prepared to activate "Boost" in case of emergency, though. At the same time, I used "Search" to confirm the location of my students.

"This room's walls contain a special ore which absorbs sound. It's essentially soundproof."

"...In other words, secret conversations and light battles won't be heard?"

I'd activate "Light" while he was busy chanting, then leave once he was dizzy. Next, I'd use "Call" to reach the disciples, run to the classroom, secure them, and escape from the school.

"That's right. I have another question for you: why did you come to this school? If you end up harming someone, I'll have to use force on you."

"In order to gain knowledge and develop myself before registering as an adventurer. Also, I came here to train and protect my disciples."

Lordvel's magic levels were rising. "Impact" seemed ineffective against him, so I chose and imagined "Magnum" as a mock bullet. No other enemies were in the surrounding area. The shortest escape route... secured. All preparations... completed.

"There's no mistake in those words, I presume?"

"There aren't."

I confidently stated those words, and the headmaster and I stared at one another in silence. I couldn't turn away. I thought the headmaster should see my weak spots and hear my sincerity, above all else. Then... our several-minute-long standoff ended and his murderous intent disappeared.

"You're really something else. It looks like you're the culprit."

"...That's right. I'm the one who took out the murderers. Even so, it's rude of you to test your theory with such bloodthirsty intent."

I mulled it over and... decided to go with the truth. It'd be tough to keep deceiving him. Even though we've known each other for a short amount of time, I understood that the headmaster would be fine as long as he wasn't antagonized. If I fought with him, the entire school would've collapsed. Quietly relieved, I deactivated "Multitasking."

Besides... I've grown attached to this school and town over the past two years. I was glad I didn't have to skip town and abandon everyone, aside from my disciples.

"I'm sorry to shock you. I wanted to take this opportunity to discover your true feelings. Thanks to that, I see that there's no reason for us to fight."

"Wasn't it a little too aggressive? If it went badly, it could've resulted in a fight, don't you think?"

"It would've been inevitable. I already knew you were too gifted. Although, I didn't think you could easily defeat dragon hybrids and high-level adventurers. I couldn't help but remember the type of danger you dealt with."

"Well... I think I overdid it this time."

It was plausible. I was so upset over my students getting hurt, I made my move without looking back.

"You have great power, you don't misuse it, and you respect politeness. Personally, I hope this doesn't change the good relationship we've built."

"Same goes here. I have a favor to ask, it's about my ability..."

"I understand. It would be troublesome if others knew about your power. It'll come to light eventually, but until then, your secret is safe with me."

"That makes me feel a little uneasy, but I appreciate it."

"This incident is partially due to my clumsiness, so I'll be somewhat flexible. Besides... if we can't get along, then I won't get any cake."

Why did I feel like the last part was his true reasoning? Regardless, I was relieved to hear that there weren't any problems regarding the Fresh-blooded Dragons and my abilities. He still had something to report, but it didn't seem like it was good news and he had a complicated look on his face.

“I’ve got terrible news. We couldn’t capture Gregory, who seems to be the mastermind behind all this.”

“Did he escape?”

“He did. I sent an investigative team to his house, but it was already emptied. I told them to leave it to me, yet dealing with this mess... is unbearable!”

“No, you didn’t do anything wrong. He seems like the type of guy who could easily get away from things.”

“Yes, he’s very good at escaping. However, based on yesterday’s interrogation and the evidence found in the house, a bounty has been placed on Gregory’s head. The pamphlets will be distributed throughout the town. He won’t be able to show his face in Elysion, at least.”

“What’ll happen to the students under his care?”

“Those students are innocent. The class Gregory ran will be taken over by a substitute teacher. However, I don’t know what’s going on with that guy, so I’ll be keeping an eye on them for a while.”

Some of those students didn’t do anything wrong. It was pitiful how they were caught up in the affairs of a runaway adult. I heard that he spoke with Hart and Melulusa, who had lost their servants, and upon much reflection decided to part ways with Gregory.

“There’s something else I’d like to ask you, Sirius. The magic that ended Goraon’s life... what exactly was that?”

He was talking about “Snipe.” In this world, there was no such thing as magic or weapons that could blow off an opponent’s head from a long distance. It was natural for Lordvel to be curious.

“I’m sorry, but I’m afraid I can’t answer that question. However, I only plan to use it against evil, murderous enemies...”

“Huh... I won’t press any further. I owe you one, so I should believe you and refrain from questioning you further. You should know that it’s a dangerous power. It goes without saying that you should use it with caution.”

He backed down more easily than I had anticipated. Did that mean he trusted

me? After the discussion had ended, I returned to the classroom. There was no point in the siblings getting so riled up over my safety and getting scolded by Professor Magna.

That afternoon... All the students gathered in the auditorium and the headmaster personally explained the incident. Killers appeared in the school's labyrinth and some students fell victim to them. The headmaster openly announced that Gregory was the one who led them, explaining that he had disappeared and was now wanted. I thought it was quite bold of him to publicize such a scandal, but he said it was so the students could understand the consequences and fate of those who held dangerous ideologies and pride. Even in the safety of one's own school, danger could be present simply from the foolishness of a single person. The students didn't understand what it was like to be in danger, so it did them well to be warned, and to emphasize the need to exercise caution. After that, he continued to lecture at the podium about the lessons to be taken away from this incident.

"I hope that you will learn to save people, not to take innocent lives. All of you wield unlimited potential as students."

You use your powers to save lives, not take them...? My partner from my past life spoke about something similar. It sounded like the opposite of what an assassin would think, but I only targeted and killed villains who would kill thousands or tens of thousands of people if they weren't stopped. Not that I was trying to justify murder.

I had gone through so many fights that I was completely detached, and more importantly, it was a path that I had chosen for myself. Most of the agents worked in the shadows, hiding from the public eye, and it was common for them to handle their targets in secrecy. I wasn't planning on telling my disciples about my backstory unless it was absolutely necessary. I didn't wish for them to imitate me. After all, assassinating someone and murdering someone were essentially the same thing. The only difference was whether or not the killer enjoyed the kill.

However... if it was to protect my students, I'd do anything without a shred of guilt, including murder. That was my foundational belief that'd never change, even after reincarnation. As a teacher... and as an agent, it was my way of life.

The mastermind behind it all had disappeared, leaving a bad taste in my mouth. That was how the incident involving the killers came to a close.

Chapter Three

Fairlise's Secret

Elysion's Harvest Festival.

A festival which was held once every few years in Elysion, with the hope of creating a bountiful harvest. The Harvest Festival lasted for several days and filled all of Elysion, which was usually full of energy, with great excitement. Schools shut down for the Harvest Festival, and some of its facilities, which were normally only accessible to students and faculty, were opened to the public. Small-scale fighting tournaments were held in the school's arena, and, with permission from their teachers, students could even set up stalls in order to raise money.

Of course, it was a festival that many students looked forward to, seeing as they could enjoy themselves without having to do anything. One morning before the festival... I was alone in the headmaster's office after class let out.

"I think that out of all the different cakes you make, cheesecake is my favorite."

"I prefer shortcake."

Since the incident involving those killers, I'd not only been invited to the headmaster's office more often, but he had also become more lighthearted with me these days. Without any reason in particular, he invited me to tea and didn't disguise himself anymore, proving how much more open he's become. When we were chatting over a cup of tea, the conversation naturally turned towards the Harvest Festival.

"Some of our school facilities will be opened to the public for the festival. The teachers will have to take turns checking on them."

"You say they'll be checking on people, which means things could turn disastrous if someone goes overboard, right?"

"That's right. It'll be a handful keeping an eye on our students to make sure they don't go too far and start trouble with some nobles. By the way, Sirius, are

you planning on doing anything for the Harvest Festival?”

“No, nothing in particular. I wanted to enjoy it with my students, that's all.”

“Might I suggest you try selling your cakes? I have no doubt you'd make quite a bit of money.”

“They certainly could sell well, but we'd have to mass produce them, leaving the possibility of not having enough supplies to keep up with the demand...”

“On second thought, I won't let you open up a shop. I can't allow that to happen.”

How quickly he changed his mind. As he said, he would prevent me by any means, but I had no intention of opening a store, so I dropped the subject. I brought in those cakes at the headmaster's request, and also to deepen my relationship with him and Professor Magna so I could ask favors from them later down the line. That's the entire reason I came here today. It was not just to deliver a cake, but to receive something I'd been requesting for some time.

“So, regarding what we discussed before?”

“Oh, this cake was so good that I forgot all about it. Here you go.”

The headmaster pulled a shiny green stone from his pocket and handed it to me. It was smaller than the fingernail on my pinky, yet even at that size, it was extremely expensive. Before me was an ore that contained magical power which was crystallized over a long period of time, generally called a “magic stone.” What made it different from other ores was that it contained concentrated magical power and had been used as a magical tool, which was why I wanted one for a long time. It was disposable, but said to be used for drawing magic circles directly on the stone. I most likely wouldn't have been able to get my hands on something like this if I didn't have a lot of money.

“How much is one of this size worth?”

“Eight gold coins. But since it's you, I don't mind if you pay in installments...”

“Eight... gold coins. Here you are.”

I took the gold coins from my pocket and laid them on the desk. The headmaster stiffened a little before taking them. He probably didn't expect me

to pay for it right away. I've been earning money by bringing ideas to the Gargan Company time and time again, so I was able to afford it.

I was going to ask the Company for the magic stone but, apparently, only those who had special permission from the adventurer's guild could handle them. As a result, I asked the headmaster, who had his own connections. Zach from the Gargan Trading Company said that he could get permission soon, so I'd be able to buy them soon enough.

"You always surprise me. Anyways, what are you planning on doing with a magic stone?"

"I'm experimenting with creating my own original magic and magic circles."

What I aimed to achieve was to have a way to "Call" each other. One-way calls were convenient, but being able to actively communicate would've been even more so. There was a wind magic spell called "Echo" that manipulated the wind to send one's voice to another party. It couldn't be used for long distances, though, and there ran the possibility of someone else hearing it along the way. However, my "Call" would've certainly reached its target, like a cell phone from my previous life. I'd wanted to develop a "Call" magic circle as soon as possible. That was why I bought a magic stone without delay. The headmaster froze at my words, then exhaled deeply, holding his head in one of his hands.

"I don't know anything about your own original magic, but if you can create a new magic circle, that'd be an astounding feat. There's the possibility that some dumb nobles or magical engineers will come after you, so please don't mention it to others."

"I know."

Only my students and I would use it. Although it was peaceful in this area, some countries were at war with each other due to issues like territorial expansion. If "Call" became well-known, we'd be immediately targeted. I believed that it was in human nature to have conflict. While I wasn't anti-war, I had no interest in getting involved in or instigating any wars.

"Come to think of it, Sirius, are you planning on becoming an adventurer once you graduate?"

“Yes, I’d like to explore the world.”

“That’s a good idea. You’re extremely talented, so you shouldn’t have any problems out there. It’s a shame for me, though. I wanted to hire you as my personal chef...”

“Is that a joke?”

“No, I’m serious.”

He looked more serious than I had ever seen him before. Cooking was a hobby that I enjoyed, but I didn’t want to make it my life’s work.

“I won’t be able to eat your cake once you go off on adventures. Even though it’s so yummy, I can only have it for two more years...”

“I have good news about that.”

As a matter of fact, I’d been thinking about selling my cake recipe to the Gargan Trading Company soon. To put it more precisely, not the ingredients or how to make it, but how to make the magical tools that would replace the oven. The magical tool I used to make the cake was of my own creation, so I wanted to sell its manufacturing method to the Gargan Trading Company.

However, I’d heard that it was a bad idea to spread new magic tools without thinking it through. I asked the headmaster, who was well-versed in magic, to see if an oven-modified magical tool was a good idea. I explained it on a piece of paper, and his eyes lit up after listening to my explanation. He’d never seen a magic tool like that before, and was excited to know he could eat cake without me around.

“Woah... So it’s a magic tool that has warming magic circles on all four sides of a sealed box, which evenly heats the entire thing? The existing magic circle also depends on... how it’s used.”

“What do you think? Would it be a problem if I sold and distributed this through the Gargan Trading Company?”

“Hm...It’s a normal magical circle, so there shouldn’t be any problems. However, I’d like to speak with the head of the Gargan Trading Company first.”

“To determine whether it could be used for dangerous purposes?”

“No, to see if they can mass-produce cakes and give me priority.”

“Hey.”

He'd been going overboard for a while now. I couldn't help but walk into that one. It was nice how we were friends who didn't get mad at each other for showing our true colors. Although, if someone who admired the headmaster were to see this kind of behavior, they'd have been quickly disillusioned. Anyways, he spoke pretty optimistically, so I'll say everything will work out fine. Or so I'd like to think.

Just to cover my bases, I told the headmaster of the dangers of eating too much cake and getting sick, then left his office.

I went to the training grounds where my students were waiting. The grounds were spacious, with a shooting range for casting magic, and a number of dummies lined up for practicing sword-fighting. Leus was quietly swinging his sword in a small fenced-off arena where students competed against one another.

“Oh, big bro! Are you done talking to him?”

“Yeah. Looks like you... are finished up too.”

Countless students who Leus had defeated were lying half-dead and dying on the playing field. They all appeared to be breathing, so it was safe enough to leave them alone. When Leus spotted me, he ran towards me, wagging his tail, leaping over the downed students and the field's fence.

“Yea, I feel great!”

It was obvious that he gave his opponents a total beatdown. More than half a month had already passed since the incident with the killers, yet Leus continued training in good spirits. He didn't seem to have had any physical or mental aftereffects. As I watched him put away his heavy swords, I noticed that the other two were nowhere to be found.

“By the way... where did Emilia and Lise go?”

“Emilia went on a run with some of her classmates and should be back soon. Big sis Lise got a call from home and went back.”

“A call... from home. Maybe Emilia knows more about that.”

Just as I thought that, I saw Emilia returning. She was leading the way, with many students running behind her in tow.

“Lord Sirius!”

As soon as she saw me, she abandoned her leadership and started running in my direction at a speed that left the other students in the dust. She halted right in front of me—her tail wagging—straightened up, and bowed.

“Good job today. Did you finish your business?”

“I did what I had to do, but it looks like you have some unfinished business yourself.”

The pace was disturbed after the leader ran off, so the students were still disorganized in the distance. Having noticed this, Emilia hurriedly ran back to the students, and led them once again to their goal: the training grounds. She made sure that everyone was in good physical condition at the end, so it was safe to return back to the matter at hand.

“Thanks for waiting.”

“Nice work. Were you asked to be the leader?”

“Yes. They wanted me to teach them more about your training routine. I lightly jogged with them so they could get a feel for it.”

The result was... the runners were on the ground and couldn't move while Emilia calmly wagged her tail. The scene had quite the stark contrast.

“There are no shortcuts to becoming stronger. By the way, I heard Lise was called away to her family home. Did you hear anything?”

“I'm sorry to say this, but I don't know the details either. An errand runner came by around the time classes ended and brought her a letter. Upon reading it, Lise said she had to rush home.”

“How did she look?”

“She looked conflicted. Do you think something happened?”

The siblings returned to normal following the incident, but Lise had changed.

There were things she wanted to say, yet couldn't... or rather, I would catch her hesitating often.

"Do you want to talk to her when she comes back? Since it's Lise, she might need a little encouragement."

"Should I track down her scent?"

"I understand that you're worried, but please hold back. She doesn't seem to be in a life-threatening situation."

I stroked her head to distract her, she was pleasantly surprised and closed her eyes. As a side note, the base of her wolf ears must've been a pleasant petting spot for Emilia. Her tail wagged even faster when I focused on petting her there.

"Big bro! Me too, me too!"

"Okay, okay, calm down. Here..."

"Oohh..."

Leus liked being petted rougher and his eyes squinted in happiness. I just couldn't stop pampering these siblings.

"Ha... That was nice. Lord Sirius, I'm sorry, but do you mind waiting a little longer? I need to go tell the other students how amazing you are."

"Stop that!"

What was she trying to achieve, approaching the students with a wide grin like that? If I left her to her own devices, I'd probably have my own personal cult worshipping me. I had to stop them. In the end, I kept patting Emilia's head until the students recovered and went on their way.

We then left the training grounds and headed into town. Diamond Manor was running low on seasonings and other ingredients, so we took a short break and went shopping. I stopped to look at a rare item along the streets of the shopping district, and Leus muttered in amazement to me.

"...Big bro, you sure like shopping and looking around."

"I won't deny that. If I keep looking, I might find new ingredients. It's thanks to this habit that we were able to make curry."

“Then it’s important!”

I was glad to hear he was in agreement. We continued window shopping and finally made our way to the Gargan Trading Company. We could obtain many things here, and above all, I came to talk about cake.

“Welcome, Boss. What business do you have with us today?”

“The usual ingredients and seasonings and... perhaps we could discuss cake?”

“You’ll finally tell me? Get over to the back room!”

“Zack, please let me use the kitchen.”

“Go ahead now, Emilia, use it as much as you’d like. Alright alright, c’mon Boss.”

I followed Zack to the back room... it was technically the manager’s room, but judging by Zack’s attitude, I was being treated as the manager here. I bet that if I sat in the manager’s chair, no one would protest.

“This is your older brother’s shop, but it looks like you’re the one running things.”

“Hahaha, yer wrong there. I’m a manager, but wouldn’ta gotten far without yer products, Boss. That’s why I wouldn’t mind if you sat in that chair right there. Why don’t you give it a try?”

“...I’ll refrain.”

Zack’s perception skills were as strong as Leus’, and his willingness to give up the manager’s chair was equally scary. As I was being taken aback by their similarities, Emilia entered the office. She had borrowed the kitchen and prepared drinks. Previously, the restaurant staff would’ve prepared them but, soon enough, Emilia took charge.

“Here you are. Lord Sirius, you like yours black, right?”

“Thank you.”

Emilia poured a black liquid into a cup. I took a whiff and a nostalgic, yet soothing, aroma filled the air. This was what I loved to drink in my previous life: coffee. A few days ago, I noticed someone had opened a stall in town. The

owner was nibbling on what looked like coffee berries.

As it turned out, they actually were coffee beans, and it was custom to not only eat the beans, but also roast the seeds inside to enhance one's fighting capabilities. Roasting... they had figured out roasting, but didn't think of grinding the beans into the powder and drinking it. The coffee I had in my previous life was of higher quality, but I'd been craving it so much, I quickly bought up all the beans they had using a handful of silver coins.

Upon tasting the new-found roasted coffee, I found that the aroma and taste were similar, with a few quirks. It was pleasant to taste the unique bitterness that I missed out on for a long time. Of course, Leus, imitating me, drank down a cup of coffee in one gulp without adding any sugar. He spewed the coffee everywhere in a mist, angering Emilia. After that, I asked the Gargan Trading Company to deliver the coffee beans on a regular basis.

"Zack takes it with a little sugar, and Leus likes it with loads of sugar and milk."

"Thank ya. It always tastes a bit sweeter when you make it, Emilia."

"Thanks, sis."

Leus preferred cafe au lait, but I was happy enough he didn't despise coffee altogether.

"I'm curious about the cake business. Lemme report some things first. Boss, the curry spice you made is mass-produced and selling like crazy. Selling coffee beans is a big hit, too. Looks like we have some stable supplies."

"Thanks for always doing business with me. Now then, about the cake..."

He wanted me to share the recipe as soon as I first served him some. I initially turned him down because of the magical tool conundrum, and wanted to use the cakes to get closer to the headmaster. I decided now, with the intent of leaving town one day, that I should teach Zack. I also mentioned that the school's headmaster would like to talk to him.

"HUUUH?! Lo-Lordvel wants to chat with me?! Unbelievable, I tell ya!"

“No, just think of him as an ordinary elf who loves cake.”

“Only you can think that, Boss! He ain’t just a famous celebrity, he’s also close with the royal family. One bad move and I’ll get sacked!”

He was certainly a great and powerful figure. On the other hand, I’d seen him relish cake alongside Professor Magna, without a hint of dignity. I’ve been worried that he’d been overeating, so I even cut down on the cake’s sugar levels lately. Wait, why did I worry about him so much?

“It’s hardly a big deal, and if you feel uncomfortable you can always turn him down, right?”

“Guh... But if I ain’t brave now, then the business’ll never grow. I gotta prepare myself!”

“Alright, I’ll tell him next time I see him. As long as you’re not hostile, and act politely like you do with me, it’ll be okay. What days are you available?”

“I thank ya kindly. Go ahead and tell the headmaster I’m free anytime. I don’t have anything more important going on than this.”

“Got it, I’ll pass on the message. Lastly, I’ll take my usual order.”

I handed Zack a piece of paper with the ingredients and seasonings I needed, which were only supplied by Gargan Trading Company. Zach gave it a once-over, called in a female employee, and handed her the order sheet.

“On it. Diamond Manor’ll be stocked up by tomorrow.”

“Also, I’d like to bring these meats and seasonings home with me. Could you wrap them up with me?”

“We ain’t eating out today?”

Usually, when I’d visit the Gargan Trading Company, I would take Zack out to eat at a nearby restaurant. Today, Lise wasn’t here and might’ve been on her way to Diamond Manor, so I wanted to head home as soon as I could.

“I don’t want to leave out Lise. Sorry, but not today.”

“Makes sense. Gotcha, the prep will take a little while, please wait.”

We finished our business and chatted as we waited. Our conversation turned

to the upcoming Harvest Festival.

“I’m thinking I’m gonna sell those crepes like you taught me, Boss. It’d be nice if I could sell cakes, but I ain’t getting my hopes up.”

“The headmaster is pretty fussy about his cake, don’t cut any corners.”

“Re-Really?! I won’t hold back then! More importantly, boss, didja hear that the king’s only daughter, Princess Leafel is gonna get hitched soon?”

That wasn’t just the talk of the town, everyone at school was talking about it too. The current king of Elysion, Cardeas Bardfeld, had several sons, but only one daughter. His daughter, Princess Leafel, was beautiful, intelligent, and politically minded. However, she hadn’t found a marriage partner, and the king was getting impatient. Recently, however, a fitting candidate was found, making the king even more excited for the Harvest Festival.

“I heard the news, but what’s it got to do with us?”

“Can’t ya imagine how famous the Gargan Trading Company would become if we were the ones to make the wedding cake for Princess Leafel?”

“You’re very business-minded. Regardless, I don’t think it’d be a bad idea to send them a wedding cake in celebration.”

“If you say so, Boss! Let’s get a move on!”

We kept making small talk and, after having received our order, we left the Gargan Trading Company. We returned to school and headed down the mountain trail that led to Diamond Manor. Emilia, in a good mood, inquired about all of our new ingredients.

“This meat looks so yummy. What shall we have for dinner tonight?”

“That’s a good question... should I make roast beef again?”

“Yay, meat! I’d rather just chomp into it now!”

“Lise might be coming over later. Don’t eat too much of it.”

“Ah, you’re right. Plus, Lise likes roast beef and might cry if there aren’t any leftovers.”

I didn’t think she’d cry that easily, but sadly, I couldn’t completely deny it.

That girl loved to eat. I apologized to Lise in my mind. Leus, who was walking ahead of us, turned around with an unusually grave expression.

“What’s the matter, Leus?”

“Big bro, when Lise... graduates from school, what are we gonna do?”

“Oh, that’s been on my mind, too.”

We decided together that we’d travel the world once we finished school. We don’t have a home to return to, so we planned on becoming adventurers. Lise had a family and a home, though. What would she do when she was done with school? That remained a mystery, along with the secret she’d been holding onto.

“Hopefully big sis Lise will come along with us...”

“Yes, I’d love to travel with her. As long as she doesn’t feel forced to do so.”

“Big bro, what do you think?”

What did I think Lise would do... she was an adorable student and, if I’m being honest, I liked her as a person, too. She was hardworking, kind, and didn’t discriminate between races. There was a mysterious charm about her, and she could calm anyone with a single smile. She’d been looking up to me more as a father than a mentor, but I wasn’t complaining. I’d been watching her grow up as if she were my own cute little daughter.

“Just like you two, I think it’d be great if Lise could travel with us. However, it’s all up to her.”

“We have plenty of time, but we’ll have to talk about it eventually.”

“Even if Lise wanted to go, she’s still a noble. Her family would probably stop her. In that case... we should just kidnap her! But if that happens, we’d end up being criminals.”

“Even if you become a criminal, I’d follow you to the ends of the world.”

“Me too!”

“I was joking. We’d get into big trouble if we did that to Lise.”

While I say that now, if Lise had any problems at home, or was scorned, or

neglected by her family, I'd seriously consider kidnapping her. She was my disciple, and family to the siblings, so I wanted to help her in her time of need.

We finished dinner, but Lise still hadn't returned to the school dorms, or Diamond Manor.

Lise eventually returned... two days later. School was closed for the day, and we were training at the manor after lunch when we noticed something approaching from the mountain road leading to the school.

"...Big bro! Something's coming this way!"

"Yeah, I can tell. Judging by the sound, is it... a carriage?"

"Maybe it's from the Gargan Trading Company? Wait no, the stuff you ordered should've come yesterday, right?"

Only the Gargan Trading Company would've sent a carriage to a place like ours. From the results of the "Search" I cast, there wasn't any particular danger, but the high speed of the carriage was concerning. We braced ourselves just in case, and eventually a luxurious carriage carrying nobles rode along the mountain road and stopped in front of us. The carriage door opened, and Lise hopped out. I knew it'd been two days since we'd seen her, but for a commoner like Lise, this entrance was a bit much.

"Oh good, you're here."

Lise saw us standing there and looked relieved. Her face then transitioned to a more serious expression as she bowed to me.

"Sir Sirius, I know my sudden appearance is troublesome, but would you mind entering the carriage and coming along with me?"

"What the hell is going on, Lise? You're suddenly showing up here..."

"This is... my family..."

"Okay. Is this something important?"

She was acting impatiently and had a hard time getting her words out, so she must've been in trouble. I guess she knew I'd catch on, and relied on me to help her out. She hadn't really given me a valid reason to do so, but I still wanted to get her out of trouble, so I decided to go along with her.

“Thank you! As long as you’re here, things will be fine.”

“Lise, may I come along, too?”

“And me?”

“Umm...I’d like you two to come. It’d be nice if... everyone knew about my situation.”

We decided to all go together, and Lise recommended we wore formal clothes. We hurriedly changed out of our school uniforms and entered the carriage. It wasn’t extraordinarily large, but spacious enough to seat the four of us comfortably. Leus sat at my side while Emilia and Lise sat across from us.

Lise called out to the driver and the carriage took off at high speed. Before long, we had passed by the school and were headed into town. We admired the fancy interior of the carriage, as this was our first time inside one, and gazed out the window at the passing scenery.

“This is awesome, big bro. The chair’s so soft. It’s so comfy I could fall asleep.”

“Alright, calm down, Leus.”

“He’s fine. Truthfully, I had the same thought when I rode in this carriage for the first time.”

She was tense and somber earlier, but must have calmed down after the siblings reminded her of a more relaxed atmosphere. She finally showed her true expression. I could see that she was tired, though. I sensed a weariness and mental fatigue that came with mana exhaustion. Anyway, I couldn’t help Lise if I didn’t know exactly what was going on, so I turned my attention to her to ask for an explanation.

“Do you mind telling us what exactly is going on?”

“Yes. But, you know, what I’m about to say will likely get everyone involved in an unpleasant situation. Regardless, I have no choice but to turn to you, Sir Sirius...”

“I made up my mind to help you as soon as I got into the carriage. Above all else, I’m your teacher and your friend. Don’t hesitate to reach out.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Lise, but I’ll do everything I can to

help you too.”

“Me too, big sis!”

“...Thank you.”

Lise straightened up with tears in her eyes upon hearing our words. She then stared straight at me and began to speak.

“I told you that I was the illegitimate child of a noble, but that’s not true. My full name is Fairlise Bardfeld.”

“Bardfeld? Wait a second, Lise. Does that mean...?”

“Yes, you’re correct, Emilia. My father is... the king of Elysion.”

I see...This was the complication that the headmaster mentioned. It must’ve been a secret that only a few important people, like Lordvel, knew. Lise, who had confided she was the daughter of royalty, anxiously shut her eyes as she braced herself for our response.

“So how should I address you, from now on?”

“Huh?! Just Lise is fine...”

“I’m not good at it, but should I speak more politely around you?”

“Tha-That won’t be necessary. Please treat me as you have in the past.”

“Then we’ll continue to hang out like that as well.”

“...I’m not surprised.”

Unlike me, the siblings aren’t surprised, because they don't know much about royalty and think they’re just like nobles. We were raised in a sheltered home, with little information about the outside world.

“I think that our big bro is cooler than the king.”

“I’m sorry Lise, but I feel the same way.”

Lise looked confused at those words and let out a sigh, but it was clear that a weight was lifted from her shoulders.

“I really... overthought everything... I’m so dumb.”

“You just don’t give off an air of royalty, Lise.”

“Same here. Instead of wearing a pretty dress around a castle, I think you look best eating something our big bro cooked.”

“What the... Well, I’m happy to hear that. Thank you.”

Lise was so moved that she held the siblings’ hands tight, as if they were the most precious objects in the world. They smiled happily, if not a little embarrassed.

“We don’t care where you came from, Lise. There are still things I’d like to teach you. Is it okay for me to continue as your teacher?”

“Yes, I look forward to learning more from you.”

“Leave it to me.”

We laughed, and she joined in. I wasn’t surprised to learn of Lise’s true identity, partly because I saw it coming, to some extent. Also, I believed that if someone’s my disciple, it doesn’t matter what status you hold, whether noble or royal. In other words, I treat all my students equally, no matter who they are. I don’t intend on changing this policy, no matter what the king decrees.

I looked out the carriage’s window and saw several large, glittering buildings standing side by side. This is the noble’s district in Elysion, which I had seen a few times when visiting Mark’s parents. It’s not a place where commoners like the siblings and I can casually enter.

“Now that we know your real identity, do you mind telling us why we’re here?”

“Truthfully, I’d like you to... examine my older sister, Leafel.”

Leafel... she’s said to be the next queen. Rumors have been circulating about her recently announced engagement. It’s not surprising, seeing how Lise is royalty, but it’s a more famous name than I expected.

“I have lots of questions. When you say examine, am I supposed to be looking for some kind of illness?”

“I’m not sure. Two days ago, she started feeling unwell. Her symptoms are getting worse with each passing day...”

“What happens when you use your healing magic?”

“It alleviates her symptoms, but after some time, she starts to suffer again...”

“So if you use your magic, she gets better, but when you stop... she’s in pain.”

Lise looks tired, probably due to mana exhaustion and the mental fatigue of continuously using healing magic on a family member. She must have reached her limit.

“When my mom died and I suddenly found out I was royalty, I thought I was dreaming. I was worried about what was to become of me, a commoner, when I reached the castle... my sister saved me.”

When Lise was brought to the castle, she met her father, who only gave her a cold stare and didn’t make conversation. She was on the verge of tears from his harsh attitude when her sister, Princess Leafel, comforted her, and helped her learn about the various changes that come with life in a castle. It was thought to be disgraceful for a former commoner to be involved with royal affairs. Princess Leafel was the one who suggested that Lise goes to school, hiding her true identity and origin.

“Thanks to her, I’m able to go to school and meet Emilia... as well as Sir Sirius and Leus. I hate the thought of my savior suffering like this. Please, help me! Do something... anything... to save the princess!”

Lise was trembling and, frustrated at her own helplessness, trying to hold back tears. Emilia hugged her, and patted her on the back to soothe her.

“I’d love to meet such a splendid person. Could you introduce us?”

“I wanna meet her, too!”

“Emilia. Leus... Yes, I’d love to introduce my friends to her.”

“Of course, I’ll have to drop in and say hi, as well. After all... I am your teacher. Who’s to say that she’ll believe me, since I’m younger than you.”

I’m a year younger than Lise, and look like a total child. It’ll sound like a bunch of nonsense when I explain that I’m her teacher.

“Lise, I don’t know much about your sister. Please give me a little more information about her condition. Could you put aside your troubles for now?”

“I think...I can. Now’s not the time.”

“Firstly, I’d like to know what symptoms she’s been having, and details on when they first appeared. Please also tell me whether she’s experienced such serious illnesses in the past.”

I wanted to be able to help, but couldn’t say for sure until I knew more about when she got sick. I’d find out more details after meeting her, but didn’t want to waste any time, so I kept asking questions and gathered as much information from Lise as I could.

After some time, we arrived right in front of a mansion that was a short distance away from the nobles’ district. Although we saw it from a distance, it was larger and more glamorous, clearly on a different level than the ones nearby. There was a tranquil garden that was meticulously maintained, without unnecessary ornamentation. The building was a functional beauty fit for royalty. I secretly admired it as I exited the carriage, and Lise came up to me to provide an explanation.

“My sister usually stays in the castle, but she’s recuperating in this separate house.”

“Is the public allowed to know about her illness?”

“No. My sister just announced her engagement. We wanted to avoid any bad luck.”

The carriage dropped us off, then left us behind, and we saw several people coming towards us from the mansion. They all wore either maid’s uniforms or butler’s coats, so I assumed they were the household servants. Then, from among the servants, a woman who seemed to be their representative stepped forward. She bowed deeply to Lise.

“Welcome back, Princess Lise.”

“I’m home, Senia.”

Senia was a rabbit demi-human. She had a pair of bunny ears on her head and a round tail just above her buttocks.

She’s definitely a beautiful woman, yet I sense a sharpness like a blade hidden behind her eyes. She’s probably very powerful, and not only a servant, but also probably a guard. She wouldn’t hesitate to take my life if I were to harm Lise.

“You were so worried about Princess Leafel when you left. So, who are these people?”

Lise rushed to step in front of Senia, while she and the other servants scowled at us.

“Hey, I told you about them before, didn’t I? These are my friends from school...”

“Princess Fairlise! Just where did you go off to?!”

Lise’s words were interrupted by a young man who arrived late. He was a tall human wearing light blue armor, with a glittering sword hanging from his waist. If I were to hazard a guess, I’d say he was a knight in the service of the king. He’s rather handsome, but gives us a menacing look.

“And now you’ve brought some unknown commoners here. Don’t you know what the princess is going through?”

“Shut up, Melt.”

“What?!”

“Do you know what you’ve done? You cut off the younger sister of Princess Leafel, Princess Lise’s words! Stand down to avoid further shame.”

“Guh...”

Senia seemed to be in charge, and the young man, Melt, reluctantly took a step back. Once the air was cleared, Senia urged Lise to continue.

“Um... These are my friends from school, Sir Sirius, Emilia, and Leus.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Sirius.”

“I am Lord Sirius’ servant, my name is Emilia.”

“I am also Lord Sirius’ servant, Leus.”

First impressions are crucial. I politely greeted the servants, who looked at me suspiciously, using the manners my mother taught me. They nodded their heads in approval and let their guard down a little.

“We can’t be outdone by such a wonderful display of manners. It’s nice to meet you, too. My name is Senia, I am Princess Leafel’s personal attendant.

We're all pleased to welcome Princess Lise's classmates."

After we gave an uncharacteristically polite introduction, Senia bowed her head and the servants standing in the back bowed their heads in unison. Only the young man, Melt, did not bow his head. He remained stone-faced, so it'd be best for us to stay away from him.

"Excuse me, Senia. I wish I could take our time with our introductions, but I'd like them to meet my sister as soon as possible."

"But Princess Lise, Princess Leafel is not taking any visitors..."

"What did you just say?"

Unable to hold back any longer, Melt came forward again, shouting. He glared at us, no longer hiding his murderous intent, and looked like he was ready to draw his sword. His reaction was excessive for such a young person. He seems somewhat overly concerned.

"What will you do if the princess' condition worsens once new visitors see her? No, even if she doesn't get sicker, as the princess' royal guard, I won't allow it!"

"Don't say such things, Melt! They could possibly cure my sister."

"Tha-That's not possible!"

The young man is stubborn, but he has a point. Even though Lise gave our introductions, it wouldn't be right for mere strangers— and on top of that, commoners— to meet the country's princess. Still, Lise didn't give up, and clung to Senia.

"Please, Senia! I believe that Sir Sirus... no, I'm sure that he could help my sister..."

"Princess Lise..."

Under Melt's sharp gaze, Senia quietly closed her eyes and thought things through. She gradually opened her eyes and gave us a soft smile, leading us to the mansion's entrance.

"...Please, come inside. I will take you to Princess Leafel."

“Wha-What are you saying?! Have you lost your mind?”

“I know what I’m doing. Princess Leafel expressed her curiosity regarding Princess Lise’s schoolmates. If you’re worried, you should come along. If they act in a hostile manner against Princess Leafel, feel free to act as her personal guard.”

“...That’s right. If you start acting funny, I’ll kick you out.”

“I apologize. Melt makes a valid point. Please allow him to accompany you.”

“No need to apologize. Thank you... Senia.”

Senia looked ecstatic when the delighted Lise gave her a hug. Her smile was somehow reminiscent of my mother’s, making the siblings and I recall those times with fond nostalgia.

After our belongings were searched to make sure we weren’t in possession of anything dangerous, we were led into the mansion. Senia took the lead, and we stared in awe at the high-class interior. The siblings also kept worriedly looking back to Melt, who was behind us. Well, I can’t say that’s a bad thing. After all, ever since we entered the mansion, Melt has been exuding a violent aura, as if he doesn’t want to miss a single move of ours.

“Melt. Suppress your anger.”

“I’m just trying to keep you in check to ensure you don’t make any unnecessary moves.”

“I understand your impatience, but we’re almost arrived at Princess Leafel’s bedroom. Is it the job of the royal guard to visit their master with such bloodlust?”

“...You’re right.”

He finally calmed down, and we arrived at a luxurious doorway that was a cut above the rest. We were about to meet the person who will someday be queen, so we lightly checked our appearance. Senia knocked on the door and called into the room.

“Princess Leafel. Princess Lise would like her schoolmates to visit you, is that

okay?”

“Lise’s friends?! She finally invited them. Please, come in, quickly.”

“Permission has been granted. Please enter.”

After hearing such an excited voice, Senia opened the door, and Lise burst in first, followed by the rest of us. Princess Leafel’s room was spacious, resembling a small library adorned with glittering decorations, and bookshelves stocked with many books.

A woman with long red hair was resting on a large canopy bed surrounded by books at the end of the room. She was facing us with just her upper body raised.

“I’m back.”

“Welcome home, Lise. I knew you left suddenly, but I was also aware you were retrieving your friends.”

Princess Leafel is a beautiful woman who lives up to her title. She was just sitting normally, yet I felt a mysterious pull toward her. She’s a bit gaunt due to her illness, but her eyes are shining like rubies so powerfully that one wouldn’t assume she was really sick.

“Aside from that, how are you feeling? My magic has recovered a little, so I can cast a spell on you if you’re in pain.”

“No need. Do you know how many times you’ve nearly collapsed while doing that?”

“My pain is nothing compared to yours!”

“Even if you make the pain go away, it’s only temporary. What’s more, I’d like you to introduce me to the children standing behind you. It’s my duty as an older sister to meet the friends her baby sister keeps boasting about, especially the young boy she’s taken an interest in.”

“Boy she’s taken an... interest in? Lise, what did you tell her about Lord Sirius?”

“Ju-Just regular stuff?! Sis, don’t say such weird things!”

Lise waved off her sister in embarrassment, and it feels like she's finally returned to her normal self. She took a shaky breath, cleared her throat, and introduced us.

"Anyways, here they are. This is Emilia. She's the first friend I made at school."

"Nice to meet you, Princess Leafel. My name is Emilia. Thank you for taking care of Princess Lise all this time."

"Hehe, nice to meet you too. You're an extremely polite girl, just as Lise said. You're quite similar to Senia."

"Hey, sis, that's...!"

"Emilia, you've met her, right? Lise has been spoiled by her ever since she came to Elysion. That's why she's so sweet to demi-humans. I bet when you two became friends, she was... overjoyed to know someone just like Senia."

"Ah, umm..."

I heard the princess held great wisdom and skills, but she's even more so an exhilarating woman who doesn't act like she's above others. She looks just like her little sister, and I don't dislike it.

"Oh my, I forgot to introduce myself. You may already know this, but I am Leafel. By the way, your silver hair is so beautiful, Emilia. May I touch it?"

"I don't mind at all."

"Don't do it, princess! You're already sick and yet you want to touch a stranger?!"

"She's a friend of my sister's. I don't consider her a stranger. Although I try to take care of my hair, I don't think my hair can match that of Emilia's. Let me have a look."

Melt, who was watching over us from the corner of the room, kicked up a big fuss, but Princess Leafel shut him down without a second thought. She was surprised once she felt Emilia's hair.

"Wow... how amazing. My fingers don't get caught in your hair at all. How do you maintain it?"

“It’s all thanks to Lord Sirius. He makes sure I’m in tip-top shape and feeds me well. Not only my hair, but my entire body is healthy.”

“Is that why your hair’s become so beautiful, too, Lise? C’mon, tell me a little more.”

The princess's eyes lit up, and she asked questions nonstop while having Senia take notes. Lise watched the scene in dismay. Not all of us have been introduced, so Lise was forced to cut in and stop her.

“Please save any further questions for later. This boy is Leus, Emilia’s younger brother.”

“Ni-Nice to meet you! Thanks for always taking awesome care of big sis Li—
I mean Princess Lise. I’m Leus.”

“How do you do, Leus? You seem oddly... stiff. If you’re Lise’s younger brother, then you’re my younger brother, too. No need for formalities. Could you call me ‘big sis,’ too?”

“Princess! Even though they’re Princess Fairlise’s schoolmates, you mustn't allow such things! You’re royalty, are you not?”

“We’re not in public, and I’ve granted permission. There’s no problem. It’s fine to be faithful to your duties, but isn’t it also your job to read into my subtleties?”

“Guh... Yes, it is.”

Melt reluctantly pulled back, but still kept an eye on us. He looked somewhat relieved, unlike before.

“I’m sorry about him. He’s been a nervous wreck ever since I fell ill. Alright Leus, don’t hold back.”

“Okay then, can I call you... big sis Leaf?”

“Yes. I heard you risked your life to protect Lise from those murderers. I wanted to meet you at least once to properly thank you.”

“That is incorr— that’s wrong... after all, I was defeated, and couldn’t protect my sister or Lise. Big bro did all the heavy lifting.”

“But if you hadn’t acted as a shield, Lise might not be with us, right? That’s why it’s not wrong for me to extend my gratitude. I think it’s only natural that you should be thanked.”

“Is that so? Then... you’re welcome.”

“Hehe, you’re such an obedient child.”

Princess Leafel patted his head and Leus rubbed his cheeks in embarrassment. Good job, Leus. It’s not every day you get a head pat from a princess.

Finally, it was my turn. I noticed that Princess Leafel was staring at me a bit more sharply than she did the siblings.

“Is this the child you mentioned before?”

“Yes! This is the teacher who I’ve learned a lot from, Sir Sirius.”

“I’m Sirius. It’s a pleasure to meet you, Princess Leafel.”

“So you’re Sir Sirius... I know it’s rude to suddenly ask this, but how old are you?”

From the crown of my head to the tips of my toes, Princess Leafel’s sharp, perceptive stare was directed at me as she asked my age. She’s eighteen years old, I believe, yet her glare is stronger than most adults. She’s even said to be the next queen, skipping ahead in the line of succession of her two older brothers, and if I underestimate her, I’d end up in a world of pain. Well, whoever she may be, she’s still a family member whom Lise trusts. I have her precious little sister under my care, so I need to be courteous.

“I’m turning thirteen this year.”

“I heard it before, but you’re actually younger than Lise...”

“Do you find it arrogant for a child like me to instruct Princess Lise?”

“No, not at all. She’s free to study under whomever, and above all, Lise has grown leaps and bounds since meeting you. I’m deeply grateful you protected her from those murderers.”

“Hey, sis!”

I was surprised to see this kingdom’s princess bow to me, a commoner. It

wasn't a public occasion, granted, but it's not easy for royalty to bow to commoners. I guess Lise means a lot to her. I looked to my side to see Senia bowing, and Melt, who acted so intimidating, was bowing as well. Soon after he returned to his previous disposition. It didn't look like he bowed just because his master did: he must have been worried about Lise. Unlike Princess Leafel, he's still young at heart, and may be the type of guy who can't hide his emotions well. I had a student like him in my previous life, so I couldn't help but feel a certain affinity towards him.

I'm concerned about Melt, but need to fix Princess Leafel's mistake, first.

"Thank you for your kindness. However, please allow me to make one correction. Princess Lise's growth has been due to her constant perseverance, I merely provided a little push."

"Tha-That's not true! Sir Sirius is always giving me guidance... thanks to him we can give it our all!"

"Hmmm... I see. Now I get why you say he's... a dependable person. You can't help but admire him."

"Sis!"

"Oops, I forgot that was our little secret."

Lise batted her sister, who had spoken deliberately, on the shoulder and blushed bright red. I relaxed watching this scene unfold when Princess Leafel turned to face me and clapped her hands lightly.

"Sirius, there's no need to be so tense. It looks like you're holding back because I'm here. You can call her 'Lise' if you'd like. Every time you call her 'Princess Lise' it makes me want to puke."

"Hey now, sis..."

"Don't you make that face at me. Aren't you the one who always says that we should clearly state what's on our mind?"

Despite preaching to her, Princess Leafel seems to be having a ball while talking with Lise. After the happy-go-lucky exchanges died down, Princess Leafel turned toward us with a serious expression.

“Still...I’m so happy. I wasn’t sure if I could handle you being away from my side. Not only do you have friends now, but also a mentor that you respect. It was a good idea to send you off to school, after all.”

“Princess Leafel, it was your idea to send Lise to school, wasn’t it?”

“Yes. My father gave the order, but I was the one to suggest her enrollment. Look, Lise doesn’t have the air of a royal, does she?”

“I agree!”



“Me too.”

“Uhm... I myself agree as well, but I don't know how to feel about you all readily agreeing so quickly...”

I agree too, but keep my mouth shut to avoid depressing Lise further. Regardless of her reasons, it's thanks to Princess Leafel that we could meet Lise. Once we get settled, I'll extend my gratitude towards her.

“Hey now, don't get so upset over something like that. By the way, aren't you all here on urgent business? I'd like you to talk with me a little longer if that's alright. All I've been doing is sleeping lately, it gets pretty boring.”

“Sleeping lately... ah?! That's right, you're sick, sis!”

It was the first time we were all meeting, so I was focused on gaining her trust. I didn't think that the person who brought us would forget why we were there. In her defense, Princess Leafel doesn't seem all that sickly.

“I'll be fine. Some new medicine is arriving tomorrow. I'll be fully cured once I take it.”

“You said my healing magic is the best in the country, but even with that, I couldn't heal you. Can you really be cured with medicine?”

“Perhaps it's a disease that's incompatible with magic and mana. Even if the medicine doesn't work, we still have other methods we can try. Don't worry.”

“Okay... would it be alright if Sirius examined you?”

“Sirius?”

“Yes! He's knowledgeable about the way our bodies work. Thanks to his teachings, I've learned so much about healing magic. I bet if he examines you, he'll find the cause of your ailments... what do you think?”

“When you say 'examine,' does that mean he'll touch me?”

“Yes, will that be a problem?”

Lise was about to nudge me forward when Princess Leafel's expression sharply changed. She was no longer the gentle sister she had been a moment ago. She was now the daughter of the king, Leafel Bardfeld, who shot us a

piercing gaze.

“Lise... try to look at this from my perspective, will you? This is a favor coming from my sister, but there’s a part that cannot be overlooked.”

“I’m so worried about you, though!”

“Yes, I understand your kindness quite well. However, let’s not forget that I am this country’s princess. And Sirius...”

“Yes?”

“Do you really wish to examine me? Touching me, an unmarried princess, without permission is a felony. If you don't find anything, I'll have to take action.”

“Sis, we’re not even in a public place...”

“I’m asking Sirius. Now, are you prepared?”

She’s the same Princess Leafel who patted Leus on the head. There shouldn’t be a problem. She asked me if I was prepared... I already know my answer.

“I was asked to do this by my friend, Lise. I simply want to help her family, however, I do have conditions for examining you.”

“Wow... I’m surprised by your audacity. I didn’t think you’d impose conditions on me. Alright, could you tell me your conditions, and I’ll decide whether or not they’re acceptable?”

“I use a type of magic that I don’t want others to know about. I’d like you to swear you won’t tell anyone.”

“What...I’ve reached my limit! I can't forgive you for taking such an attitude towards the princess!”

“Stand down, Melt. This is a conversation between Sirius and me. Now... what happens if I break our promise?”

“I’ll kidnap Lise and leave Elysion.”

“HUH?!”

A true getaway. The siblings will surely follow me. I entered the school in order to grow up safely, meaning I don’t have any reason to be tied to this town

as long as my students are with me. I'd kidnap Lise and run away with no regrets. These words violently upset Lise, and Princess Leafel looked like she wanted to kill us.

"...Do you think I'd allow that to happen? I'd send people to track you down and catch you."

"Then I'd cross over to another continent. Intercontinental interference would make things difficult for a search party. Besides, I'm already used to living in remote mountains."

"Do you think you could do all that? I have the ability to block all ports."

"I believe I can. I have my own unique route."

Once we escaped, all I'd have to do was carry them one-by-one through the air, just like we did to get to old man Lyall's hut. We aren't using a ship, so shutting down all harbors and ports wouldn't affect us. If possible, we'd stay at Lyall's place until things settled down.

The potential abductee is red-faced and looks troubled. I can see that she's not happy with this situation, so I'll leave her be.

"Why are you so obsessed with Lise?"

"I have many reasons... she's my disciple. It'll be tough, but she'll become stronger and more like herself if with us rather than under your shelter and protection here."

"I see... you passed!"

I don't know if that was the right answer, but after hearing it, Princess Leafel looked refreshed and started celebrating with Senia.

"Did you hear that, Senia? Sirius not only refused to back down, but even talked about kidnapping Lise and running away, right?"

"That's correct. There's no doubt he's serious about Lise, no matter the situation."

"Kidnap her and run away... it's like the prince in her favorite story. I'd like to receive such passionate love, too. Hey... Melt?"

“Pri-Princess! Please don’t turn to me with such expectations!”

“Wait, what? Sis... aren’t you mad?”

“Lise. She wasn’t actually angry. She was testing me.”

She’s entrusting her precious sister to me, so she wanted to test my earnestness. Even so, is it common practice for school headmasters and other great people in this world to act so bloodthirsty?

Princess Leafel, who had finished laughing with Senia, held out her hand towards me, satisfied.

“You should still know that if you touched me without permission, there would be consequences. Well then, I grant you permission, and ask that you examine me. Is it okay to touch only my hand? Ah, you’re a kid so my chest is definitely off-limits.”

“...Just your hand is fine.”

Unfortunately, compared to her sister, Princess Leafel’s breasts are— ...No, I’ll stop there. A woman’s intuition is especially sharp at times like these.

With permission granted, I held Princess Leafel’s hand, which felt nice and smooth. Her body temperature was slightly high due to her poor health. I began to examine her using “Scan” through her hand, and she tilted her head.

“Nothing’s happening. Are you actually examining me?”

“This is Lord Sirius’s original magic, it checks for any irregularities in the body. He’s done it to Leus and me many times, yet he’s never found anything wrong.”

“Checking for irregularities... in other words, he’s searching for illnesses. This is magic that shouldn't be shared with others or spread.”

“But if others know about it, even more people could be helped...”

“It’s true a lot of people could be helped, but Sirius would be targeted and examined. As you all heard before, this information doesn’t leave this room. These are my royal orders.”

“Understood.”

“Huh!”

The servant and two guards bowed their heads with grace, but only Melt immediately raised his head, continuing to stare at Princess Leafel's and my hands. It could be that he's a royal guard protecting the princess, but I also detect a hint of jealousy as well.

I carefully used "Scan" which... revealed that it was not a disease. I took away my hand and announced the results loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear.

"I've identified the cause. There seems to be a foreign object in Princess Leafel's body."

"A foreign object? I don't feel any abnormal sensations and don't remember anything being put inside me, though?"

"It's extremely small, not large enough to cause any bodily discomfort. The object should be... around here."

I pointed to the area between her upper arm and wrist. "Scan" showed that this area contained a foreign object and was emitting a strange magical power.

"I'd like to ask a question. Have you sustained any serious arm injuries lately?"

"...I have. I fell off my horse, and got a nasty cut when I landed on a stone."

She fell off her horse... the princess certainly is active. However, how come, despite a deep cut, there isn't any scarring?

"It was so upsetting. Without Lise's healing magic, Princess Leafel would have been left with a deep scar."

"I only handled the final treatment. I'd like you to calm down a bit, sis."

"Uh... I already apologized a lot for that, haven't I? More importantly, Lise's healing abilities are amazing. It would've been bad for my appearance as a princess if I was left with scars. Thank goodness for her."

"You can also thank Sir Sirius for teaching me so many things."

"No, this was purely due to your efforts, Lise. This is proof that you can make good use of what I taught you."

“I agree with our big bro. Lise has healed me a buncha times!”

Leus often got injured during our daily training and mock battles. Lise had no shortage of opportunities to practice healing magic. Furthermore, Leus and Lise have become closer due to these repeated treatments. Even though they're of different races, they've become true siblings. The same goes for Emilia, and for some reason, an undeniable hierarchical relationship was formed...one could say.

“Anyways, there's no doubt that a scar would have formed on her arm. Wasn't that the day before her physical condition started to deteriorate?”

“Yes, you're right. I thought the wound looked off, so I asked for healing magic to be cast on it. I also asked for an examination from a famous doctor. Turns out, the magic within my body is out of balance, and we're trying to find a way to fix it.”

“According to my diagnosis, the main cause of your unbalanced magic is the foreign object in your arm. It should be taken out as soon as possible.”

That planted object was leaking magical power that had a different quality than that of Princess Leafel's. It's poisoning her, eating away at her body, and causing her current physical ailments. Lise's healing magic only temporarily wipes away the foreign magical power. Unless we do something about the object itself, Princess Leafel's suffering will continue forever.

Melt was the first to react to my explanation.

“Wait a minute. Isn't she already healed? Are you planning on causing bodily harm to the princess?”

“It's buried a little deep, so I'm afraid there's no other way to remove it.”

“As a royal guard, I can't stand idly by and let the princes get hurt! Besides, I've never heard of a type of magic that can find foreign objects in a body. Do you have any proof of the object's existence?”

There's no such thing as surgery in this world because most injuries and illnesses can be cured either with magic or medicine. There's no need to cut people open outside of a battle. It'd make more sense to them if there was a visible arrow or blade. Right now, they have to trust me on faith, so Melt's

reaction is natural. Princess Leafel, the main person involved, was calm, though.

“Please calm down, Melt. Lying would only put him in a worse position. If you’re suspicious of Sirius, then you’re suspicious of Lise as well. Even though I may be unfit to be your superior, I believe in my little sister.”

“Sis...”

“However, I see where Melt is coming from. Sirius, is there really a foreign object in my arm?”

“Unfortunately, the only way I can prove its existence is by extracting it and showing you.”

Seeing as there weren’t any changes in her appearance, this was the only way. There’s no other way for them to believe me, but it must be tough to trust someone who you’ve only just met.

“Princess, there are medicines that you’ve yet to try. It’s too early to cut you open...”

“I recommend that it be removed at once. If things stay the way they are, Princess Leafel’s suffering will continue.”

“Sir Sirius, sister...”

“She’s not going to die right away, but as long as it’s in her body, she’ll stay in pain.”

“I see. To be honest, my body feels like it’s on fire. I can’t sleep well, and had to resort to using Sleepfly powder last night.”

Sleepfly powder is a powder collected from a magical being with the same name. In essence, it’s a sleeping potion. Even though she is in a state where she has no choice but to rely on such a potion, she’s laughing and conversing with us so as not to worry Lise. I can’t help but admire Princess Leafel for her mental strength. I need to show her my resolve.

“I have a suggestion, if you trust me.”

“...Let’s hear it.”

“If nothing is found...you can have my head.”

“What did you say?”

It’s a surprising proposition, but I know that my treatment will work. I understand I’m being pushy, but I want to quickly take away her pain to reassure Lise.

“If you have Lord Sirius’s head, you can have mine as well.”

“Mine too!”

We didn’t talk this over, yet the siblings immediately stepped forwards in front of me. I appreciate their support... but as a mentor and father figure, I feel conflicted.

“M-Me too!”

“Lise?! What are you...?”

“If Sir Sirius says it is true, then it must be. I’m sure you’ll recover quickly...”

Seeing her sister’s strong feelings, Princess Leafel took a deep inhale, paused, then exhaled. She turned and gave a soft smile.

“You really... have become stronger over this short period of time. You agree, don’t you Senia?”

“Yes. Lise sure has grown up, most likely due to her making such good friends.”

“I just wanna help my sister, not grow up...”

“Oh, that’s not true. You never would have said such a thing in the past. Now, you’re making your own decisions and saying them with confidence. There are still parts of you that aren’t true to your inner self, but I wonder if you became stronger because you fell in love.”

“Lo-Love?! T-t-that can’t be! Sir Sirius has Emilia, after all!”

“All’s fair in love and war. I won’t forgive you as my sister if you give up before the battle’s begun.”

It’s fun watching her get riled up, but Melt, who’s feeling left out, is glaring at me. Time to move on.

“So, can you trust me?”

“I don’t need you to swear your life on it, but I can’t disagree when my sister feels so strongly. Besides, if I refuse, then you’ll all see my true character. I’m in your hands, Sirius.”

“Please think it through more calmly. Didn’t those who examined the princess say there was no lasting damage on her arm?”

“Yes. Although, everyone has been saying that my magical power has been disturbed... but can only say they don’t know the cause of it. In the midst of everything, Sirius is the only one to provide a definite answer. If Lise says it’s fine, then it’ll be okay.”

“Guh... we sho-should at least get the king’s permission! ...Huh?!”

Melt turned to step outside, and Senia casually approached him and stabbed him in the neck with a small needle. Melt collapsed, and was dragged into a corner of the room and left there. There are many things I could say about what I just witnessed, but I’ll leave it to the fact that the royal guards are treated terribly.

“This needle is coated with Sleepfly powder. He won’t wake up for a while.”

“Good work, Senia. Alright, Sirius, now’s your chance.”

“...Will Melt be okay over there?”

“This isn’t the first time we’ve done that to him. He’s an excellent guard, but tends to go overboard when he’s worried. I’m happy you’re so straightforward with me.”

“I get it. My servants can go overboard, too.”

“Oh, I’m so glad to have made your acquaintance.”

After quickly looking at the siblings, Princess Leafel nodded her head in understanding and we shook hands. If Melt hadn’t been sleeping, he would have bothered us again.

With permission from Princess Leafel, I immediately began to prepare for surgical removal. I asked Senia to prepare a large tub of water and find a tweezer-like tool. After instructing Senia to boil the water, I touched the princess’s arm again to confirm the location of the foreign object while

explaining the procedure.

“I’ll cut this area with a knife and remove the object. It’ll bleed, of course, so prepare yourself.”

“I’m ready. Compared to the pain coursing through my body, something as trivial as a little cut doesn’t mean a thing.”

“Ah, I should have told you this earlier. Don’t worry about feeling anything. I’ll erase all pain sensations.”

“What are you talking about... oh?”

As I spoke with her, I completed the anesthesia procedure using magic. Her arm will be numb for a while. Noticing something strange, Princess Leafel touched it with her other arm and was taken aback.

“Wow... how strange. I don’t feel either my touch or any pain right here.”

“I’ve treated you by pouring magic into your arm in a particular way to paralyze your senses. You won’t feel any pain when I make an incision.”

“Is this also something you thought of? No... let’s prioritize my treatment first and foremost. Go ahead.”

Despite my recommendation of covering her eyes, she wanted to watch out of curiosity. All eyes were on me.

With the tub underneath my arm, Emilia standing to my side as an assistant, and Leus on the opposite side as additional personnel, we all nodded at each other and began the surgery. I call it surgery, but seeing as I’m not dealing with crucial organs and have magic on my side, it shouldn’t be as big a deal as it was in my previous life. Simply put, all I need to do is make a cut, remove the object, and heal the wound. So long as I maintain all sanitary procedures, it should go off without a hitch. She’ll start bleeding once I make my incision, though, so I must be careful and quick. Blood transfusions don’t exist in this world.

“I’ll tie up her arm with ‘String’ in order to slow the bleeding.”

“Wow... are you sure that ‘String’ will work?”

I cut into Princess Leafel’s arm with a knife that was sterilized with boiling water, and her blood flowed into the tub. Someone gasped at the sight, and I

swiftly widened the wound and thrust the tweezers into it.

“Hey, sis... how are you holding up?”

“You look paler than me. Still... It's weird. I'm happy that I don't feel pain right now, but will everything go back to normal afterward?”

“Yes, in about half a day's time. Lord Sirius will soon remove the cause of your pain, so please wait.”

“I trust you.”

“I'll do all that I can.”

“Oh my, this looks like it'll be tough. Stay strong, Lise.”

“I can't believe you just said that at a time like this, sis...”

I'm amazed at the fact that her sense of pain is so diminished that she can make small talk so calmly right now. Well, it makes it easier for us, so I focused on finishing up the procedure. Carefully, so as to not damage the blood vessels, I removed the foreign object and placed it on the tray that Emilia offered. The surgery was over. It was an easy procedure, mainly because Princess Leafel stayed still the entire time.

“Extraction complete...The rest is up to you, Lise.”

“Alright! I'll treat her right away.”

The final step was healing, which I left to Lise. She closed the wound with her healing magic. I deactivated “String” and told Princess Leafel that she was in the clear. The foreign object was stained red with blood, so, using a towel offered up by Senia, I wiped it off to find that it was a small, greenish stone. It was no bigger than my pinky fingernail. I recognized it at once.

“To think she had something like this in her arm...”

“Yeah...I've heard about it before, but it's still surprising, isn't it?”

“Hey big bro, it's kinda pretty. What kind of stone is that?”

“This is... a magic stone. It seems more pure than the one I bought recently.”

Despite its size, it contains an enormous amount of magical power, which was leaking into Princess Leafel and causing her to suffer. The odds are low that

such a precious magic stone just so happened to be conveniently right where she fell from her horse. I smell a conspiracy. I was thinking of how to explain this while the treatment was wrapping up, and once Princess Leafel's arm was patched up.

"How do you feel, sis?"

"Hmm...I feel pretty tired, but that annoying pain has subsided."

Princess Leafel gave herself a once-over as Senia wiped away the blood and sweat from her.

"I'm tired and lost a bit of blood, so I won't let my guard down yet. If I rest for a few days, I believe my strength will return."

"I'm curious about a lot of what you've done, but should set that aside for now. First, I must thank you."

"I agree. Thank you for helping Princess Leafel."

I felt embarrassed by being thanked by a princess and her servant, but it didn't feel too bad. I turned around and the siblings nodded at me, smiling. Lise was so moved that she held my hand with both of hers as if to completely envelop them.

"Thank you for helping my sister. I'm so glad... to have met you."

"Alright, this is your chance, Lise! Give him a hug!"

"Sto-Stop it, sis! I only... think of Si-Sir Sirius as my teacher!"

"Then why did you tell me he was such a dependable guy? Besides, it looks like you're looking at him a little differently than you would a teacher!"

"Why are you bringing that up now?!"

"Aren't you the one blowing things out of proportion?"

Some time passed, and Melt woke up, causing an uproar. He bowed his head obediently when he saw the magic stone that came out of Princess Leafel's body. He doesn't give a strong first impression, but I can't stay mad at him knowing that he's acting purely out of concern as her royal guard. Lise secretly whispered to me that Princess Leafel and Melt are childhood friends who share

mutual feelings for each other. It's complicated, though, due to the difference in their social status. Melt was previously a low-ranking noble who rose up to the ranks to be the princess's royal guard. He did it out of his love for her. It's odd to say this while in a child's body, but it's good to be young.

Afterward, Lise's worries were gone, and Senia treated us to a cup of tea. They wanted to thank me in an informal way, but I still declined.

"You've taken care of Lise, I won't be satisfied unless I thank you. Please, the sky's the limit, tell me what you'd like."

"I have nothing that's troubling me at the moment. Well, there is something I'd like to ask of Lise."

"What's this? Not me, but Lise? Wouldn't it be better to ask the person directly involved?"

"It's fairly important, which is why I want to ask in front of her sister, too. This is a rude question to ask, yet I'm curious. Why is Lise's existence hidden?"

There's only one daughter of the king known to the world, and that is Princess Leafel. Yet, here stands another daughter who is even accepted by Princess Leafel, herself. I don't care about Lise's heritage, but since she's royalty, she should be learning more than just magic. I'd like to know more about her and her environment, so I can adjust my educational plans accordingly.

My impertinent question made Senia, Melt, and the princess turn serious. The once-friendly atmosphere shifted to a tense one. The siblings drew closer to protect me from all sides. Lise shifted from foot to foot with a troubled look on her face. The tension could be cut with a knife until Princess Leafel broke the ice.

"Senia. Melt. I release you from your duties."

"Understood."

"Are you sure, princess?"

"These are the children that Lise accepted in her heart. She'll wind up telling them eventually. It's alright."

"Sis, I don't want to keep secrets from them anymore."

“Is that right? Well, it’s a common reason, but you must swear not to tell anyone.”

“I swear I won’t. I just want to know more about Lise.”

I honestly don’t want anything to do with royalty, but it’s different knowing that it’s Lise’s family. I wanted to ask Lise to join us on our adventures after graduation, but the fact that she’s a royal throws a wrench in our plans. We should at least teach her some attack magic and self-defense so she can protect herself when we’re gone.

“The reason why her information isn’t released to the public isn’t just because she’s an illegitimate child, it’s also to protect her from idiots. If Lise’s heritage becomes known, loads of nobles will line up to try to marry into the royal family.”

There are certainly quite a few nobles who’d like to become royalty. And Lise...

“I’m able to drive those types away, but Lise might be deceived. She was living as a commoner up until recently, and she’s such a naive and kind child. It’s inevitable.”

“Right, she doesn’t notice her surroundings when enjoying delicious food.”

“If someone uses our big bro’s cake as bait, she’d be caught in no time.”

“Ah... I can’t even deny that. But wait Leus, isn’t that you, too?”

“I’ll go wherever his cakes go!”

“Huh?!”

Lise’s spirit was whittled down piece by piece. Princess Leafel is right, after all. Lise is pure and easily deceived, but I think that’s one of her charms.

“Anyways, for that reason, I proposed to my father that we should hide her identity. What she wants to do after she graduates is up to her.”

In other words, it’s up to Lise whether she wants to live as a royal, or forge a new path as a commoner. Despite her illegitimacy, she is royalty, meaning she could be used for political reasons... Princess Leafel has definitely considered such a thing.

“Big bro, can Lise come if we persuade her?”

“How would you do that?”

She has family in this town whom she adores. There was no way she’d decide to leave at this moment. Now that we know the reason for her being hidden away, I ventured to ask one more important question.

“Does Lise have the right to inherit the throne?”

“She does but... I have both younger and older brothers. Unless someone as powerful as Lordvel hits the castle with some extreme magic and takes us all out, she’s not likely to take the throne.”

“Princess, even if you say it as a joke, please refrain from saying such impolite nonsense.”

“What I’m saying is, it’s practically impossible for Lise to become queen. Isn’t that better for you all?”

“Ye-Yeah. I’ve never had an interest, and I doubt I’d make a good queen.”

“I don’t want any part of the royal family, either. Looks like Lise and I can continue our friendship as it is. Isn’t that right, Lise?”

“...Yes!”

Lise’s cheeks flushed red and broke out into a wide, happy smile. We then had our second cup of tea, and continued chatting peacefully. It was getting late in the evening though, and we decided to return to Diamond Manor. Lise was worried about her sister and wanted to stay behind, but Princess Leafel assured her that she could return home, so she reluctantly got into the same carriage as us.

“This may sound rude, but I’m glad to have learned more about Lise and her family through this matter.”

“Yes. It’s such bad luck that big sis Leafel managed to get a magic stone lodged in her arm.”

It’s common practice to use healing magic first when someone gets hurt in this world. If it’s done in a hurry, the hygiene standards may fail to be up to code. The cause of her injury was falling off her horse. It’s not surprising that at

least one foreign object was mixed in with the stones and dirt on the bare ground. I'd like to agree with Leus that it was bad luck... However, magic stones are only found in the depths of mines deep underground. It's hard to believe there was one right where she fell off her horse.

In my opinion, Lise, who understands hygiene, must have used her magic midway through the healing process. It's likely that whoever applied the first round of healing magic intentionally embedded it... to assassinate the princess. Princess Leafel must have realized this possibility, and told Lise to head home so she doesn't see her scary side as she searches for the culprit. It must be hard being the next queen. There's no use in worrying everyone, though. I only met her today, and can tell she was as amazing as the rumors alleged. She'll find the culprit and bring them to justice soon.

"By the way, what should we have for dinner? Since Lise is here today, wanna eat the roast beef we talked about earlier?"

"...Are you sure?"

Lise, who was sadly looking out the window, perked up at the sound of roast beef. She's very upfront when it comes to food.

"But didn't you have it the other day? Anything you make is delicious, Sir Sirius, you could always make another dish, right?"

"That meat's delicious, it'd be a shame if you didn't get to have some, Lise."

"I wanna have some too, Lise, it's no big deal?"

"Then let's have another stew. We can fill it to the brim and simmer it thoroughly."

"Alright!"

Then, after shocking Zack by driving the luxurious carriage to the Gargan Trading Company, we returned to Diamond Manor for dinner. The meal was modest in comparison to the royal residence of Princess Leafel, but Lise says it's incomparably delicious.

"Hmm...I like eating with my sister, but eating with you all is so relaxing. I wish I could always enjoy meals with you..."

“Me too. Meals are meant to be enjoyed with others, you should invite your sister sometime.”

“I agree! Big bro, refill please!”

“I would also like a refill, Lord Sirius.”

“Why can’t you do it yourself?!”

I don’t know why, yet feeding them food makes me happy. Also, Lise looks her finest when she’s laughing along with the siblings.

Despite all our difficulties, we were able to return to our daily lives without too much hassle from the royal family. I poured the stew into my student’s bowls, thinking of what training should be done tomorrow.

But just two days later... I had to revisit Princess Leafel for some reason. She has some business with me, and this time requested that only Lise and I go to the mansion. The siblings, who were asked to stay behind, are letting out their frustrations through training back at the Diamond Manor. I’m sitting on a sofa in the room while Princess Leafel sits opposite of me, smiling happily.

“Welcome, Sirius. I appreciate you coming all the way out here.”

“I’m sure it’d be more difficult for you to do so, given the circumstances. I was also concerned about your healing process, so please don’t worry. It looks like you’re all better, what a relief.”

Unlike before, her previously pale face has regained a bit of color and her strength is recovering steadily. She’s dressed in a dress that looks like her daily attire. She’s well-groomed, and anyone could ascertain that she’s a splendid princess.

“Yes, and it’s all thanks to your support. By the way, about why I sent for you... before I start talking, Lise, could you step out for a while?”

“That’s suspicious, sis. What in the world do you want to talk about?”

“Don’t give me that look. It’s a touchy subject, I don’t want to worry you. Why don’t you and Senia go snack on some treats?”

“Don’t patronize me! Alright... I’ll do as you say, but I’ll get upset if anything happens to Sir Sirius.”

“It’ll be fine, Lise. More importantly, I tried making the candy that Emilia told me about a couple of days ago. I’d like you to try some.”

“Hm... well, if you insist.”

Lise and Senia, both practically drooling, exited the room, leaving me and Princess Leaefl behind... it feels like something’s missing. That’s right, it’s oddly quiet because Melt isn’t around today.

“By the way...Where’s your royal guard, Melt?”

“He had some business to attend to back at the castle. He’s quite noisy when you’re around, so it’s best that he’s gone, right?”

“Isn’t he your guard? Does that mean you’re without protection?”

“I have Senia to protect me. She acts both as my servant and my guard.”

“Yes, but you’re alone with me right now?”

We’re alone together. Is she not worried about the possibility of being assassinated by me? I don’t plan to, but I can’t help but think that way due to the experiences of my past life. Princess Leafel realized what I was implying, and merely smiled as if to say she can handle it.

“What’s this? Are you planning on assassinating me, Sirius?”

“Doing so would make Lise cry, so I don’t plan on it.”

“Then it’s fine. Wow, you never fail to surprise me with your talent. I want you more and more.”

Princess Leafel gave me a look like she was staring down her prey. I guess I knew why she called me. However, it was impossible to escape now, so averting my gaze in slight resistance, I urged her to go on.

“Well then, why did you invite me over?”

“Oh, that’s right... shall I begin by reporting on the magic stone that was plucked from my body? As expected, it turns out it was implanted in me to assassinate me under the guise of a disease.”

She explained the truth of the incident in a matter-of-fact manner. The same man who first cast a healing spell as soon as she fell from her horse was the

same man who implanted the magic stone. This was just as I predicted. The man didn't know much about magic stones; it was given to him by his boss, who told him that placing them in the body would help facilitate the healing process. Then, when Princess Leafel was injured, he trusted his boss' words and implanted the magic stone. He was acting with good intentions, therefore he didn't raise suspicion.

His boss who gave him the magic stone previously supervised magic researchers at the castle. Magic stones are expensive, so they traced back transfers of large sums of money to find him. He didn't think it was possible to remove magic stones from the body, and when the actual stone was placed in front of him, he readily admitted his guilt.

"The man who put the magic stone in me was sick, not taking any visitors, and upon further investigation, I found out that he had been dealt with by his boss. He was afraid he'd turn himself in, so he was disposed of before my physical condition took a turn for the worse."

"You're saying that the root of the problem is the magic researchers... no, it must be someone higher up if they're aiming for the person who's next in line for the throne."

"You're clever. That's exactly what I'm saying. The real culprit was a noble who used to serve my brother, Dirav. He wanted to kill me and make Dirav, who seemed easier to manipulate, king."

Furthermore, the nobleman hates women, and strongly believes that Elysion cannot be ruled by a queen.

"...Childish."

"I agree. When his mansion was investigated, we found a mountain of evidence. He's been arrested and imprisoned. He'll be secretly disposed of under the pretense of an illness in the near future."

He'll be assassinated by the person who he intended to assassinate. That's the definition of causality. Princess Leafel wears a nice smile on her face as she wraps up her report... is she just putting on a show for me? Regardless, I'm highly impressed by her ability to find the real culprit and put the matter to rest in less than two days.

“Um, I have a question. Why are you reporting this to me? I treated you, but how am I related to anything else?”

“I arrived at the truth thanks to you, you have the right to know. Now, onto the main issue...”

...Here it comes. I already figured out what she was trying to do. She’s lowering her walls by showing off her abilities and sharing secrets of the royal family with me. Sighing inwardly, I waited for her to speak. She held out her hand to me and spoke clearly.

“Sirius, I called you here to recruit you. Would you like to serve me after you graduate from school?”

Just as I thought. Not only does she appreciate my original techniques, but she also admires how I’ve trained Lise to harness her own magic. Being around Lise made the possibility of recruitment inevitable. Although, I never expected Princess Leafel to solicit me after just one meeting. Should I call her open-minded, or fearless?

“...This is just my opinion of myself, but I’m a commoner, and have a questionable existence. Would it be alright to be served by someone like me?”

“Your abilities are certainly beyond that of a child. You are questionable, but your good character is evident through your treatment of Lise and your two servants. You're not a bad guy— you’re genuinely trustworthy.”

“Only towards my disciples. Let’s be clear: I don’t hold back when it comes to my enemies.”

“That’s exactly what I want. You can’t protect people with kindness alone. Strength is crucial. You understand that, which is why I want you.”

Princess Leafel doesn’t look down on me because I’m a child. She treats me as an adult. That’s probably why she speaks to me as an equal. Nevertheless, I want to travel the world and experience many things. I have no intention of serving anyone for now.

“This is a great honor for a commoner such as myself, but I plan on traveling once I graduate. Besides, I have to take care of Emilia and Leus.”

“Ah, of course, those two could come join you here. They both possess skills that Senia approves of. You can have Lise, too.”

“Don’t toss in your little sister as a bonus. Besides, I’m a commoner, so it’s not like I can ignore her wishes...”

“Is that so? She wouldn’t be displeased. As long as she’s near you, I’m sure she’ll be happy.”

“You make a tempting offer, but I must decline. I apologize.”

Seeing my stubborn manner, Princess Leafel let out a sigh and gave up. I didn’t think she’d bring her sister into this, I hope she got her permission ahead of time.

“Huh... it’s a shame to miss out on someone like you. I concede this time, but I’ll have you know that I’m pretty persistent. Prepare yourself: I’ll continue my attempts to recruit you, even after you’ve traveled the world.”

“I don’t know how many years that’ll take.”

“That doesn’t matter. Besides, I’ll eventually become the queen of this country and expand Elysion. You’ll be tempted to be hired by me eventually.”

Instead of throwing in the towel, she’s instead burning with a fighting spirit. We’ve only known each other for a short period of time, yet I know she’s adaptable enough to accept both the good and the bad. She holds qualities that put her above the rest. As she declared earlier, she’ll be able to further develop Elysion.

In my previous life, I held a job that involved a lot of behind-the-scenes work. I was a subordinate of my partner in the organization, meaning that I’m not averse to working under someone else. Maybe I’ll consider serving her in the future. That’s still a long way away, though. For now, there’s nothing wrong with developing a normal friendship with her, viewing her as Lise’s sister.

I brought out a wooden box I had taken with me and placed it on the desk. Princess Leafel peeked over at it with a deep interest.

“I came over last time empty-handed, but this time I brought something sweet for you that I made.”

“Oh, there’s no need to be so polite. Yet, since it’s you, I couldn’t help but expect this.”

“I heard from Lise that your appetite returned. I baked a cake for you today.”

“A cake?!”

Her eyes lit up when she saw that the wooden box– which had a cooling magic circle that I learned to make at school– contained a whole cheesecake. This isn’t the first time she’s had one of my cakes, I’ve made Lise take over slices back to the mansion several times in the past.

“Look at the size of it... how dreamy. I’ve never seen a cake like this before, I wonder what it tastes like?”

“You’ve never seen this before?”

“I’ve had shortbread, but this is the first time I’ve seen this type of cake.”

“I’ve given slices to Lise to take over to you multiple times...”

Lise’s gluttony is strangely voracious. Cheesecake is her particular favorite. It’s quite possible that she sneakily ate it on the way to the mansion. Princess Leafel must have come to the same conclusion as I did because she started to overflow with mysterious magical power. This is anger.

“I see...Looks like I need to have an important conversation with that girl.”

...Food aggression is scary, especially for women when sweets are involved. Lise will get what’s coming to her, and I can only silently pray for her soul to rest in peace. It appears that my business here is concluded. While the countdown to Lise’s punishment was ticking away... someone suddenly arrived.

“This is terrible, Princess Leafel!”

I was about to cut the cake when Senia burst into the room, flustered. An excellent servant like her would normally have knocked and waited for a reply before entering the princess’s room. This must be quite the emergency.

Princess Leafel was enchanted at the sight of the cake. However, she quickly turned to the situation at hand with a serious expression once she saw Senia.

“What happened?”

“Please listen, Miss Lise...”

Senia unapologetically spoke with her mouth to Princess Leafel’s ear. I wasn’t involved, so I resumed cutting the cake. I listened using my advanced hearing and briefly caught the word “Lise.” After that... I activated “Search.”

“Are you serious? What’s the possibility of this being fake?”

“It carries the seal of the king, so there’s no doubt about it. It doesn’t appear to be dangerous, but...”

Princess Leafel looked bitter, but, remembering part way through that I was still there, softened her expression. She turned to face me.

“I’m sorry, Sirius. I have urgent business to attend to...”

“Is it because Lise left the mansion?”

That’s right... I can’t sense Lise’s presence anymore. Princess Leafel was taken aback by my words, and she looked serious, shooting me a penetrating look.

“This is a royal affair, commoners shouldn’t have such easy access to this information.”

“There must have been a reason why she got upset... in other words, either your father or brothers... I have a feeling it was the king.”

I’ve been tracking her using “Search” for some time. Lise, having left the mansion, seems to be heading in the direction of the castle. Princess Leafel’s silence indicates that I’m on the mark.

“...I can only protect her from so much. If you delve deeper, you won’t be able to return to your regular life, okay?”

“I can’t leave her alone. She’s my student, after all.”

“You’re a commoner, and a teacher-student relationship isn’t written in stone. Do you really want to make enemies with members of the royal family?”

“Unless she requests otherwise, I’ll work alongside Lise, no matter who the enemy is.”

“That seems to surpass a teacher-student relationship. Are you actually in love with her?”

“I’ll leave it up to you to determine that. Anyways, as her teacher, and as a man, I want to look after the woman I promised to protect.”

Influenced by my previous life, I’ve grown considerably stronger due to my practical training. That’s why I hold such high goals and ideals. My way of speaking may have sounded rude, regardless, Princess Leafel smiled wryly at my steadfast words.

“I wanted to hear you say that you’re doing this out of love... I understand your determination.”

“I’m glad I got it across. But aren’t you determined, too?”

“Of course. I finally got a little sister after living in a family full of men. She’s honest and adorable... I’ve been thinking of appointing her as my personal healer when I become queen. That way, I can keep her by my side. Well, that was until she met you.”

Lise was a kid who lacked self-confidence and was easily influenced by those around her before she met me. Nonetheless, she was great at using healing and water magic. I guess that’s how Princess Leafel wanted to protect her sister. She had spoken to me with a distant look in her eyes, then, as if she had made up her mind, turned her gaze towards me.

“Unfortunately, I don’t think there’s much you can do to help. That alone won’t convince you, so I’ll explain the circumstances.”

“Thank you. Even a small amount of information would suffice.”

“Are you sure, Princess Leafel?”

“Sirius probably won’t leave unless I tell him this. Plus, I don’t want him to act on his own without any explanation. Above all, if I were in his shoes, I would have grabbed one of us by the collar and demanded more details.”

“That’s...fair. If I weren’t in this position, I would have followed Miss Lise and stormed the castle.”

“Then I’ll go ahead and share. As you expected, Lise was taken by the king of Elysion, Cardeas.”

“Lise’s father, correct? If you two are flustered, does that mean she’s in

danger?”

“Her life isn’t in danger. However, Lise...she’s too honest and can’t change her emotions. He’s done something cruel.”

Apparently, this was an unprecedented event. With a bitter taste in her mouth and an expression to match, Princess Leafel told me more.

“They sent her to the castle to marry a certain noble.”

I listened to the full story and returned to Diamond Manor. I told the siblings, who were waiting for me to return, everything.

“What do you mean Lise is getting married, big bro?!”

After hearing the news, Leus banged on the table in anger in disbelief. Emilia wore a solemn look on her face, and calmly patted Leus on the shoulder to soothe him.

“Calm down, Leus. Lord Sirius isn’t finished yet.”

“Ah, so-sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. Why are you so upset, though?”

“Because isn’t it like a marriage of convenience? I don’t get why she’s involved in something like that! Why can’t big sis Leafel stop it?!”

“Stay calm. I doubt Miss Leafel would’ve allowed the marriage to happen if she knew about it. She didn’t know either.”

“Anyways, Lise is currently at the castle. I don’t think she’s being mistreated, she just can’t leave the castle until the marriage takes place.”

Her last location I saw with “Search” was on one of the upper floors of the castle. She’s also in the back of the castle, so in a sense, her safety can be assured.

“Lord Sirius, how could this happen? Even if she’s a royal, she’s too young to get married.”

“It’s called a marriage, but at Lise’s age, it’s actually a pre-nuptial ceremony. Age doesn’t matter, because it’s a kind of ceremony where relatives and those who promise to marry and have a future together gather.”

It's a very serious ceremony that follows the same process as a wedding ceremony. Marriage is confirmed when the pre-nuptial ceremony is performed. Regardless of what the participating people think or do, everyone else will recognize the union. In my previous life, it'd be like putting a stamp on a marriage certificate initially, then having a full-fledged wedding at a later date. There's no need to go through it again, but the ceremony is also a social event where nobles can mingle with one another. For those of us who aren't involved, it's just a hassle.

According to Senia, a highly trusted aide to the king arrived at the mansion while Princess Leafel and I were conversing. Princess Leafel was busy, so Senia answered for her. Lise, secretly hearing the conversation, cut in and said she would take her sister's place. She left for the castle with the entourage.

“Lise...”

They must understand how she feels, given the Silver Wolf tribe's emphasis on treasuring one's family. Emilia looks especially conflicted.

As for the other wedding party, he's a nobleman famous across Elysion. According to Princess Leafel, this was a perfect example of a political marriage that strengthens the alliance between powerful nobles and royalty. This was the marriage that all of the rumors were spread about, yet she didn't have a good impression of her partner, and was working behind the scenes to sabotage the marriage. However, talks were still going on when she was sick from the magic stone in her body. It could still be overturned, but unfortunately, Lise had overheard and stepped forward to take her place. Despite sending her off to school to prevent something like this from happening... she had gotten her sister involved, which deeply frustrated Princess Leafel.

“I'll absolutely put a stop to this. Please wait for Lise's return, Sirius.”

She had a lot to say, but didn't want to get me involved because it was a royal family matter. She also questioned my true intentions with Lise, so I had no choice but to take a step back. I needed to be patient and wait it out. Princess Leafel hurriedly got ready and rushed out of the mansion. She's probably at the castle by now, trying to persuade Lise and the king.

By the time I finished explaining everything to the siblings, they had calmed down, but weren't wholly convinced.

"I wonder if it's okay for Miss Leafel to be moving around so much..."

"Isn't there anything we can do, big bro? I hate just sitting around and waiting."

"...Get ready."

"Oh! Are you going to save Lise?"

"No, I'm not exactly saving her. I simply want to hear her true feelings."

I think she has a beautiful, kind heart, acting as a scapegoat for her sister. However, when it comes to those she cares about, Lise acts without thinking of the consequences. In fact, she had that tendency during the incident where she faced the murderers in the labyrinth. Truth be told, I have a feeling... she might be regretting it now.

What's important to me is whether or not this is what Lise really wants. For that reason, I went to see Lise so I could ask her directly. Princess Leafel advised me to wait for her, but I wanted to hear Lise's thoughts directly from her.

"The castle's security is tight... I guess it'd be better to sneak in during the ceremony tomorrow."

Lise is probably currently hiding her true feelings. It would be better to have one of the siblings with her to find out her intentions. It would be difficult to sneak into the castle with them, seeing as they're not used to doing infiltrations. Besides, we need to be prepared. There's a chance that we might blurt out how we feel in the heat of the moment. We should aim for tomorrow.

"Lord Sirius, please allow me to accompany you."

"I'll go too! I won't be able to move on until I know how she feels!"

"So you've decided... I'll ask, but depending on the outcome, you could be hunted down by the royal family, or they may even hold a grudge for the rest of your lives. Do you still wanna go?"

"That won't be a problem. I'll be on Lise's side, even if I have to go up against the king."

“It’s the best when Lise can laugh alongside us and big sis Leafel!”

Powerful words. At any rate, I’m happy she’s grown to be a sweet and gentle girl who cherishes her friends. Firm in our resolve, we headed to the Gargan Trading Company to gear ourselves up.

Chapter Four

My Prince

| Lise |

When I was a little girl, there was a story that my mom read to me many times that I loved.

“Mother, please read this to me.”

“You still love this story, don’t you? Once upon a time, there was a very beautiful princess and a prince, who were chosen by a legendary sword.”

The book’s title was “The Dragon Prince.” It was a common story that could be read to children anywhere. An evil dragon cursed a country’s princess, and she fell into a deep sleep. To break the princess’s curse, her fiancé, the prince, set out on a journey to use the legendary sword to defeat the dragon. After a long and arduous journey, the prince was able to wield the legendary sword and slay the dragon. But once the dragon was defeated, and the princess’ curse was lifted, a wicked prince from a nearby country kidnapped her, and tried to force her hand in marriage.

The princess was saddened by the unwanted marriage, and her fiancé, the prince, came to her rescue on the back of a dragon during the ceremony. After being defeated by the prince, the dragon had a change of heart and became his companion. The prince rescued the princess safe and sound, and the two returned to their former kingdom on the dragon’s back. Then they got married and lived happily ever after.

...Even though it’s for little kids, I still love this story. Hearing it made me long for a prince who would ride on the back of a dragon, wielding a legendary sword in his hand. But that’s... only a story. Yet even when I was old enough to understand that, I still...

For as long as I can remember, I never had a father. Mom mentioned that he went far, far away, but I somehow came to believe that he had died. But my mom was enough for me. She was a former adventurer who raised me by

herself. She gave me such generous love that I never felt lonely without my dad around.

Then, when I was ten years old, she passed away from an illness. I spent days and days grieving, and when I finally began to heal, a man arrived who asked for me. He gave me a letter. It was from the king of a country called Elysion, who stated that his name was Cardeas, and he was my father. He learned of my existence through a letter my mom sent before her death, and he wanted to take me into his custody. The money in my savings was dwindling, and thinking that it was my mom's wish to have him raise me, I decided to go to my father. The man who delivered the letter took me to the castle, where I met my father for the first time.

My first impression of him was that he was cold. He told me again and again in a matter-of-fact manner that I was a bastard child who had no claim to the throne. He explained that if I wanted to stay in the castle, then I should not do anything conspicuous. He stared at me as if he couldn't care less about me. My mom told me before she died that my father was a very brave and reliable man... from that moment on, my illusion of having a dependable father was shattered.

I was surrounded by strangers, and had no understanding how to conduct myself around nobility and royalty. My father's family treated me coldly, and those who were supposed to be my brothers and sisters were embarrassed by me. I no longer wanted to stay in the castle, and started to think that I was better off in my hometown, even if it meant returning to poverty. While quietly crying in my room and wondering what would happen to me— who turned out to not only be a noble, but also royalty— when a knock came on my door.

“Nice to meet you. You must be Fairlise, right? My name is Leafel. I’m your older sister.”

And that's how I met... my sister.

She gave me a gentle smile, and wrapped me in her arms. I found myself telling her all my worries and true feelings. It's embarrassing, but I cried out loud at the warmth I felt when meeting the first person I could rely on in the castle.

After getting to know one another, my sister introduced me to two people who were waiting outside our door.

“How do you do, Fairlise? I am Miss Leafel’s servant, Senia. Feel free to call me as you like.”

“My name is Melt, I’m the princess’s personal guard.”

Senia, a kind bunny demi-human, and Mr. Melt, who is a bit scary sometimes, but is great at protecting my sister. With these two and my sister at my side, I became accustomed to life in the castle. However, that didn’t change the fact that I was once a commoner. It was difficult for me to learn the etiquette and table manners of the royal family. I managed to get by with the help of my sister and Senia, but I began to feel an emotional toll, and showed signs of fatigue. My sister, who couldn’t bear to see me like this, offered a proposal.

“Why don’t you enroll in school?”

She told me there were nobles enrolled in the school, so I could learn etiquette. There were also commoners there, which meant I might be able to make friends... I decided to enroll.

My sister explained this idea to our father, who gave me permission on the condition that I conceal my identity. I also confided to my sister that I could see spirits, something that I had never told anyone but my mom. She gently told me she would pretend she never heard that, and I should continue keeping it a secret.

“I don’t care if you can see spirits. You’re my sister, and that’s enough. Thank you for telling me something this meaningful.”

I was so moved by her words that I hugged her, which became a cherished memory.

I was admitted to the school, and entered my assigned dorm room, wondering what my roommate would be like... but there was no one there.

While I was wondering what had happened with my roommate, who didn’t show up at all after dinner time, a wolf demi-human with beautiful silver hair came into the room.

“Hello, you must be my roommate?”

“Ah, y-yes. My name is Fa—uh, Lise... what’s yours?”

“My name’s Emilia. As you can see, I’m a Silver Wolf.”

I almost blurted out my real name, but decided on going by my own preference that my sister and I had sorted out ahead of time. My story was that I was the daughter of a certain noble family, and was admitted to the school for training... but I was so captivated by Emilia’s beautiful silver hair that I almost told her the truth, even though she never asked. When I first met Emilia, I thought she was a respectable person who was the daughter of a certain famous noble family, in contrast to me, who became royalty out of the blue.

“That’s just like my master, Lord Sirius.”

Huh? Did she say master? That means... this beautiful and polite young lady is a servant? I was surprised, yet Emilia didn’t stop talking and continued to say how amazing her Lord Sirius was. I am sure Emilia respects and trusts her master from the bottom of her heart. She reminds me of Senia, who serves my sister. Emilia was easy to talk to, and before I knew it, we became close enough to stay up late into the night chatting.

Thinking of how my sister would be relieved to find out I made a friend, my father summoned me to the castle on the day of the entrance ceremony. Just as always, he spoke to me coldly, while avoiding my gaze. In essence, I was called in to nail in the fact that I should not reveal my identity at school. We didn’t make eye contact once, and as I was leaving, my father asked me if I thought I would do well at school. I responded that I had made a friend, and left the room.

“...Is that so?”

I caught his reply behind my back as I was walking away. It felt different. Regardless, I didn’t like how he looked at me, so all I could think about was leaving as soon as I could. My father, this country’s king, is certainly a fine man. Why must he look at me coldly? Was I better off... never having been born?

My emotions were all over the place when I returned to the school. Emilia had just come back from the entrance ceremony and told me all about it,

concerned about my condition.

Yeah... I shouldn't be feeling so down. I have friends other than my sister who worry about me. I'll do my best in school from now on. That's what I aimed to do, but... it wasn't easy.

The reason is that in the Airone class I entered, I had to be able to use elementary magic in all four attributes. I'm a skilled water attribute user, but I have no skill at all with the fire attribute, which caused my classmates to make fun of me. I was able to bear their teasing, but they crossed the line when they ridiculed my mom. Their abusive language got worse and worse by the day, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't use fire attribute magic. Hitting a wall so soon after my sister recommended that I go to school made me want to disappear and cry nonstop. Then, Emilia saw me crying, and when I explained the situation at hand, she gave a big nod and made a suggestion.

"If that's the case, why not consult Lord Sirius? I'm sure he'll come up with something."

A few days later...I met the man who'd change my fate.

I finished another heartbreaking day of class, and Emilia guided me to the library, where I met... Sirius. Emilia always hyped him up as a great man, but he looked like a regular boy. On one hand, though, his calm atmosphere and demeanor were just like my sister's, who seriously tackled her royal duties, so I didn't view him as child-like. On the other hand, the book he was reading with a pensive look on his face was "The World's Cuisine Encyclopedia." My first impression was that he was a hard-to-understand person.

Next, Emilia's younger brother, Leus, introduced himself. He seemed to be very naughty, but also cute, and was honest with Emilia and Sirius. He calls me "sis," and I had a feeling the two of us would get along well.

After our introductions were complete, I visited the small dormitory named "Diamond Manor." I ate the cake that Sirius made and... forgot myself for a moment. I had never tasted a sweet that was so yummy that I could get lost in it. That alone could have satisfied me, but that's not why I visited, was it?

After explaining the situation, I asked Sirius to take a look at my magical abilities. To my surprise, he easily found out that I was the type of person who

could see spirits. I've kept it a secret for a long time... because my mom taught me that I should only tell those that I trust about this skill, and that I could get kidnapped by terrible people. That's why I never told anyone but my mom and my sister... I couldn't believe he figured me out.

Sirius not only calmed me down when I freaked out, but also gave me advice on how to handle the spirits. Thanks to his advice, I was finally able to use elementary fire attribute magic. With that problem solved, Sirius also said that my class placement was another problem that needed to be handled. Why would he do so much for me, who he just met?

"It doesn't matter whether you're a noble or can see spirits. You're a friend of Emilia's, and we want to get to know you, too... that's the only reason we want to help."

Those words were so much like my sister's. He's not obsessed with money and honor like the people I saw at the castle. He's a kind person whom Emilia and Leus trust wholeheartedly. My sister warned me to be suspicious of anyone who speaks sweetly to me, but I subconsciously thought that I could trust Sirius.

While his servants, Emilia and Leus, are supposed to take care of Sirius, strangely enough, he's the one who cooks meals for them. Then, they let me eat with them, and served me dishes that I had never seen in my hometown or in my life at the castle. The dish, called hotpot, was so good that I ended up having seconds, even though I thought I was eating too much. They told me they had all sorts of other dishes. I secretly envied the two of them for being able to eat this kind of food every day.

Then, after some negotiations, a match called a "draw" was made to take place over me. The match was three against six, and while Sirius and his party were at a severe disadvantage, they easily overcame it and won. I heard that Sirius was the one who trained the siblings, but I never imagined they would be so great. I admired their strength and the fact that they were commoners who wouldn't back down from nobles. They could crush any difficulties head-on. I thought that if I became stronger, my sister would become relieved, and more than anything...I would be able to help someone as everyone had helped me.

That evening, I consulted Emilia and Leus when we went shopping in town

together.

“Hey...Why did you two become Sirius’ students?”

“Our reason for following Lord Sirius? Hmm...At first, it was to protect Leus, who’s the only family I have left. But now, it’s so I can stay by Lord Sirius’ side.”

“I just want to be able to protect my sister, too. Someday, I wanna get strong enough to match him!”

“I see. I guess I’m... hopeless.”

“Lise, do you wanna become big bro’s student?”

“Yes, just like you...I want to be strong enough to help someone. Yet, I merely want to become strong, I don’t have a clear reason like the two of you...”

“That’s not true.”

“Bu-But my reasoning is vague, and it’s selfish of me...”

“Everyone has their reasons. Lord Sirius is the type who’ll accept whatever your strong beliefs may be.”

“Strong beliefs...”

I want to become stronger. But was that really it? We’ve only known each other for a short time, yet I liked the sight of Emilia and Leus always smiling and having fun, while Sirius watched them calmly. When I remembered that, I understood the real reason. I...wanted to be their friend. I want to train with the two of them under Sirius and laugh with them. I’m sure that’d be a wonderful sight. Having understood my feelings, I decided to become his disciple. Then, after we were cleaning up, I boldly asked to become Sirius’...no, Sir Sirius’ student.

I’ve had many busy and difficult days since becoming his student. Times can get hard and painful, but I have no regrets spending my days here. I started by running to build up my stamina. When I first heard that we had to run around the nearby mountains in the morning, I nearly fainted.

To be honest, I felt discouraged at times, but Emilia and Leus always cheered me on, and Sir Sirius never forced me to do anything. Little by little, I grew accustomed to it. If I fell while running, Sir Sirius wouldn’t immediately lend a

hand. He would instead quietly wait for me to get up on my own. He seems very strict and terrible on the outside, but I understood he was trying to teach me about the importance of doing things by ourselves. He cares about us. He would also praise me when I completed my assignments, worry about my health as much as his own when training was done, and treat any injuries I sustained.

It was around that time that I started to admire him and think of him as a father figure. He watched over me strictly, but kindly, prepared warm and delicious meals, and— with his abundance of knowledge— taught me things that I couldn't learn from a textbook. In my mind, the ideal father was...Sir Sirius. I remember that upon completing my first training session, despite the fact that he was younger than me, he patted my head and praised me. It filled me with happiness. The days of chasing the back of someone I admired will continue forever... and ever... it was then that I woke up.

I just wanted to get some sleep, I can't believe I had this dream. Are these lingering feelings of regret? But... this is reality. My reflection in the full-length mirror showed myself, I was sitting on a chair with my long hair tied up. I was wearing a beautiful white dress.

"Are you awake? You look tired, but it's time for the ceremony."

"I-I'm fine. I was so nervous that I couldn't sleep."

As I sat dumbfounded in front of the mirror, the head of the ceremony, and my future marriage partner, Lord Cooler, spoke to me. Today, I'm... going to have a prenuptial ceremony with him. Yesterday... Sir Sirius and I were called to visit Leafel's mansion. She said she had something to talk about and kicked me out of the room. Those two piqued my curiosity, yet Senia and I waited while eating candy in the next room over. Then, a castle messenger arrived at the castle.

"Please wait, Miss Lise."

I wondered if it was something important as they left for another room. Something felt off about Senia's demeanor. What's more, it was the same messenger who took me from my hometown. I had a bad feeling about it, so I left the room to eavesdrop on their conversation. I couldn't hear the conversation from the hallway. However, I could hear it if I put a cup against the

wall and placed my ear against it. I never thought the method Sir Sirius taught me as a joke would end up being useful. Despite knowing I shouldn't, I listened to their conversation and my heart started thumping loudly.

"This discussion should be put on hold. Why did you give it the go-ahead without asking Miss Leafel for permission?!"

"This has already been decided. Plus, the document's already been stamped by the king. The wedding between the princess and Lord Cooler will be held tomorrow. Please tell her to come to the castle."

My sister... married?

Why didn't my sister stop this? Why did she pretend it wasn't happening? She even has a young friend she's close with, Melt. He was easily swayed by my pushy sister and admired her more than anyone else. That's why he climbed up the ranks of the royal guard. I loved seeing the two of them together. I was sure they'd get married one day and have a happy family. That's why...

"Wait!"

Before I knew it, I burst into the room and offered to take my sister's place. Senia tried to stop me, but knew that persuasion was out of the question once she saw me. She ran out to my sister, but... I felt so sorry for leaving Senia, who begged me to wait for her and talk to my sister. I asked the messenger to take me straight to the castle.

I then waited in the room that was first assigned to me when I initially arrived at the castle. My father soon made an appearance. He had his usual cold eyes, but— and this could have been my imagination— he had a troubled look on his face.

"I heard the news. Why are you trying to take her place?"

"Is it true that you made this agreement without my sister's permission?"

"This is a necessary measure, it's for the sake of the country. Aside from that, what will you do about your schooling? When you're married, you won't be able to attend school anymore."

That means I won't be able to have fun with everyone anymore. Yet, even so,

I...

“I’m doing this for my sister. I want the person who saved me to be happy...”

“...Do as you wish.”

Father left the room with a very conflicted look on his face. A short while later, when it was dark out, Mr. Melt came to my room to report the current circumstances. By the way, wasn’t he called to the castle this morning? I heard that someone else was supposed to come, but Mr. Melt forced them to switch places.

“Miss Fairlise. I’m here to report tomorrow’s schedule.”

Melt is always serious and self-disciplined, yet at the same time acts like a gentle older brother to me. At the moment, however, he wore a bitter expression, and was giving his report in a detached manner, as if he was enduring something. The original plan was to hold a wedding ceremony, which was changed to a prenuptial ceremony because I was too young. Despite the sudden change, the other party accepted, and it was decided that the ceremony would be held the next day as planned. Anyone would suffice, so long as they were royalty. Even though I’m just a girl who rose from being a commoner, I’m still my father’s daughter. If I can be of use to my sister who rescued me from the depths of despair, though, I’m sure... my wishes would come true.

According to additional reports, my sister came to the castle to stop the ceremony. She and my father quarreled, but she was then forcibly sent to a sanatorium a short distance from the castle. He may have treated her terribly, but she’s indeed recovering from an illness. That means no more help would come. Leafel... knowing she tried is enough for me. That’s why I want her to be united with the person she loves. After he finished the report, Mr. Melt headed towards the door. Before he left the room he turned around and said something to me.

“I’m merely a member of the royal guard, so I mustn’t impose my own will on you. However... please listen to what I have to say. The princess would never have wanted this to happen. Could you think it over once again?”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Melt. Everything’s been decided. Besides... it's too late now.”

“...I understand.”

I’m sure he knew we were past the point of no return, however, he felt as though he had to speak up. Thank you, Mr. Melt. I hope you and my sister will be happy, and that I’ll be able to call you my brother-in-law.

Midnight came and I still couldn’t sleep. I sat on my wide bed, and kept looking out the window to the moon. I’m in the same situation as I was when I first came to the castle. My sister came to see me back then, but she can’t do so now. Unlike the situation years ago, I’ve grown up and learned to be patient. That’s right... I need to be patient. Living with a nobleman means I won’t be able to go to school, but that doesn’t mean I’ll never see Sirius and his family again. Therefore... it’ll all work out.

Even though I forced myself to think that, I didn’t feel drowsy at all, and continued to stare blankly at the moon. Here I am. Looking at myself again, I’m sure I’m wearing the type of wedding dress that Emilia told me about. I heard that someone named Noel was really happy to wear this outfit. I’m not happy in the slightest.

“Now, Fairlise, shall we head to the venue?”

“Okay.”

My partner, Mr. Cooler, is a young man of eighteen years old with good looks that women greatly admire. He’s not only a man of great ability, but his father—who made a great contribution to Elysion—is one of the most prominent noblemen in the country. I met him for the first time today, and he seems to be a sincere and kind person.

I can see his true self, having been familiar with the powerful gazes of Sir Sirius and Leus. I could feel the hesitation behind his eyes, and the way he smiled was fake, almost as if it were made of plastic. I didn’t like it, and I still haven’t made proper eye contact with him. Regardless, the ceremony was about to begin, and Mr. Cooler led me by the hand to the venue.

“Now entering the stars of the ceremony, Mr. Cooler and Miss Fairlise, the legitimate daughter of the king.”

The moment I entered the brightly decorated venue, I was met with

thunderous applause and countless stares from the audience. My identity must have been revealed in advance, and I heard no complaints. My father sat in a prominent place among the sea of strangers, a cold look marring his face. Inside the venue of no more than fifty people, we were led to the chairs on stage and took our seats. A well-dressed man, with a voice that could be heard by everyone in the hall, stepped forward and began to make a speech.

“Tonight, we gather here to hold a ceremony which shall unite our family with the royals...”

Various people then came forward to make speeches. I didn’t process anything they said, merely gazing at the venue in amazement. It was as if the world lost its color, and I was all alone in this gray world. Colorful dishes lined up for those who were well-built and broad-minded while the waitstaff was busily moving around the venue. Among them, my eyes were naturally drawn to a short, dark-haired waitress. She may have been small in stature compared to the others, but her movements looked familiar...

“...Emilia?”

She had black hair and wore a headband to hide her ears, but that waitress was definitely Emilia. Then she noticed my gaze and looked over at me, waving her hand and smiling a little. I’m sure that’s her.

“You... came.”

She was so nice to disguise herself and come here. The gray world suddenly began to regain some of its color. Also, if Emilia’s here, then Sir Sirius and Leus must be nearby. I was so ecstatic that I started searching the venue for the two of them. Not long after, I found Leus dressed as a waiter. He may be a kid, but he’s tall enough that he doesn’t look out of place when mingling with adults. Like Emilia, he dyed his hair black and walked around with a tray of wine glasses in his hand. Leus, who always moves as he likes, looks strange when moving around like that.

My heart eased up and my mouth unintentionally relaxed when Mr. Cooler, who had been sitting next to me, stood up and called out to the people across the hall.

“Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Cooler, the next head of the Everity

family. Tonight, I will be married to Fairlise, who's sitting next to me, and Elysion's..."

Looking up to see him give his speech, I snapped back to reality. Those three must have come to save me. I was happy to see them, I wasn't asking for help. Besides, if they help me, then they'll be ostracized and chased down by my father and other nobles. I was happy to hear that Sir Sirius was willing to go through that for me. I don't want him to have to deal with that, though. So, please. Please don't try to weaken my resolve any further.

"Everyone, please take a look at this."

He finished his speech and drew everyone's attention to a large object that was covered by a cloth. He then removed the cloth and there was a huge cake that was as tall as me.

"This is a congratulatory gift from the Gargan Trading Company, which is currently active in all sorts of activities. This splendid decoration, as well as the taste, is suitable for today."

It's amazing... it's way bigger than the cakes I've seen, and the cream decoration is absolutely beautiful. I understand now. This isn't simply a cake that was prepared by aristocrats, it was one that Sir Sirius put a lot of effort into making. No one but Sir Sirius could make such a delicate cake. Did he make it for me? Two days ago, I would have jumped up and down with glee, but at the moment, I feel nothing but emptiness and sorrow.

Besides, there's no need for it to be that big. The four of us would cut up a small cake and argue over whose slice is the biggest. Sir Sirius would get so fed up over our arguing that he'd share this portion with us. Eating cake alongside friends... tastes the best.

Ah, no, I can't. I tried to hold it in, I didn't want to wear my heart on my sleeve, but tears were spilling from my eyes. Suddenly, I grew weaker and before I knew it I slipped out of my chair and sat on the floor.

I have to get back up. I knew that my body could move, and the tears wouldn't stop. Because...because...

Once the ceremony is over, those happy days will... never happen again.

“...I don't want this...”

“Understood, leave the rest to us.”

I was shocked by the voice that suddenly echoed in my head. I lifted my head, forgetting to wipe my tears... and the venue had changed completely.

“Wha-What?”

“Hey, what's going on?!”

“Call the guards! This is an emergency!”

In the blink of an eye, the spacious venue was covered in fog, completely obscuring my vision. The fog seemed to have been created by magic, but I don't remember using any.

Anyway, when I asked the water spirits to give me a clear view, it looked like something descending in the center of the hall was generating fog. Is that a... stone? If it's generating this much fog, I think that it's a magic stone with an "Aqua Mist" magic circle engraved on it.

“Miss Fairlise! Please stay close to me!”

Just as I noticed that, Mr. Cooler, who was sitting next to me, reached out his hand. I reflexively backed away and avoided him.

“Wja-What's wrong? It's me, your soon-to-be husband, Cooler.”

“I'm sorry! But I...”



“Ah, you’re having cold feet, too. Think it over. This decision has been made by my father and the king. This is all for Elysion...”

“Then why do you have that look in your eyes?”

I’ve reached my limit. Influenced by the voice in my head and the commotion in the venue, I couldn’t hide my true feelings anymore. Right now, Mr. Cooler’s doll-like eyes are scaring me.

“I ju-just want to improve Elysion...”

“You can’t impress her with the sugar-sweet words you use to seduce other ladies.”

I turned around at the sudden voice behind me to see a person with a white mask and robes.

“Wh-Who are you?!”

“...The person who’s going to kidnap this child.”

Even though I couldn’t see his face, I knew who it was. I’d never mistake the voice of the gentle person who warmly watches over me.

“Does that mean this mess is your doing? You’re not only throwing a sacred ceremony into chaos, but you’re also planning on kidnapping her?!”

“Do you truly find political marriages sacred?”

“HUH?!”

“Think it through. Cooler Everity... are you really okay with this? Why are you leaving a woman who cares about you and loves you more than anything behind? What are you doing in a place like this?”

“Shut up! As the next head of the Everity family, how much resolve do you think it took for me to stand here—”

“You act like a boy who can only follow his parent’s orders. Listen up, you’re not your parents’ puppet. You’re just a man who loves a woman.”

“What, I’m not my parents’ puppet! I’m... I’m... not a puppet!”

“Are you unable to even state your own opinions properly? Next time, tell

that to your parents.”

“Next time... huh?”

Taking advantage of his distress, the masked person punched Mr. Cooler, knocking him out. He slowly placed Mr. Cooler on the ground and turned back to me. I was standing there dumbfounded and he extended a hand to me.

“Princess Fairlise. I’ve come to take you away.”

“Siri– uhmm...”

“Please wait until later to use that name.”

I almost unintentionally called out his name, but covered my mouth with my hand. Despite the ceremony being utterly ruined, I was extremely happy with the turn of events. But still... it’s useless.

“I’m so happy you came. But if I don’t stay and go through with the ceremony, my sister will have to do this...”

“We’re kidnapping you at your sister’s request. Of course, we were planning on doing this anyway.”

My sister’s... request? But she was sent to the sanatorium near the castle. How did she send out the request?

“Late last night, a certain rabbit demi-human came to my place and asked me to kidnap you during the prenuptial ceremony.”

“Sister... Senia...”

“Also, I have a message from your sister. She said it’s okay to act selfishly sometimes.”

She’s said those words to me multiple times. I’ve always heard her tell me to express my own opinions more often. Even if she’s saying those words to me now, that means...

“Can I say something... selfish?”

“Of course. There’s no need to kill yourself and lie for the sake of your sister. You should rely on her more, and depend on us for help.”

“I...see.”

“Hurry up and come home. I may have made that wedding cake for nothing, but we’ll bake a larger one next time so we can all enjoy it, including your older sister.”

“Okay!”

If I were to be selfish, I’d ask to go home with my friends. I want to eat food and cake with them. I want to be with Sir Sirius and the others... forever.

“Please, take me away.”

“Huuuuh, I can’t see anything! Someone blow this away with wind magic!”

“I-I’m trying! No matter how many times I try to blow it, the fog just keeps reappearing!”

The people at the venue are trying to get rid of the fog, but seeing as it’s coming from a magic stone, their efforts are meaningless. Sir Sirius must want to take advantage of the commotion and fog to escape. He was headed towards the venue’s door, trying to avoid getting too close to others. My father... didn’t move at all from his original position. He’s with the guards trying to order everyone to calm down. I can’t see Emilia and Leus, but I think it’s alright because Sir Sirius hasn’t said anything.

“Alright, all that's left is our escape.”

“I won’t let you pass. No one leaves this venue!”

“Wh-what are you guys?! I’ll stop you... OOF!?!”

“I was told not to let anyone leave the venue! By order of the king!”

However, the castle guards were already blocking the entrance to the venue, and the nobles who tried to escape from the mess were captured. What should we do? If the doors are blocked, how can we escape...

“There are loads of guards in the castle. In that case, change of plans.”

Sir Sirius calmly murmured to me, ignoring my panic. At the same time, the venue’s windows shattered with a loud crash. The windows broke one after another, and the venue descended into further chaos as screams and shouts resounded all around. Unaffected by the fog, I saw Emilia and Leus casting magic toward the windows. Despite the poor visibility, they were hitting their

targets remarkably well. Sirius guided me through the broken windows and onto the balcony. Tonight was a full moon, so it was relatively bright, allowing us to see clearly without the assistance of lamps.

“I’ve got some preparations to make, wait a moment.”

Saying that, Sir Sirius stood at the edge of the balcony. He then did something in the direction of the forest visible from the castle. Since this is the castle’s fourth floor, jumping from here isn’t an option... how are we supposed to escape? My nerves were getting the better of me, and then I saw Emilia and Leus emerge from the fog. Both of them looked slightly different and had black hair, but I was truly relieved and happy to see them.

“Emi– are you hurt?”

“Nope, I’m fine.”

“That was a piece of cake.”

I was about to call out their names, but they were in disguise, so I can’t say anything. As I was wondering what to say to Emilia and Leus, who I caused so much trouble, I then saw them smiling at my outfit.

“Lise, that dress really suits you.”

“Yeah, it’s super pretty!”

“...Thank you.”

Even though our plight isn’t over, I’m so happy that tears are welling up in my eyes again. Mr. Cooler and those from the castle also complimented me, but hearing it from these two means so much more to me. However, we still have to escape. I looked back at Sir Sirirus, wondering what our plan was from here. Then, he pulled out something like a hook and waved it in front of me. The hook looked like it was floating in midair. Ah, I get it.

I was wondering what he was doing when he was facing the forest. Sir Siriius had been extending “String” from here to there. Basically, there’s an invisible thread over there with a hook attached to it. Emilia and Leus are taking out similar items, don’t tell me...

“Alright, shall we make our escape?”

“Um, from here?”

“Where else? Look, you’re wrapped up tightly.”

I was cowering from this height, but the moment Sir Sirius held onto me, nothing else seemed to matter. “String” wrapped around me, whilst I was blushing a deep shade of crimson, and when Sir Sirius pulled me closer... we flew through the sky.

“Wahhhh!”

We glided through the air along the outstretched “String.” I almost screamed at the feeling of the wind blowing into my face, but Sir Sirius’ warmth kept me calm. Once we reached the end of the “String,” we almost hit a tree. Just before we did, Sir Sirius suddenly let go of the hook and we fell down.

“Huh? We’re still high up!”

“It’s fine. Don’t bite your tongue.”

I involuntarily closed my eyes at the sudden sensation of my body getting lighter. I felt two light shocks before landing safely on the ground. Um... what in the world happened? Still trying to figure out what was going on, I saw Emilia coming down from the sky. I tried to make a cushion using water magic, but Sir Sirius stopped me. Then, the wind whipped up from around my feet, which slowed Emilia’s descent as she landed softly on the ground. Oh, that’s right, Emilia’s skilled in wind magic. Leus fell at the end, but grabbed a branch on the way down and kicked the tree to spin around and lower his speed of descent. He finally landed on the ground with grace. Unsurprisingly, he’s as strong as ever.

“Alright. They won’t be able to catch up to us for a while here. Lise, can I let go of you?”

“Ye-Yeah.”

I wish we could’ve stayed like that for a little longer. When I turned away from Sirius and looked at the castle, the balcony where we were just standing looked very small. I never thought it’d be so easy to escape from there.

“Lise. Could you release two big “Aqua” spells?”

“Huh? Yes, I will. Water spirits...”

I produced two large spheres of water into the air. Emilia and Leus stuck their heads inside to wash their hair, which returned to its usual beautiful silver. Furthermore, they quickly undressed, which shocked me, and revealed that they were wearing plain clothes that wouldn't stand out underneath. Next to them wiping their hair and changing their clothes was Sir Sirius. He drew a magic circle in the ground and dug a hole.

“What are you doing?”

“I'm hiding the evidence. I don't think we'll be suspected, but it's better to be safe than sorry.”

The other two wiped their hair and threw the clothes into the hole. Once Sir Sirius reactivated the magic circle that refilled the hole, he turned his gaze to us.

“We're still in the middle of our operation. Don't let your guard down. Do you know where our rendezvous point is?”

“Yes. We're heading east.”

“Watch your back!”

“Alright, let's get a move on!”

“Um...”

Their conversation was continuing without me... what should I be doing? I was still confused when Emilia quietly approached me, whispered in my ear, and walked away.

“Huh? Hey Emilia, what do you mean by that?”

“Hehe, it's exactly what it sounds like. We'll meet with you later.”

“Catch ya later, sis!”

Before I could question them, the two ran towards the forest and disappeared in no time. They were running very quickly, but where were they going? They left me behind in astonishment. Suddenly, Sir Sirius wrapped one arm around my back and one behind my knees, lifting me.

This is... just like *that*, right? That's what the prince who rescued the princess

in the story did. It's what I secretly yearned for. I'm embarrassed... but I'm so happy. And when I think of the fact that it's Sir Sirius by my side, I feel somehow extremely relieved.

"I believe it's good manners to hold a princess like this. If you're uncomfortable, then I can..."

"No, this is perfect."

"That's good. We're gonna fly, so close your eyes if you get scared."

I tilted my head in confusion, and he flew up with me in his arms. I thought we'd fall as soon as we jumped, but he kicked the empty air and jumped up again. We were flying higher than the surrounding trees in no time.

"Si-Sir Sirius? A-are we flying through the sky?!"

"This is my original magic. I create a magical foothold in the air, then kick it to fly."

Kicking a foothold... did he use this to land when we were falling down earlier? I usually would be so scared that I'd close my eyes, but I wasn't scared at all because Sir Sirius had me in his embrace.

"Where are we going?"

"There's a lake ahead, isn't there? After crossing that lake, there'll be a mansion."

Just as he explained, we saw a lake off in the distance. We continued flying over the lake, and a fantastic sight came before our very eyes. The wind was weak, so the lake's surface was reflecting the night sky like a mirror. The reflection made it look like there were two moons.

"Wow... amazing."

"Ah, this is just another occurrence of the mysteriousness of nature."

Amid this breathtaking scenery, I abruptly noticed that Sir Sirius was still wearing his mask. He'd been wearing a mask to hide his identity, yet there was no one around here to be looking for him... wouldn't it be okay for him to take it off? No, that's not right. I just want to see his face.

“Sir Sirius, could I... take off your mask?”

“Hm? Ah, I think we’re far enough away. Sorry to ask this, but do you mind taking it off?”

So as not to disturb him, I removed his mask. The face of Sir Sirius, whom I always see, appeared before me. He looked over at me and smiled kindly.

“Thanks.”

At that moment... my heart thumped loudly. My entire body got warmer, and my heart was pounding so much that I felt pain in my chest.

This sort of thing has happened a few times before but... this time was completely different. Even though it’s painful to look at his face, I can’t take my eyes off of him. Could it be that... I have feelings for...? But Sirius has Emilia, and I simply look at him as the father I never had. Right now, I’m wearing a beautiful dress, being carried like a princess, and soaring through the sky just like in that story. Surely what I’m feeling is the happiness of being so close to someone who I view as a father figure. I had thought that, until I remembered what Emilia murmured in my ear earlier.

“Be honest with your feelings. Lord Sirius isn’t your father, he’s a man.”

Will Emilia... be okay with this? Is this... acceptable? Otherwise, she wouldn’t have said that, right? My honest feelings...

She’s right...Sir Sirius isn’t my father. That’s why I like him...as a man. He doesn’t have a legendary sword like the hero in “The Dragon Prince,” and even if he flies through the sky, he isn’t riding a dragon. He’s a commoner, and I’m a princess in name. Our stories are different. Yes, Sir Sirius... the man who kidnapped and rescued me is without a doubt... my prince.

Chapter Five

Family

| Sirius |

“You got it, boss. I’ll negotiate with those castle folk right away.”

“Oh, there’s no need to rush, but thanks for handling this. I’ll make it first thing in the morning tomorrow, so please have the ingredients ready by then.”

“Leave it to me.”

It was the day before Lise’s prenuptial ceremony. We were making preparations at the Gargan Trading Company to infiltrate the castle. We planned to create a cavity in the wedding cake that the Gargan Trading Company would present as a celebratory gift. Then, we’d enter the castle by hiding in that cavity. Early tomorrow morning, I’ll make a huge cake with a hollow interior. In the evening, we’d hide in the cake and sneak into the venue. Then, I’d ask Lise about her true intentions and, depending on her response, rescue her. The issue is whether or not the castle will accept the cake. However, the signboard saying it was made by the Gargan Trading Company, which is well-known in town, will increase the likelihood of them accepting. I have a few backup plans, but this is my main one for now.

“Sis Lise, you must be super worried in that castle right now...”

“Yes. I have some regrets, but I feel like I’m holding a lot of feelings back. I’m stubborn in the weirdest ways.”

“You should redress your grievances to your heart’s content during the meeting tomorrow.”

The ceremony was important for Elysion’s survival, so it was obviously wrong for us to interfere. Additionally, political marriages are commonplace in this world, and what we’re trying to do is an act that will make us enemies of the country. Regardless, even though it’s only been two years, I know Lise’s character well. On one hand, she’s shy, yet works hard, and is kind and considerate of others. On the other hand, she can’t properly express her own

opinions, and is prone to self-sacrifice. She's most likely trying to convince herself that she's doing this for the sake of her family and savior, Princess Leafel. I'll accept everything as her teacher if she fully recognizes this is a political marriage done for her sister and lives as a royal. It'd be sad, but it's also the role of the teacher to see his disciples go off on their chosen path. If she rejects the ceremony, I'll do my best to help Lise, even if it means becoming enemies of the king and the entire country.

"Okay big bro, we're going back to the dorm."

"Good night, Lord Sirius."

We decided to disperse without training today, as we'll be busy tomorrow. Returning from the Gargan Trading Company, I went back to Diamond Manor by myself and was making preparations for tomorrow when... there was suddenly a knock on the front door. It was already late at night, so I used "Search" and saw a familiar presence. I opened the front door to greet my visitor.

"So, it's you, is it?"

"Yes. I apologize for dropping by so late."

The visitor was Senia, Princess Leafel's servant. I wondered why she was here, but knew it was probably related to Lise. I had some questions for her, so—being somewhat wary—I invited her in and prepared some tea.

"It's not the best tea..."

"How polite of you. Thank you for accepting my sudden visit. As you may have already guessed, I have a request regarding Miss Lise."

"...Please continue."

Senia, sitting in the chair opposite me, filled me in on the details. She told me that Lise agreed to the ceremony, and is now confined within the castle. Princess Leafel, who went to the castle to try to stop her, was sent to a sanatorium after an argument with the king.

"Miss Leafel said that something felt off about the ceremony, which is why she obediently went to the sanatorium to undergo a certain treatment."

“What kind of treatment, if any?”

“Yes, you’re quite bright. You’ll understand. She wanted me to ask you this, not as the country’s princess, but as a member of Miss Lise’s family.”

Senia cut off her speech there, bowing her head deeply before continuing to speak.

“Could you kidnap Miss Lise from the ceremony tomorrow?”

After all, Princess Leafel was uncomfortable with the ceremony too, wasn’t she? Still, as a princess, she couldn’t openly defy her country’s decisions. She decided to play a card in her hand by pretending to be incapacitated, huh? And that card... was me? I can’t believe she’d ask for help from a child like that. It doesn’t seem as though she thinks of me as a child. She must have deemed me worthy of her trust and knows our personalities well.

“I know it’s absurd to ask you, who has nothing to do with the matter, to go against the country. It’s shameful of us to say, but we’ve deduced that you wouldn’t keep quiet about this or refuse our request. Will you accept?”

Shameful, huh? That’s fine by me. If Princess Leafel wants to use me, she can feel free. Even if she hadn’t asked, we were still planning on going to the castle to see Lise. In any case, it’s safer for us to have Princess Leafel watching our backs.

“I understand. I accept your request.”

Thank you very much. I’ve also been struggling because I can’t do anything too ostentatious. I feel a little better now.”

Senia bowed deeply, smiling. Still, kidnapping Lise is only a last resort. In the end, Lise’s true feelings are all that matters. I decided to ask if the plans could be flexible based on my assessment of the situation.

“It is the wish of both myself and Princess Leafel that you save Miss Lise. She trusts you. I believe you’ll guide her in the right direction. For those reasons, I’ll leave this matter in your hands.”

“Thank you for entrusting me with this. You truly care for her, don’t you?”

“Oh, don’t mention it. Miss Lise is like a little sister to me. It’d be unbecoming

of a servant to say such things with flippant disregard to their master.”

Senia was overflowing with love, just like a mother. Perhaps I’m a bit weak to this type of person because of my experiences with my own mother.

“I can’t just rely on you for everything. Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Actually, do you know of a route we could use to infiltrate the castle? I’ll be able to manage somehow, but I’m worried about my servants, the siblings.”

Maybe the castle officials have a better idea. Infiltration by cake could be out of the question if any stupid nobles think to snack on it.

“Well... how about sneaking in as a member of the waitstaff, like me? Those two have solid skills, they disguise themselves well, and they could find their way inside.”

“Then tomorrow I’ll disguise the siblings. Could you allow us to infiltrate in this manner? I was going to sneak in under the guise of a Gargan Trading Company employee.”

“Yes, we can. Also, I have one more request. If you kidnap Miss Lise, could you take her to see Miss Leafel?”

“She’s in the sanatorium, right? Where is it located?”

“It’s across the lake that’s northwest of the castle. It’s a conspicuous building, you’ll know which one it is when you get close. We’ll prepare some horses and carriages. Please use them for your escape.”

I even flew around Elysion several times— late at night, so people couldn’t see me— to map out the area. Just as Senia said, there were indeed some buildings in that lake that stood out a bit. If we fled by carriage, we’d immediately be pursued. To counteract this, I heard that they’d use multiple wagons and horses as decoys. It’s only natural, seeing how this task involves something important like kidnapping the country’s princess.

“I found the location. What’s more, carriages are unnecessary: you don’t need to prepare one. It looks like it’d be easier to escape through the woods and fend off pursuers.”

“But there’s quite a distance from there to the sanatorium. There is a vast

forest between this place and the castle. What if you get lost?”

“We train in that forest, so we’re used to navigating it. We’ll be fine.”

Diamond Manor is surrounded by woods, so we run through it to train running in rough terrain. Someone would need to be very skilled in order to pursue us.

“...Okay. I’m counting on you, I have no choice but to trust you. I do wish you would reconsider using the carriage, however.”

“The more cards we have in our hand, the better. I have no objections. Anyways, what time will the ceremony begin?”

“It’ll begin at night. I’ll come and pick you up in the evening, so please be sure you are prepared at that time.”

“Let’s ask the Gargan Trading Company to see if we can use them as the pick-up point. If you act like you’re there shopping, you’ll be able to pick Emilia and the others up without arousing any suspicion.”

“That sounds good. Is there anything else you’d like to know about?”

“Please give me more information about the noble Lise will be marrying. Also, can you give me any details on the itinerary for the ceremony?”

Once I received more information, Senia, having finished her business, said she’d return to her master, Princess Leafel, and took her leave. As I was seeing her off at Diamond Manor’s entrance, before she turned to step out into the night, Senia slowly turned around and said.

“Finally... if you see Miss Lise, please pass on this message: ‘It’s okay to act selfishly.’”

“That’s the perfect message for Lise. Alright, I’ll tell her.”

She laughed, muttered something under her breath, then disappeared into the night. Truth be told, I should have escorted her to a safe place. However, Senia, who holds considerable power, would have returned the favor. Well, there are probably no such dangerous people around here.

Besides, I have urgent business to attend to. On top of revising my plans based on the information I just obtained, I wanted to confirm several things in

person.

I returned to my room in Diamond Manor, opened the door under my bed, and entered the basement. This is where I keep my stuff: my small fortune and other things that I've made that I don't wish to be in the public eye. The entrance is completely disguised, with a special lock and a unique anti-theft magic circle for security. Even the siblings can't get in. There are a multitude of concealed weapons and other dangerous items that, if used improperly, might arouse suspicion. Well, it's not weapons we need, but rather some handmade clothes with a design that makes it easy to blend into the darkness.

After quickly changing my clothes, and equipping a minimal amount of weapons, I left Diamond Manor, concealed myself, and headed into town. My destination was the family mansion of Cooler Everity, the nobleman who secured Lise's hand in betrothal. I wanted to find out what kind of person he was, as well as gain information about the Everity family. After confirming it was the mansion Senia mentioned, I crept up its surrounding wall under the cover of night. Naturally, there were guards posted, but I could easily find a blind spot in their patrol by using "Search." I swiftly cleared the fence and snuck into the mansion.

Then, as I read through written transactions and investigated the mansion's interior, the true identity of the Everity family became clear. It's said they're recognized by the king for their generous contributions to Elysion, but behind the scenes, they're terrible people. From illegal embezzlement, to dealing with the underworld, to getting rid of anyone who stands in their way, it looks like the family is involved in some pretty shady dealings. Thanks to their clever tricks, though, the world sees them as good nobles. Despite all that... it's hard to believe that the king, whose excellence is known, is unaware of the Everity family's true identity. I think I'm beginning to see the real reason for the forced ceremony, and the strange feeling I felt when Lise disappeared.

While I was sifting through the documents for evidence, I heard loud voices coming from a room a short distance away. Intrigued, I made my way towards the sound. Peeking in the room, I found a young man being scolded by an old man with a mustache and beard.

"I've told you time and time again to just do as I say! It is for that reason that

the Everity family has come this far.”

“Yes... it’s just as you say, father. However, I...”

“This is the chance for the Everity family to finally ride to royalty! Leave that weak, sickly girl behind!”

“I can’t throw her away...”

“Stop saying that! Hurry up, and get ready for tomorrow!”

“...Yes sir.”

From the characteristics described to me beforehand, this young man is Lise’s future partner, Cooler. He can’t seem to express any of his own opinions at all. As I heard, he acts as his parents' puppet and caters to their every whim. I’m not sure what to make of it, but I’d like to see what he’s got in store for me. When I went into his room... I found out who he really was.

I made my opinions on the Everity family during my infiltration, yet Cooler was pure... no, I wouldn’t go so far as to say that, but he’s been ordered to do something unjust, which makes him... a blend of good and bad. He’s still young, and will be able to pick himself back up depending on what course he decides to tread in the future. On the other hand... his parents are totally evil. I could get rid of them now, but I’m afraid that touching them would do more harm than good, given their contributions to this country.

Besides, something may happen in the future. With this security, I can infiltrate at any time, so I’ll stop here for now. For the time being, the next time I meet Princess Leafel, I’ll forget all about the materials I collected and just head home. I then returned to Diamond Manor and went straight to work on making the giant sponge cake for the wedding. The Gargan Trading Company also has “ovens,” but I would prefer to use the tools with which I am most familiar. I’m not sure if it’ll suit Lise’s tastes. Since I’m making it though, I don’t want to make too many compromises. I also took a nap midway through, because I don’t think I’ll be able to rest until the end of tomorrow’s ceremony.

We arrived at the Gargan Trading Company in the morning, and completed the giant wedding cake. When the siblings and Zack saw it, they wanted to eat it, but eating that much would surely give them stomach problems.

Up next is the siblings' disguise. Their beautiful silver hair is colored black with some harmless hair dye, their tails are tucked inside their clothes, and their wolf ears are hidden under headbands. It was a little uncomfortable to have their ears compressed like that, but I requested they bear with it for now.

The carriage that Senia had arranged for us arrived in the evening. The siblings and I, who had changed into the waitstaff clothes that Senia had prepared for us, got in together and we loaded up the finished cake. By the way, I changed into the merchant's clothes that Zack gave me to act as an employee of the Gargan Trading Company. The carriage arrived at the castle, and thanks to Senia's help, we were able to enter without raising any suspicions.

"It's finally time, Lord Sirius."

"Yup. We've gone through a lot together, and now all that's left is the final act. I'm counting on you."

"This is all for sis Lise. Leave it to us."

The prenuptial ceremony began, and while the siblings were moving around the hall serving the guests, I secretly snuck in and hid in a corner of the hall. I could see the entirety of the venue from my vantage point, and as I looked around surreptitiously, I saw that there must have been at least fifty people gathered. Various well-dressed nobles were chatting and laughing as they waited for the stars of the show to appear.

"Everyone, we are proud to introduce the stars of the ceremony, Miss Fairlise and Lord Cooler."

Lise, dressed in a beautiful gown, and Cooler, whom I saw last night, entered the venue at the sound of the announcer's voice. Lise then sat on the stage and was taken aback by the atmosphere. Her eyes showed obvious agitation and fear. She's trying her best to endure this for her sister's sake, but it looks like she's on the verge of an emotional outburst at the slightest provocation.

"We gather here tonight to perform a ceremony that will unite one family with the royal bloodline..."

The ceremony proceeded with the announcer's speech, and Lise's expression

suddenly brightened. She was looking at Emilia, who was waving her hand at her. Lise then began to look around the venue joyfully, even though she had only been staring blankly ahead earlier. Unfortunately, her bright expression soon clouded over and she stopped moving, as a downcast look appeared on her face. Her ever-changing expressions proved that she was experiencing emotional instability.

“Everyone, please take a look at this.”

The cake I made was introduced to rapturous applause. Even though Lise loves cakes, she doesn't look happy under these circumstances. She's pretty admirable for stubbornly holding out for that long. Hey Lise... is this really what you want? Do you really want to get married with such a resigned look in your eyes? I don't think your sister will be happy unless you're smiling from ear to ear.

If she tells the truth, I should probably immediately kidnap Lise, even if I have to resort to force. It's not exactly the wrong way to fulfill Princess Leafel's request, I just want to hear the truth from Lise. I want her to drop all excuses about this being for someone else's sake, and have her speak her mind. If that happens, I'll...

“...I don't want this...”

Ah, she finally said what she really thought. That's right. Even if you took Princess Leafel's place, she wouldn't be pleased. In fact, she would be filled with regrets. If both Lise and her sister, her own family, will be upset about this, I'll break up the ceremony, even if it means I'm hunted down. If my predictions are correct, the ceremony should be...

“Understood. Leave the rest to us.”

Lise is my top priority right now. I activated “Call” and sent out instructions to the siblings.

“It's time to get to work!”

At the same time, I throw the magic stone with an “Aqua Mist” engraving into the center of the venue, don the white mask and robe I brought, and start moving. The entire venue was instantly enveloped in a white fog. Nobody could

see anything. Of course, the same goes for us, but I can use “Search” to feel out my surroundings, and the siblings have strong senses of smell, so we don’t have much trouble navigating the area. Avoiding getting too close to guests, I went to the podium to find Lise. She was scared to death after being confronted by Cooler.

“I ju-just want to improve Elysion...”

“You can’t impress her with the sweet nothings you use to seduce other ladies.”

Lise looks conflicted as I come between the two of them, yet I shifted my focus towards Cooler. He argues with me when I tell him I plan on kidnapping Lise, but I know the truth so his words don’t resonate with me.

“Here’s a piece of advice. Cooler Everity... are you really okay with this? Why are you leaving a woman who cares about you, and loves you more than anything behind? What are you doing in a place like this?”

Last night, after he finished talking to his dad, Cooler went to a room where a woman was resting in bed. She obviously didn’t feel well, as if she had some kind of illness, but she smiled as soon as she saw Cooler. Cooler bitterly described how he was ordered by his father to marry Lise and the woman quietly shook her head, taking his hand.

“Lord Cooler, please don’t worry about me. If a pact has been made with the royal family, then your future has already been determined. Please forget me, who would only hold you back”

“How could I ever forget you?! I can never change my feelings for you, no matter what my father’s orders are. I’m in love with you!”

“Ah, hearing your true feelings is enough for me. Now, please go on and marry a member of the royal family. Your happiness is my happiness.”

I don’t know the details, but I’m fairly sure they love each other. Nevertheless, the woman stepped aside for Cooler. What is he doing, leaving behind such a devoted woman?

“Shut up! As the next head of the Everity family, how much resolution do you think it took for me to stand here—”

“You act like a boy who can only follow his parent’s orders. Listen up, you’re not your parents’ puppet. You're just a man who loves a woman.”

“What? I’m not my parents’ puppet! I’m... I’m... not a puppet!”

“Are you unable to state your own opinions properly? Next time, tell that to your parents.”

“Next time... huh?”

So much for giving him support. I punched Cooler in the stomach, knocking him out, and turned to Lise, giving her my outstretched hand. I was in disguise, but my voice was the same. She recognized that it was me at once.

“Princess Fairlise, I’ve come to take you away.”

“Siri—uhmm...”

“Please wait until later to use that name.”

Easy now, it’d be meaningless to be in disguise if she called out my name. I hurriedly covered her mouth. Why did she look so happy? I immediately removed my hand from her mouth, and her emotions switched from being gleeful to dead serious. Looks like Princess Leafel is still on her mind. I explained her sister’s request and conveyed her message.

“Also, I have a message from your sister. She said it’s okay to act selfishly.”

“Can I say something... selfish?”

“Of course. There’s no need to kill yourself and lie for the sake of your sister. You should rely on her more, and depend on us for help.”

“I... see.”

“Hurry up and come home. I may have made that wedding cake for nothing, but we’ll bake a larger one next time so we can all enjoy it, including your older sister.”

I’m sure that’s what Lise loves more than anything, and what makes her happy. I’d bake any number of cakes for that. I told her as much, and she finally smiled her usual smile, then took my hand.

“Please, take me away.”

After escaping from the venue, the siblings and I parted and I continued to run over the lake using “Air Step” while holding Lise. We finally reached the shore and, seeing the sanatorium I heard about beforehand, we landed nearby. Simultaneously, I used “Search” to check for any presences, and it looked like we weren’t being pursued.

I thought that getting some distance from the castle would be a relief for Lise, yet she’s been acting strangely for a while now. After removing my mask, she kept staring at my face and didn't take her eyes off me.

“Look, we’re here, Lise.”

“.....”

I tried talking to her... to no avail. She’s still gingerly holding the mask for my disguise. Her cheeks are bright red and her glazed eyes are filled with warmth as she looks at me. Maybe she’s tired. I checked her over with “Scan” and discovered that her heartbeat was a little fast, but didn’t find any other abnormalities.

“What’s up, Lise? Is there something on my face?”

“Huuuh?! It’s no-no-no-nothing!”

“Are you afraid of flying? We’re on the ground, you’re safe now.”

“I’m no-not scared! If anything, I’m super happy! I wish things could stay like this forever... wah! What am I saying?!”

She regained her senses, but her gaze aimlessly wandered all over the place before stopping on my face. I remember seeing such a feverish gaze before. It’s the same look Emilia gave me while handing me a towel on the day after we first became friends.

“Could it be that you were surprised to fly through the sky?”

I was pretty surprised by that, but it was extremely fun! Umm, well... can we stay like this a little longer? Truthfully, I didn’t get much sleep last night... so...”

If she was her usual self, she’d get away from me immediately. Yet today, she’s making excuses and doesn’t want to leave my arms. Judging from the fact that she has the same reaction as Emilia...

“Lise, are you perhaps...”

“Lise!”

“Miss Lise!”

Just as I was about to ask her something, we heard loud voices coming from the sanatorium. Looking over, we saw Princess Leafel running out of the building with Senia and Melt by her side. I abruptly set down Lise. She looked disappointed, but at once ran with her arms outstretched towards Princess Leafel. The sisters had an emotional reunio—

“Lise, you idiot!”

...Nevermind. Right as their bodies met, Princess Leafel angrily unleashed a sword-like slap right onto Lise’s head. The emotions in the air fizzled in an instant, and Princess Leafel gripped the stunned Lise’s cheeks with both hands.

“Why’d you go and do that?! Why didn’t you come to me first!? When did I ever say I wanted you to take my place?! I always knew you were dumb, but you really outdid yourself this time!”

“Sister... but, I—”

“I won’t allow you to get taken away just for my sake! I’m gonna make something crystal clear: this is your fault for trying to do everything on your own!”

“I’m... sorry.”

“Ugh. Still, I’m glad you’re safe.”

Her anger must have subsided, because she flashed a compassionate smile and pulled Lise close for a hug. Understanding the trouble her mistake caused, Lise sobbed in her sister’s chest, apologizing repeatedly. Well, it looks like Princess Leafel took the words right out of my mouth. They hugged it out, then Princess Leafel remembered something, and suddenly pulled Lise from her chest.

“You protected your body, right? Are you still pure?”

“Ye-Yes. I’m fine. Sir Sirius came and rescued me, so nothing...”

As soon as I met eyes with Lise, her cheeks turned red, and she blushed with shame. She didn't try to take her gaze away from me. Princess Leafel noticed Lise's appearance and beckoned me over with an amused smile.

"Is everything alright? Did you do something to this child, Sirius?"

"No. Except for carrying her, nothing in particular happ—"

"It's hard to say nothing happened when you look at her expression. Anyways, you'd better take responsibility for making a girl so crazy about you."

She winked at me happily, yet behind her smile I could see a demon who would never forgive me if I ever made Lise cry. Giving the wrong answer could prove fatal. Well... it's definitely my fault that Lise has been acting differently. I bet I looked like a prince in some fairytale when I showed up and rescued her from an unwanted ceremony, then held her in my embrace as we ran across the night sky. Until now, she's always treated me as her teacher and father figure. After this incident, it looks like she'll see me completely as a man. If I leave things be, Princess Leafel will encourage her, and she'll confess normally. When Emilia confessed her feelings to me in the past, I was shaken by how abrupt it was. Now, I have an answer, and have already decided my response.

"I'm willing to take responsibility if Lise is serious."

"Oh?"

"HUH?!"

Not expecting my honest response, Princess Leafel froze with her mouth wide open and Lise let out a strange whine.

"But that's a conversation for another time. Why don't we put it aside for now? We haven't solved our problem yet."

"...That's right. There's still much to be resolved, so let's put this discussion on hold."

As expected with the situation at hand, Princess Leafel switched gears. She then handed off the frozen Lise to Senia, and looked around, tilting her head.

"By the way... what happened to your servants?"

"Those two are running in this direction from the woods. They'll get here in a

little bit. Would you consider your request to be completed?”

“Yes, I’m satisfied. I’m so grateful you accepted such an unreasonable request. Thank you for safely taking Lise away.”

“Didn’t you make the request after calculating that I wouldn’t refuse?”

“Let’s not bring up the past, shall we? At any rate, the request is completed. There are lots of things left to do, but just leave all that to me!”

She waved her hand as she loudly made that declaration. I see, this is the spirit that makes us believe in her, despite a lack of evidence, as the charismatic future queen.

“I have a question. Can we assume that we’re safe here?”

“There’s only us and a few nearby guards at the sanatorium right now. I can trust them because they’re an elite few that I’ve chosen myself. We’re far safer here than in the castle.”

No matter how messed up the ceremony became, it doesn’t mean that their engagement has disappeared. It’s surely better than being at the castle.

“We’ve stockpiled enough supplies just in case there’s a siege. Plus, even if we are pursued, it’s easy to defend this land. On top of that, we have an emergency escape route.”

“We’re trained to protect Miss Leafel. There won’t be a problem, even if soldiers from the castle come.”

“As long as we’re here, no one’ll lay a finger on the princess!”

Senia, who was holding Lise in her arms, and Melt, who was clenching his fists, backed up Princess Leafel’s statement.

“We’ll be safe for today and tomorrow, at the very least. I’m sending my men to the castle, so if anything happens, they’ll report back to me immediately.”

“Hearing that is a relief. After I reunite with my students, we’ll head back to school—”

“Wa-Wait!”

After hiding out for a bit, we were planning on returning to Diamond Manor,

but... Lise suddenly gave a large shout. The action seemed unconscious, and when I turned to look at her, she was staring at the ground in embarrassment. Princess Leafel smiled at seeing her sister's reaction and placed a hand on her shoulder.

"Oh my, what made you shout so loudly? Tell us clearly."

"Um... I want to be with Sir Sirius... well, not just him, but everybody... today."

"So you're saying you don't want us to leave yet?"

Lise vigorously nodded at my words. I glanced over to Princess Leafel, who winked at me with an all-knowing expression on her face.

"We have an empty guest room that can hold three people. I'd also like to thank you for your hard work. Could you stay the night?"

"...Understood. Thank you for your kindness."

Despite deciding without first consulting the siblings, I have a feeling they'd readily agree to it. We don't have a bedtime roll call in the school dorms, so as long as we get our stories straight with our roommates, we should be good. Emilia's roommate is right in front of me, and Leus' roommate is my subordinate, meaning he'd absolutely help us. I live alone at Diamond Manor, so I'm fine, too. Staying here shouldn't cause any problems. When I decided to stay, Lise was so happy that she hugged Senia. If she were Emilia, she'd be energetically wagging her tail.

"Princess, would you like to return to the mansion? Even though your physical strength has come back, you're still in recovery."

"You're right. Alright, let's go in and rest."

"I apologize, but I'm going to stay out here until the siblings arrive."

Using "Search" to check their position, I can see that the siblings are headed this way at a very fast pace. They'll be here in a few minutes.

"They're on their way. As a teacher, I want to be the first to greet them."

"Sister, I'll also meet them here. After all, it's my fault they had to run all this way."

“I see. In that case, I’ll stay too. Melt, could you bring us a table and some chairs? Senia, please prepare some tea. Shall we watch the moon as we wait?”

“You got it. Princess, please put on another layer. We don’t want the night wind to make you cold.”

“Understood. Would you like to have a meal here as well? The chefs are almost finished with their welcome preparations for Miss Lise.”

“Sounds good to me. Looks like we’ll have a dinner party.”

What was supposed to just be a waiting game turned into an outdoor dinner party. Well, it’s not a bad idea for Lise to have a fun dinner party right after escaping from an unpleasant ceremony. She changed out of her dress, and into casual clothes while a table and chairs were set up. We sat outside drinking tea and waiting for the siblings to arrive.

Lise occasionally sulked at Princess Leafel’s lectures, but it was nothing compared to her mood at the ceremony. Melt, standing behind her, was watching over Lise with a kind expression on his face. What a truly heartwarming scene. I was thinking to myself how it wasn’t a mistake to recruit him when I caught signs of the siblings coming out of the woods. Then, Senia and Melt also noticed, and turned their gazes toward the woods as well. Senia’s bunny ears were twitching, just like a real rabbit.

“Judging by their footsteps, it looks like those two are approaching.”

“It’s Emilia and Leus. They’ll be arriving soon.”

“Really? It takes about half a day to walk here from the castle. There’s no way they could get through those dense woods quickly.”

“Sir Melt, those two run around in the woods every day. Doing this much wouldn’t be out of the ordinary.”

“They’re Silver Wolves who used to live in the woods. Look, here they come.”

Once I raised my hand, Emilia jumped out of the wood with a particularly strong gust of wind. Her flowing silver hair shone in the moonlight and I was secretly a little fascinated by its beauty. Emilia smiled at me as she used the wind to make a glorious landing.

“Thanks for waiting, Lord Sirius.”

“Good work.”

She happily closed her eyes and wagged her tail when I patted her head. She was sweating a little, but I was relieved to see that she didn't sustain any injuries. A few seconds after Emilia, Leus came running out of the forest. He had a frustrated look on his face when he saw us.

“I lost! Looks like my big sis is faster...”

“Hehehe, Leus you'll never be faster than me. I reserve the right to get my head patted by Lord Sirius.”

They're awfully enthusiastic, they must have been racing. Looks like the winner earns head pats as a reward... but that's none of my business. I beckoned Leus over to me, and his tail wagged as I patted his head.

“Oh yeah, this is the best!”

“Ugh, even though I won...”

“I'll brush your tail later, Emilia.”

“Yay!”

They were dressed as adventurers to prevent being identified as school students. Lise didn't care that they were a little dirty from running around in the woods, and pulled them both in for a hug.

“...Thank you. Thank you... so much.”

“H-hey wait! I appreciate the sentiment, but your clothes are gonna get dirty!”

“Sis Lise, you're squishing me.”

“It's okay! It's the only way I can convey my gratitude to you.”

Emilia and Leus were left to the mercy of Lise, who was unwilling to let them go. Then Princess Leafel came in from behind and joined their hug, which added to the commotion.

“Let me also offer you my thanks. Emilia. Leus... thank you so much. It's thanks to you that we were able to get Lise out of there safely.”

“Don’t say such things. We were only following Lord Sirius’ instructions.”

“Right. Besides, even if you didn’t send out that request, we’d still do it to save sis Lise.”

The siblings smiled shyly, and the meal preparations were completed. Leus’ stomach rumbled at the delicious smell. He arrived at the ceremony early so he wouldn’t miss anything. As far as he was concerned, he came a long way without having eaten dinner, so it was no wonder he was hungry. Perhaps from relief that the siblings were safe, Lise’s stomach let out a growl. Her face burned red as if she were caught in the act.

“Now that we’re all here, let’s eat. With everything settled, I’m getting hungry.”

“May we join you?”

“Of course. We prepared this for you and Lise, feel free to eat it. Also, this isn’t the castle, so don’t worry about manners.”

“Hey big bro, can I have some food?”

“Yea, go ahead. I’m hungry, too.”

After they got my permission, the siblings immediately sat in their chairs, joined their hands, then reached out for the colorful array of dishes. I followed suit and tasted the meals that royalty eats. As expected from a chef in the service of the royal family, the food was delicious.

“Woah, this is awesome! It’s yummy, but... I like the food big bro cooks more.”

“I agree. I also prefer Lord Sirius’s cooking.”

Those are things you should think, not say. Look, the cook is grimacing at you.

“Ah, well y’see, they’ve both tried my cooking, and what they mean is that the taste they’re accustomed to is the best!”

“The one who cooked this meal is one of the best chefs in Elysion. You two are quite interesting.”

In spite of this embarrassing moment, our small dinner party ended

peacefully.

“Big bro, the royal family really is amazing.”

“You’re right.”

After the dinner party was over, we were shown to the sanatorium’s guest room. Leus and I entered the hot spring that was built into the villa. I built a bath in Diamond Manor as a hobby, but the hot spring here is large enough to accommodate ten people, which excited Leus.

“I wonder if it’s the same where the girls are?”

“Probably. I don’t think you’re tempted to, but don’t even think about peeping, okay?”

Well, it’d be impossible to peep anyways, because the hot spring is completely walled off. I bet peeping on Princess Leafel would be a capital offense. I was only trying to lightly warn Leus, but for some reason he got upset.

“There’s no way, big bro! If I did that, my sister would kill me!”

“Ah, yes. She’s usually kind, but she’s strict with you. I also feel it whenever she slaps your cheek.”

“Nah, if it were you, she’d probably ask you to join her. I think sis Lise would probably forgive you, too.”

“Probably?”

“Yeah, I feel like she’s changed ever since that ceremony. She currently has the same air that Noel had around Dii.”

Leus’ instincts make him sharp in the strangest ways. More importantly, Lise has started showing affection for me as a man. I wonder if Emilia is okay with that? She said she wanted Lise to travel with us, and agrees with her staying around, so I can’t imagine their relationship would take a turn for the worse.

However... a woman's jealousy is a scary thing. In my previous life, I once witnessed a woman stab a colleague in the gut with a kitchen knife out of romantic jealousy. The colleague was safe because there was a magazine on her stomach, but I thought at the time that she deserved to be stabbed because it was obviously her fault. Emilia and Lise are probably talking in the women’s

bathing area right now. I don't want to see those two fight. I think it'd be best for the three of us to discuss everything once we get out of the bath.

"Alright, get scrubbing, big bro."

"I'll wash your back if you wash mine."

There was no point in worrying now, so we climbed out and washed each others' backs. Anyways... when I previously picked him up, his arms and legs looked like they'd break at any moment. Now they've grown into a fine body with muscles that were trained to perfection. As a teacher... and a father figure, it makes me happy to see how much his body has developed, even if his mind hasn't. I was brooding and feeling deeply moved when the bathroom door suddenly opened and someone came in.

"Excuse me."

I thought that it was Emilia, who practically had a criminal record of storming in at the Diamond Manor, but it was Melt who entered. Come to think of it, this was the first time all of us guys were together, so the atmosphere in the bathhouse felt a little strange.

"Don't mind me."

"...Okay."

After we finished showering, he went to the bath to relax. Melt was also soaking, at some distance from us. A bath is a place where one can relax and calm down, yet a strange tension filled the air. Some time passed, and I decided to get out of the bath when... Melt suddenly turned his attention to us.

"...You two. I want to apologize."

"What do you mean apologize?"

"When I first met you, I put too much priority into my work as a guard. I treated you coldly when you came to save the princess."

Saying this, he broke his usual stiff countenance and bitterly chuckled. Wow, I didn't know he could do that.

"That's not the case at all. Even though Lise introduced us, we were still suspicious, so it's only natural for you to react that way."

“Regardless, it’s the truth that I treated you with scorn after you saved the princess. I am... a man who’s devoted everything to protecting the princess. Her health was failing, and there was no sign of her recovery. I was flustered. I thought of everyone as my enemy, and all I could think about was turning you away.”

“Oh, I totally get that feelin’! If anything happens to my big bro, I’d blow them to bits.”

“No matter what you say, I still acted out of turn. I’m late, but I’d like to once again thank you for saving someone I care for, and her sister as well.”

Melt slowly lowered his head and had a natural smile on his face.

“I’m sorry... and thank you.”

I don’t know if our mutual nakedness was a factor, but on that day, we got to know Melt a little better.

The next day, I woke up to a peculiar feeling. I turned sideways to face the feeling and saw the color silver on one side and a blue mass on the other.

“Good morning, Lord Sirius.”

“Mo-Morning....”

Those colors were Emilia and Lise, who were wearing light nightgowns. Apparently, we were all in a row sleeping in the bed. At our feet was...

“Big... bro...”

Leus was snoozing on his side. The bed was large and spacious enough for royalty. It wouldn’t have felt cramped, even with four children sleeping on it, so why were we in this situation?

“Being at Lord Sirius’ the absolute best.”

“M-My sister... told me to come here...”

“*Gulp*”

There were two beds in the room assigned to us. We decided last night that Leus and I would use one bed, while Emilia would use the other. After exiting the hot spring, we waited to talk to Emilia and Lise, but they didn’t come out for

a while, so I guess we fell asleep before we knew it. I think I was tired from the incident at the ceremony, and from not sleeping well due to the information gathering I did the day before. I also let my guard down when considering my students, but it's quite a pity that I didn't even wake up after we were all sleeping together.

Hmm... wait a minute? Does the fact that they're laying on the bed with me between them mean that they're still on good terms?

"You two are friendly, as always."



“Yup! I love both Lord Sirius and Lise, after all.”

“And I love Emilia and Si-Sir Sirius, too.”

It looks like Emilia and Lise’s friendship has deepened. I imagined them fighting over a guy, yet there wasn’t the slightest hint of hatred between them. Are they a special case, or do we live in a different world where polygamy is the norm? Then again, maybe I’m the crazy one for thinking in terms related to my past life. Well, they are my students, and it’s too early to think about marriage at our age. I don’t know what the future holds, I’ll just keep watching over them as a teacher. I already have an elf who told me she doesn't mind being my mistress, so I guess you could say I've already given myself up to the future.

“Lord Sirius, do you want to go back to sleep?”

“No... I’m wide awake”

“Ca-Cake?! Huh? Where’d my cake go, big bro?”

At this point, I was truly envious of Leus, who was alone in his own world.

We all got up and had breakfast in the mansion’s dining room. Suddenly, a maid entered in a hurry and whispered something to Princess Leafel. Something must have happened, yet from how Princess Leafel looked, it didn't seem to be an emergency.

“I see... it’s just the two servants? Anyways, let’s talk. You all stay on high alert and look for anyone hiding.”

After sending out instructions to the surrounding maids, Princess Leafel stood and stared at us with a serious expression.

“Someone went to check on how things were at the castle earlier and came back... and brought my father along with them.”

“Father?!”

He has only one servant with him, and only has a weapon for self-defense. It doesn't look like he came here to fight, but you all should stay here just in case.

“Sister! I’ll go with you...”

“I’ll go and talk to him first. If I don’t sense any danger, I’ll call for you. Sirius, if

anything happens, take Lise and get out of here.”

“Understood. Leave Lise to me.”

“I appreciate it.”

Princess Liefel said that with a laugh, and left the room with Senia and Melt in tow. The rest of us stood by, sipping our after-breakfast tea. Lise was fidgeting and looking restless, so Emilia approached and held her hand.

“It’ll be okay. I’m sure Princess Leafel will be able to persuade your father.”

“Yeah... I believe in my sister. I just didn’t expect my father to come in person, so I’m a little worried...”

“Calm down, Lise. He probably didn’t come here to take you away.”

Still, it’s strange how her father came in lieu of a search party. If I’m right, the king does not intend on hurting Lise, let alone Princess Leafel.

“If he really came to catch you, there’s no way it’d just be the two of them. I think they’re probably here just to talk to you.”

“As if all he wants is to talk. He’ll only tell me what to do, won’t he?”

“This is just what I expected from the start. It’s about time someone does something...”

“STOP SCREWING AROUND!”

Princess Leafel’s voice echoed from the nearby parlor where they were meeting. Reflexively, I activated “Search” but didn’t find any signs of struggle.

“Was that... sis Leaf’s voice just now?”

“This doesn’t sound like a normal discussion. What should we do, Sir Sirius?”

“They don’t seem to be fighting. Remain on alert, but be patient.”

“Sister... what exactly happened?”

Lise and the siblings were upset at the angry voices reverberating throughout the mansion when the room’s door opened and Senia entered. Seeing as she wore her usual calm expression, she didn’t seem out of sorts, but there was a hint of anger to her.

“Senia! Is my sister okay?”

“She’s safe, please don’t worry. Miss Lise, everyone, please come to the parlor.”

“Is it acceptable for us to go, too?”

“Yes. There’s something you all need to hear. The king is in that room. This is a special circumstance, so he’ll pardon a little rudeness.”

“Let’s go, Lise. We’ll be with you. Today’s the day you can tell your father what you’d like to say!”

“...Okay. Thank you.”

With Lise ready to go, Senia led the way to the parlor. Princess Leafel was sitting on the sofa in the center of the room. She was clearly angry and looked like she had just gotten into an argument. The man sitting opposite of her, the object of her anger, was Cardeas Bardfeld, Lise’s father, and the king of Elysion.

“...You came.”

His short hair was red, like a fiery flame, and his gaze was as sharp as a drawn blade. He’s just sitting there, yet he exudes the supremacy of a king. Even those who don’t know who he is would subconsciously kneel. It’s no wonder that Lise cowers at the sight of him. He’s truly a man fit to be a country’s king...

“You must be Fairlise’s friends.”

The king’s serious nature was ruined when he turned to face us, exposing the slap mark on his right cheek. Was that the sound we heard when Leafel raised her voice?

“What are you doing just standing there? Come, take a seat next to me.”

We were made to sit side-by-side with Princess Leafel in such a tense atmosphere. I was a little frustrated, because Emilia and Leus were trying not to laugh at the slap mark on the king’s face.

“Miss Leafel, how can we be of service to you?”

“I called you in to tell you the truth of the matter. To put it simply, the prenuptial ceremony that was held yesterday... was a set-up.”

“Sister... could you say that again?”

“Yesterday’s ceremony was a trap set to gather all the bad people of Elysion. I never intended on marrying Lise into the Everity family.”

So that’s what it was. Most of the people at yesterday’s ceremony were well-to-do nobles who were in the wrong line of work. Since this was a country-wide ceremony, they should have at least invited the school headmaster, Lordvel. His absence was suspicious. The guards were unusually quick to respond to the commotion, and that explains why they didn’t let the nobles leave as they tried to escape from the venue. Long story short, the marriage was a sting operation. And the result was... luring the Everity family– the root of all evil– and their friends, securing them all at once, then expelling the rot that was deeply rooted in the country. The operation was a success, but the problem was explaining and compensating the people around them. Plus, the grudge was playing out in front of me.

“Do you understand? This person used me, and even Lise, as a decoy without telling us! How little do you think of a girl’s marriage?!”

“It was a painful choice for me to make, too. We couldn’t let all the preparations we made to catch those idiots go to waste.”

Looks like he kept this secret from Princess Leafel not only to prevent any information leaks, but also to reveal to her the dark side of becoming the next heir to the throne. What a bold and merciless king. Princess Leafel somewhat understood his reasoning, but couldn’t forgive him for involving Lise, who wasn’t supposed to be entangled in all this, so she yelled at him, then slapped him across the face.

“Why didn’t you explain that to Lise when you spoke with her?! If you did, she would’ve been convinced and stepped down, and I could have proceeded as planned!”

“It’d be unreasonable to ask that of you since you’re recovering from an illness! Besides, this kid’s face and enthusiasm are so much like yours... I couldn’t say no.”

The king, in deep trouble, suddenly dropped his head and bitterly closed his mouth. Lise was the most surprised to see her father in such a state, and she

anxiously grabbed Princess Leafel's hand, as well as my sleeve.

Hmm... this room needs a change in atmosphere.

"We understood you wanted to tell us the ceremony was a sham. Was there any other reason for you to call us here?"

"Of course there is. I requested you and the others to kidnap Lise, after all."

"...Um, although it was requested by Leafel, it can't be ignored that you interfered with the ceremony. Normally, I'd give you some kind of punishment, but since this was a set-up, I'll pretend as if nothing ever happened."

Cardeas, who returned to his original self, explained that to us. Even though he's the king, I still think he's being too pushy.

"Even though it helped us, it was a very drastic measure to take. Complaints must be coming from all directions."

"I've received a mountain of complaints. I'll leave it to my body double for the time being."

"Even if it was to expel society's rot, wasn't this plan a bit overboard?"

"The people who implanted the magic stone in you were also involved. We squared it all off. Besides... doing everything in such a flashy fashion makes it easier for you, the next successor, right?"

He aimed to set a precedent by making such a spectacle: not only to expel the rot, but also to take revenge for his daughter before she takes the throne. Since it's happened once, it'll be easy to carry out flashy policies once Princess Leafel ascends to the throne. I guess it depends on the degree of the action, but I don't think it's something to worry about since she's a good judge of character.

"This was also an example of what will happen if you do something poorly. I plan on publicly announcing the true purpose of the ceremony. You must keep your actions a secret."

"So you're executing royal authority."

"Call it whatever you like. Rather than punish the person who saved my daughter, I will use my privilege as king however I want."

Hmm... what's that supposed to mean? Lise told me he was a cold-hearted man who only spoke out of necessity. Now, though, Cardeas is looking at Princess Leafel and... Lise with an earnest expression. He's looking at them like a father who's seriously thinking about his daughters.

"Anyway, I understand the situation quite well. However, there's one thing I can't accept. It's about Lise."

Cardeas's expression twists into that of bitterness at the mention of Lise. Nevertheless, Princess Leafel proceeds to speak.

"You asked me multiple times how Lise was faring. At first, I thought you were pretending to hate her on purpose to keep her away from the royal family."

"Huh?! Is that true?"

"Yes. On the outside, he seemed unaffected, but I didn't miss his muted relief when he heard how you were all doing. However... now that he's used Lise as a decoy for the ceremony, I have no idea what he's thinking."

"...Makes sense."

"I held back from asking for various reasons, but now I've reached my limit. It's time you tell us your true feelings. Please answer clearly how you feel about Lise."

"....."

"If you like her, say you like her. If you dislike her, say you dislike her. Just tell us how you feel! Don't you see how your half-heartedness hurts this girl the most?"

"Sister... Father is distressed. There's no need for him to talk about me."

"No, we need a solid clarification. C'mon, Dad!"

We were going to leave, seeing as this was a family matter, but Lise was holding my sleeve and shaking. We weren't told to leave, so if this happens, we should roll with the punches. Princess Leafel made her declaration as she struck the desk in front of her, and Cardeas gave Lise a strained smile.

"What do I think... of her? It's a shame to say, but I'm not sure I know, either. No, I'm completely lost."

“Father. Should I... have not come here?”

“You’re wrong, Fairlise. You... didn’t do anything wrong. I’m the one to blame, I feel indebted to your mother, Lola.”

He wetted his mouth with tea and gazed out the window to the sky with a melancholic look on his face. He was speaking not as a king, but as a man named Cardeas.

“...I’m sure Lola held a grudge against me.”

He sadly mumbled and began telling the story of his past. Cardeas Bardfeld was born as the eldest son of the former king— who was talented in many fields— and was therefore suited to be the next king. However, rather than becoming a king, he longed to be an adventurer. Strong-willed, intuitive, and more interested in physical activity than mental activity, Cardeas bragged since he was a kid that he’d definitely go on an adventure someday.

He had a younger brother named Arios. Arios was a gentle and kind young man who liked reading books. Although the brothers were complete opposites, they got along well. And the one chosen as the heir to the throne was... Arios, the second son.

The former king decided that, regardless of his capabilities, such an unmotivated eldest son was not fit to be king. Fortunately, Arios was capable enough, and his good character granted those around him their approval. Cardeas wasn’t interested to begin with, so he supported his brother while training his own body. Thanks to Arios’ political prowess, Elysion continued to have stable policies.

Then, Arios married a noble, and they eventually had their first child. A few years later, their second child was born, so Cardeas decided there was no need to worry about an heir. He decided to leave Elysion to become an adventurer. Naturally, those around him opposed his decision, but only one person, Arios, supported him.

“I want my brother to see the world for me.”

Arios, who had heard Cardeas talk at great length about his dreams, was painfully aware of his brother’s feelings. Such kindness from his younger

brother made Cardeas determined.

“Ten years. After ten years, I will come back and support you for the rest of my life.”

With this promise, Cardeas became an adventurer and set out on his journey. It wasn't all fun and games, yet he enjoyed being an adventurer to the fullest. It was his dream. He grew up to be a strong and sturdy man while he traveled the world and experienced a plethora of things. A few years passed before he knew it, and one day after accepting some commission from the guild to earn money... Cardeas met Lise's mother, Lola.

Since they were both adventurers and oddly compatible, they decided to form a party. They watched each other's backs, and were drawn to each other as they traveled together. Perhaps it was inevitable the two would become lovers. They had been together for many years and were even thinking about marriage when... the ten-year mark was just around the corner. Cardeas was anxious. He could take Lola back home with him, but there would surely be people who wouldn't approve of her being a commoner and an adventurer. Above all, he was well aware that the freedom-loving Lola wouldn't like royal or noble society.

There were... two options. Should he leave Lola and return to the castle to support his younger brother? Or should he pretend to have forgotten his promise, and continue his travels with Lola? Of all people, it was Lola who made him decide. Even though she taught him everything she knew, she still pushed him forward.

“You... made a promise, didn't you? If you can't keep that promise, you're not the Cardeas I fell in love with.”

With her words in mind, he made the decision to leave Lola and return to Elysion. When he returned to the castle, what awaited Cardeas was... the weakened and bedridden form of his brother.

Arios had fallen ill in the previous year, and by the time Cardeas returned, he didn't have much time left to live. The treatment came too late, and his ailing brother was smiling from ear to ear as he welcomed him back. Then a few days later... Arios passed away. Arios' children were still young, too young to succeed

the king. The whole country was filled with sorrow and regrets for Arios, and Cardeas took a look at the country his younger brother protected, Elysion, and made up his mind again.

“I’ll become king and protect his country!”

He adopted Arios’ three children, and became the king of Elysion. Incidentally, one of those children was Princess Leafel.

Of course, some opposed him, but when Cardeas, who was capable of being king from the very start, became motivated, he was quickly able to distinguish himself. Gradually, his opponents were silenced. Supported by an excellent group that Arios had cultivated, he spent his days swamped with work... in the blink of an eye, ten years had passed.

One day... a letter arrived for Cardeas. It was warped with a hole that was stamped with a seal. The letter must have reached him, because it was stamped with his seal. There was only one other person who had this seal beside himself. It was from the ring he gave to Lola when he left her. In other words, he realized it had to have been sent by her. The letter arrived with the ring used as the seal, and a piece of paper. The paper had only a handful of words written in shaky handwriting.

“Take care of your daughter.”

Cardeas found out the letter’s origin and sent a retainer to investigate. He learned through the report that Lola had already passed away from an illness, and that she carried his child, Fairlise. Lola had been pregnant with Cardeas’ child at the time of their separation ten years earlier. Upon further investigation, it was determined that there was not the slightest sign of another man in her life, and, considering the time of birth, the child was definitely his. Because she knew that the presence of a commoner’s child would be a distraction for Cardeas, she had raised the child by herself without telling him.

Angry at himself for not knowing about this and returning to Elysion, thus neglecting her for ten years, Cardeas immediately sent a letter, deciding to adopt Lise. However, the moment he actually saw his daughter in person and saw a semblance of Lola’s face in Lise’s... it hit him. How could a foolish father face his daughter who he neglected until now?

After finishing his monologue, Cardeas slowly stood up, walked over to the window, and let out a sigh.

“I didn’t want to pretend to be your father, but there was no way I’d leave you alone, either.”

“Father...”

“But at the same time, I was scared for you. I didn’t know how to treat you after neglecting Lola and you.”

He wasn’t coldly staring at Lise, he was just trying desperately to keep his composure. He’s a good king, but a clumsy father.

“No matter what I say, it’ll only sound like an excuse. I was the only one, though, who tried not to get you entwined in the royal family’s problems but... you still got involved anyway.”

“Tha-That was my fault! I acted without telling my sister about it first.”

“No, I’m the one to blame. When you came to the castle instead of Leafel, I was going to explain the truth, and dissuade you from acting as the lure. However, the way you offered to take her place... the way you cared for your sister, was too much like Lola. The moment I realized that... I couldn’t say a thing.”

Cardeas’ decisions and judgment were clouded by his guilt over Lola. Now, Cardeas didn’t look like a king, he looked like a lost father.

“Lola enjoyed being an adventurer from the bottom of her heart, just as I did. I took that away from her, without even taking responsibility, and she passed away. Therefore, I have... no right to claim to be your father.”

She couldn’t possibly continue as an adventurer if she was carrying a child. It must have been rough for her to raise a baby all by herself. She undoubtedly was a strong woman, both physically and mentally.

“Come now, Fairlise. Do you have anything to say to the foolish man who left you and your mother behind to do something so stupid? You can go ahead and hit me. I can take it.”

Laughing self-deprecatingly, Cardeas trudged forward and stood in front of

Lise. At the same time, she stood up and raised her hand in a wide gesture towards Cardeas standing in front of her.

“...Don’t make such decisions on your own!”

Lise cried out and released a slap, but it only made a light, quiet sound.

“You don’t know how my mom and I felt... don’t be so selfish!”

“I understand. If you hate me, hate me all you’d like.”

“You’re wrong! Father, you’re wrong! Mom... didn’t hold a grudge against you.”

“Still, you must have...”

“My mom told me so before she died. She said not to hold a grudge against you.”

“Huh?!”

Cardeas’ eyes widened in astonishment once he heard that Lise wasn’t holding a grudge. For a man of his kingly position to be so visibly shaken, the situation involving his lover and child must have been deeply upsetting.

“Mom told me over and over again how wonderful you were. She spoke with pride, as if she was bragging about herself. I thought my father was dead at the time, so I didn’t know, but now I do. My mom was proud of you, who lived as a king.”

“Lola... you...”

“That’s why I won’t hold a grudge against you, father. I *can’t* hold a grudge against you. However, I’d like to ask you one thing. Was it okay... for me to be born as your daughter?”

“Of course! If I didn’t know about you at the time I found out about Lola’s death, I would have fallen into the depths of despair.”

“...Good. Knowing that I’m good enough to be your daughter is enough for me.”

“Fairlise. Could you... forgive me?”

“There’s nothing to forgive. I was never angry in the first place. Besides,

father... I'd like you to call me 'Lise.'"

Cardeas's hardened expression dissolved when Lise smiled at him, and a grin broke out across his face. It looked like a weight was lifted from his shoulders, perhaps because of the heavy pressure that was bound to him because of Lola.

"Haha... sounds good. Lise, thanks for telling me what Lola said."

"No problem!"

They cleared up their misunderstandings with each other and were in a good mood, but... something was missing. She viewed me as a father, so I knew what Lise wanted right now.

"Excuse me, Your Majesty, may I interject? If you're a parent who's praising their child, you should pat her head."

"That's true. Thank you, Lise."

"Ah..."

He patted her head a bit roughly and disheveled her hair, yet Lise still laughed heartily. It wasn't perfect yet, but this would start to bridge the gap between Lise and her father. He wouldn't know how to treat her for a while, but at least things wouldn't get any worse. Once the tense atmosphere suddenly disappeared, Senia was preparing a new cup of tea when Cardeas' servant opened his mouth.

"Your Majesty. If we do not return to the castle soon, it will hinder our government affairs."

"I see... we must go at once."

Cardeas glanced at Lise, who looked disappointed. With her abandoned puppy dog look in mind, Cardeas asked the servant.

"Hey... Jin. How do my cheeks look now?"

"The marks left from being smacked by Miss Leafel are quite visible."

"As a king, I can't appear before my vassals like this."

"You're correct. Fortunately, we're at a sanatorium. If you take a long soak in the hot springs and rest up for the day, the swelling should somewhat go

away.”

“Hm, let’s do that, as long as it doesn’t give anyone a hard time.”

“That’s not a problem at all. Now then, I’ll return to the castle.”

“I’m counting on you.”

The servant, named Jin, left the room without a sound. Cardeas, left behind, sat down on the sofa and invited Lise to sit next to him.

“Lise. If you don’t mind... could you tell me more stories about Lola?”

“Ye-Yes!”

Father and daughter were sitting together on the sofa and the siblings nodded their heads in satisfaction. Princess Leafel looked relieved. No, wait. Something’s wrong with her expression. It’s as if she’s thought of some mischievous prank...

“What’s more, Dad, did you know? Lise has someone she likes.”

“Sister?! You don’t have to say that...”

“Oh? Which of the two is he...”

We had already escaped from— or rather, left the room. From here on out, the family should talk amongst themselves. I thought we could borrow the kitchen and make some snacks. Let’s just say we *definitely* didn’t run away because it was going to be a hassle.

“Hey big bro, before we left the room, Lise’s dad sure was glaring at us, wasn’t he?”

“You lose the moment you care. Anyways, let’s go to the kitchen and cook something. The conversation will become more lively if we make something delicious.”

“I can help, too.”

We headed to the kitchen and asked the sanatorium’s cook for permission to whip up some sweets. He showed us the ingredients he had on hand, and it looked like— if we tried hard enough— we could make Lise’s favorite, cheesecake. However, there wasn’t an “oven,” so we decided to make one

while Emilia prepared the ingredients. The “oven” is powered by a magic circle, so I’m able to make one as long as I can draw a warming magic circle. I made a sealed container out of a heat-resistant material, and drew a magic circle on it, thus completing the “oven.” It’s easy to create, making it disposable after one use.

I then quickly cooked the ingredients, put them in the “oven,” and sometime later...the cheesecake was ready.

Partly due to the oven’s simplicity, it was a little misshapen, but the taste was fine. The cook intently watched the sequence of events and took notes. I don’t think it’d be worth trying without an “oven.” However, I will advertise that they’ll eventually be mass-produced at the Gargan Trading Company.

When I returned to the parlor after about two hours, Lise and the others were happily conversing. The rift between those two seemed to have dissipated, and Cardeas, delighted by Lise’s words, was laughing out loud. He had the look of a full-fledged father.

“You’ve really grown stronger, Lsie. When we first met, you couldn’t say a word.”

“It’s all thanks to you and the others, sister. Especially Sir Sirius... huh? Sirius, could that be...?”

“Hm, maybe.”

As soon as we returned, Lise’s eyes lit up at the sight of the cheesecake. Princess Leafel was also chomping at the bit to have some. Cardeas, the only one who was unfamiliar with cheesecake, tilted his head.

“I believe your name was... Sirius. What the hell is that?”

“It’s a dessert I made. It’s almost lunchtime, but since we worked so hard on it, why don’t we all eat it together?”

“Of course. You might have a lot to say about it, but you should try eating that first, Dad.”

“I’ll cut it up. Lord Sirius, please sit on the sofa.”

“As you say.”

Senia offered, and I decided to leave the rest to her. I handed her the circular cheesecake and sat down on the sofa. I noticed Cardeas's sharp gaze on me. Perhaps he was told I was Lise's teacher, and the object of her interest. He's been giving me a probing look—no, he's been shooting me a murderous gaze for a while now. I wonder if making up with Lise awakened his fatherly instincts. If they were alone, I have a feeling she would hit him and yell at him to stop.

When I was letting such a gaze pass through me, Senia had finished cutting the cake into portions for all of us. Then, after lightly taste-testing the cake, she put the cake slices on the table one after another...

"...Senia. Isn't my slice a bit small compared to the others?"

The size difference between Cardeas's slice and ours was obvious. Mine was almost twice the size of his, and Lise and Princess Leafel's were a bit larger, too. It was only natural for Cardeas to ask, but Senia only smiled briskly in response.

"No, they're all equal."

"How could they be equal? No matter how you look, mine is smaller."

"They're all equal."

"But, look at this..."

"They're all equal."

"No, just..."

"They're all equal."

"Hmph."

The king was defeated by the servant's nonchalant responses. Come to think of it, Senia loves Lise like a little sister. There's no way she wouldn't get angry over this incident. As a servant, she can't slap him as Princess Leafel did, so she wanted to do whatever she could to get back at him. It's much cuter than actually hitting him...

"...Hm?! What a rich flavor! Is there any more?"

"As if there'd be any more. Cheesecake is yummy, isn't it Lise?"

"Yes! And it's even tastier when I'm having it with you all!"

“Hey... daughters. Could you share a little with me?”

“No way!”

“Please do something!”

What an outstanding result. The king’s character seems to have changed quite a bit. Perhaps this is the real Cardeas. Maybe his daughters convinced him that, despite our presence, he doesn’t need to have such a regal air. Well, there’s no one here to rat him out. I hope they will behave as they like, and enjoy their family time. Spending days with a boisterous family must be... what Lise yearned for.

“By the way, Lise, there’s something I’d like to ask.”

“What is it, sister?”

“I heard from Sirius that you brought cheesecake to the mansion several times... yet I don’t ever remember eating any. What happened?”

“.....Uh.”

“Oh, what a cute smile. Still, I can’t help but turn into a demon when kids eat snacks that they shouldn’t.”

“Forgive me, sister.”

“Nope.”

...Yup, these physical altercations are also a part of normal family life. What happened to Lise after that... I dare not say.

If I could say one thing, it’d be that the men quietly left the room. Then, following lunch, we held our usual training session with Melt, who asked to join us. After training, Cardeas stared me down while I gave Lise advice. He interrupted Leus and I when we were in the hot spring, trying to work up a sweat. He may be the country’s king, but he’s also a former adventurer who works out in his free time. He has nice, toned muscles. I was admiring them, when, for some reason, Leus started to compete and flex his muscles.

“His are dope, but I ain’t losin’ to him, big bro!”

“Oh, you’re already like this at a young age. You’re a promising young man!”

Cardeas didn't seem to mind Leus' way of speaking at all. They looked more like father and child than Lise as they showed off their muscles and laughed loudly, complimenting each other. I guess they're pretty compatible. They calmed down after a short while, and Cardeas sat down next to me and thanked me.

"My daughters told me all about you. Thank you for doing so much to take care of them."

"I helped them a bit, but I mainly did what I wanted to do."

"Oh, what is it that you'd like to do?"

"I want to see my students grow, and to see Lise smile from the bottom of her heart. By the way, you're on good terms with your family now... right?"

"Hm... you're a righteous young man. I can see why Leafel recruited you. Still... you failed."

"Big bro did?!"

Cardeas's contagious laughter caused Leus to crack up, too. Cardeas, satisfied after his laughing fit, exhaled, leaned his back against the wall, and began to mutter.

"...This is changing the subject. How do you feel about Lise?"

"She's a very cute and kind girl who puts her all into everything she does. However... she's not fit for the royal family."

I didn't want to give false flattery at a time like this. I honestly told him what was on my mind. Cardeas was momentarily taken aback, then laughed out loud and clapped me on the back. It hurt a little because I'm nude.

"Hahaha! She's just as you say: she's not fit for nobility, let alone the royal family. If she went into that den of vice, she'd be eaten alive."

"Sis Lise looks best when eating delicious food!"

"...Right. It'd be best if she lived as a commoner, like Lola. I thought about returning her to the castle for royal education, but I believe that she should return to her current school."

“I agree. Lise has a lot of acquaintances in her class. She seems to enjoy going to school each day.”

“Hm, then I’ll leave Lise in your hands. Just...”

He then put his hand on my shoulder and put all his strength into it. Hey... my shoulder made a creaking noise and it hurt a lot.

“Could you... cut back on the training a bit? That girl has gone through a lot of hardship, you know?”

“It’s normal to go through hardships when training. I understand your concern for your daughter, it’s not that I don’t see your point. I’m making sure she stays in top physical condition, please don’t worry.”

“Top physical condition?! Have you ever seen or touched her naked body?!”

“I touch her when I give her treatment. When it comes to examining her naked body, I leave that to Emilia.”

“I won’t allow you to see it! Ugh, I won’t allow you to marry her, either!”

“You’re jumping to conclusions too quickly!”

This is worrisome. This could be because of the patience he used to endure up until now, but Cardeas has transformed into an outstanding fool of a parent. I don’t think I’ll win against a father who only thinks of his daughters.

Epilogue

After further investigation, I've collected a summary of the details. First of all, Lise's identity was to remain a secret as before. She was revealed at the prenuptial ceremony, but all of the nobles who saw her were caught, and it was announced that she was an imposter they hired as a decoy. Cardeas and Princess Leafel pulled some strings, and Lise will be able to go back to school once things settle down. For the time being, Lise is staying with her sister at the sanatorium. We frequently visit her so she doesn't get bored.

Next were the at least fifty nobles who participated in the ceremony. Even if you play with fire a couple of times, your senses eventually become numb. If the number of people doing so increases, they can't be stopped. This is the type of group they were dealing with. They were confronted with the evidence of fraud that the king had gathered, and most of them were either stripped of their nobility, or banished from Elysion. For especially rotten people, their entire existence was erased without anyone noticing.

There was natural backlash due to the number of nobles purged, but once the king publicly published the evidence, those around him had no choice but to shut their mouths. If they impudently opposed the decision, they would be labeled as members of that group. Then, there's the case of Cooler, the man Lise was supposed to marry. He's already no longer in Elysion. Evidence of the Everity family's wrongdoings fell into the hands of Princess Leafel, and the head of the family was executed, while the rest of the family was demoted to the lowest rank of nobility.

However, Cooler himself was only banished from Elysion thanks to a kind-hearted girl's help, and a letter that was left behind with the evidence. He was sent to a faraway territory, and left Elysion with several servants and a sickly woman by his side.

Finally, there was us, living our normal school life. It was announced that the king had ordered this series of affairs, and that Lise was kidnapped by the king's private army. The siblings and I were in disguise, so our faces went undetected, and we could continue to stroll around town without any issues. I became acquainted with this country's king, yet I have not seen Cardeas since that day.

He didn't want to involve me with politics, and I didn't want to get roped in either, so I guess it's natural. Cardeas calls on me from time to time for cake, so I send it through his two daughters. I'm not sure if they're actually arriving, though, because of Lise's snacking habit.

One of the biggest changes is that Emilia and Leus are now living in Diamond Manor. Emilia immediately moved her belongings to her room, and finished the move in less than an hour once I permitted them. I knew she had prepared in advance, but didn't expect her to finish everything so quickly.

Additionally, two beds were laid side-by-side in Emilia's room. The extra seems to be for Lise, as she's decided to live here when she returns to school. This troublesome procedure was solved instantly by offering cakes to the headmaster and Professor Magna. Leus and his roommates sadly parted one another, and the Diamond Manor, where I was previously all alone, has become lively.

A few days later...Elysion's Harvest Festival began. The whole of Elysion was buzzing with energy, with many stalls and vendors coming from outside the city, and street performances took place all over town.

"Oh... this place is usually packed but today's ridiculous, big bro!"

"Don't get lost. If we get separated, let's meet by the school."

"It'll be fine. There's no way we'd lose sight of you, Lord Sirius."

We made our way through the crowds of people, peeking at the stalls and street performers we found along the way, and ate meat skewers while enjoying the festival.

"Meat skewers are good but... since it's a festival, we should be eating takoyaki."

"What's takoyaki, big bro?! Is it yummy?!"

"It's delicious. I'll make some soon, so stop swinging those skewers in your hands around."

"Got it!"

We arrived at our meeting place with Leus, who was quietly chewing on the

skewer, beside me. We were planning on meeting with Lise here... she hasn't arrived, though.

“Lord Sirius, have a bite.”

“Ah... mmm. It's a bit bland, but the seasoning isn't bad. Where'd you buy this?”

“At the stall over there. Looks like they changed up their seasoning lately, and it's gradually gaining popularity.”

Afterward, while eating the food that Emilia brought from nearby stalls, Leus, having finished his meat skewers, spotted a familiar person in the crowd.

“Hey, isn't that sis Leaf over there?”

Looking where Leus pointed, I saw Princess Leafel. Her hair was dyed from red to black and was pulled back in a ponytail. She was wearing a gorgeous one-piece dress, and was walking arm-in-arm with Melt. Incidentally, the dye used on her hair was left over from the siblings for the prenuptial ceremony. I gave it to Princess Leafel as a gift. Her attendants, Senia and Melt, also dyed their hair, and donned more mature clothes than they usually wear. Princess Leafel's beauty was attracting attention, but the three blended in well with the rest of the town.

“Why are you leaving? You'll get lost if you don't stick close.”

“I won't get lost! That was definitely...”

“Hey... don't cross your arms in frustration.”

“We're supposed to be betrothed, take it easy.”

We were told that Princess Leafel and Melt were attending the festival as a married noble couple, with Senia as their servant. To faithfully reproduce the scene, Princess Leafel walked on, much to Melt's annoyance. She must have not noticed us because of the crowd.

“Aren't you gonna go talk to them, big bro?”

“I think it's best to leave those three alone.”

After seeing the happy couple off, we found Lise at a stall in the back. She was

with a man who gave off a weird vibe.

“Father, would you like to eat that next?”

“Oh... are those meat skewers? Shopkeeper, I’ll take one of everything you’ve got.”

Standing next to Lise is Cardeas, who dyed his hair black and disguised himself in a commoner’s clothes. He probably slipped out of the castle to enjoy the festival with his daughter. There’s probably a lot of clamor going on at the castle, but seeing as he has a body double, things should be fine for a while. The two of them quickly devoured the meat skewers they ordered, and then held the rest of the grilled meat in both hands and started to eat. The sight of a father and daughter enjoying a meal together is heartwarming, but... the two had eaten nearly twenty meat skewers altogether. Their healthy appetite... truly shows that they’re related.

“Ah, Sir Sirius!”

We stared at the scene in a daze, when Lise noticed us and came running forward. Cardeas’s eyes were sharp as he walked up behind her, biting into a skewer of meat. He can’t seem to say anything about his daughter’s gleeful behavior.

“Father’s bought me all sorts of stuff.”

Lise, as usual, didn’t look like a princess as she was chomping down voraciously on the meat skewer she was holding. However, the smile she wore on her face as she looked at us was more radiant than anything else.

Extra Story

The Festival Continued

It's been some time since the fake prenuptial ceremony had taken place at the castle. The Elysion Harvest Festival was in full swing, and excitement overflowed throughout the town. Initially, a parade was planned for the commemoration of Princess Leafel's marriage, but it was called off due to the ceremony's cancellation. The parade's cancellation is said to have caused both disappointment and relief, and since the information was publicly disclosed in advance, there wasn't any major confusion, and the Harvest Festival went off without a hitch.

The information that was released, which contained a mixture of lies and truth, didn't mention any details about Lise or her title. Just to be on the safe side, though, she was to live with Princess Leafel in the sanatorium mansion, instead of the school dorms, for a while.

The day of the festival arrived, and we met with Lise at a corner of the town. For some reason, her father, Cardeas, had joined her. It was the first time we met in person since the incident.

"It's been a while. Since *that time*, right?"

"...Yes, indeed it has. What's more, what exactly are you doing here?"

"Hm. As you can see, I came here to celebrate with my daughter. I'm trying to make up for lost time with her."

"I think that's great. But don't you have other plans?"

Right now he looks like just a regular dad holding a meat skewer. However, he's the king, and should have a full schedule, including announcing the opening of the fighting tournament held in the school arena. And yet...

"It's only giving speeches and tending to relationships with annoying nobles. My daughter is more important than that stuff."

...That's the case. His overly candid speech is all the more refreshing. It's hard to believe that this was once the man who couldn't deal with Lise, and

desperately pretended to be someone he's not.

"Father... I'm happy to do this, but you mustn't neglect your work."

"I've told you many times not to worry, Lise. The retainer who's acting as my substitute is doing his job properly. I'm sure he's doing better than I would, hahaha!"

His remarks made me wonder what it was like to be king. By the way, that retainer was the man named Jin who went to the sanatorium with Cardeas.

Jin worked for Cardeas's younger brother... he was trained by Arios, and before Arios passed, and was an excellent retainer and partner who supported Cardeas both professionally and privately. Arios must have been an excellent man to leave behind a retainer to fill in for his older brother's shortcomings in anticipation of his ascension to the throne.

At any rate, if he says it's okay, I'll hold back from asking any more questions. Then, following my example, the siblings tried to bow their heads in greeting, but Cardeas raised his hand to stop them.

"You don't have to bow your heads. I'm not here as a king, I'm here as a father. Please treat me normally, and without reverence.

Even in disguise, he often attracts the stares of surrounding people. Perhaps he hasn't fully concealed his presence as a king. However, people nearby won't think that the country's king would be in a place like this, and he's only attracting a tiny bit of attention. His presence will most likely be overlooked, given the free atmosphere of the festival.

When I looked around for any familiar presence, I could see people, mixed in with the general public, watching us. I don't sense any bloodlust, so they're probably the king's secret guards. I used to guard dignitaries like that, too. I miss it a little.

"Understood. Now then, what should we call you?"

"That's a good question... you may call me Toran."

"You got it. By the way, Mr. Toran, that meat skewer looks awfully tasty!"

Leus is quick to adapt. He got used to it in no time, and seemed very

interested in the meat skewers that Cardeas... no, Toran is holding.

“Hm, I bought it at the vendor over there. It’s delicious. Come on, if you want, I can share.”

“Really?! Thank you!”

“Hahaha! It feels good to be properly thanked. How about the young lady, Emilia?”

“Is it quite alright?”

“There’s no need for children to exert such self-control. Besides, Emilia didn’t just become Lise’s friend, she took care of her in many different ways.”

Emilia turned to me at once and I nodded my head. She politely thanked him as she accepted the meat skewers. Toran saw a beautiful smile come across Emilia’s face. Emilia is the same age as Lise, so he probably feels like he gained another daughter. Finally, Toran looked at me, but... for some reason, he looked reluctant.

“...I have some resistance to handing some over to you. It’s like giving my daughter away...”

“That’s terrible, father! Sir Sirius has taken great care of me!”

“Hm... this last one is for Lise, so I guess there’s nothing I can do about it.”

“Huh? Ah... okay.”

“...I’m fine. Please give it to Lise.”

There’s no use going against those airheads. They’re an amazing father-daughter duo in many ways. She’s a daughter who’s faithful to her instincts, and he’s a father who’s not very popular. Besides, he could have bought more if we wanted, but since it was for me, he didn’t want to... time to stop.

“Lord Sirius. The seasoning is different compared to the last one, but it’s also delicious. Please try it.”

“...Mhm, this is pretty good.”

“Yes! Hehehe...”

Emilia just fed me. Maybe she’s in high spirits today because of the festival,

but she's oddly eager to take care of me. I'm not in a bad mood, and— most importantly— it makes Emilia happy, so I let her do what she wants.

“Hey now! I know men like ladies fawning over them, but one of those girls is my dedicated daughter...”

“Father! He hasn't done anything wrong, plus, I don't mind if it's Emilia doing that!”

After we caused a ruckus, we started strolling around the town, which had been decorated for the festival. As we walked along the street, buying various items from stalls along the way, Leus found a certain stall and tugged my sleeve.

“Hey big bro, what is that? There are a bunch of small arrow-like things over there.”

“Are those... darts?”

“Darts? That's a game called “flybee.” I used to play it now and then when I was an adventurer.”

At the end of a wooden box, which seemed to be off-limits, was a board with multiple circles drawn on it that got smaller and smaller toward the center. There are no such things as cork or air guns, so this must be the kind of target used in this world.

“You win a prize if you hit a flybee in the center of the target.”

“There are loads of different prizes. Ah... that ribbon is so cute.”

“Yes, that would suit you well, Lise. That little ribbon is cute, too.”

“Hey shopkeeper, we'll take on the challenge!”

Lise, who was checking out the prizes, was interested in a larger ribbon with a small embellishment. It's the same color as the one she currently wears, but as soon as it became clear that she liked the decoration, Toran started up a game. I don't need to ask why.

By the way, it costs three stone coins to borrow three flybees. All that was left to do was throw the flybees from the front of the installed wooden box toward the board, which was at a distance away. The distance was so great that hitting the center was difficult. In fact, Toran attempted it three times and Leus tried

once. The closest one was about a fist's width from the center.

"This is tough. I prefer slashing things rather than throwing them."

"Hmm... one more time, shopkeeper!"

"Father, I don't want it that much. You should stop..."

"No, items that are obtained in times like these come with good memories. That's why I want to give you this present."

"Oh! You're so cool, Mr. Toran! By the way... aren't you gonna give it a shot, big bro?"

"I don't think anything good will come of it if I win, but I'll try."

After I paid a stone coin for a flybee, which looked like a tiny arrow, I began my examination. I learned most of its flying habits through watching Leus and Toran. I picked it up with my index finger and thumb, focused, and released a shot that sailed through the air first up, then down—like a mountain— and it hit... slightly off-center.

"Ah! So close..."

"Wow, you can get it that close on the first try, huh?"

"It deviated more than I expected. But... I remember."

Truthfully, I wanted to hit a bullseye on the first throw, but I guess my senses have dulled. However, I learned how it flies now, so I continued to fire flybees in succession straight into the center of the target as if they were being sucked in. Because I can't always use my favorite weapon when fighting, I wouldn't be able to survive if I didn't learn a weapon's quirks, even if it was from just one shot. Then, when the last one hit exactly in the center, the shopkeeper groaned in admiration.

"Wow... this guy's amazing. But, little guy, I think you've done enough..."

"Okay, I'll stop now. Instead, can I have two gifts?"

"I guess so. This is a special occasion. What do you want?"

He gave me a bitter look but let me choose my prizes. I picked a small ribbon and a stuffed animal made for kids to play with.

“Okay, this ribbon is for Emilia, and this stuffed animal is for Lise.”

“Are you sure?! Wow, I can’t believe I got a present from Lord Sirius...”

“Wow... is this really for me?”

“There wasn’t anything I wanted. More importantly, do you not like the stuffed animal, Lise? If you’re not interested, you can have something else...”

“No, I love it! Hehehe... it’s cute.”

I randomly chose one that I thought Lise would like. I guess it was worth it, because she happily hugged the stuffed animal. Emilia, on the other hand, was absolutely glowing and off in her own world. I was about to pat her on the head to bring her back to reality when I noticed that Leus was tilting his head.

“Big bro, why didn’t you pick out the ribbon for Lise?”

“Her dad should be giving that to her, don’t you think?”

“Naturally. However, I don’t like the sound of you calling me dad.”

What a difficult person. Well, it was my fault for trying to match the mood and calling him that. Toran, who was further motivated by my performance, fired several flybees again. They still didn’t hit the target’s center.

“You were so close that time, Mr. Toran!”

“Hmm... just a little closer...”

“I think you’re exerting yourself just a bit too much. Given your strength, Mr. Toran, flicking your wrist is enough. You might want to relax your fingertips more.”

“Hm, I see...”

I thought he’d fight back against my advice, but he actually took it and released a flybee. He’s willing to learn what’s best for him, even if it means dealing with an enemy. No wonder he was able to make it as an adventurer for nearly a decade.

“Lise, I looked a little pathetic, but will you accept this?”

“You didn’t look pathetic at all! Thank you, Father.”

“Mhm!”

Toran nodded his head in satisfaction at Lise’s wide smile.

“You don’t look as happy as when you got the stuffed animal. Should I give you that as a present instead?”

“Dummy. Can’t you see that Lise would rather get a present from Sirius than you?”

“Ah, Sister!”

“I finally found you!”

When I turned around towards the voices that interrupted us, I saw Princess Leafel and her servants, Senia and Melt. By the way, Princess Leafel was still arm-in-arm with Melt. He must have gotten used to it, too, because he looked happy and his cheeks were flushed red. Now, though, his face was frozen in a tight smile. That’s because standing before him is the king... or rather, Princess Leafel’s father.

“Leafel?! Why are you here?”

“Hehehe... you’re naive to think you can outsmart me. I won’t let you have Lise all to yourself.”

“Father? I think she wanted to be alone with Mr. Melt.”

“Shhhh...”

I thought it was odd that they weren’t together, despite both living at the sanatorium... was Toran trying to have some alone time with Lise? Princess Leafel, who had pushed away an awkward-looking Toran, got some distance from Melt and hugged Lise from behind.

“I’ve had enough with Melt. I want to enjoy the festival with everyone from now on. Is it okay if I tag along?”

“Of course! You guys don’t mind, right?”

There was no reason for any objection. After making sure that everyone, besides Toran, nodded their heads, Lise showed Princess Leafel what Toran and I gave her.

“Check it out, sis. I got these from Sir Sirius and Father.”

“Oh my, how nice. Actually, Melt bought this for me.”

It was a heartwarming scene of people showing off to each other what they received. Let’s not forget, though, that people were crying out nearby.

“Alright! This time... I got it!”

“It’s nothing once you get used to it. Now I can give this to Lise.”

“What in the world is going on?! Why are there so many of you who can do this?!”

The shopkeeper’s in tears as Leus starts to hit the target again. Senia, who wants to present a gift to Lise, hits a bullseye with a flybee.

“Melt. Are you on good terms with Leafel?”

“Ye-Yes! She’s given so much love to a nobody like me! It’s too much!”

“What, you don’t have to worry about your status. However... I think it’s a little early to cross your arms in front of me, don’t you think? Shall we have a talk...?”

“I don’t really want to... I mean, yes.”

Melt was already teary-eyed at dealing with such a frustrated father. At this rate, Melt won’t be able to enjoy the festival alone. But that’s none of my business. It’s something he’d have to deal with eventually.

“Ah... my treasures increased. I’ll cherish this ribbon.”

“Please wear it.”

The scene devolved into complete chaos, and it seemed unlikely that it would calm down.

Once we met with Princess Leafel, we went to the Gargan Trading Company. I heard they set up a stall on a plot of land next to their store and were serving them the crepes I taught them to make. It looked like a huge success, because many people had gathered in a line. Since it’s a festival, it’d be better to hold the crepe in your hand and bite into it directly. Even the paper that’s used to wrap the crepe is expensive, though, so they serve it on a plate like a coffee

shop would.

We were about to give up on eating on the open terrace because it was packed, but Zack had left a seat open for us so we could sit down right away. We were a large group, so we put tables together and shared seats.

“Sirius taught you how to make these crepes, right? How exciting.”

“Yes. Their sweetness is different from a cake’s, sis.”

“It looks like you can choose from different types. What’s everyone getting?”

Normally, since Senia and Melt are servants, they’d be seated in the background. Their identities are concealed today however, so they’re sitting with us. Then Toran, who had seen the menu that Senia held out for us to see, pointed to a menu item and asked a question.

“I heard that it’s a dessert, why do some have meat?”

“A crepe isn’t just a dessert. They can be eaten as regular meals and are delicious. Might I recommend this meat and veggie crepe?”

Roughly speaking, there are two types of crepes: there are sweet pastry crepes with fruit and whipped cream, and there are meal-like crepes with meat and vegetables. Because people may be confused by these never-before-seen crepes, the menu includes meal recommendations compiled by the waitstaff. The toppings and ingredient amounts can be freely adjusted, so the combinations are truly endless. I had just eaten a meat skewer, so I was thinking about ordering a sweet crepe. Toran, who had seen other customers eating them, was the first to decide what to order.

“Hm, they look pretty tasty. For now, I’ll take everything off the menu.”

“Okay!”

“What a splendid idea.”

This family...they dive headfirst into everything when they’re all together. Even one of those meals is quite large, so what they ordered could feed at least thirty people.

“Are you sure you want everything?”

“What, are you worried about the cost? Don’t worry. Today’s meal is my treat, so eat as much as you’d like.”

“That’s not what I meant...”

“Ok then, I’ll have this one and this one.”

“I’ll go with this meal. Lord Sirius, what are you ordering?”

“...I’ll have one of these.”

There’s no use in worrying. We have Lise and Leus, who are big eaters, and Toran, who didn’t think it’d cause any problems. At any rate, I didn’t expect Princess Leafel to nod her head so easily. Unlike those two, her food intake is supposed to be normal.

“Sister, which will you choose?”

“I want to enjoy lots of different flavors. Could you share with me whatever you’re eating?”

“Yes! Let’s eat together.”

I see... she's killing two birds with one stone. She’s enjoying a variety of flavors, and is also getting to know Lise. That’s a clever plan. Senia called over a waiter and put in the order, and then a man sitting at the table next to us looked our way with a sigh.

“Huh, are you serious? That kind of order reminds me of someone I don’t like, so please stop.”

“What else would I order—wh-?!”

The man was Professor Will, the school headmaster in disguise. Like the king, he must have a busy schedule, and yet... I’ll stop there. Toran seemed to know who Professor Will was and glared at him in a loathsome manner.

“Hey sis Leaf, does Mr. Toran not get along with Professor Will?”

“It’s only natural. We’ve known him since we were kids, so we have a long history. There’s a lot of secrets that shouldn’t be let out.”

“I’ve known you and your family for generations. I’ve known you all since you were babies and have listened to you many times when acting as an advisor.

Even the other day, I listened to your whines about wanting to get along with your daughter as soon as possible...”

“Stop! Also, stop treating me like a child.”

“That’s a difficult request. No matter how much you grow, you’re still a kid to me.”

Looking from the perspective of an elf, a species with a long lifespan, the years Toran lives are but a few. As Professor Will said, he’s like a kid...

“Thanks for waiting. Here’s a fruit crepe with plenty of whipped cream.”

“...There’s not enough whipped cream here. Could you add some more?”

Why do I feel the same way about him?

Seeing Professor Will ask for an extra dollop of whipped cream, Leus delivered a precise verbal K.O.

“Big bro, don’t you think Professor Will is more childish?”

“That’s not true, Leus. I just don’t like compromising when it comes to sweet stuff.”

Professor Will didn’t get through to him. Even if Professor Will looked like he was telling the truth, there was no way Leus could be fooled by his words.

“That’s a purely childish opinion! You treating us as children is unfair!”

“What are you talking about?! If you’re connected to Sirius, then you should be well aware of the appeal of sweets!”

“That’s a different story!”

“Um, about that...”

“Shut up!”

“Come back when you learn to appreciate the taste of whipped cream!”

Melt tried to calm down the man-children, but it seemed impossible. Even if they quarrel like little kids, they are, after all, the country’s king and the most powerful wizard in the world. They’re awfully noisy and are attracting attention. Judging by Princess Leafel’s aloof demeanor, this is probably a daily occurrence.

I followed suit and quietly waited for my crepe to come.

Then, I noticed Zack was beckoning for me from behind the building. It looked like he was only calling for me, so I made sure no one followed me as I approached him. He had a puzzled look on his face.

“Ah... I’m sorry about the noise. I can ask them to stop if it’s bothering you.”

“Nah, it’s a festival so it’s s’posed to be noisy. But...”

I can see people drinking and causing a ruckus all over town, and this isn’t a fancy restaurant, so they don’t seem to mind. I was wondering why I had been summoned when Zack looked at our table and asked me a question.

“That corner’s oddly intimidating. Who are those guys? Are they your friends, boss?”

Well, the highest-level people in the country are assembled over there. Despite the large gathering of people and the fact that they’re in disguise, they can’t hide their intimidation and elegance. People unconsciously avoid them.

“Ah... at any rate, they’re great people. I think it’s better to not pry too much.”

“I better not dig too deeply then, boss.”

“That’d be wise. For the time being, I think it’s better to bring the crepes we ordered out sooner rather than later.”

“You got it!”

As I was telling Zack that he should bring out the crepes as soon as possible, a certain change was taking place at the table.

“Hey, hey, you’re being noisy as hell.”

“It’s a big festival, we can’t fight, right?”

“How terrible... it’s making my alcohol taste bad!”

I said people avoided them unconsciously, but was only talking about rational people. They had apparently attracted a drunk who was walking outside by the stall. As expected, those two couldn’t fight in that situation, so they returned to their seats.

“Look over there, they’ve got a few cute girls with them!”

“Hey hey, why don’t you ditch those old men and come drink with us, little girl?”

“I like this one better. I’ll toss you some pocket money, so come drink with me.”

The trouble is, all the women over there are beautiful. The three drunks were utterly enraptured.

“That looks bad. I’m gonna put a stop to it.”

“No, that shouldn’t be a problem for them. More importantly, please give our crepes the top priority.”

I returned to the table, but the ladies responded quicker.

“I have no intention of serving drinks to anyone other than my master. I refuse.”

“Shouldn’t you be spending that money on delicious food?”

“I accept that you called us beautiful, but we’re not that type of woman. Go hit on someone else.”

“Please go away before you get hurt.”

“Huh?! Cut the crap!”

They flat-out refused, and one of the drunks raised what appeared to be a bottle of liquor that he was carrying. Perhaps because he was intoxicated, he thought in simple terms. He thought he could get away with anything if he was threatened... but he had never moved.

“Kids. Let’s stop there.”

“If you move your hand any further, I won’t guarantee that you’ll live.”

That’s because a frightening father and a knight who protects the princess grabbed his arm and stopped him. The drunkard was about to retaliate, but was swallowed up by the murderous intent released by the two of them, which left his mouth agape.

“What’s wrong? You were in such high spirits before, don’t you have

something to say to me?”

“If you leave now, I won’t chase you down. Get out of here.”

“If you lay a hand on my sisters, I’ll send you flying!”

After such a beastly intimidation, the drunks turned away from us. Their faces had paled, and it wasn’t from the alcohol.

“Damn... you can’t keep eating all this!”

The drunks started taking out their anger on the table next to them... but they didn’t realize that they had stepped on the tiger’s tail.

“...Please wait.”

“What–HUH?!”

The man turned around at the gentle voice and saw Professor Will shooting him a killer smile. Dishes were scattered around his feet, and the crepe he had been most looking forward to had pitifully fallen to the ground.

“...It looks like they need to be taught a lesson, don’t you think?”

“You’re exactly right. Let’s show him what happens when he drowns his spirits in alcohol.”

“I’ll help out, too.”

It wasn’t just Professor Will who was upset, Toran and Melt were burning with rage, as well.

“Wa-Wait! You can’t get all mad over one measly dish!”

“That’s right! Besides, we haven’t even done anything to you. Why are you getting involved?!”

“This wasn’t a mere snack, was it? Shall you air out your grievances later?”

“The forks and knives that flew out when you bastards broke that table almost hit my daughters!”

“Whether it was intentional or not, hurting them is unforgivable.”

The three men, who were outwardly smiling, grabbed the drunks by the head and forced them out of the stall, into the shadows of a nearby building. The

drunks' cries of despair gradually faded into the distance, and were completely drowned out by the clamor of the festival. Their lives weren't in danger, but they would learn innumerable lessons, such as it's not right to get drunk and do as you like.

"Alright, I'll punish them, too!"

"Don't go, Leus."

"Huh? Why not, sis Leaf?"

"You don't need to act like that. Look at how calm Sirius is."

"That's because there's no reason for me to go."

Guards and soldiers were heading toward the direction that the men disappeared, and they'd soon meet them. By that time, our crepes were cooked, and the waiters laid them on the tables one after another. If we don't eat them soon, we'll run out of table space.

"They'll get cold soon. Why don't we have some before those three return?"

"Yes! Sister, have a bite of this one."

"Thanks. Mmm... it's sweet, but not like a cake. I like how fluffy it is, too. Come on, try it out, Lise."

I smiled at the two sisters, who were amicably feeding each other crepes when I saw a fork with a crepe stuck on it being held out in front of me. Needless to say, Emilia was the culprit. I ate it with a wry smile and Emilia wagged her tail, grinning.

"Hehehe... would you like another piece?"

"No, I ate a lot of street food, so I'm not that hungry. You should eat more, Emilia."

"Okay..."

"...Look."

She was so disappointed that her tail stopped wagging. I offered her a crepe, which she ate with a twinkle in her eye.

"This is amazing. Next, I'll... no, I can't lose my chance of being fed again."

“Hehe, you look awfully happy, Emilia.”

“Ha... how terrible. Lise, you should have cut in and said ‘Here, try some of mine.’

”

“T-that would be embarrassing. Plus, I’m eating with you, sister...”

“Pfft. If you can’t even say that, you won’t be able to say anything! We can’t lose like this! Open your mouth, Lise.”

“This is what you want!”

Despite the arbitrary match going on next to them, Leus and Senia continued to eat crepes at their own pace.

“They’re different from what big bro makes, but they aren’t half bad!”

“You should eat more calmly. Jeez... you’re like a troublesome younger brother.”

They seemed to get along well, so I continued to let Emilia feed me crepes. Afterward, Lise tried to feed me a crepe, but Toran and the others returned and they raised yet another ruckus.

After we finished our meal at the Gargan Trading Company, we continued walking around town and had a good time through and through. Time flies when you’re having fun, and before we knew it, the sun was setting, meaning we’d have to split up. The festival goes until late into the night, but we’re still kids, so we decided to stay only until the evening. When we could see the school in sight and tried to part ways... Princess Leafel held back Lise— who had been tagging along— by her hand.

“You can go with them.”

“Huh? But I...”

“There was hardly any information about you in the first place. You should be safe to return to school now. Besides, I was planning on going back to the castle today, so you should go back to Diamond Manor with the others.”

Diamond Manor is currently stocked enough for everyone. Emilia also moved

Lise's belongings from the school dorms, so there's no problem if she leaves as-is. However, this also means Lise won't be able to live with Princess Leafel. Even though they're sisters, she won't be able to casually visit her at the castle.

"...It was really fun staying with you, sister."

"Yeah, I had fun, too. If anything happens, feel free to reach out. I want to eat Sirius' cake again, so I'll send Senia over every once in a while."

"Hehehe, sounds good."

"Also, you live in the same town, but please send Dad a message or letter from time to time. Otherwise, I'm worried he might sneak out of the castle."

Incidentally, Cardeas is headed back to the castle to do his kingly duties. He had a depressed look on his face as he went. If he's left alone, he'll surely slip out, as Princess Leafel stated.

"Then next time, I'll bake some cookies and send them to him. I'll give you some, too."

"Oh my, I look forward to it. We'll meet again."

"Miss Lise, everyone, good night."

"Be safe. Goodbye."

Lise looked forlorn as she sent off Princess Leafel and the others. I stood next to her, patted her head, and smiled at her.

"Wouldn't it be nicer to give them cake, rather than cookies, that you made?"

"I guess... so. Can we bake it together?"

"Of course. Alright, shall we go back to Diamond Manor?"

"Yes. I'll prepare some tea when we get back."

"Let's go, sis Lise."

"Yeah!"

That day... we headed back to Diamond Manor, which lived up to its name in the truest sense for the very first time.

Afterword

It's been quite some time. Neko, here. World Teacher is finally, *finally*, on its third volume, and the spines are starting to look a bit better when they're all lined up on the bookshelf. This is thanks to Nardack, who draws wonderful illustrations every time.

I would also like to thank the many people involved in the publication process, as well as everyone who reads this work's support. Once again, I'd like to extend my gratitude. Thank you so much, everyone! I'll continue to work hard with all my might.

*There are spoilers from here on out, proceed with caution. This third volume is roughly composed of two stories, and the concepts cover Sirius's honor as an agent, and his growth through his own failures. The first half, the labyrinth arc, finally circles back to the opening story from the first volume.

How did you like seeing Sirius get angry once he saw his students, whom he nurtured and protected like a parent, beaten? The part where he came just in the nick of time and stood in front of his students is totally up the author's alley. It could be considered a shortcut, but I still wanted to try my hand at writing it. I tried my best to portray the feeling of a man speaking over his shoulder to those he's protecting. I hope the message came through.

As you can see, Sirius isn't the type of person who shouts loudly when he's upset. Instead, he calmly defeats his opponents while keeping his fiery hot anger close to his heart. If he confirms that someone's an enemy, he'll kill them with no hesitation. I believe this is the first time he's shown himself as an agent.

I wrote the second half of the story, which concerns the royal palace and Lise's true identity, to depict a girl's love for a prince riding atop a white horse. Even though she can see spirits and is a glutton, she's a normal girl, so I wrote this in the style of a shoujo manga.

Next is Emilia, a devoted heroine. She's getting more and more out of control, but it's all out of her love for Sirius. Please watch over her warmly. By the way, I have an addendum for the scene where she supports Lise's love: Emilia accepts and supports her because she knows that Lise is her friend and that she truly

cares about Sirius. Emilia isn't backing down; she's a servant, and being able to stand by Sirius and support him is enough for her.

In other words, it doesn't matter if Emilia is his second wife or even his mistress. This is because it's a different world where polygamy is the norm. Emilia is only a servant, but there's also a girly side to her that wants to have children with Sirius in the future. Imagine a grown-up Emilia and her children hanging out the laundry together. I'd like to create a happy scene someday...

The story will continue by following their school life, but I think that'll probably end with the next volume. Let's meet again when it comes out.

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