

5

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The DO-OVER
DAMSEL
CONQUERS
the DRAGON
EMPEROR

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The Do-Over Damsel Conquers the Dragon Emperor Vol.5

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YARINAOSHI REIJO WA RYUTEIHEIKA O KORYAKU CHU Vol.5

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FARIS DER KRATOS

First princess of the Kratos Kingdom.
Gerald's younger sister.



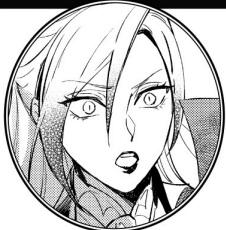
LUTIYA TEOS RAVE

Hadis's younger brother and the class president
of the Azure Dragons in La Baier Military Academy.



RISTEARD TEOS RAVE

Second prince of the Rave Empire.
Hadis's half-brother.



ELENTZIA TEOS RAVE

First princess of the Rave Empire. Hadis's half-
sister and the captain of the Neutrah Dragon Knights.



NOYN

The class president of the Gold Dragons
in La Baier Military Academy.



ROGER BROODER

The assistant instructor of the Azure Dragon
class in La Baier Military Academy.

~THE LEGEND OF THE CONTINENT OF PLATY~

Kratos, the goddess of love and the earth, and Rave, the Dragon God of logic and the sky, bestowed their
divine blessings onto their respective lands. The Kratos Kingdom, with which the Goddess shared her power,
and the Rave Empire, with which the Dragon God shared his power, have been embroiled in a long-standing rivalry.

CHARACTERS

RAVE

The Dragon God. He is
only visible to those
who possess strong
magic power.

JILL CERVEL

From the House of Cervel in the Kratos
Kingdom. Currently redoing her second life.

**HADIS TEOS
RAVE**

The young emperor of the Rave Empire.
He is the reincarnation of the Dragon God
Rave and is called the Dragon Emperor.

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The **DO-OVER**
DAMSEL
CONQUERS
the **DRAGON**
EMPEROR

Prologue

A map of the continent of Platy was splayed out on the desk. Jill was in a hot debate with herself, a quill in hand as her legs dangled over her chair. She was a soldier. In her first life, she was called the god of war's daughter. She was used to thinking of military strategies and tactics. She'd relied on her vice commander for complex plans, but it wasn't as though she threw all her responsibilities onto others.

In a weird twist of fate, the sixteen-year-old had gone back in time to do-over her life from the age of ten. Now eleven for the second time, Jill used her past life experience and knowledge to their fullest. Above all, she was now the Dragon Consort of the Rave Empire. Using her age as an excuse for her incompetence was nothing short of acting spoiled. *These policies are headed in the right direction. I'm sure of it.*

The problem was cooking up a strategy to make her plan into reality. Jill glared at the map on the table as though she was staring down an enemy. The continent of Platy stretched out like the wings of a butterfly with the sacred Rakia Mountains in the middle. These mountains served as the border for two large nations. To the west was the Kratos Kingdom, and to the east was the Rave Empire. These countries were guarded by Goddess Kratos of love and the earth, and Dragon God Rave of logic and the skies, respectively. Since the era of the gods, the two deities were at odds with each other, and thus, the two nations became enemies that waged war against each other.

But in recent years, the gears were finally shifting toward peace. Last month, the third daughter of Kratos Kingdom's Margrave Cervel, Jill Cervel, had gotten engaged to the Rave Emperor, Hadis Teos Rave, under the approval of both nations. With this now official, the two countries had taken their first step to attain peace.

From Kratos Kingdom, Crown Prince Gerald der Kratos had decided to study

abroad in the Rave Empire, and was currently staying at Rahelm, the imperial capital. Things were off to an excellent start. In truth, the prince was a hostage who spoke with the intellectuals of Rave, residing within a guest room that was equipped with iron bars and a barrier personally applied by the Dragon God, but appearances were important here.

In any case, unlike her first life, Jill had successfully prevented war from breaking out so far. However, she couldn't let her guard down. The two nations had cultivated an enduring sense of hatred toward the other and each had its own respective responsibilities. The sparks of war could quickly turn into a roaring flame at any moment. Jill, who had recently returned to her homeland with Hadis, was prepared to fight her family that protected Kratos's side of the border. She learned of the love and hatred of the Dragon Consorts before her—these women had protected their Dragon Emperor and ultimately fallen into the hands of the Goddess.

Jill once again thought about her future. What kind of Dragon Consort should she become? She believed appearances mattered and created an office within her personal room upon returning to Rave. She prepared a sturdy, light-brown desk to work on, and had properly stored her writing utensils so that she wouldn't lose them. Because she would be sitting for long periods of time, she received a plush cushion. Now that the stage was set, it was time for her to put some of her thoughts into action. Jill folded her arms in front of her chest and gazed up at the ceiling.

"I think it's all about timing, but I can't quite find it..." she muttered.

"Jill! It's snack time!" a cheery voice said.

Just as the clock struck 3 p.m., sounding a bell, the door opened. A man with a beaming smile on his face entered the room—he was likely the largest obstacle to overcome within the military strategy Jill was cooking up. Hadis Teos Rave, the current Rave Emperor, possessed the Heavenly Sword made from the Dragon God Rave; he was the true Dragon Emperor. Though he was wearing an apron, he was the emperor—a man who personally made snacks for Jill every day without fail.

Hadis pushed the tea wagon into the room. Sitting atop the wagon was an

entire cake with layers of delicious white cream and decorated with loads of glossy, red strawberries.

“Whoa?! What’s the occasion?” Jill asked.

“Heh heh. I’ve got some happy news to report,” Hadis chuckled. “But is this too big for you? Can you finish it all?”

“I can! I will! I’ll devour it in one bite!”

Jill quickly pushed her maps and pens to one side of the desk, creating space for the cake. Hadis swiftly placed two teacups and plates on the desk with the large cake in the center.

“Be patient, okay?” he said. “I’ll cut you a slice. It’ll be bigger than usual, though. This is a small celebration. I’ll cut to the chase: the day of our wedding has been decided!”

“Huh?” Jill, who had been so focused on the cake, gaped in astonishment.

Hadis cupped his red cheeks with his hands. “Next year, when you turn twelve, we’ll have our wedding!”

“Next year? When I turn twelve?” she repeated.

“I just turned twenty, right? We had a meeting, and we talked about how the emperor must have a consort. So, we decided to handle that before my birthday next year. We thought it was perfect to host a wedding between your birthday and mine. Since you’ll be twelve, we might barely be in the clear.”

In some situations, political marriages occurred before the married couple turned ten. While Hadis and Jill weren’t marrying due to an arranged marriage, since there were no other Dragon Consorts aside from Jill, it was a similar situation.

“I thought I had to at least wait until you turned fourteen, so I’m just so happy!” Hadis cried with elation.

Jill fell silent.

“And then, we can officially become a married couple! Hm? Jill? What’s wrong? Are you upset?” Hadis paled, and he visibly deflated, causing Jill to quickly shake her head in reply.

“O-Of course not! But twelve...”

Jill looked down at her body. *What was I like when I was twelve the first time?* At the very least, that was the age where she finally experienced her growth spurt in her first life. In other words...

“Am I going to be wearing a wedding dress?!” Jill cried. “With this measly height and body?!”

Hadis stared at her blankly. “Huh? I-I guess so...”

“People might take pictures or paint portraits of me, correct?”

“Th-They might.”

“Then no! *You* should wear a wedding dress, Your Majesty!”

“Why?!”

Hadis looked shocked, but Jill paid him no heed.

“I’ll be twelve!” she cried. “Even if I wear a wedding dress, it’ll only look like I’m playing house or something! Then it’s far better for *you* to wear the dress! I’ll wear the tuxedo!”

“W-Wait! Wait! That’ll look weird! No one wants to see me in a wedding dress!”

“I do!” When Jill tried envisioning her future husband in a dress, he looked quite cute. “I’ll even princess carry you, Your Majesty! In my family home, you became my wife, remember?”

“I think I just barely avoided that outcome! Calm down, Jill. Why don’t we have a bite of cake first?” Hadis suggested.

“Right, the cake!”

Jill suddenly remembered her important snack as Hadis started cutting the treat in front of her, giving her a larger slice than usual. She took a bite, the strawberries glittering like jewels as she stuffed her cheeks. She was in heaven.

“Yummyyy!” she squealed in delight.

“I’m glad you like it. Even after we marry, I’ll continue to make sweet treats for you.”

Jill froze in place. When she saw a smiling Hadis, the word “marriage” started to fill her mind.

“W-We’re getting married,” she said. “You and I.”

“That’s right. We’ve even settled on a date,” Hadis replied.

She started to grow embarrassed. The cake seemed to taste sweeter and fluffier.

“I-I’ll do my best to be a good wife...and an excellent Dragon Consort,” she vowed.

“You’re already an excellent Dragon Consort,” he said. “But yeah, next year, you’ll become my wife. You’re not just my fiancée anymore.”

Hadis sat across from her happily sipping on his tea. Jill noticed that there was a good mood in the air. *Maybe I can tell him about it now.* Rave was nowhere in sight; it was a perfect opportunity to talk, just the two of them.

“Your Majesty, I’d like to talk with you about something,” she began.

“Hm? We’re still planning the more detailed wedding schedule. All you need to do is memorize the flow of the ritual... Ah, you *do* need to learn embroidery, though.”

“Ugh... I-I know that. I’ll give it all I’ve got! But before that, I’m a little worried about Radia.”

Radia was the domain of the Dragon Consort. Along with her title of Dragon Consort, Jill also had her rank as Radia’s grand duke.

“What about it?” Hadis asked. “I think I reported to you that reconstruction is going smoothly.”

“I’ve been thinking about the type of city that I wanted Radia to become! Here!” She pulled out a half-written document from under the map and writing utensils on the edge of her desk. Hadis glanced at the paper and blinked.

“Radia’s Reconstruction Plan...” he read. “I *thought* you weren’t out training much these days. Were you writing this?”

“That’s right!” she replied. “I’ve only jotted down a few rough notes, which is

a bit embarrassing, but I wanted you to be the first to see it.”

“Really? Wow, that’s making me nervous too! Hmm, let’s see... Heh heh. You want to make it into a city with delicious food and cuisine! That sounds great. Radia doesn’t really have any defining characteristics.”

Jill leaned forward upon hearing the emperor’s assent. “Exactly! It’s sandwiched by Lehrsatz to the south and Neutrah! to the north. It’s in an awkward position. Only a small portion of the city is on the border, but geographically speaking, Radia should be able to support both Lehrsatz and Neutrah! from the back and should be a key player in defending the borders.”

“Because it’s a land that’s under the direct control of the Dragon Consort, oftentimes the person in question is gone for prolonged periods of time,” Hadis said. “It’s likely been difficult to think of a long-term plan that spans over thirty to forty years.”

“Right. So, I’d like Radia to grow in the future even without the Dragon Consort,” Jill explained.

“Ah, now I see what you’re saying. You wrote here that you wanted to create the best military academy. You want to make an education system in the city, yes?”

“Exactly!”

Jill nodded vigorously, excited that she’d gotten her point across. Hadis nodded while he placed his finger on his jaw, pondering these ideas.

“This is a city touching the nation’s borders,” Hadis said slowly. “During times of peace, it’s a place that raises excellent soldiers and serves delicious gourmet meals. During emergencies, these trained soldiers and stored food can be valuable. If we can use some of the undeveloped land to create a granary... this’ll be a good idea.”

“Really?!”

“This plan is beneficial to both the Neutrah! and Lehrsatz duchies. The Lehrsatz duchy primarily focuses on trade—they can trade ingredients and entice tourists. The Neutrah! duchy can share their knowledge of their Dragon Knights while dispatching trained personnel to this land. I’ll have Duke Neutrah!

and Duke Lehrsatz invest in this idea upfront and provide us with money and people. I can have my sister and brother negotiate.”

Jill widened her eyes, impressed. She hadn’t thought that far, making her a little frustrated. She still had a long way to go—Hadis was seeing a completely different view from her.

“Above all, it’s great that this is your idea,” Hadis said. “Let’s work hard to make this into a proper proposal. We’ll need to figure out some numbers and our budget... But I’m shocked. I didn’t think you had such a grand plan in mind.”

“Yep! I want to hurry up and become an excellent Dragon Consort! I want to stand tall by your side and see the same sights that you see. I want to become a consort that can think about stuff like this.”

Hadis turned serious for a moment before he gave a forced laugh. “Personally, I’m fine if you want to remain a child for a while longer.”

“But our marriage date has been set. We have to hurry.”

“Right... You’re right.” Hadis cut off a bite of his cake on his plate, placed it on his fork, and offered it to Jill. “Say, ‘ahhh.’”

“*Ahhh!*” Jill said with satisfaction, eagerly taking the bite as she leaned forward.

Hadis rested his chin on his hand. “Now you look like an adorable child.”

“Don’t say that, Your Majesty! I won’t be fooled!”

“Say, ‘ahhh.’”

“*Ahh—* I-I mean, I actually have another thing I’d like to consult you about!”

“So, you don’t want any more cake?”

“I do! I’ll take this bite and then tell you!” She took another bite off his fork. The emperor smiled and reached out.

“You’ve got cream around your mouth,” he remarked.

“I-I’ll wipe it off myself.”

“You’re so cold.”

“Because you keep preventing me from talking! Y-Your Majesty, you always just...”

“Just?”

Jill glared while wiping her mouth, but Hadis coolly sipped on his tea. She cleared her throat and stated her business.

“Your Majesty, you’re aware of the Grand Duchy of Laika, aren’t you? It’s the large island country beyond the Radia duchy and the gulf,” Jill started.

“Of course,” Hadis replied. “It’s an island under our protection. What’s with the sudden shift in topic?”

Jill tried to act as nonchalant as she could. “I’ve heard that it has institutions where you can learn about dragons and magic.”

“It does. That island nation started when people drifted from the East Sea and required assistance to fight against pirates. We lent them some of our dragons. They swore their allegiance to the Rave Empire, but since they’re all immigrants, it was imperative for us to educate them regarding our language and the like. That ultimately led them to put quite a bit of effort into their education system.”

“All of their schools have high standards. I’ve even heard that their military academy is superb,” Jill said. Hadis placed his teacup back onto its saucer. He gave Jill a questioning look, making her nervous. “I also heard that many people study abroad. So, you see, Your Majesty...”

“I’ve got a bad feeling about this. I don’t want to hear it.” He flashed a brilliant smile of rejection, but Jill wasn’t one to back off.

“Please hear me out,” Jill pressed on. “I’m interested in Laika’s military academy, and I’d—”

“I can’t hear you! We just decided on our wedding date today! I don’t want to hear it!”

“But you just said that my plan was a great idea.”

“Did I? I’ve forgotten.”

“I’ll feed you some cake.”

“No! La la la! Can’t hear you!”

Hadis kicked his chair back as he stood up, turned his back toward Jill, and ran off. As usual, he was oddly astute about matters he disliked and was quick to flee. But Jill had gotten used to tracking and capturing the emperor. She leaped toward the exit of her room in one jump and ran down the hallway with all her might, chasing after Hadis’s tall back.

“Your Majesty, you know that I never usually feed you my cake! This is big!” she called.

“Which means you’ll make a big request that I’ll absolutely hate!” Hadis yelled back.

“Bingo! You’re amazing, Your Majesty!”

“That doesn’t make me happy at all!”

Hadis’s older brother emerged from the corner, grabbing the emperor by the scruff of his neck. “What are you shouting about, Hadis?” His timing was superb. Beside the prince was Jill’s private tutor, Sphere, looking a tad troubled. Jill didn’t care who she ran into as long as they were able to stop the emperor.

“Please keep him there, Prince Risteard!” Jill cried. “Please hear me out, Your Majesty! I only need three months!”

“No!” Hadis shouted back, his hands over his ears.



“Our wedding date has already been decided!” Jill shouted as loudly as she could.

Hadis blinked, implying that he was still able to faintly hear Jill’s voice.

“I like you, Your Majesty!” Jill yelled.

Jill felt bad for having Risteard and Sphere hear her sudden confession of love, but she needed the pair to be decor for the time being. If she didn’t settle matters with Hadis here, she wouldn’t receive another opportunity.

“I love you!” Jill declared at the top of her lungs.

“Did you just say that you *love* me?!” Hadis said, uncovering his ears.

Good. I can do this. Jill took a deep breath. “Please let me study abroad in the Grand Duchy of Laika! It’s so that I can create an academy in Radia!”

As the words reached Hadis’s ears, he fell to his knees in despair. Risteard had a thousand-yard stare, and Sphere looked on in astonishment. But Jill paid them no mind as she clenched both of her fists victoriously. She’d won.

Chapter 1: How the Dragon Emperor and His Wife Left the Empire

IN the back of the room was an ebony desk. Bookshelves lined the walls, and a rug with long bristles stretched out on the floor. Smack dab in the center of the room was a rectangular table with cabriole legs paired with a large sofa for guests. The desk was a bit of a mess, with papers piled high, but the emperor's office was a large space. Yet, because of the highly confidential nature of documents that an emperor had to look over, the entrance to the office was heavily guarded. It was the perfect place for the Rave imperial family to have a private discussion.

"So, you're saying that while our empire is your home, you'd like to go to Laika for three months to study abroad," Vissel said before making a quick decision. "Very well. I shall arrange that for you."

"Brother!" Hadis shrieked, knowing that Vissel was at the helm in terms of administrative duties. "Why?! Stop her, will you? I thought you were on my side, Brother Vissel!"

"I am, of course," Vissel replied curtly. "I'll do anything for your benefit, even if that means being hated by you."

"You always say that! You never listen to my words!" Hadis whined.

"Oh, this is painful for me as well, Hadis. You have my condolences regarding the Dragon Consort," Vissel said.

"Don't talk like I'm dead," Jill interjected.

"Oh dear, pardon me. I don't really care whether you're here with us or not, so I guess I couldn't help myself."

Jill glared at the man, but he had a sunny smile plastered on his face. With tears in his eyes, Hadis clutched onto his other older brother.

"Brother Risteard!" the emperor cried. "You're against it, aren't you?!"

“Er, well, we’ve got less than a year until your wedding, and for Lady Jill to be gone for three months is a little...” Risteard started.

“Right?! She shouldn’t go, right?!” Hadis latched onto his support.

“Is it really a problem, Risteard?” Vissel asked, emanating an overwhelming pressure from behind the second prince. “Choose your next words wisely. How can this Dragon Consort assist us? Are you so incompetent that you can’t see how she’s just a nuisance?”

“L-Lady Jill might dislike rituals and lack etiquette, but I think you’re being a little hard on her,” Risteard replied.

“You can’t even say that she’s unneeded, and you call yourself Hadis’s older brother? This is the perfect opportunity. In fact, we can host the wedding while the consort is away. I’ll prepare a body double and have her marry Hadis instead.”

“I don’t want a wedding like that!” Hadis screamed.

“Me neither!” Jill joined in. “It’s only three months! There’s more than enough time for me to make it to my wedding!”

“In any case, I’m for sending Her Highness the Dragon Consort away,” Vissel said. “Are there any dissents?”

Hadis’s hand shot right into the air. Hadis’s other siblings who had gathered in the room—Elentzia, Natalie, and Frida—all looked a bit troubled, but no one raised their hands. Only Risteard looked visibly torn in making his decision.

Vissel gave a satisfied nod. “Then that’s that.”

“Why?!” Hadis yelled. “My opinion doesn’t count?! I’m the *emperor*! I-I am, aren’t I?”

“If Sister Jill...wants to go...I think we should let her,” Frida said gingerly. The youngest of them all, she was first to speak from her perch on the sofa.

Natalie looked indifferent from her spot beside her. “Our opinions don’t matter, anyway. Look at Brother Vissel. He’s determined to crush any dissenting opinions.”

“The Grand Duchy of Laika is indeed famous for its military academies,”

Elentzia said, her thought process in line with what it should be as a general of Rave's imperial army. "I can see why Jill's interested. In fact, I'd like to go myself. Risteard, you're interested too, aren't you? I take pride in how excellently trained the Dragon Knights in Neutrah are, but we train them all in the same fashion. It's good to have a fresh take. And it'd be a good reference for Beilburg, no?"

"Beilburg?" Jill asked. "Did something happen again?" Her private tutor, Sphere, needed to marry and have her husband rule over the floating city someday. It was a city that Jill was quite familiar with as well.

Elentzia shook her head. "No, nothing at all," she replied. "Risteard's been trying his best to assist Beilburg. Recently, I've seen him spend more time with Miss Sphere—"

"Elentzia!" Natalie hastily cut in, tugging on her older sister's sleeve.

Elentzia blinked in confusion, not understanding what her words had suggested. *Isn't Miss Sphere here in search of a...husband?* Jill thought. If Risteard wanted to do something about Beilburg, the best choice of action was for him to marry Sphere. If that much was abundantly clear to Jill, there was no way Risteard *hadn't* noticed that solution. An awkward silence filled the room as all eyes gathered on the second prince.

Risteard's eyebrows soared. "What? I haven't said anything."

"Right, of course. And I haven't heard anything," Hadis said with a smile, though his tone was cold. "Isn't that right, Brother Vissel?"

Vissel responded with an even more perfect smile. "I haven't heard a thing either. If, for *whatever* reason, in a one-in-a-million chance, Risteard had been doing something so important, like trying to court Miss Sphere without *notifying* us, it would be a huge problem. I'm opposed to that, of course. I'll crush those feelings without fail."

"Huh?! Wait, why?!" Risteard cried.

"Right! Let's work hard together!" Hadis said.

"Wait, I'm not hiding this from you or anything. Miss Sphere has her own feelings, and it's not something I can mention so easily. Above all, Hadis, you

were away because of the whole Kratos debacle...”

“Oh? So, you’re blaming me, huh?” Hadis asked.

“No, I’m just saying that I was refraining from reporting about this until there was more concrete proof of my relationship developing with her. I wasn’t trying to be sneaky, and I wasn’t hiding—”

“...I didn’t hear anything...either,” Frida, his beloved younger sister, mumbled.

Risteard froze in place upon hearing his sister’s sad voice.

Natalie placed a hand on her cheek. “You idiot, Elentzia... You didn’t need to reveal this in front of Frida.”

“I-I’m sorry,” Elentzia apologized. “I truly didn’t realize it myself either. But I see...”

“...I didn’t hear anything...either,” Frida repeated, her eyes glazed over. She seemed to shelve her usual meek attitude. Resolute, she raised her head to meet Risteard’s gaze, causing her older brother to flinch. “Brother, are you perhaps taking advantage of Miss Sphere while she’s in a bind and imposing yourself on her?”

“Wh-What are you saying, Frida?” Risteard replied quickly. “I’d never do something like that.”

“But you don’t deny that you’ve been in talks...with Miss Sphere.”

He stiffened at her remarks, his cheek twitching. Hadis gave a small applause, and Vissel watched on in interest. Elentzia had her hands together in a prayer for her younger brother, and Natalie was gazing in the distance.

“Brother, when you come to a decision, you become rather forceful at times,” Frida said. “I think...I should go to Miss Sphere and check if your behavior is troubling her.”

“What?! F-Frida, listen. This isn’t something that you should get involved in —”

“Say that again?” Frida stared back at her brother coldly, causing the second prince to freeze where he stood.

Jill started to pity the man and tried to casually steer the conversation towards a safer topic. “Uh, so about my study abroad request...” she started.

“R-Right!” Elentzia quickly said, feeling guilty that she caused the conversation to derail like this. “Of course! If you’ll be abroad, we should make preparations!”

Natalie decided to help her older brother as well. “So? Have you decided on your academy?”

“I’ve got a few in mind,” Jill replied. “But I’m not visiting for an inspection. I’d like to actually have the full experience, so I want to avoid being welcomed as a Dragon Consort.”

“Ah, so you want to be accepted as a commoner,” Vissel interjected. “Very convenient.”

“Pardon?” Jill asked, bothered by the crown prince’s words. She looked at him as though he was some kind of pariah, but Vissel maintained a pleasant smile on his face.

“I’ll make the arrangements. You can leave everything to me,” he said.

“That only makes me worry even more,” Jill said. “What? Is there something in Laika?”

“Unfortunately, there’s nothing...is what I’d like to say. Another sibling is there,” Vissel admitted.

“Come again?” Jill asked.

“Our youngest brother, Lutiya Teos Rave,” Natalie explained. “His mother was a Laikan princess, making him the grandson of the Grand Duke of Laika. He remains there, and I think he’s about the same age as you.”

Jill was surprised by the news.

Frida’s expression shifted from stern to surprised as she asked, “My...other older brother...?”

“I wonder,” Vissel replied with a mean chuckle. “He hasn’t officially renounced his claim to the Rave throne, but he’s the next grand duke of Laika and spent most of his life there. Hadis and the rest of us have never met him.

He's more of a Laikan prince than a part of the Rave imperial family, but he's only able to assert this because of the power that the Rave Empire holds over Laika. I do wonder what the current grand duke thinks about the boy in regard to the Rave imperial family bloodline."

Hadis was the Dragon Emperor with no ties to the previous monarch. In other words, barring Hadis, the rest of the imperial family weren't descendants of the Dragon God. The truth had come to light and went public around six months ago.

"Besides, I don't hear good things about him," Vissel said. "He went to Laika as a prince of the Rave Empire, and I heard he's been acting quite selfishly. Recently, however, complaints about his behavior have ceased."

"Isn't that a good thing?" Jill asked.

"It could be. The moment the truth about the imperial family's bloodline was publicized, he was thrown into a military academy. And that's the last I've heard of him."

Jill quietly stared at Vissel, and he gazed back. If she could take the report at face value, there would be nothing better. But because of the timing, it looked like a Rave imperial family member was thrown out of the imperial court. She finally understood why the crown prince had been so aggressively supportive of her study abroad plan and let out a sigh.

"In other words, you want me to join the same academy and see how he's doing?" she asked.

"It'll be killing two birds with one stone," Vissel said. "You don't have to name yourself as the Dragon Consort, so I think it quite suits your wishes."

"Fine, I understand. In exchange, I'll have you make all the preparations for me," Jill said.

"Of course. But you've got one more task."

"What now?"

"No need to take that attitude with me. You must convince my precious younger brother, your important fiancé."

Jill looked up with a gasp. Hadis was now in the corner of the room, his back turned towards everyone as he hugged his knees and curled into a ball.

“Everyone’s ignoring me and making their own arrangements. Heh,” he mumbled while cackling maniacally. “No one’s on my side... Hee hee...”

Jill hastily rushed to his side. “Y-Your Majesty, I’ll only be gone for a short while! I’ll be back soon.”

“You call three months ‘short’?! Are you fine being away from me for so long?!” he cried.

“I-I’ll be lonely, of course...”

“Well, I’ll leave you two to it,” Vissel said. “I’ll make the preparations.”

“Help me convince His Majesty!” Jill pleaded, turning around to face the prince.

He smiled serenely. “This is a matter between a married couple, is it not? I wouldn’t want to be the third wheel.”

The rest of Hadis’s siblings followed Vissel right out the door, keen on not getting involved either. Jill, now left alone in the office with the emperor, was tempted to bury her head in her hands as she realized that this responsibility was thrown onto her.

“Do you want to go that badly?” Hadis muttered.

A little hesitant, Jill crouched down to his eye level. “I-I don’t want to be apart from you, Your Majesty. If possible, I want to always be by your side.” She chose her words carefully, making sure that there would be no misunderstandings. “But for me to do that, I need to get results during times of peace. Because of my amount of magic, I tend to think that I’m fine if I can just protect you. But if I can’t be of value for anything else, then I’ll turn out like the Dragon Consorts before me.”

The previous Dragon Consorts had told her that she couldn’t just protect Hadis. She had to do something more.

“So, I want to try all sorts of new things,” she continued. “I ultimately might reach the conclusion that protecting you is my priority, and I should let the rest

be taken care of for me. Still, it's a huge difference to think that after I try instead of assuming that without doing anythi— Y-Your Majesty?"

Hadis pulled Jill tight to him in the middle of her explanation, causing her to tilt her head to one side. Hadis rubbed his forehead into her shoulder and groaned.

"You make it sound like I'm a narrow-minded husband who gets in the way of his wife's goals."

"You're not... I think."

"You think?"

He stared at her with narrowed eyes, and she gave a forced laugh. Before he had a chance to sulk, she wrapped her arms around his neck.

"I'll become a respectable Dragon Consort soon. So respectable I can hold my head high when I say that I'm your wife," she said.

"That sounds like you'll go despite my protests."

"You know me so well."

"No! Hmph, I'm a narrow-minded husband who gets in the way of his wife's wishes!"

"You look so cute when you're pouting. I like this cute side of you very much, Your Majesty."

Hadis instantly turned serious. "Recently, I feel like you're handling me pretty well."

"But of course. I'm going to be your wife. I'll need to learn how to handle you, won't I? And you know very well that I require results, don't you?"

Despite it all, Hadis was the emperor. He got lonely easily and yearned to be loved, but he wasn't a man who would be swept up by his feelings.

"I don't know, and I don't want to," Hadis grumbled. "I'd rather have you by my side."

It was hard for Jill when he resisted up until the very end like this. It was proof that he wanted to always be by her side, and she was unable to push back

against it strongly.

“But Your Majesty,” she said, dropping her voice to a whisper. “When we’re apart, there’ll be a lot of new discoveries we’ll have about ourselves and each other. We’ll be anxious and nervous and...isn’t that a little exciting?”

“Stop saying things like that to rile me up! You’re speaking like an adult having an affair!”

“You can’t cheat on me, of course.”

“That’s totally my line...” Hadis sighed deeply and pouted. “Three months?”

“That’s right. We’ll be so busy that it’ll be over before we know it.”

“Will you contact me every day without fail?”

“I’m not good with letters, so that might be tricky.”

“You’re taking that attitude with me from the start?! Well, a letter from you might just read like a menu of what you eat every day...” He hugged her tightly. “Three months, and that’s it, okay? If you don’t come back, I’ll fly over to you, okay? Hey, why are you laughing?”

An emperor picking me up on a dragon? That sounds wonderful. But Jill decided to keep her thoughts to herself. She didn’t know why, but she thought it’d be for the best.

“It’s a secret,” she said with a smile.

“What’s with you?!” Hadis shouted. “I’m telling you now, but I’m against this, you know. I haven’t fully given you my permission!”

“I know. Be a good boy and wait for me, okay? I’ll be back soon.”

“Phrasing! Argh, now I’m getting embarrassed!”

His ears bright red, Hadis tried to bury his face in her neck and hide his expression. She didn’t want him to sulk any further and decided not to steal a peek at his face.

“You have to work hard too, okay?” Jill said, switching topics. “Prince Gerald is in the imperial castle.”

Gerald was currently trapped inside a force field so powerful that he couldn’t

possibly break through without the assistance of the Sacred Spear of the Goddess, but that was no excuse to let one's guard down. He was able to hold his own against Jill without her Sacred Treasure, implying that it was difficult to best him. Rave had begun negotiations with Kratos regarding ransom, but there was still a chance that they would forcibly try to strike a deal. With Gerald gone, the infamous king returned to the Kratos palace to take care of all the affairs within the kingdom, but no major chaos ensued as the Rave empire had hoped.

Gerald was extremely capable at what he did and intelligent beyond his years. Just because he was trapped, it didn't mean that he was powerless, and it was careless to assume so. As his ex-fiancée, Jill knew well that he lived up to his name of being a prodigy.

"He might do something," Jill said. "Be careful."

The emperor remained silent.

"I'm just saying this now, but I love *you*, Your Majesty," she added.

Hadis knew that Gerald was her first love and looked visibly displeased. She made certain to assure her husband that she no longer had any lingering feelings, and the emperor clicked his tongue in annoyance.

"I'm not going to be manipulated so easily," he said. "I'll keep a close eye on him whether you tell me to or not. If he flees, Rave will notice immediately."

"But neither you nor Rave are in peak form yet. And I've heard that Princess Natalie has been visiting the tower where Prince Gerald resides."

"Well, she's scheduled to be engaged to him." Hadis stood up with Jill in his arms and walked over to the sofa.

"That's still a thing?" Jill asked.

"Do you have a problem? Are you upset?"

Ugh, he's such a pain... Jill sighed, causing Hadis to look at her in shock.

"Among all the cold reactions you've given me today, that one hurt me the most," he said.

"I can only quell your anxiety once per day. Or else, there'd be no end to it. I was just wondering if Princess Natalie is fine with the arrangement. I'm afraid

that she might be forcing herself.”

He tilted his neck while adjusting his hold on Jill. It was clear that he had no plans to set her down yet. “Since we’re acting like we get along on the surface, it’ll be odd if no one from the imperial family meets with Prince Gerald,” Hadis said. “And if Natalie’s doing it of her own volition, I have no reason to stop her.”

“And do you have any plans to speak with him, Your Majesty?”

“When I lop off his head, I might glance at his face.”

Honesty was appreciated here. It seemed unlikely that Gerald could escape. When Jill was about to leave Kratos, she saw Natalie receive something from King Rufus, Gerald’s father. Because Natalie herself was unsure of the contents, she refrained from providing an explanation. Jill trusted the princess, of course, but anxiety still gripped her.

“Don’t worry,” Hadis assured. “Natalie’s a smart kid. She knows her abilities and role quite well.”

Shocked to hear such a gentle tone, Jill looked up at the emperor. He was facing the ceiling.

“Last time, she entrusted me with everything because she believed in me,” he said. “Maybe she’s starting to resemble Elentzia. Vissel and Risteard were grumbling complaints because she really only relies on them for matters for which she truly requires assistance. They said it was quite troublesome. She can ascertain her limits frighteningly well, and Frida is very astute too. If anything happens, I’m sure she’ll come to us for help. Hm? Jill?”

She wrapped her arms around his broad back and squeezed tightly. Since when had he become so calm while speaking about his siblings so fondly? When he visited Kratos, he’d relied on them heavily as well.

I really do have to hurry up and become a splendid Dragon Consort. Though Hadis was surrounded by wise, reliable, powerful, and kind people, she wanted to be relied on the most. Jill wanted to say it with pride. How could she convey those feelings to him?

“Your Majesty, I love you,” she said.

“Well, that was sudden!” Hadis replied. “I won’t be so easily—”

Words weren’t enough. Jill reached up, debating where she should touch him before she planted a kiss on his cheek. She was still too embarrassed to kiss his lips. She was still too immature for that. Jill had never been so assertive with her romantic feelings before. After she kissed him, her heart lurched into a full-speed race, and embarrassment welled up from within her. Yet, Hadis didn’t react.

Only then did Jill realize her mistake. If *she* was this embarrassed, that meant...

And, of course, Hadis looked to be at peace as his heart had stopped.



JILL excelled at convincing Hadis. Hadis’s siblings, who’d escaped into the corridor, expected Hadis to give in to his future wife’s wishes. Natalie was sure of this too, but beside her was her disagreeable older brother, gazing down at her meaningfully.

“What?” Natalie asked. “You’re not going to force me to eavesdrop on a married couple’s conversation, are you?”

“Tell Prince Gerald that the Dragon Consort is going to the Grand Duchy of Laika and gauge his reaction,” Vissel whispered in her ear so that their other siblings couldn’t hear him.

Before Natalie could ask why, he walked away, implying that he wasn’t willing to explain his reasons. Soon after, Frida quietly turned on her heels and walked away, her stride conveying her anger.

“She’ll calm down after some time,” Natalie said to Risteard out of pity. “I’ll go talk to her later.”

“Thank you,” he replied. “I really have got nothing to hide.”

“Are you sure?”

Natalie knew that Risteard wasn’t one to act so audacious, but she posed her question just in case. Risteard furrowed his brows, insulted that the question had been asked at all.

“Do I look like such a dastardly man?” he asked.

Seeing that he answered her straight on, Natalie knew that her inquiry was meaningless. Foreign diplomacy was Risteard’s forte. He managed to sneak into the Neutahl Dragon Knights and headhunt a few soldiers from there to create his own squad of knights. He was a man who could still boldly enter the Neutahl Dragon Knights despite what he’d done. He was cunning and straightforward; certainly not someone Natalie could beat when it came to strategizing.

“I’m starting to pity Miss Sphere,” Natalie murmured. “I don’t think she can ever escape your grasp.”

“Why do you say that?” Risteard demanded. “I’m not forcing her into anything.”

“If you say so. Well, I suppose your greatest obstacle is Brother Vissel. Do your best.”

Sphere was a friend who often had tea with Hadis—a tea party could surely convince the emperor, but Vissel was different. The crown prince would gleefully try to dash Risteard’s hopes.

Elentzia, perhaps noticing the ominous air, whispered to her brother, “Don’t fight *too* much. I’d feel bad for Miss Sphere getting wrapped up in your mess. Her standing is complicated enough as it is. She has her father’s incident to think about, and couple that with you as a potential suitor after Hadis. Society won’t have anything friendly to say, I’m sure.”

“She’s not that frail,” Risteard countered. “When Hadis had just become emperor and had no one on his side, she was able to splendidly fulfill the role of being his friend during tea parties.”

He was right—Natalie and Elentzia exchanged a look. They both understood that their brother wasn’t doing this on a whim. When considering Beilburg, Risteard’s plan was ideal. His sharp eye and excellence were almost infuriating. Vissel likely felt the same. But Natalie couldn’t bring herself to recklessly speak against Risteard’s designs; it felt like she’d be exposing her pettiness, unable to accept the brilliance of others.

“I think you’ve chosen your partner well,” Natalie finally said. “I’ll pacify Frida for you.”

“Thank you,” Risteard replied.

“But! In exchange, help me out too, Brother.”

This was about the only issue Natalie could use to her benefit. Risteard tilted back his head, ruminating over her words.

“With Crown Prince Gerald?” he asked, incredulous.

“It’s great that you’re quick on the uptake. Help me out if anything goes south.”

“Of course. If Hadis and the empire require it.”

At first, he sounded like he was accepting her proposal, but in reality, he was simply trying to keep her in check. Indeed, this brother was a crafty one.

“How’s it going with Prince Gerald?” Elentzia asked, cutting in. “I’ve heard that he’s calm and hasn’t been acting suspiciously.”

“I’m making good progress deepening my ties with him,” Natalie replied. “Leave him to me.”

“The guards told me you were barely speaking with— Ow! Natalie!” Risteard cried.

“Do you *want* Frida to remain angry at you?” Natalie asked, stomping on his foot.

Risteard quietly backed off. With an angry huff, Natalie stormed off. She was headed for a tower located in a corner of the castle grounds, away from the palace. There were no entrances aboveground, and no one could enter from the sky. The tower didn’t even have a window; this was apparently to create an *unfortunate* fire, an accident that required the disposal of anyone trapped inside, should it be required. The only entrance was heavily guarded, be it night or day.

Natalie was a little nervous at first, but she was already used to it. She confidently strolled inside as though she were walking into her own palace, had the lock undone as she’d requested many times before, and stepped inside.

Only the Rave imperial family members who had lost a war or a precious hostage would be trapped in a cell as complicated as this. Each person kept here had their own reasons and circumstances. And so, unlike the dull, dreary outward appearance of the tower, the inside was well-maintained like a palace. It was cleaned every day, had running water, and was spacious. Of course, it was likely small for a man who held power within the royal palace of Kratos.

“Good day, Prince Gerald,” Natalie said, strutting in confidently.

From beyond the iron bars, Gerald didn’t even glance her way as his nose was stuck in a book. Risteard was wrong when he’d claimed that they barely talked. In fact, Gerald would hardly even meet her eye.

Natalie couldn’t lose her temper here. Whining for attention was what a child did. Gerald had a decent reputation: he was known to be kind and modest, never forgetting to be polite even toward the guards, and understood his position quite well. He never made difficult requests, and actually showed consideration for others. The scholars and intellectuals that he spoke with all highly praised his intelligence and quick thinking.

This perfect prince of an enemy nation would refuse to acknowledge and greet only Natalie and treated her crassly. *This must be a good sign.* She chose to take it as such, for she was up against a perfect prince who likely was never acquainted with the concept of defeat. Though Jill was the Dragon Consort, Gerald was taken hostage by such a young girl. He was surely internally livid about his situation. Natalie started to pity the prince when she considered that she was probably the only one who knew his true feelings.

“Is anything troubling you?” Natalie asked. “Please don’t hesitate to let me know.”

For a prideful prince like him, it was certainly humiliating to be told that *he* would be offered something as an act of charity. Natalie felt herself shudder with excitement from the mere thought. *I must be quite the nasty woman.* But the prince didn’t even twitch an eyebrow and continued to ignore her. She had a long road ahead before he surrendered to her.

Usually, she would spend the rest of her time here in silence, but today, she had a souvenir from Vissel to offer. Troublesome matters like these would be

better if they were cleared away quickly.

“The Dragon Consort will be studying abroad,” Natalie started.

She was aware that he’d react to the mention of the Dragon Consort. As she’d expected, he turned his handsome face toward her. Half of her felt superior for making him act this way, but the other half was frustrated by the name that she had to use. She chose not to focus on the latter—turning a blind eye to whether Gerald responded to *Jill* or the fact that she was a Dragon Consort—and pressed on.

“Do you know where to?” she inquired.

“The Grand Duchy of Laika,” came his reply. He easily guessed the correct answer and continued indifferently, “Stateswomen immediately focus on education. They probably like the sound of it when they produce good results and get shiny diplomas. I suppose none of these women realize that education is just a cute word for brainwashing. It’s simply a terrifying weapon in disguise.”

“She said that she wanted to build a military academy, though.”

Upon seeing Gerald’s eyes widen, Natalie realized her mistake. Gerald’s estimation of Jill had soared even higher.

“I see,” he mused. “That’s a thought fitting for a Cervel. Her motive must be to strengthen national defenses... I suppose the Dragon Consort really likes becoming a shield for the Dragon Emperor. And?”

“Hmm?” Natalie asked.

“Crown Prince Vissel probably told you to notify me, didn’t he?” he scoffed.

His lips curled up into a meaningful smile, causing Natalie to clench her fists. *That unpleasant brother of mine and this Kratos prince are both using me as a messenger to gauge the other’s reactions.*

“You’re not suited to be an undercover agent,” Gerald continued. “Your older brothers are truly no good. I sympathize.”

“I don’t deny that they’re no good, but you’ve got no right to say that. If you think you’re such a wonderful older brother, why don’t I ask Princess Faris? I look forward to hearing her response.”

“I’ll never use my younger sister like your older brothers are doing to you.”

Natalie knew that he’d react to any mention of his beloved younger sister. “Ah, that means you don’t find your sister reliable enough to use,” she goaded. “I pity her having an older brother who thinks so little of her.”

“Why do you always twist my words so negatively?!” he snapped.

“You’re the one who spoke ill of my brothers first! Brother Vissel will never use anyone that he deems worthless.”

If Vissel relied on someone, that implied he approved of their abilities and found them to be valuable.

“So, I’ll just tell my brothers about your response,” Natalie said. “You easily guessed the location of the Dragon Consort’s study abroad destination. You even called my older brothers ‘no good’ for using me, so I should be treated better!”

“You’re...” Gerald muttered, overpowered by Natalie’s ferocity, “very...how shall I say...strong-minded.”

“Why, thank you. I’m a fitting woman to become crown princess, don’t you agree?”

Gerald looked back at Natalie, expressionless, as though he’d given up on everything. She hoped that he’d stop plotting against Rave and rethink his life... and, while he was at it, consider her as a potential marriage partner.

“I’ll come again,” she declared.



“No need,” Gerald replied, sounding superficially polite.

He didn’t even see her off—he just went back to his book. Natalie didn’t mind as she turned on her heel to leave. The prince was obstinate but intelligent. She had to act as though she couldn’t have cared less about his attitude.

Natalie had seen the real family tree of the Kratos royal family. She couldn’t read it now due to the seal, but she was in possession of a journal that Gerald’s mother had written before her death. Most importantly, Natalie had hidden this from her brothers.

Before she entrusted her brothers with this information, she agonized over if there was anything she could do. How could she help? But if Gerald noticed her hesitation, he would utilize that without fail. Should that happen, Natalie had no confidence in what would happen to her. *I must let Brother Vissel know. Prince Gerald must be plotting something in Laika.*

Until Natalie could come to a firm decision, she absolutely couldn’t let anyone know her true feelings.



CROWN Prince Vissel was famous for taking care of things quickly.

“But it’s only been two days! Isn’t that a bit *too* quick?!” Jill cried out.

“You’re in my way. Get out,” Vissel said before he changed his tone. “Pardon me, I misspoke. Have a safe journey, Lady Dragon Consort.”

Early in the morning, Jill had been shaken awake and was transported by horse outside of the imperial capital. She blinked in confusion and saw a green dragon waiting for her on the grassy plains. And now, she was being sent off.

“Here are your belongings,” Vissel said. “It contains your living expenses and a letter of recommendation. Furniture and other daily necessities will be provided for you in the home that you’ll be living in. If you require anything else, get it yourself. Per your wishes, your bird has been registered as a magical beast employed by you, and the stuffed bear is a magical tool.”

He tossed the luggage from the carriage, and Jill caught them all while still trying to process her situation. Sauté, Jill’s bird, was thrown in the air and

landed gracefully by her side. This was all requested by the Dragon Consort to study abroad.

Camila and Zeke requested to tag along, but Jill declined—she wanted to just be a student. In exchange, she would bring Sauté along. She was headed for a military academy that prioritized handling dragons and inventing new spells. Just like the magical military academies in Kratos, students were allowed to register magical beast familiars and magical tools, for they were seen as necessities for sorcerers, and permitted to bring them onto campus.

Sauté wasn't quite a magical beast, but the game fowl, perhaps raised by pecking at Dragon God Rave, had legs powerful enough to crush boulders. Recently, a flap of its wings was all it took to cut down trees, making it no different from a magical beast, and had been registered as such. Hadis Bear, a stuffed bear made by Hadis, looked nothing out of the ordinary at a glance, but it was created from the blood and magic of Dragon God Rave. When activated, it would turn into a weapon that would punch anything in its path. It was still unable to discern friend from foe, but it had undergone a number of enhancements. It was able to fire hot lasers from not only its crown, but its adorable eyes as well. Since it was a stuffed animal, it counted as a magical tool.

“What's His Majesty doing?” Jill asked, opening a bag with her belongings.

Vissel gave a carefree smile. “He's had a meeting to attend since early in the morning. He admirably made you breakfast before he entered his office. I don't want him to make a fuss, so I'll just tell him that you left after you're gone.”

“I won't be held responsible. His Majesty can get quite persistent when he sulks.”

“I know that. You don't need to tell me.”

Jill frowned when she heard Vissel's condescending tone, but it was true that he was good at handling Hadis. She clicked her tongue and checked the contents of her bag. It contained a few days' worth of clothes, an envelope with a map and a letter of introduction, a school pamphlet, her school uniform, a bag filled with gold coins, and a sizable wad of money. There was also some water and food.

While she'd be attending an academy that was fairly close to the imperial

capital, Laika was beyond the sea. Because she'd be stopped once before she crossed the sea, it'd take about two days of travel. The green transport dragon was waiting anxiously a short distance away from her. She didn't want the dragon to carry anything too heavy, and she felt bad for making it wait.

"Thank you for my stuff," Jill said. "But I've never ridden on a dragon by myself."

Dragons generally had to give a person permission to ride on their backs. While Jill was the Dragon Consort, Dragon God Rave, the ruler of them all, allowed the dragons to express their opinions freely. Since she had magic that the dragons disliked, these magnificent beasts were unwilling to carry her unless she threatened them. Since she wasn't in an emergency situation, she was reluctant to use force, but she also didn't think she had anyone to turn to.

Rare, of course, would be willing to fly Jill across the sea, but the consort had no idea where the black dragon was, and it was insolent to casually use the Dragon Queen as a method of transportation. Rare would surely be furious. In any case, Jill needed someone else to assist her.

Vissel stuck his hand into a bag slung across his horse. "Shouldn't be a problem if you've got this."

"Rawr!"

"Raw?!" Jill cried.

When she caught the black ball, a small dragon with gold eyes stared back at her. Her eyes widened as Raw lovingly nuzzled her chest.

"I registered him as a magical beast as well," Vissel said. "He's a lizard that underwent a mutation because of magic."

"A-Are you sure you can say that?!" Jill stammered. "He's the Dragon King!"

"Think about it. He's so round with a large bottom and can't even fly. A Dragon King like him can't possibly exist in the Rave Empire. He'd bring shame to us all. He's just a lizard-type magical beast."

That was about as much of a stretch as you could get. But Raw, possibly elated that he could be with Jill, stuck to her side like glue and chortled happily.

He didn't seem to care about the insults hurled at him.

"If he's there, should anything happen, you can communicate with us," Vissel said. "And the Dragon Queen would come flying."

"Raw!" Jill said. "Uh, did you get permission from Rare?"

The memories of Raw wanting to go with Jill to visit her family in Kratos and Rare being vehemently against it was still fresh in her mind. But Raw huffed proudly.

"Rawwwr!"

"We're basically still within the bounds of the Rave Empire," Vissel added. "We've already persuaded the Dragon Queen and received her permission."

"You're really good at having your bases covered!" Jill said in awe. "But if Raw knows, doesn't that mean His Majesty does too?"

"Rawr! Rawr!" Raw shook his head with gusto.

"That lizard's using Hadis's spirit as nutrients, correct?" Vissel continued with an icy gaze. "Then of course he wants to get back at Hadis for being left behind last time."

"Rawr!"

The baby dragon puffed out its chest with confidence, agreeing with Vissel's explanation. Jill gave a dry smile. Indeed, Vissel was a bit *too* good at handling both Hadis and Raw.

"If Rare's given her permission, I guess it's fine," Jill relented. "It's not like we're going to war."

"Rawr, rawr!"

"All right, all right. Then I'll take you up on that offer and bring you along."

"Remember, he's just a lizard, a product of a failed experiment where we tried to transmute him into a dragon," Vissel warned. "He's not a black dragon at all."

That was quite the detailed setting.

"Then I'll be off," Jill said, gazing into the distance beyond the plains. The

imperial castle's spire stood tall within the imperial capital.

She'd be lying if she said that she wasn't lonely. Hadis wasn't here to give her a proper send-off. They'd be separated for three months. Jill didn't expect to study abroad so quickly, and too late, her hesitation had started to grow.

"Don't start waffling now," Vissel said without an ounce of sympathy. "Hurry up and go. Right now. Just leave."

"Fine, I will!" Jill snapped angrily. "Don't say I didn't warn you when His Majesty starts throwing a mega tantrum! I'm not the one to blame!"

"Be at ease and never return to Rave."

"I'll make you regret your actions!"

Jill's oldest brother-in-law always had a sharp retort to give. She wished that Hadis would start frantically wailing and trouble Vissel. She slung her bag on her shoulder and carried Hadis Bear under her arm. Sauté stuck by her side, and Raw dexterously sat atop her bag.

Just as Jill headed for the green dragon, she narrowed her eyes, noticing something behind Vissel. A dragon was flying through the skies, a common sight in the imperial capital. However, this dragon was headed straight for them.

"Rawr?!" Raw cried with disdain.

By then, Jill could clearly make out the person sitting atop the green dragon that was flying toward them.

"Your Majesty?!" she cried.

"Jill, grab my hand!" Hadis shouted.

Just as Vissel turned around, Hadis had the dragon fly close to the ground and reached out, lifting Jill into the air.

"Hadis, you!" Vissel roared.

"You're at fault for trying to trick me!" Hadis yelled back. "Don't worry, I'll come back once I send Jill off!"

Hadis smiled confidently as he placed Jill onto the saddle in front of him. Vissel looked up at the pair from below and let out a sigh. As Jill was pulled up,

she gazed at the emperor in astonishment.

“Your Majesty, how did you—”

“Vissel didn’t stop me when I was preparing a going-away party for you. He said that I could make it as grand as I wished because your departure date wasn’t decided yet.” Hadis turned to the black dragon baby. “And *you*.”

“Rawr...”

Hadis had his arm wrapped around Jill from behind, squishing Raw in between them. The baby sounded like he was suffocating.

“I asked him if he’d get lonely with you gone, but he kept grinning from ear to ear,” Hadis said. “He was clearly hiding something from me. So, I had Rave keep an eye on you.”

“Even I wanna send you off too, Missy,” Rave said, appearing with a poof. “And Rare came to ask me if it was safe for you to visit Laika, Raw.”

“Rawr?!”

“You think you can fool a Dragon God? Come back in a century, kid. Also, your mate doesn’t trust you at all, eh?” Rave teased.

Raw wriggled out from between Jill and Hadis with a frown. The baby crawled to the front to join Sauté. Rave gave a mocking laugh, perhaps still having a thing or two to tease the Dragon King with. Jill was stunned for a moment before she found the whole situation humorous.

“You’re amazing, Your Majesty,” she said. “I was shocked by how quickly everything was prepared.”

“I didn’t expect things to progress so quickly either,” Hadis replied. “In my haste, I jumped out the terrace of my office and rode on this dragon. Brother Risteard was foaming at the mouth. I’ll likely be lectured when I get home.”

“I feel like Prince Vissel and Prince Risteard would fight first. Who would be to blame? The one who fooled His Majesty, or the one who let him escape?”

“I’m sure Elentzia will stop them. But when I return, I feel like I’ll get a fist to my head. Sister’s always trying to wrap things up so crudely...” Hadis sighed.

“Still, I’m glad. I’m so happy you came.” Jill adjusted her sitting position and leaned against Hadis. The imperial castle was already out of view. “I know I decided to do this on my own, but I wanted you to send me off,” she admitted.

“Personally, I don’t want to send you off at all.”

“It’s so bizarre. I know we’ll be apart for a while, but I want to stay by your side a minute or even a second longer before I go.”

Jill meant to point out how illogical she was being, but her words had a deep effect on Hadis. She expertly supported his swaying body before he could fall off the dragon.

“You’re sending me off, aren’t you?” she asked. “Then send me off properly, Your Majesty.”

“I-I know, but your attacks are just...so powerful these days!”

“I suppose you need to strengthen your defenses within these three months then. I’m sure you’ll regain most of your magical powers by then.”

“Oooh, that sounds nice.” Rave nodded, returning to the pair.

Raw had completely gone into sulking mode and had curled up into a ball. For whatever reason, Sauté stood in front, blocking the wind with its magnificent wings.

“Heighten my defenses? How?” Hadis asked.

“No clue. But it’s better to have a goal. A bit of friendly competition never hurts,” the Dragon God replied.

“You really don’t think things through. Just thinking about Jill growing even a tiny bit taller in three months makes my throat tighten. What am I supposed to do?”

“I’m saying that you should work on that. Whatever, I won’t get in your way.”

The Dragon God closed one eye and slowly vanished from view. Jill and Hadis faced each other, and finding this entire event funny, they let out a loud laugh.



“PRINCE Risteard! Is it true that His Majesty despaired at Jill studying abroad

and jumped out the window to commit suicide?!” a woman inquired.

“How did that rumor go so out of control?!” Risteard shouted before he realized who’d barged into his office. He cleared his throat. “Er, um, ahem! Apologies, Miss Sphere. Hadis simply jumped out of the terrace onto a dragon. He’s not injured in any way.”

“I-Is that so?” Sphere replied. “I-I apologize as well. I was just so shocked, and thought that perhaps Emperor Hadis would do something like that...”

Just how unstable was Hadis seen by the pale-faced, trembling woman that Risteard was trying to court? Unfortunately, he couldn’t deny that his younger brother would do something that childish.

“But why did he do something so reckless?” Sphere asked. “Just earlier today, His Highness Vissel told me that there was no need to give Lady Jill her lessons for the time being. Since she has to prepare for her study abroad trip, our lessons will be on hold for a while.”

“Then it’s likely that she’s already headed for the Grand Duchy of Laika,” Risteard said.

Sphere, finally understanding the reason for Hadis’s fuss, placed a hand on her cheek. “W-Well, that was decided quite suddenly, wasn’t it?”

“I apologize. I’ll be sure to have you properly informed about Lady Jill’s schedule at a later date.”

“I-I understand.”

Quick to catch on, Sphere understood that there were some affairs that Risteard couldn’t speak about, and obediently backed off. Risteard wasn’t fully aware of the circumstances either, so he was grateful for her consideration.

“I’m sorry for confusing you as well,” Risteard said. “I’ll be sure that you get properly compensated for the next three months.”

“W-Well, since the lessons are canceled, I don’t think payment is necessary.”

“This cancellation is at our own convenience. There’s no need for you to act so reserved here, Miss Sphere. If you don’t properly assert the rights that you have, you’ll set a bad precedent for the rest. If you still find it unagreeable, you

can use this time period as preparation so that you can jump right into Lady Jill's consort training once she returns."

Sphere fell silent.

"Miss Sphere?"

She clenched her fist in front of her stomach and raised her head. "Then may I tutor Princess Frida for the next three months?"

"Pardon?" Risteard asked, letting out a dull-witted response. He couldn't grasp the intentions behind her request. With a gasp, he asked, "Did Frida ask you to?!"

"N-No, nothing like that."

"A-Ah, I see. I'm glad. I didn't think she'd do something like that. Did someone else perhaps make this request to you? Hadis and the others are aware of your position, so I think they'd stay quiet, but perhaps information has leaked somehow..."

"N-No, I think we're fine in that regard." Sphere continued to shake her head, causing Risteard to feel uneasy.

"You don't have to rush things. I'll wait for as long as possible until you reach your decision," Risteard repeated.

He was the second prince, the older brother of the emperor, and a man who was backed by Duke Lehrsatz. It didn't matter how noble Risteard tried to sound; if he were to ask for Sphere's hand in marriage, it was more of an order and not a request. Even if he tried to get in between, his surroundings would surely start to pressure the poor woman, and if she were to decline his proposal, she would be treated unfairly by others. It didn't help that Sphere's father, Marquess Beil, had been convicted for his rebellion.

Well, there's a possibility that the emperor and crown prince won't approve of this arrangement... Risteard thought. But this wasn't a choice that Sphere could make by herself. The only thing he could do as a show of goodwill was to buy her as much time as possible until she was ready.

"I'll persuade Frida," Risteard said. "You don't have to push yourself and act

so reserved.”

“Would it be problematic if I became Princess Frida’s tutor?” Sphere asked suddenly, a smile on her face.

Risteard blinked. “N-Not at all, but...”

“Then please allow me. I don’t think Her Highness would decline either.”

Was he just imagining this odd pressure that he felt from her? A little troubled, he tried to confirm the situation once more.

“Er, are you sure Frida didn’t say anything?” he pressed.

“She has not. Princess Frida has been quite thoughtful toward me. In fact, she told me yesterday that if I was troubled, she would do her utmost best to support me, and that there was no need for me to force myself to marry you.”

“R-Right. I know that you don’t have much say in this matter...”

“Indeed. Princess Frida is wise beyond her years. I’m sure she knows that, and yet decided to support me.” Sphere smiled faintly, seemingly moved by the young girl’s actions. “And I’ve realized that this isn’t the time for me to hesitate.”

For whatever reason, cold sweat ran down the second prince’s back.

“Will you kindly give me your permission, Prince Risteard?” she asked.

“Er, um, what are you planning?”

“I’ll allow it,” Vissel said, entering the office without even offering a knock. “Frida’s tutor, was it? Why not try it out for three months?”

“Brother! You can’t just decide that by yourself!” Risteard snapped.

“I’m interested in the lady of House Beil’s reasoning. Frida won’t decline you, was it?”

He’s been listening since that part? Risteard fretted. Before he could say anything, Sphere bowed her head.

“Thank you, Prince Vissel,” she said.

“I suppose you must try your best to cajole the older brother of the emperor,

more so to make up for your sullied family name,” Vissel replied.

“Brother, I’ve told you that *I* was the one who brought this upon her—” Risteard started.

“I shall do my utmost best,” Sphere said with an angelic smile.

She acted like a perfect lady, gracefully lowering her head and elegantly walking out of the room. She maintained her flawless etiquette even as she closed the door to the office. Risteard stared in astonishment and Vissel snorted.

“Surely you’re not *this* stupid?” Vissel accused. “She convicted her father of his crimes and is trying to rebuild the house of a marquess while shouldering her family name that has been defiled by her parents. Of course she’s a bold and strong woman. If she was anything but, she would’ve given up her title by now and married some rich guy as his second wife, feeling despair about the world around her. You let Hadis escape precisely because you don’t understand these things.”

Vissel glared at his younger brother, but Risteard had some words of his own to say. “You let Lady Jill go to Laika and you tricked Hadis, didn’t you?”

“Tricked? No, not at all. I was planning on explaining it all later, much like how you planned on telling us about your engagement.”

“They’re not even remotely similar situations! Don’t get smart with me!”

“If you were more reliable, this all could’ve gone well. I’ll have you take responsibility for this. Go to Beilburg immediately.”

Caught off guard, Risteard visibly panicked. “I-I promised Miss Sphere that I’d wait for her reply.”

“I don’t care about that. Just go and take your Dragon Knights that you’re so proud of with you. I’ve already contacted Hugo, who’s rebuilding the Northern Division.”

“Are you putting me in charge of the Northern Division imperial army?”

“Isn’t that why you wanted to marry Miss Sphere? They allowed Kratos to invade once. We can’t let it happen twice. I’ve also heard that Miss Sphere’s

stepmother has been mingling with a suspicious crowd. Try seducing her to gain some information.”

“You say it so easily, but think about my position! I’m trying to marry Miss Sphere here!”

“That’s none of my concern. I’m sure I could easily overturn or sway the outcome of your marriage.”

“That train of thought is precisely why things aren’t going well with your fiancée, Brother.” Vissel’s cheeky expression faded, and Risteard gave a triumphant snicker. “You threatened her, didn’t you? You said that if she didn’t obey Hadis, you’d cancel your engagement with her and strip her of her title while treating her like a rebel. Ever since, you lost contact with her. I don’t blame her—imagine being threatened with a piece of paper by a person you’ve never met. It’s only natural that you were rejected. Stripping her of her title is already an unreasonable order. Your fiancée is Uncle George’s daughter. Since he’s the younger brother of the previous emperor, she would be our cousin. Uncle George may be a rebel, but she’s backed by the powerful Duke Verrat.”

“I’ll praise you for sniffing around and gaining information about me. But your information is inaccurate, old, and displays how shallow your thinking is. My fiancée didn’t cut contact with me. She went out to sea to become a fisherwoman.”

Risteard cocked his head to one side in befuddlement, but Vissel only smiled calmly.

“Recently, she’s been fighting over fishing rights against boats that have the protection of House Cervel by the border. As a token of gratitude for her dreams being fulfilled, she sent me an entire bluefin tuna,” the crown prince divulged.

“I think...Hadis would be happy about that,” Risteard replied.

“And he was. To express my gratitude, I sent her some tuna that Hadis had prepared for me. Ever since, for whatever reason, she sends me bluefin tuna every month. I don’t understand... I can’t even cancel our engagement at this rate...” Vissel gazed into the distance as he let some of his innermost thoughts slip.

“She...actually sounds like a perfect match for you, Brother Vissel,” Risteard observed.

“Surely, you jest! I decline! The moment my cousin comes back from the high seas and steps on land, I’ll restrain her and cancel our engagement! I’ve already decided as much, so I’m just letting her do as she pleases for now!”

“This is the first time I’ve truly heard you eat sour grapes. What a fine day this is.”

“Ooh? Then why don’t I tell you one more tidbit that I heard from our cousin? There are rumors in Kratos that Princess Faris will take the throne.”

For a moment, Risteard couldn’t process the words that had been said so casually.

“If this is true, I’m unsure if Prince Gerald remains a valuable hostage,” Vissel continued. “Do they have a brilliant strategist in that kingdom? I currently can’t grasp the full situation. I feel like the prince might be preparing something in Laika, but I’ll have the Dragon Consort handle that. In all the history of Kratos, there was never a queen who took the throne for themselves. I don’t know how this will go.”

Risteard, brain finally working again, shouted, “Why don’t you say stuff like that earlier, you buffoon!”

“That’s why I’m telling you to hurry up and control Beilburg!”

“If you’ve got time to eat tuna, why don’t you optimistically cheer me on?!”

“Stop talking about our cousin! It makes me sick! Do you understand just how horrifying it is to dream of tuna every night?!”

“Of course I don’t! Get harpooned, damn it!”

“How could you say that to your older brother?!”

“Is this a fight I sense?!” Elentzia said, slamming the door open and interrupting the brotherly squabble.

Both Risteard and Vissel froze in place. The princess cracked her knuckles with glee. She gave a sweeping glance around the office.

“How rare for Hadis not to be involved,” she said. “No matter, you two really don’t learn, do you?”

“Uh, Sister,” Vissel started. “We’re not fighting. This is just a debate that got a little heated, is all— Ugh!”

A fist flew into his stomach, causing the crown prince to crumple to his knees and land motionless on the floor.

“You guys really need to talk it out calmly,” Elentzia said, sounding like a levelheaded older sister while using anything but a calm discussion to settle this situation.

In fact, she’d leave soon after landing her blows; she’d only come to deliver a few punches. A horrible sister, indeed.

“Uh, Sister, why don’t you think about marriage soon?” Risteard stammered.

“Are you stupid? If anyone would have me, I would’ve married off long ago!” she roared.

Risteard stared at his older brother, who was sprawled on the floor, groaning. *She does have a point, I guess.*



THE trip to Laika was like a short vacation in the skies. Jill was used to traveling by dragon, and she was relaxed enough to enjoy the sights. The green dragon, receiving protection from Dragon God Rave, flew much faster than usual, maintaining a shocking amount of energy as well. Jill’s initial plan was to stop at night by the sea and arrive at her destination a little past noon the next day.

“Look, Your Majesty!” Jill cried with elation. “It’s the ocean! The ocean!”

“I think we can make it across the sea before the sun sets,” Hadis said. “Let’s press on and arrive at your new house by sunset. You’ll let me stay the night, won’t you?”

“Didn’t you say earlier that you could fly as much as you liked, even during the night, if Rave was with you?”

“Are you telling us to return home during the night? Without giving both me

and the dragon any rest?" Hadis asked, sounding scandalized.

Jill found this hard to refute. If they maintained this speed, she could have him leave early tomorrow morning, and he'd arrive back at the imperial castle within the same day.

"Just tonight, okay?" Jill relented. "I won't let you stay longer even if you talk about shopping or cleaning tomorrow morning!"

"Aw, you won't?" Hadis asked.

"Nope. And you can't drop by once a week or visit me without any prior notification."

Hadis pouted, but Jill had her reasons. She'd act spoiled if the emperor was by her side, and if she didn't know when he'd arrive, she'd need to keep her room in pristine condition at all times.

"You don't understand a maiden's heart, do you?" Jill mumbled.

"Hm? A maiden's heart?" Hadis asked.

"Would you like to swim back to the imperial capital right now?"

She raised her fist in the air, and the emperor laughed and apologized. Below them was the vast, blue sea. A few fishing vessels floated below, making white waves as they chugged along.

"Laika is an island nation, right?" Jill asked.

"That's right," Hadis replied. "They have great seafood."

"Seafood! I mean, err..." She quickly took out a map from her bag that was slung over the saddle. In a separate leather bag, Raw and Sauté were taking their afternoon nap, using Hadis Bear as their pillow. "Does Rave's protection reach that nation as well?" she asked.

Though Laika was on the opposite shore of Radia, it wasn't technically connected to the mainland.

"Yep," Rave said, appearing to answer her question. "The sea dragon controls this area."

Jill nodded in understanding. "My background story is that my parents were

from Kratos, but I was raised in Radia. Is there anything I should be wary of when making friends at the academy?”

“Wait, friends?” Hadis asked. “Y-You’ll be talking to boys younger than me who can cook?!”

“You won’t get good advice from him, Missy. He’s got no friends,” the Dragon God said.

“Ah, you’re right. I’m sorry that I asked,” Jill replied.

“Aren’t you both being a bit too mean to me?!” the emperor wailed. “Listen, Jill. Laika belongs to the Rave Empire. If I really wanted to, I could become the principal of your academy in a flash and place you in a class where you’re all alone!”

“I love that part of you, where you use your power for petty affairs!” Jill squealed.

“Urgh... Rave, Jill’s too strong for me!” Hadis gripped at his heart.

“Missy might grow up rather quickly...” Rave said before quickly changing his tone. “Hey, Hadis, look.”

Rave clambered atop Hadis’s head and narrowed his large eyes. Jill did the same, facing ahead, and saw the sun’s fiery red glow. She blinked for a moment but widened her eyes in surprise.

“Your Majesty, isn’t that a naval ship from the Rave imperial army?” she asked.

The vessel raised a flag embroidered with the familiar emblem of a dragon—a symbol that belonged to the Rave Empire. A fleet of around ten ships sailed in a crescent moon formation. Jill was unable to feel excited about this as their cannons were aimed squarely at them. *I’ve got a bad feeling about this...* she thought.

She stuffed the map back into her bag, and it was clear that Hadis also had a sinking feeling. He gripped the reins tightly.

“Hang on tight, Jill. We’ll speed up,” Hadis said. “Naval ships should have a magic detection device, so they should know that this dragon is properly

registered within the Rave Empire, but I don't want to be stopped here. It'll be troublesome."

"Your Majesty!"

As Jill shouted, a magic circle appeared in front of the cannon, ready to fire a shot imbued with anti-flight magic. *They're not even giving us a warning?!* No normal naval force would act this recklessly. A ray of magic shot straight at them, and the dragon quickly veered away to dodge the attack. Raw and Sauté peeked their heads out of the bag in surprise.

"Rawr?!"

"Chirp!"

"They're tailing us, Your Majesty!"

It didn't matter just how high the dragon flew and dodged the shots. The barrage of magical attacks didn't let up, and they were close behind them, giving chase. Hadis clicked his tongue.

"Grab your things, Jill!" Hadis shouted.

Jill hastily removed her bag from the saddle and placed it on her back. She clutched the bag with Raw and her friends close to her chest.

"Wh-What are you going to do, Your Majesty?" she asked. "We can't fight back..."

"We'll act like we got hit and fall to the ocean before making a quick turn for land! Hang on tightly to me!"

An island appeared in front of them. With the island now in Hadis's sight, though he didn't have all his magic powers, he could likely teleport without exerting much energy.

"Wouldn't it be faster if we took control of the fleet?!" Jill asked.

"Then you'll have to name yourself as the Dragon Consort," Hadis countered. "And we don't know what they're after. We're unsure if they really are part of the Rave Empire's naval fleet. No normal naval vessel will fire without warning, and they know that this dragon originates from Rave. They still chose to be hostile despite that."

“D-Do you think this is a rebellion of some sort?!”

“We’ll talk later. Rave, let’s go! Teleport the dragon to a safe area!”

“Gotcha,” the Dragon God replied.

It was then that something bizarre occurred. Amidst the explosions, the whirring of the magic circles, and the sound of the group teleporting, there was another sound—the ringing of a bell that didn’t belong. It came from the island. Was it the sound that notified residents that the sun was setting? But there was one more odd sound in the mix—a noise imbued with magic that echoed directly in everyone’s eardrums. *Is this...a flute?*

Suddenly, the green dragon froze in the air.

“What is this sound?!” Rave yelped with a grimace.

Raw covered his ears and trembled, and it looked like even Sauté was trying to make itself look smaller. But the current issue at hand was the dragon. The petrified beast fell to the sea. A ray of anti-flight magic was headed straight for them.

“I’ll negate the attack, Your Majesty!” Jill shouted.

She didn’t fully grasp the situation yet, but she knew that the frozen dragon was under attack. It was imperative to flee from this place at once, to an area where this sound couldn’t be heard. She transformed her Sacred Treasure of the Dragon Consort into a whip and flung it around. The attacks that came from all directions exploded in the air, and as she’d hoped, they were now surrounded by thick smoke.

“Rave, stay inside me!” Hadis ordered. “Raw, keep your ears plugged!”

As the smoke rose, Hadis clutched Jill to his chest and fell into the water. A massive splash rose into the air as they plunged into the watery depths. The pressure of both magic and water gripped Jill’s body as bubbles escaped from her mouth into the sea. *I-I feel like His Majesty and I are always fleeing from sudden attacks...*

In the blink of an eye, the ocean disappeared from sight, and was replaced by a sandy beach. The explosions were gone, and the sound of the waves filled her

ears instead. They were on the sunset-colored shore.

“Jill, are you all right?” Hadis asked.

“I-I am!” she answered. “And Raw and the others are...”

Sauté shook its feathers beside her, drops of seawater flying everywhere. Raw was spitting out sand and clung to Jill, acting clingy after experiencing such a horrible affair. Neither seemed injured. Hadis Bear was in the hands of the emperor, who was lending Jill a hand. Rave was on his shoulder with a calm demeanor.

Everyone’s safe. We’re drenched from head to toe, but we’re fine.

“What should I do, Hadis?” Rave asked. “Want me to call the green dragon nearby?”

“Is it safe?” Hadis asked.

“Yeah. It was just paralyzed for a moment, but that’s all. It seems pretty tired, though.”

“Let it do as it pleases. If it can blend in with a flight and make its way back, we can hide our tracks better. We should probably use a different dragon for our return trip.”

“Got it. In any case, what should we do from here?”

“Huh, it’s obvious, isn’t it?” Jill muttered under her breath as she wrung out her skirt. She squeezed her bag tightly to her chest, letting any excess water drip out. She decided not to think about the paper money inside. “You’ll head to my residence and live in hiding with me.”

“Huh?” Hadis asked.

“I thought it was weird that Crown Prince Vissel was able to grant my wishes so quickly.”

The crown prince sounded laudable, telling her to look after his youngest brother, but there was surely something more than meets the eye. And finding an opportunity, he decided to push it all onto Jill, as though pressuring her to protect Hadis before anything happened to him.

“That bizarre sound included, something’s clearly going on here,” Jill said. “I can’t let His Majesty return by himself when it could be dangerous out there.”

“J-Jill!”

Above all, Vissel would surely grit his teeth with rage if Hadis didn’t return. It was one of the only ways that she could get back at that twisted prince. *Serves him right!* She felt bad that Risteard would likely be troubled by this situation as well, but she was willing to cooperate with his plans regarding Sphere. Jill hoped that would make them even.

Hadis, moved by her words, clutched his hands together with joy. “S-So then, I *don’t* have to go back to the imperial capital tomorrow?”

“Nope. But stay at my residence, okay?”

“Of course! I will! I’ll make you food and clean! Ah, but you need money. Should I work?”

“Money won’t be an issue. Don’t worry. If push comes to shove, I’ll work as a mercenary.”

“You’re so cool, Jill! B-But I’ll work hard too! I’m good at living on the run!”

“I know!”

The two laughed together as Rave gingerly said, “A-Are you sure, Missy? We can let him return to the imperial capital and scope out the situation...”

“That would only make me even more nervous and worried,” Jill replied.

To her knowledge, there had been no major battles in Laika. Her timeline was different now, but she had plenty to worry about in terms of traitors. She’d be worried sick for the three months, wondering if Hadis was in danger or knocked out somewhere.

It was better if he was kept under her watch so that she could protect him.

“You’re here to study, aren’t you, Missy? To have you protect Hadis again is...”

“Thank you, Rave. But I don’t mind,” Jill said, looking at the reddening sun setting into the ocean. It hurt her eyes. “I’m used to it.”

“I-I see...” Rave said with a nod, watching the girl gaze into the distance.

Hadis was happily running toward the sunset, thinking about tonight's dinner.

Chapter 2: The Military Academy Sewer Rats

“I’LL be off, Your Majesty,” Jill said, turning around and looking up at an apron-wearing Hadis. She was dressed in her academy uniform, designed like a military uniform, complete with a tidy hat, and she knocked the toes of her leather shoes at the entrance.

“Can’t I come with you?” Hadis whined.

“No,” she refused.

“But Raw, Sauté, and even Hadis Bear are going with you! I have to stay home with Rave?! And you’re even hiding your Dragon Consort ring!”

“Please thank Rave for me.”

As the mark of the Dragon Consort, a golden ring decorated Jill’s left ring finger, and since she couldn’t take it off, she had Rave cast a spell on it to conceal the mark. She didn’t expect her request to be accepted at first, but Rave cheerfully allowed the ring to be concealed. A person with powerful magic could still see it, but it was otherwise hidden from the naked eye—in essence, this ring was invisible, just like Rave.

But Hadis wept bitterly over this fact. “Rave, you traitor! And Jill, why didn’t you insist that it was just a magical tool?!”

He was elated just yesterday, delighted to learn that he could spend some alone time with his wife and live like a real married couple, causing him to busily make preparations for their new life together. However, Hadis always kicked up a fuss when he needed to back off the most; this was one of his bad traits.

“It can’t be helped,” Jill reasoned. “I want to eliminate any factors that could mark me as the Dragon Consort, and I’m going to school. I’ll be a student. It’ll be troublesome if people find out that I’m married.”

“Troublesome?! You’re horrible!”

“We haven’t been attacked since yesterday, and I can’t sense anyone pursuing us, but we can’t let our guards down. Please just wait here quietly,” she requested. “Besides, I’ll be home early today. I’ll just greet my homeroom teacher and come back.”

“Is that teacher a *man*?!”

“Oh, be quiet already! Go do our laundry!”

She slammed the front door behind her. Ignoring the pathetic cries of “Jiiill!” echoing from within the house, she locked the door and left. If she gave him an inch, he’d take a mile.

Vissel had prepared a two-story house for Jill. The first floor had a kitchen and living room with running water, and the second floor had two small rooms. It was a short walk away from the city—a convenient location. *It’s a little suspicious that he didn’t just shove me into the dorms*, Jill thought.

She heard that most of the students at the military academy lived in the dorms. Locals could attend from home, but Jill, whose cover story had her coming from Radia in the mainland of the Rave Empire, could’ve easily been pushed into the dorms. With the unexpected addition of Hadis in her abode, she was grateful that she had a house to herself, but she couldn’t help but smell something fishy going on.

With a map in one hand, Jill found a post office, bought a stamp, and sent a letter to Vissel. More precisely, she’d be sending it to an unknown middleman—or middlewoman, rather—within the Verrat duchy. This mysterious woman would be the one receiving letters in Vissel’s stead. Jill wrote a short and sweet letter.

“Thanks to you, I’ve been able to start my new life. Tonight’s dinner will be Acqua pazza with salmon!”

-Jill”

Jill had no idea what an Acqua pazza was, but Vissel would surely realize who exactly would be making this dish for her.

Her job done, she left the post office and unfurled the map. She was currently on the northernmost island of the Grand Duchy of Laika, responsible for

controlling the entire nation. The governor-general was on the largest island of Laika, but the island Jill was on was the closest to the imperial capital. It had a magnificent city hall and a prosperous port, which honestly surprised her quite a bit. The paved roads were lined with gas lamps hanging from numerous stores. Perhaps it was lunch break; there were a few students in uniforms wandering about. Dragons flew above their heads, possibly carrying cargo or engaging in some kind of extra-curriculum lesson.

However, none of the dragons dared to venture across the vast ocean. There was a possibility that doing so was banned to prevent accidents from occurring over the ocean, but Jill couldn't ease her suspicions. Who could blame her? The fact that she and Hadis had been attacked wasn't widespread news. Jill had casually asked a few residents about the incident, but they thought that it was some kind of military exercise. The Dragon Consort and Dragon Emperor may have successfully disguised their fall, but the mastermind was far too used to hiding their evil deeds.

Another curious tidbit that Jill had heard was that the Rave imperial army had been conducting numerous military training exercises recently. *But it's true that I know practically nothing about Laika's internal affairs. I don't have a clue about His Majesty's youngest brother either...*

In Jill's previous timeline, the ones responsible for rioting against Hadis and causing a war were Risteard and Vissel. Natalie's older brother had technically been directly linked with starting the war when he went to Kratos for help, but he was nothing more than Gerald's pawn. The crown prince of Kratos had complained about how Natalie's older brother had brought useless information—tall tales and cock-and-bull stories about research.

None of this information would help Jill confirm Laika's current state.

"Hmm... Wasn't there something else?" she muttered to herself as she walked. "Speaking of, what kind of research did he talk about?"

"Rawr?" Raw asked, poking his head from her backpack.

Jill looked up and gasped. Before she knew it, she stood in front of the massive iron gates that divided the campus from the city. Atop a leisurely hill loomed the magnificent academy building.

La Baier Military Academy was the oldest academy in Laika and was home to the most superb, cream-of-the-crop students. Behind the structure was a mountain, and the white building on the hill towered over the city like a fortified castle looking over its citizens. Jill steeled herself and stood tall.

“Raw, you’re a lizard-type magical beast, is that clear?” Jill asked, confirming with the Dragon King one last time.

“Rawr!”

Do lizards go “rawr” and growl? Jill was a little anxious, but she shook off her fears and turned to Sauté peeking out on her opposite side.

“And you’re a bird-type magical beast,” she said. “I leave His Majesty Bear and Raw in your capable wings.”

“Chirp!”

“All right, let’s go!”

She decided to think about difficult matters later; if she lived here for a while, she’d be able to glean a bit more about Laika’s affairs anyway. Jill stuffed her map back into her bag and searched for the instructors’ lounge with a pamphlet in hand. She’d carefully confirmed the date and time written down, and she checked the clock before she entered the academy. She was sure that she had ten minutes to spare; she’d be just in time when she arrived at the instructors’ lounge.

“Let’s see... I’m supposed to greet Mr. Roger Brooder,” Jill muttered.

This was the person to whom the letter of introduction was addressed. She instinctively became wary because Vissel had arranged for her to meet with this man, but it wasn’t healthy for her to be suspicious all the time. Jill was, in fact, hiding her identity as well; there was a good chance that this instructor was also being fooled by Vissel.

I’m just a child who came to learn magic that couldn’t be taught within the Rave Empire. I was raised in Radia. I inherited my magic powers from my mom, who originated from Kratos, but I don’t know who my father is, and I no longer have a family. As Jill repeated her setting in her head, she noticed students in uniform looking at her funny. But because she spent most of her time

surrounded by adults, Jill couldn't help but feel a little happy to be around people her age.

She wanted to make friends, but she didn't want a crafty vice commander like Lawrence again. *Here I go...* Jill thought as she placed her hand on the door to the instructors' lounge.

"Are you lost, young lady?" a tall man called out to her.

He was sloppily wearing a school uniform in a nonchalant fashion. However, unlike the other students, he was wearing a short, striking blue cape over one of his shoulders. *He must be an instructor.* He wasn't wearing a hat, and his messy, dark-brown hair was on full display. At a glance, he seemed to be wandering around in an aloof manner, but on closer inspection, his well-defined features made him quite handsome. But above all else, Jill noticed his refined magical energy. *This man's strong. He might be on par with Princess Elentzia.*

It was rare for a citizen of the Rave Empire to possess magical powers. This only cemented how prestigious La Baier was.

"Where are your parents?" he asked. "Do you have an older brother or sister at this academy?"

"Oh, I'm not lost," Jill quickly replied. "I'm looking for Mr. Roger Brooder..."

"That so? Well, that's me."

She didn't expect him to come to her. Finding this to be a huge coincidence, she stepped forward. "Please pardon me for my ignorance and rudeness. My name is Jill."

"*You?* You're a little girl."

"That's right. I'll be in your care!" As she lowered her head, Raw and Sauté hopped out and bowed their heads as well. Jill decided to introduce the well-mannered duo. "These are my magical beasts, Raw and Sauté. I've got my magical tool—a stuffed bear—inside my bag. And this is my letter of introduction!"

She handed him the letter that Vissel had written. Roger, however, didn't take the letter and stared at her in stunned silence.

“Um...” Jill started.

“Ah, sorry,” he said. “You really do have magical beasts that look like a lizard and a bird. Um, do you have a parent or a guardian with you?”

Seeing Roger look visibly troubled, Jill panicked, realizing that she needed a guardian with her.

“I don’t quite have a family... Oh, but I’ve got an older brother with me,” Jill replied. “He’s working, though.”

She decided to leave it at that. There was a chance that her classmates would visit her house to play, and it didn’t seem wise to keep Hadis a secret. Luckily, her golden ring was hidden, and she decided to come up with a setting on the fly—her older brother came for work, and as the younger sister, she came to study abroad. *I think this isn’t a bad scenario.*

But Roger only grimaced. “I-I see. So, you’re *really* here for our academy, young lady?”

“I am. I’m pleased to meet you.” First impressions were important. Jill replied energetically, and Roger suddenly started laughing.

“H-Huh, I see,” he muttered. “Seems like the higher-ups have really thrown in the towel. Good grief, I can’t believe it.”

“P-Pardon?” Jill asked.

“Oh, sorry. I know you’re not in any position to go against orders. I didn’t mean to trouble you; I was just a little surprised. I mean, you’re still so young...”

“I’m not *that* young,” Jill insisted comically. “I’ve had a late growth spurt, so I admit that I’m a bit small, but I won’t lose to the students around me.”

Roger smiled. “I can tell that you’re a talented girl with quite a bit of magical power. I can see that with your magical beasts as well. You’re indeed a bit different from the other *teachers*. I guess I can only hope that the gap in your abilities and your appearance will set you apart from the rest.”

His words didn’t sit right with Jill. It was clear that their conversation wasn’t quite clicking, and she had a bad feeling about where this was headed.

Roger flashed her a pitiful smile. “I’ll welcome you with open arms, Instructor

Jill. It's a pleasure to meet you."

He stuck out his hand for a handshake. Jill froze with a smile plastered on her face. She was impulsively about to scream in confusion, but praised her maturity and growth as she suppressed these desires.



“Homeroom teachers are quitting one after another, and as an assistant instructor, I can only do so much, and I’ve got to abide by the rules,” Roger confessed. “I was in a bit of a bind, but I didn’t expect such an adorable teacher to arrive.”

“R-Right...” Jill managed to eke out.

She didn’t expect it either. *I’m not a student, but a teacher?! How did this happen? How was this accepted?* And yet, Vissel had managed to make it happen. When Roger had initially seen Jill’s age, he’d assumed that it was a typo.

It was difficult for Jill to go, “Uh, I thought I was a student here,” in this situation. Vissel’s letter had clearly stated that she was here to be an instructor. To claim that this was a mistake of some sort and request a revision was beyond suspicious; she was already hiding her identity as it was. Furthermore, she’d have to return to Rave once to clear up this misunderstanding.

In addition, Jill didn’t *have* to be a student to fulfill her mission. In fact, she realized that being an instructor would work to her advantage, since she’d be able to sneak in and obtain more information on administrative affairs.

However, this didn’t mean that she’d forgive Vissel for this. Should the crown prince *ever* dream of creating a riot, she’d personally deliver his punishment. As Jill continued to shift her eyes away from reality, Roger led her out of the white academy building.

Jill blinked. “Erm, are we not going to the instructors’ lounge?”

“Have you heard anything about the class you’d be in charge of, Miss Jill?” Roger asked. “Or as I’d thought, were you kept in the dark?”

As I’d thought? His question bothered Jill, but she nodded her head obediently. Roger confidently proceeded to walk farther away from the building.

“I expected as much,” he said. “And what about this academy? Do you know anything?”

“As long as you’re over ten years of age, you can enter this academy

regardless of gender or nationality,” Jill replied. “It hinges on a merit system, and the student’s grade will place them into their suitable classes.”

“That’s right. From the top, we’ve got Gold Dragon, Purple Dragon, and Azure Dragon as our classes. It’s not like we’ve got fewer students when compared to other military academies. Each class has thirty students, about the smallest size of a platoon of Dragon Knights in the Rave Empire.”

“Er, which means this academy has a total of...”

“Around 240 students,” he supplied. “Since students are allowed to stay here for six years, we’ve got first-years to sixth-years. However, there’s only one Gold Dragon class regardless of grade, and it’s filled with students who have excellent marks. Purple Dragon classes are divided by years, so it’ll go first-years, second-years, and so forth until the sixth-years. Below that is Azure Dragon—the class you’ll be in charge of—which also has only one class regardless of grade. They’re nicknamed the Sewer Rats. And that makes it a total of eight classes.”

“S-Sewer Rats?” Jill gasped.

Roger offered her a wry smile. “They don’t often get called Azure Dragons. As you know, blue dragons don’t exist; this class was named out of irony. You might not like it, but if you want to continue working here, you should quickly get used to the nickname Sewer Rat.”

“Er, um... Wh-What kind of class is it?”

“To be blunt, it’s filled with failures,” Roger answered frankly. “These students misbehave or have poor grades, causing them to be dropped from Purple Dragon classes. However, since they required six years to graduate, they were gathered into the Azure Dragon class. They’re separated from the main building.”

“I-Isn’t that odd? Just because they have bad grades or behaviors, how can their classroom not be within the main academy?”

“They’re being made an example out of. If you don’t want to turn out like them, you’d best become an excellent student. And...we’re here.”

Jill stopped in front of a building that was in the shade of the main academy.

In stark contrast to the pristine structure that she'd just walked out of, she was in front of what looked like a dilapidated warehouse. *Is this where the classroom is?* Jill wondered in stunned silence.

Roger exhaled a deep sigh. "It's true that there are a lot of problematic kids in this class, and many of them may have lost their drive. But they still managed to pass the most difficult entrance exam in Laika. They can all do it if they try."

"I-I agree."

Jill had been thrust into a problematic environment, but she didn't think the students were at fault. She pulled herself together as Roger grimaced.

"But one of the students who recently entered this class is a bit *too* problematic and difficult to get under control," he admitted. "He's chased out one homeroom teacher after another. To tell you the truth, I only became an assistant teacher last month, but I'm constantly being underestimated by him."

"Does that student get violent?" Jill asked.

"Oh, nothing like that, but he's the grandson of Grand Duke Laika, Lutiya Teos Rave."

Jill widened her eyes at the mention of Hadis's youngest brother. "Isn't he part of the Rave imperial family?" she asked. "Why is he...?"

She couldn't stop herself from asking questions. She'd heard that the boy was attending this military academy, but she could hardly believe that he was a part of the Sewer Rats. She assumed that he'd be placed in the highest class regardless of his grade.

"What you heard about the merit system isn't a lie," Roger replied. "If you've got bad grades or misbehave, you're not shown any mercy. Of course, with the current affairs of the empire, we're receiving backlash for this decision. He *is* part of the Rave imperial family, after all... Have you ever seen the Rave imperial army within this city, Miss Jill?"

"I-I haven't..." She couldn't tell him that she was almost shot down by them.

He gave a dry smile. "I'm glad to hear that. You might find out why later, but it's best if you don't go near them. They've always been a little overbearing, but

it's gotten worse recently. The entirety of Laika is filled with dissatisfaction toward the mainland, and this academy is no exception. This educational institution is Laika's pride and joy." Jill narrowed her eyes as Roger continued in an exhausted tone. "But that boy is, without a doubt, a problematic kid."

"Without a doubt..." Jill murmured.

"Within the past six months, four instructors have already been chased out. Just because you're up against a thirteen-year-old child, you shouldn't underestimate him. Ah, but that might be a bit odd for me to say to you, Miss Jill." He glanced at her and forced a smile. "It'll be tough for both of us. Let's do our best."

"R-Right. You'll be my assistant, correct, Mr. Brooder?"

"That's right. Although, I really can't do much. In fact...well, you might learn this later, so I'll just tell you right now. An assistant acts like a spy for the main building."

Before Jill could ask about his alarming statement, Roger handed her the roll call book.

"You'll start tomorrow. I'll leave the rest to you," he said.

"Leave the rest of what to me? What about today's lesson?" she asked.

"It's meaningless to teach unsalvageable students. Blue dragons don't exist, do they? I'm sure you know what this means." With that, Roger turned on his heel and left. Jill only stood there in astonishment.

"S-So what do I do now?" she muttered to herself.

She was only beginning to grasp that she was here to be an instructor, and she didn't expect to be thrown into the deep end. In addition, she was put in charge of a class that had a problematic student who chased out numerous instructors. *This feels like max difficulty.*

"Are you perhaps a new student of the Azure Dragon class?" someone called out.

Jill turned around and was met with a boy in uniform, his round, sky-blue eyes peeking out through his silver bangs. It was as though the clear skies were

poking out between the clouds. His elegant face and friendly smile didn't suit this dilapidated, old building.

"Mr. Brooder brought you here, didn't he?" he asked. "That teacher goes by a *laissez-faire* policy."

"Uh, no, I—" Jill started.

"Or were you threatened to be here? I guess the elites of the main building are as awful as ever. But this place isn't so bad, you know. Don't look so anxious."

"Um, are you a student with the Azure Dragon class?" she asked.

The boy widened his eyes before he chuckled. "That's right. I'm a Sewer Rat. Are you a transfer student or someone who came from abroad? No one calls this class *Azure Dragon*, and you don't seem to recognize me." Finding amusement in Jill's loss for words, the boy laughed through his nose. "I'm the class president of the Azure Dragons, Lutiya Teos Rave. I'm sure that you've at least heard of my name."

Jill gulped as he flashed her another friendly smile. "Don't be so on guard. You might've been told a lot of things, but they're just empty rumors. I'm actually quite troubled myself, I'll have you know."

"D-Didn't you make a lot of instructors quit?" Jill asked gingerly.

"Well, they were trapped between the main academy and us... I guess it's our fault in a sense, but the academy places too many responsibilities on the instructors. They're horrible." Lutiya closed his eyes with a pained look and shook his head before he smiled at Jill. "But we won't lose. Why don't we work together? Even Sewer Rats can do something if we band together. Let's show those main building folks who's boss."

Jill put her hands together and nodded firmly, hearing the determination in his tone. She was wary of him at first, but he seemed like a normal student. She felt embarrassed for being intimidated when she first heard about the student who made multiple instructors quit.

"Y-You're right," she agreed. "We should work hard together! Oh, but I'm not a student. I'm a—"

“Since we’ve got the perfect opportunity, I’ll introduce you to everyone,” Lutiya interjected. “Over here.”

“Th-There? Aren’t the students inside the classroom?”

Lutiya took Jill’s hand and walked out of the warehouse-like classroom. “It’s self-study right now,” he explained. “They’re by the dragon stables of the main building. Students like us usually never get the opportunity to use dragons, so we study them on our own when we can.”

“Never get the opportunity? Are you saying that you’re being made an example of— I mean, is that the policy of the academy?”

“That’s right. And that’s not all. We’re not allowed to leave or enter the main academy as we please either, so we can’t use the cafeteria or student store.”

“Seriously?”

Jill was in shock—she’d been looking forward to the various menus introduced within the school pamphlet. *How can this be? I-I must do something about this! I’ve got His Majesty’s lunch with me, but still!*

She held on to a sliver of hope that perhaps instructors were allowed to dine in the cafeteria, but she was hesitant to do so while her students suffered. She knew that the academy hinged on a merit system, but she felt like this was taking it too far. There was a clear and vast difference in how the students were being treated. She didn’t like how the Azure Dragon class was being made into an example for others to avoid and braced herself for the future. *All right, I’ll do this! I’ll be an instructor!*

She’d appeal for an improvement in how these students were being treated and eat the entire menu offered at the cafeteria. Her first order of business was to build rapport with the students. Just as Jill began to think about a proper way to introduce herself, a burnt stench tickled her nose.

The moment she looked up, multiple explosions sounded, and the roar of dragons reverberated through the air. Was this an accident or an altercation? Before she could give herself another moment to speak, she ran forward without turning back to Lutiya’s gasp of surprise. Explosions continued to boom as she ran forward, and the howling of the dragons drew closer. But she heard

another noise—the laughter of children.

She followed the sounds and turned the corner, leaping into a splendid dragon stable. The large double doors were wide open, and around twenty students were gathered at the entrance, lighting up paper tubes with glee. They were igniting firecrackers, and the startled dragons gave a furious roar.

The dragons didn't seem to be harmed, but this was a wicked prank to play. Provoking dragons with nothing to defend yourself with was incredibly dangerous, and Jill warily stepped forward.

"Hey!" she shouted angrily. "What are you guys doing?!"

"Argh, you don't have to be so hasty," Lutiya called out from behind her.

A feeling of dread filling her heart, Jill tore her eyes away from the scene and faced Lutiya. "Is this what you mean by self-studying?"

"That's right," he replied. "And you're one of us from now on. Looks like fun, doesn't it?"

"President Lutiya!" the other students called out.

He waved in reply.

"So, those students are part of the Azure Dragon class..." Jill mumbled wearily.

"That's right," Lutiya answered. "We Sewer Rats are trying to check just how well the main academy is training these beasts. We're so kind, aren't we?" His innocent explanation was devoid of any sense of guilt. "Don't worry. I'm part of the Rave imperial family. They might be able to kick me down to Sewer Rats, but they don't have the guts to directly land a blow on me. They're all cowards."

Jill opened and closed her mouth like a fish, unable to find her words.

"Let's do fireworks next!" Lutiya yelled.

"You can count on me! I made a special blend!" a student answered with gusto.

In the next moment, a firework whistled into the air and exploded with a loud

pop. The dragons jumped in shock at the sounds, no longer able to endure this deafening torture, but their legs were tied to the stables. The students, well aware of this fact, giggled with delight.

“They get so startled with simple fireworks!” a student laughed. “The dragons that the main building is so proud of are such wimps!”

“I thought it was getting noisy,” an instructor bellowed as a couple more teachers followed behind. “You Sewer Rats!”

Lutiya laughed in response. “They’re finally here! Come on, let’s leave, everyone! All according to plan!”

“Don’t let them leave! Catch them all!” the instructor roared. “Lock ’em all up in detention! Call security!”

The students goaded the instructors as they fled.

“Hell no!”

“Ha ha ha! If you’ve got any complaints, take them to our instructor! Oh wait, we don’t have one anymore!”

Instructor. Jill snapped back to her senses as the teachers all growled in annoyance.

“Dammit! Where’s Roger? Is he ditching work again?!”

“You think an assistant will be of any use?” Lutiya crowed with glee as he turned to Jill. “Come on, let’s go. Oh, what was your name again?”

“I-I’m their homeroom teacher and instructor!” Jill shouted, standing tall.

At once, everyone went silent and fixed their gazes on her. There was no turning back now.

“I-I’m the new instructor for the Azure Dragon class!” she declared. “P-Pleased to meet you all!”

Even Jill thought that this was a pathetic introduction, but she decided to press on. The only saving grace was the roaring dragons that returned to their stables, displeased.

“You’re...the new instructor?”

Both student and teacher alike exchanged troubled glances. *I expected as much*, Jill thought as cold sweat trickled down her back. She could barely believe it herself, and coupled with the situation they were currently in, she couldn't blame anyone for doubting her words. *Wh-What am I supposed to do here? Is this all my responsibility?*

The first one to break the ice was Lutiya, who was trying to grab her hand to run off together. He let out a boisterous laugh. "Ahahahaha! This is great! I guess you guys finally surrendered to us!" He took Jill's roll call book from her hands and checked the contents. "I see, so your name is Jill. Then I hope we get along, Miss Jill."

He grinned and stuck out his hand. Jill's cheeks twitched, but she returned his handshake—she knew that his words couldn't be taken at face value. Her husband had trained her instincts well, and they were ringing loud and clear on red alert. As though to confirm her suspicions, Lutiya made sure that his smile didn't quite reach his eyes.



WHEN Jill returned home for dinner, a delicious aroma filled the house and her apron-clad husband warmly welcomed her back.

"Welcome home," Hadis said. "The bath's ready for you."

She couldn't help but grab his hands and earnestly propose, "Please marry me."

Only when her husband nodded with red cheeks did she snap back to her senses. *This is bad. I'm tired*, she thought.

Still, it was important to have such a warm and inviting home to return to after a tiring day. She polished off the delicious dinner, washed off her exhaustion in the bath, and stepped into a small room with two beds pushed together by the window. She plopped down on the bed.

She'd decided that she wouldn't sleep with Hadis until they were officially married, but they'd gotten attacked on the way to Laika, and there weren't any guards to protect him. The green dragon had acted up on their way there too. And so, she decided they'd sleep in the same room with Sauté and Raw as well.

Each person had their own bed—they may have been in the same room, but they technically weren't sleeping *together*. The beds were pushed together because the room was small; surely, Vissel was to blame for this mishap.

On top of the fluffy comforter, Jill spread out some documents about her students and puffed out her cheeks. "This is crazy. Me? An instructor? I won't forgive Prince Vissel for this."

"Brother was always one to make unreasonable requests," Hadis replied. "But a teacher, huh? And in charge of my younger brother, no less. What kind of kid is he? Does he look like me?"

Jill was leaning against Hadis's chest and looked over her shoulder. "Rave, can you come out?"

Hadis's magic hadn't fully recovered yet, and the Dragon God didn't show himself as often as before. However, if he was called, he'd immediately appear.

"Hmm? What's up? What's wrong?" Rave asked.

"Thank you so, so much for raising His Majesty," Jill said. "It might've been your obligation, and he just barely made it, but I'm glad that he grew up without being two-faced." She lowered her head and Rave blinked several times with his large eyes.

Hadis frowned. "Are you praising me? You're not, right?"

"I am, of course," Jill replied. "Your younger brother is difficult to handle, just like you, Your Majesty. I can sense that things will start to get a little hairy. Prince Lutiya and the rest of the students will be tough nuts to crack."

After Lutiya's so-called "self-study session," Jill was placed in the line of fire. The moment she introduced herself, Lutiya and the other students fled the scene, leaving her behind to apologize for them. The other instructors were initially troubled by this turn of events, but once they confirmed that Jill really was the new homeroom teacher for the Azure Dragon class, they changed their attitude.

Meanwhile, Lutiya and the rest of the class continued with their mischievous "self-study sessions." They threw paint on the main academy building, secretly inscribed a magic circle into a classroom water pipe while students were

studying magic, and exploded the pipe, soaking the entire classroom, and continued to play pranks on the other students. The incidents that Jill had to apologize for began to snowball out of control, and the other instructors showered her with scoffs and insults.

In truth, if Jill had time to apologize, she would've much rather greeted her students, but she was unable to voice her thoughts as the dismissal bell rang, ending her first day of school. Jill was left to work overtime, writing letters of apology for the trouble that was caused.

"Thirty students per class, right?" Hadis asked, flipping through the documents that Jill had laid out so that she could remember the names and faces of her students. "If all of them come at you at once, I can see how they'd be difficult to control..."

"And the other teachers don't help me at all! Not one bit!" Jill shouted angrily. "They only see me as a nuisance!"

Roger had popped up to teach Jill how to properly write a letter of apology, but that couldn't be considered assistance.

"I don't even know my students yet!" Jill complained. "And I'm technically supposed to start working tomorrow, but it's *all* my responsibility now?! They said that they won't let me off so easily tomorrow. They're all crazy! How can they take that attitude toward me?!"

"Doesn't seem like the entire academy's filled with delinquents, but was Raw okay?" Rave asked.

"Raw and Sauté had fled before I knew it," Jill replied. "When I was about to head home, they suddenly appeared once more."

Raw, thinking his name had been called, clambered up on the bed and let out an adorable cry.

Jill grabbed his cheeks with both hands. "You really are *exactly* like His Majesty! You're so good at running away, aren't you?!"

"Rawr."

"Are you sure you haven't been casually insulting me?" Hadis asked. "I feel

like I'm the one under scrutiny here, Jill."

"But it might be best for Raw and Sauté to stay here. I should leave His Majesty Bear here too," Jill said, ignoring him.

It would be horrendous if the students dared to play a prank on Jill's companions. Hadis Bear might activate and burn the school to the ground. If Raw were to start crying, dragons would surely come flying and attack the academy.

"Rawr! Rar!" Raw insisted, his cheeks still squished.

"He's saying that he wants to tag along," Rave translated. "Why don't you bring him along? He can be used to communicate with us too."

"Sauté, can I leave him to you again?" Jill asked.

The bird, who was checking its bed a short distance away, clearly looked exhausted. One could sense its fatigue and sorrow from its hunched back and glassy eyes.

"Today gave me a pretty good idea why the previous homeroom teachers quit," Jill grumbled.

"The students can't be controlled, and the other instructors blame you for their antics," Hadis said. "I can understand why people can't cope with that."

"And I can't either!" she yelled, tossing Raw aside.

She leaned into Hadis's chest. Raw huffed in annoyance at being thrown, but he didn't want his cheeks to be squished again. He took Hadis Bear and crawled into the bed that Sauté had made.

"Please cheer me up, Your Majesty," Jill said. "Come on!"

"H-Huh? Wh-What am I supposed to say?"

"Your wife just battled through an unreasonable workplace! Why do you sound so hesitant?!"

"W-Well... Mere students can't possibly fight back against you."

His nonchalant response caused Jill to frown, and she gazed up at him. "On what grounds do you say that? I'm up against students, not an enemy during a

war. I've never been a teacher before..."

"Are those students more troublesome than me?"

Jill sat snug between Hadis's legs and he peered over her shoulder at her face as she tried to process his question. She couldn't say a thing. His golden irises were beautiful like the moon, and she couldn't let her guard down around him.



Though she was the one who'd snuggled up against him, she pushed against his chest and looked away, sensing imminent danger if this mood lingered.

"Well... They're better than you...I suppose," Jill muttered.

A single mistake with her students wouldn't lead to a war that would cause her loved ones to be executed while a sea of flames enveloped the land around her. She wasn't up against a goddess, and she didn't need to sever the bond of hatred that had piled up for the past millennium.

"Exactly," Hadis said, sounding a bit happy.

Jill pouted. "But even so, being a teacher and a wife are two very separate things!"

"I'd be troubled if they were the same, but I'm sure you'll be fine."

Hadis caused Jill's cheeks to turn pink with his honesty. None of her problems had been resolved, but oddly enough, she felt like she could do it. It didn't look like she was venting her anger or airing her grievances; it seemed like she was acting spoiled. She played with the ends of Hadis's clothes, pinching it and releasing it from her grasp as she switched topics.

"What about you, Your Majesty? Did anything odd happen today?"

"The landlord came by today, so I said my greetings," Hadis replied.

"You let them come into our house?"

"Well, we should be on good terms with our landlord, don't you think?"

Jill frowned at his lack of vigilance, but in terms of common sense, he made the right move. He seemed to be enjoying himself too.

"They were nice," Hadis went on. "I was told that I shouldn't hesitate to come to them for any problems."

"Er... I just want to ask, but is this landlord a man?"

"Nope. She's a lady."

Jill grew worried in a different sense—her husband was handsome and friendly. But vocalizing her thoughts outright made her sound jealous. *How should I go about this?*

As she agonized over her choice of words, Rave peered down at her from above. “Don’t worry, Missy. I’m here. He’s friendly, but he really is very wary of his surroundings.”

“Ah, you’re exactly right!” Jill replied.

“I still feel like I’m being insulted... I listened to her talk about all sorts of stuff, but she seems fine,” Hadis said, his voice dropping an octave, “as long as she doesn’t find out that I’m the Dragon Emperor.”

Jill gazed at the emperor’s face. He placed his elbow on his knee and stared into the distance.

“I was told that the Rave Empire was to blame for the rising costs,” Hadis continued. “She said that they were being exploited, and the government officials were all related to Rave in some way, doing as they pleased. There was no end to her complaints, really.”

“Does...any of that ring a bell?” Jill asked.

“I haven’t meddled in any political affairs in Laika recently. Still, that doesn’t mean I know what the middlemen are doing. And my younger brother has quite an infamous reputation. People can’t believe that a brat like him will become the next grand duke. He’s known as a selfish brat who can’t be checked and is treated as a total pain in the neck.”

His reputation has reached the ears of the people too? This’ll be a real headache... Jill thought.

“Prince Lutiya’s grandfather is the grand duke, isn’t he?” Jill asked. “Is the boy being neglected?”

“The grand duke is an elderly man and he’s apparently bedridden. But Laika’s newly appointed chancellor is from Rave, and he’s been pretty popular. He’s been revolutionizing the grand duchy without being intimidated by the Rave Empire and the imperial army. His name is MinerD Fale and—”

“MinerD?!” Jill yelled.

Hadis closed his mouth in surprise and Rave, who had settled on Hadis’s shoulder, cocked his head to one side.

“Do you know him, Missy?” he asked.

“N-No. I-I just know a person with the same name...” Jill said, frantically trying to mask her shock. She used Hadis as a backrest and stared at the sheets underneath her feet.

Jill was familiar with a MinerD Teos Rave, a man belonging to the Rave imperial family. He fled the empire and sought asylum from the empire’s internal strife and the Rave Emperor’s various purges. He insisted that his younger sister’s death and his abdication from his claim to the throne were all due to Hadis’s cunning schemes.

In other words, MinerD had insisted on starting a war so that the Kratos Kingdom could crush the Rave Empire. Jill, who’d been Gerald’s fiancée at the time, had personally met MinerD on multiple occasions. Quite frankly, she found him to be nothing short of shady. The information that he brought as an act of goodwill was often wrong, and Gerald had placed little trust in the man. MinerD was nothing more than a decoration and was politely handled to prevent any skirmishes. It seemed like he knew that himself, so he wasn’t completely oblivious and useless. However, the fact that he used the murder of his younger sister to receive pity and attention was something that Jill simply couldn’t overlook. It was then that she came to a realization. *Wait, his younger sister is...*

“Wasn’t Princess Natalie’s older brother named MinerD?” Jill asked.

“Ah...” Hadis replied with a nod. “Now that you mention it... No wonder his name sounded kind of familiar.”

“Is this just a coincidence?” Rave asked.

Hadis thought for a moment. “I wonder... His mother’s related to Duke Verrat, so I heard that he was residing in his duchy. I never heard of him escaping to Laika, and they’ve got a different last name.”

“Could his last name have changed when he abdicated his claim to the throne? When the crown princes started dying one after another, he fled, didn’t he?” Jill asked.

“Since he left in the dead of night and vanished from the castle, I don’t think

he technically rescinded his claim. A different person abdicated his right, so MinerD should just barely still be a part of the imperial family. But of course, if he ever claimed that boldly, both Brother Vissel and Duke Lehrsatz won't let it slide."

While Duke Lehrsatz was a powerful figure and one of the three dukes within Rave, Jill wasn't sure why his name was brought up here. Hadis, noticing her befuddlement, gave a strained smile.

"Risteard's older brother—Duke Lehrsatz's grandson—was next in line for the throne after Natalie's older brother. If MinerD hadn't fled and became the crown prince instead, Risteard's older brother may not have had to claim the throne and might've still been alive."

This was a painful story to hear. Jill looked away.

"Risteard wouldn't say anything like that, though," Hadis continued. "But if the chancellor for Laika's grand duke really is MinerD Teos Rave, I wonder how Natalie, Risteard, and Vissel will feel..."

"C-Crown Prince Vissel, you say?" Jill stammered.

"Vissel constantly badgers and bullies Risteard because the latter's older brother was simply that splendid. I'm sure Vissel will never admit that of his own volition, however."

Jill felt like bullying the younger brother just because his older brother was a magnificent man was rather immature, but she kept her mouth shut. She was sure that there were complex emotions involved, and she wasn't privy to all the details.

"I never met him, so I only know the rumors, but I have heard that he was indeed an excellent man," Hadis said.

"What was his name?" Jill asked. "I don't think I've ever heard it."

"Arnold. His name was Arnold Teos Rave. I'm sure you haven't heard his name because people are being considerate of me."

That tidbit was also tough to hear. Jill decided to blame all of it on the Goddess and raised her head.

“In other words, Laika is filled with dissatisfaction toward the Rave Empire right now,” she said. “And one of the reasons is how Prince Lutiya acts, correct?”

“Huh? Uh, yeah, I think so,” Hadis replied.

“Then this’ll be simple! I’ll reform that entire class, Prince Lutiya included!”

Hadis blinked.

“Wait,” Rave said. “I don’t think it’s that simple, Missy.”

“But what use is there to overthink this situation?” Jill countered. “Besides, it could be true that the people of Rave are doing as they please within Laika. The ones who attacked us were quite skilled and used to combat. Plus, can you blame the citizens? Even their future grand duke will be an autocrat belonging to the Rave imperial family. But His Highness Vissel said that he never received any such reports, correct?”

“Right,” Hadis nodded. “Someone’s stopping the flow of information. I’m not sure if that person is in Laika or Rave. The landlord told us that there are strict regulations regarding travel by ship and dragon, so I’m guessing that someone from Laika’s controlling the information.”

“We might’ve been attacked not because of our status, but simply because they didn’t want to let anyone from the Rave Empire in.”

Had their attackers been specifically aiming for the Dragon Emperor and the Dragon Consort, they would’ve surely given a more persistent chase.

Rave stretched out his body with a groan. “So, if we make our move without confirming the situation, we might make it worse.”

“Exactly,” Jill agreed. “And even if there are signs of rebellion or corruption, we can’t make our move without proof.”

Hadis was the emperor. It was easy to become nitpicky and get rid of the bad apples, but one wrong move, and the ire of the citizens would come bouncing back at him. He couldn’t scapegoat a person to take the fall, and he certainly couldn’t make false accusations. The Laikans were already angry as it was, and anything could ignite a raging fire that couldn’t be doused. They had to act

carefully.

“If anything could be done about this situation, Brother Vissel would’ve already done it,” Hadis added.

“I agree,” Jill nodded. “And this is Crown Prince Vissel we’re talking about. If Prince Lutiya were to get in your way, Your Majesty, I’m certain the crown prince would’ve already gotten rid of the boy.”

Hadis gave an awkward chuckle. Rave stared into the distance.

“Prince Lutiya is still a child,” Jill said. “There’s ample opportunity for him to turn over a new leaf. If people learn that he could become a splendid grand duke, we might be able to quell their dissatisfaction. We shouldn’t give up hope! And we’ll leave Crown Prince Vissel dumbfounded!”

“I feel like you just want to get back at Vissel...”

“Of course I do! And for that, I’ll become a teacher or whatever it takes!”

Even if the ultimate outcome was exactly as Vissel had predicted, if Jill made her own decisions here, she was acting of her own free will. She stood on her fluffy bed and balled her hands into fists.

“All right, I’ll do my best!” she said. “I’ll make sure that Prince Lutiya will be reformed, Your Ma—”

Just as she was making her declaration, Hadis grabbed her waist from behind and brought her close. She was plopped right between his legs, causing her to bounce slightly.

“Your Majesty?” she asked.

“I...don’t like this,” Hadis muttered. His tone wasn’t his usual act of whining. There was a sense of desperation, as though he were begging. “I like how cool and optimistic you are. And I know you’re doing this all for me. Still...I don’t like how you’re giving all your attention to another guy.”

Realizing where his complaints were coming from, Jill shifted her bare legs. “A-A man? He’s my student. And His Highness is still a child.”

“And you’re only eleven! Age-wise, he’s far more fitting for you than I am! Any guy younger than me are all my enemies!” Hadis cried.

“D-Don’t be unreasonable, Your Majesty.”

She tried to act casual, hiding her feelings of excitement. From behind her, she felt him emanate a dangerous aura.

“He’s just your student, is that clear?!” Hadis asked. “I won’t forgive you if you become anything else to him! I’m the most troublesome guy for you, all right? I won’t concede this spot to anyone else.”

“Hey, you should probably concede that...” Rave said. “What’re you gonna do when you guys have kids?”

“Shut up, Rave! I’ll think about it then!”

Jill gave a loud sigh. Hadis jolted, but squeezed her tightly, insisting that he wasn’t in the wrong. *What a guy...*

“You really are hopeless, Your Majesty,” Jill said. “You can’t get jealous over a child.”

“S-Say what you like,” Hadis said.

“I’ll forgive you because you’re cute.”

Hadis let out an odd cry and loosened his grip. Jill used that opportunity to turn around, rising on her knees to match his eye level. She couldn’t suppress her smile at her husband’s pathetic expression.

“You should be more confident in yourself,” she said. “No normal man on the streets can hold a candle to you, Your Majesty.”

“Y-You...think so?” Hadis asked.

“Of course! Above all, you’re an excellent cook!” Jill clenched her fists and spoke with conviction. “You have nothing to worry about. Prince Lutiya will probably never wear an apron!”

“Sorry, Jill. You’re convincing, but I don’t want to be convinced with that.”

I thought that was a good compliment. I guess it wasn’t. I messed up. Hadis gently kissed her puffed-out cheeks and turned off the lights.



THE first and most important order of business was to have her students

approve of her as a teacher. It may have been difficult to accept that an eleven-year-old girl was their instructor, but this was reality. *And those eyes... He must've seen me as an enemy.*

Jill thought back to Lutiya's frosty gaze and the rest of the class who stared at her coldly. Their message was clear: they didn't trust any adults, including instructors. Judging from yesterday's events, it wasn't hard to guess why they distrusted adults.

Though Lutiya seemed cunning, he was friendly with Jill until he found out that she was an instructor. His carefree smile implied that he was genuinely happy to find another friend. She didn't think that he was a bad guy.

"But I don't like pulling strings or psychological battles..." Jill muttered.

"Rawr."

Raw poked his head out from her backpack, which was stuffed with her lunch and Hadis Bear. Sauté, who walked beside Jill with its chest puffed up, gave a proud cry. They were trying to cheer her up. *They're right. I don't have time to complain. To become an excellent Dragon Consort, I came here to learn how to make an academy. I'm sure being an instructor will be a good experience for me.* She flipped back her blue cape—a sign that she was the instructor of the Azure Dragons, and a perfect fit since Hadis had adjusted it for her small frame—and walked ahead with confidence. She crossed by the main building with her roll call book in hand.

"Miss Jill! Come here, quickly!" Roger called out.

Jill had already learned her lesson yesterday and swiftly turned around. "What's wrong? Did our students do something again?" she asked, rushing to him.

Roger looked at her in bewilderment and stammered, "Er... Th-They haven't done anything yet, but they're about to, I think?"

"Act sharp! You're my assistant, aren't you?"

"Right. They were gathered at the training grounds early in the morning, so I thought it was suspicious. They should still have some fireworks, and..." Jill took off running and Roger hastily added on, "The training grounds are right around

that corner!”

Tsk, what're they up to this time?! Jill didn't want to spend another day bowing to other teachers. Her priority was to stop her students. But her prayers were for naught as explosions boomed in the air.

The training grounds beyond the academy building were a wide, open space. There were targets for shooting practice and sandbags scattered throughout. Dragons were near the students, and some of them tried to take to the air. To Jill's surprise, she noticed a single green dragon in the mix of patchy dragons.

Successfully riding a green dragon was a symbol of proficiency. Even within the refined Neutahl Dragon Knights, the pride and joy of the Rave Empire, riding the green beast would imply that one was the cream of the crop. It would be a shock if there was a student who could even mount the dragon for a brief moment. *Is that the Gold Dragon class?*

Another explosion cut her train of thought. Luckily, while the dragons in the air were shocked by the noise, they showed no signs of aggression. However, they growled in annoyance. The ones riding them weren't Dragon Knights. No matter how skilled the riders were, they were still students, and it'd be too late if teachers acted once an accident had occurred. Before Jill could yell her warning, a calm voice cut through the air.

“Everyone, don't panic! First, calm down the dragons!” said the golden-haired boy riding the green dragon. He still looked young, but his stern face made him look like a reliable, model student. Jill froze and gazed at him in shock. “They're just loud sounds. Don't fret,” he said. “It's no laughing matter if the Gold Dragon class can't control these beasts.”

“Right, class president!” a student replied.

“Acting like an honor student as always, huh, President Noyn?” Lutiya said. “Then how about this?”

When Lutiya gave the command, a loud explosion rang through the air. But the other students followed Noyn's orders, and took to the skies, skillfully guiding the beasts to safety. Lutiya looked frustrated, but there was nothing he could do from the ground. Jill held on to a sliver of hope—if she could make everyone retreat before the other instructors arrived, she might've been let off

with a simple apology.

But Noyn gazed at the ground below coldly. "Are you only capable of juvenile acts, President Lutiya? How pathetic."

"What did you say?" Lutiya growled.

"Stop this at once!" Jill shouted, interjecting herself between the two before her tiny hope was snuffed out.

Lutiya clicked his tongue while Noyn stared at her blankly.

"Are you...the rumored new instructor?" Noyn asked.

"That's right," Jill replied. "I apologize for the trouble that my students have caused. Please forgive us."

"I didn't think you'd be such a little girl... No, I apologize for my careless words."

Jill had received complaints and disdainful glares, but it seemed like Noyn wasn't the type to ignore an instructor. Relieved, she continued, "Today is my first day. I'll be sure to scold my students well, so could you please let us go for today?"

"I understand," Noyn relented. "I don't mind. I'll act like I didn't see anything."

"Didn't see anything?" From behind her, she heard Lutiya laugh with ridicule. "You just can't aim your dragon at me, since I'm a part of the Rave imperial family!" he jeered.

"Lutiya!" Jill snapped sharply.

The boy widened his eyes at his teacher's biting tone, but then he snorted. "It's the truth. Even the guy who's at the top of the Gold Dragon class can't go against the imperial family. Aren't I right, President Noyn? Your daddy's a government official, isn't he? He must be besties with the Rave imperial army!"

Noyn turned expressionless. Jill was unsure of the details, but she knew that the situation had taken a turn for the worse. Lutiya couldn't take his words back.

But Noyn curled the corners of his mouth upward. “The truth... I see. Then wouldn’t it be a problem if I pointed my dragon at you? Though you’re a part of the imperial family, Your Highness, there are rumors that you can’t control dragons at all.”

It was Lutiya’s turn for his smile to fade.

“I’m different from my father!” Noyn spat. “I’ll *never* butter up trash! Want me to prove it to you?”

“Try it if you can, coward!” Lutiya howled.

Noyn grabbed his reins, and the green dragon’s maw yawned wide. Jill clicked her tongue. This was a fight between children, but she couldn’t back off if dragons were involved. Though she was the Dragon Consort, she had the magical energy of Kratos, and was disliked by dragons. Her orders were generally ignored. And so, she clenched her fists, thinking that violence was the only answer to this mess. In the next moment, Sauté flapped its wings, and kicked a black ball out of her bag.

Raw fell face-first on the ground, surrounded by students of the Golden and Azure Dragon classes. The dragons widened their eyes and froze.

“R-Rawr...”

The Dragon King, who’d just hit his face, stood up, trembling. He was holding back his tears, aware that the situation would turn disastrous if he dared to cry out. As expected, despite Noyn’s orders, the dragons froze in place, and everyone watched Raw, the Dragon King, with bated breath.

Jill was moved by his actions. She’d thought that Raw only knew how to act spoiled, but he was growing in his own way.

“I-I’m proud of you, Raw!” she exclaimed. “You’re enduring the pain so well!”

“Gr... R-Rawr... Rar...”

When Raw turned around, it was easy to see the large beads of tears welling up in his eyes. His adorable face was covered in sand, and Jill ran over to pick him up. Instead of looking at the students, she glared at the dragons.

“What’re you doing?” she demanded. “Can’t you see that this child is scared?”

Come back to the ground.”

The frozen dragons all flew to the ground at once. The students let out gasps of shock, but to the dragons, Raw was their precious king, a priceless treasure. No student or instructor could command these beasts to fight until Raw calmed down. Jill was grateful for Sauté’s quick wit, and vowed to give Raw heaps of praise, for he sacrificed his face for this incident.

Noyn gave a dubious gaze at the reins in his hand. “The dragon froze... But why?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Lutiya said proudly as the students cheered haughtily. “Because I’m part of the Rave imperial family, of course. Now, I wonder what excuse you’re gonna say to your daddy, Mr. Elite.”

“How dare you speak so insolently to President Noyn!” a student roared back. “A mere Sewer Rat like you has no right to do that!”

“Hey, stop it!” Jill shouted, trying to defuse the tense argument. “I’m telling you all to cut it out!”

The students, unfortunately, paid no heed to her efforts and continued their skirmishes.

“And just who was the one that lost to a Sewer Rat? Heh, this is rich!”

“C’mon, let’s set off the rest of the fireworks with our spells!”

“Enough, Sewer Rats,” a booming voice cut through the noise.

A middle-aged gentleman, running his hand irritably through his hair, approached the scene with a few guards in tow. *I recognize this man, Jill thought. I think I saw him in a pamphlet... Right! That’s Principal Gunther! He’s also the homeroom teacher for the Gold Dragon Class...*

“Whatever is the matter, Noyn?” Gunther said, standing next to the boy in a pretentious manner with guards behind him. “Just use your dragon to fry these Sewer Rats to a crisp. As long as you don’t kill them, it shouldn’t be an issue.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Gunther. It seems like my dragon isn’t feeling well,” Noyn replied.

“Hmph. Then you can use your flute.”

A *flute*? Jill twitched upon hearing the word. She placed Raw, who was still trying to suppress his sobs, beside Sauté and ran up to the principal.

“Um, what is this about a flute?” Jill asked.

“And just who is this child?” Gunther demanded.

“She’s the new instructor of the Azure Dragon class,” Noyn explained gingerly.

The principal sized the girl up before he scoffed through his nose. “So, the mainland forces a teacher onto us, and she’s a mere child? Just how much longer must we be mocked by them? I was hoping for an excellent instructor who could control the Sewer Rats.”

“I’m very sorry to hear that,” Jill replied. “But no one’s hurt, and I’ll be sure to scold my students very well—”

“You think dirty *rats* can understand human speech? Fighting against a moving target every now and then is excellent training. Gold Dragon class, prepare for battle.”

Jill froze in astonishment as the entire Gold Dragon class, barring Noyn, hesitantly prepared for combat. Even the guards followed suit. The Azure Dragons, overwhelmed by the numbers against them, turned pale and inched back.

“Lutiya, this isn’t good,” a student said to him. “They’re serious.”

“You guys should all run,” Lutiya ordered. “I’ve got my magic, and if I step forward, I guarantee that I can create an opening.”

“I suppose the fact that you never learn points to your low intelligence, Sewer Rat,” Gunther scorned. “Do you still not understand why you were dropped to the lowest class? You’re a worthless member of society, unbecoming to be even a dropout in the mainland.”

“Miss Jill, are you all right? Any injuries?” Roger rushed to her, avoiding the two glaring parties.

“No injuries. I’m fine,” Jill replied. “U-Uh, they’re kidding, right? They won’t seriously attack other students, will they?”

“Principal Gunther detests the mainland.”

“But he’s against students! These are children!” Jill protested.

Noyn stepped forward. “Mr. Gunther, school is about to start,” he said. “Perhaps we should tend to our lessons instead of fighting, sir.”

“Are you trying to *protect* them, Noyn? The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, I suppose. Will you also become a traitor and try to curry favor with the mainland?” Gunther snapped.

Noyn fell silent, unable to refute these words.

“Think of them as targets!” Gunther shouted to the other students. “I’ll permit the use of both magic and weapons. I don’t mind if you hurt them—they’re all getting detention anyway. We’re simply making the lives of the other instructors easier. This is justice!”

The bracelets on the students of the Gold Dragon class started to glow—the tool assisted them in regulating their magic powers. Jill clicked her tongue and stepped in front of Lutiya and her students.

Lutiya, noticing this, shouted, “Stand back! It’s danger—”

Beautiful rays of magic flew toward her, but the students’ attacks were straight from the textbook and easy to predict. With a single wave of her hand, she negated the attacks. Explosions and dust clouds rose in the air as the attacks dispersed in the blink of an eye. She didn’t even feel the need to put up a barrier. *They probably thought it was training, so they went easy on us. That’s what I’ll believe.* If she didn’t keep telling herself that, she would’ve shouted angrily at the principal, demanding to know if this was an action that an instructor should take.

As the dust settled, Gunther and the other students chattered in confusion.

“Was it a misfire?”

“What happened? Did the Sewer Rats do something again?!”

Jill turned back toward the stunned students of the Azure Dragon class. A few of them jolted in shock, implying that they knew what had just occurred. Lutiya drew his head back in alarm, but he quickly formed a pretentious smile.

“You’re awesome, instructor!” he crowed. “You protected us! Thank you! I’m

so happy—”

Jill slapped Lutiya across the cheek. A sharp sound rang through the air. She'd put in a bit of her strength, causing the boy to fall to the ground. Everyone became quiet as a mouse as she frostily gazed down at the boy.

“Your higher-up just told you to stop, and yet you ignored those orders,” Jill said coldly. “If you were in the military, you would've been punished severely for insubordination. You're lucky you're still in school. All you'll get is a slap.”

Lutiya snapped back to his senses as he pressed a hand against his red cheek. His lips curled up into a malicious grin. “Just who do you think I am? Just because you're my teacher, don't think you'll get away with doing this to me.”

“Like I care. If needed, I'll even step on the Dragon Emperor.”

Lutiya laughed, convinced that Jill was joking, but she'd done exactly that just last night. It'd been a while since she slept with her husband, and she'd kicked him to the edge of the bed. She regretted those immature actions.

Jill put both hands behind her back in a military stance and stood tall in front of her students. She took a deep breath and shouted, “At attention!”

The students had been trained, and they stood tall out of reflex. She was tempted to hammer the proper form into them, but she decided to do that later.

“My introduction has come at a delay, it seems. Students of the Azure Dragon class, I will be your teacher starting today. You can call me Miss Jill. As you can see, I am a fragile, dainty, and adorable little girl. I'm only eleven. There's no reason for you to be overly polite or afraid of me, is there?”

She smiled serenely, overpowering her students with her aura. Luckily, no one was stupid enough to take her words at face value. They all gazed at her curiously, trying to gauge her strength.

“Now then, ladies and gentlemen. Since yesterday, I've been constantly moved by your noble actions. Indeed, this class certainly fits their nickname, the Sewer Rats. But even rats have their way of fighting and living. And I'll be teaching you all just that.”

The students returned her declaration with troubled glances.

Lutiya glared at her, his face filled with distrust and confusion. “Unfortunately, you have nothing to teach us.”

“Hmph, so you admit that these students are sewer rats. It seems you’re quite understanding, Miss Jill,” Gunther said, approaching the girl and clasping her shoulder. “I recommend you quietly follow our lead. We can claim that the action you took earlier was a mistake of sorts. You can just back off, and I don’t mind treating you decently as a fellow instructor.”

“I’ll have to decline that offer, sir,” Jill replied. “These are *my* students.”

The students all looked shocked, ruining the moment. Lutiya, perhaps getting goosebumps, was rubbing his arms. But this was part of Jill’s work, and she had no intentions of backing down.

“If you’re planning on doing a combat exercise as you proposed earlier, please run it by me first,” she said firmly. “I’m their homeroom teacher.”

“And you’re telling me to let him go?” Gunther accused. “You’re telling me not to lay a hand on the Rave imperial family? So, the mainland is threatening us, I take it?”

“Oh, nothing like that. His actions are certainly a problem, and I’ll fix that right up. Sauté?” The bird cocked its head to one side as it dragged the bag containing Raw and Hadis Bear. “We’ll start our morning lesson right now!” Jill bellowed to her students.

“And what are you planning with that bird of yours?” Gunther asked in a mocking tone.

She heard snickering from behind her. She didn’t care how she was seen, but she couldn’t accept that the students she was teaching were laughing as well. Sauté was a game fowl, and one who didn’t flinch at the sight of a Dragon God and even shooed him away on a few occasions. Students who could only play immature pranks to waste time were hardly a match for the bird.

“Sauté, kick all my students back into my classroom!” Jill ordered.

“Chirp!”

Sauté spread its wings and dashed full speed ahead. It didn't show an ounce of hesitation as it kicked Lutiya's butt. The boy flew in a beautiful arc and landed face-first onto the ground under the eyes of the other students.

"If you don't want to be kicked, run back to class!" Jill ordered.

Sauté puffed out its chest and let out a battle cry as it jumped up and started kicking the behinds of the other students. Everyone started to flee in panic.

"R-Run! Argh!"

"What *is* this bird?! Ow! Ouch! Don't peck at me!"

"C-Calm down, it's just a bird! Blow it away with magic and— Did it just dodge?!"

"N-No, you're attacking its afterimage! This bird's fast! I can barely even see it!"

"Wh-What even is that magical beast?!"

The students ran as fast as they could, away from Sauté. Gunther stared in astonishment—he was no longer tempted to touch Jill's students under the guise of it being a lesson.

"I apologize for the fuss we caused. Please leave those kids to me," said the little girl.

"W-Wait. Just who *are* you?" Gunther asked. "How can you manipulate a magical beast?"

"I'm the new teacher of the Azure Dragons," Jill replied indifferently. She slung the bag with Raw inside on her back.

Chapter 3: The School Building of the Azure Dragons

APRONS are useful. Simply wearing one and wandering around the town made an emperor look like a normal citizen.

“You sure you can leave the house?” Rave warned, floating around Hadis’s shoulder. “Missy’ll scold you for it.”

“It’s fine if she doesn’t find out,” Hadis whispered back, his gaze fixed on the market stalls.

“You’re gonna buy something, aren’t ya? Then she’ll definitely find out.”

“Don’t worry. Jill isn’t really keeping track of the ingredients we have around the house. She didn’t suspect a thing during last night’s dinner, did she? She’s so adorable. And besides, she ate it, so I don’t think she has room to complain.”

“You’re just tricking her into being your accomplice...” Rave sighed. “I can’t believe you can still deceive Missy so openly.”

“A bit too late to point that out, I think,” Hadis shrugged. “Jill understands me.”

Hadis lied as easily as he breathed, and he rarely divulged his innermost thoughts. Despite it all, Jill accepted him for who he was and loved him. He suddenly felt something tighten and constrict in his chest.

“I-Isn’t my wife the coolest?!” he gasped.

“All right, all right,” Rave replied dismissively. “Don’t faint here and forget what you came for. Anyway... the prices seem inflated.”

“You’re right,” Hadis nodded, regaining his composure. “I can understand regional and out-of-season items having a price hike, but three times the market price is a bit much. The landlord told me that the Rave Empire is overcharging for the delivery fees by dragon...”

“But that logic already sounds flawed,” Rave pointed out. “Dragons can’t carry this much stuff.”

Dragons were powerful when attacking from the skies, and they could carry cargo across long distances. They were speedy and prevented others from tracking them down, but in exchange, they couldn't carry much. Hence, the Rave Empire only had a few resources delivered by air, and due to their cost-inefficiency, dragons weren't commonly used for import and export. Since long ago, Laika also preferred a trade route over the sea. In other words, while prices were inflated, the rumored cause was incorrect.

"Is this some kind of anti-Rave propaganda in the works?" Hadis wondered. "But controlling prices island-wide requires a large-scale operation."

"Agreed," Rave nodded. "And look, Hadis. Over there. We see it again."

Hadis looked where Rave was signaling on his shoulder. Rave soldiers were loudly threatening a store, several of them surrounding a single store owner.

"You're telling *us* to pay?!" a soldier demanded. "Who do you think protects this city, huh?!"

"B-But I still need you to pay," the store owner implored. "I've got my family to feed too..."

"All right, then. Why don't I make it so that you can't *charge* any money?"

Before the owner could react, one of the soldiers walked behind the store with a smirk and kicked a box over. Fruit spilled out and rolled onto the ground. Screams pierced the air.

"You can't sell these anymore, can you?" the soldier gloated with glee.

An orange rolled over to Hadis, bumped into his shoe, and stopped in place. Riotous laughter continued to reach his ears, and Rave glared at the soldiers.

"What should we do?" Rave asked. "Should we save the store owner before anyone gets hurt? We have to do it discreetly to not stand out."

"I don't think there'd be an end to them," Hadis pointed out.

This wasn't the first time the Dragon Emperor and the Dragon God had seen the Rave imperial army act oppressively to the locals. However, something didn't feel right. *I knew it. These people aren't from the mainland*, Hadis thought.

Their shrill, noisy shouting had an odd accent, and they would occasionally pronounce certain words with a different intonation. Plainly, they weren't from the Rave Empire—they were likely locals who were hired by the empire. But of course, they were still shouldering the name of the Rave Empire as soldiers of the imperial army.

"But just watching won't give us any more information, I feel..." Hadis muttered.

"Agreed," the God of Logic answered.

It was time for Hadis to act. He assumed that a submissive husband like him wouldn't get in trouble with his wife even if he punished fools who wasted food. *At least, I hope so. All right, then.*

He picked up the orange by his foot, imbued his arm with magic, and threw it at the side of a soldier's head, preventing the man from causing further damage to the store. The orange flew at an astonishing speed, and a dull squelch sounded as it blew the soldier back.

"Wh-What the?! Are you okay?!" another soldier cried, his face red as he tried to help his comrade up. "Who did this? Show yourself! Don't you dare hide, you coward!"

"It's him! That guy in the apron!" one of the soldiers pointed.

It seemed like they were trained enough to sense magic—they'd been educated a little, at least.

"Oh, sorry about that. My hand slipped," Hadis said nonchalantly.

"You can't bury an orange into a man's head with a slip of your hand," Rave scolded. "And don't smile while saying it."

Hadis ignored Rave's biting remarks, picked up the oranges that were scattered around the street, and knelt in front of the store owner, who'd fallen onto the ground.

"Are you okay?" Hadis asked. "I'm sorry for throwing one of your products."

"I-I'm fine," the store owner managed to stammer. "But you should run, mister."

“You interfered with our public duties!” a soldier roared.

He grabbed Hadis’s shoulder. Just as he tried to turn around, two soldiers grabbed each of his arms and dragged him away.

The store owner let out a sorrowful cry.

“Just because you have some magic powers, you let it go to your head, you fool,” a soldier barked. “We’re bringing you in!”

“What?” Hadis insisted. “Fellas, it was an accident. An accident!”

“You think we’ll let you slide with an excuse like that?! Come on, move! Make way! Stop staring!”

“We’ll thoroughly show you what happens to people who go up against the Rave imperial army,” another soldier growled. “Your family won’t be left unscathed either.”

“Hey, Hadis,” Rave commented. “Won’t Missy find out about this? You’ll get in trouble. You stand out, too.”

The Dragon God floated behind Hadis and looked on in worry. Hadis, however, was lost in his thoughts. He wanted to see inside of the military base, but the issue at hand seemed to extend further than that. The biggest problem was that information from Laika wasn’t making its way to the Rave Empire. What he needed was access to a person who was higher ranked. He also had questions about the dragons. Hadis wanted to lay low as much as possible until he had those answers.

I’ll get rid of them all.

He dug his heels into the ground, and the soldiers turned around when they noticed Hadis wouldn’t budge.

“Hey, don’t resist!” a soldier demanded. “Hurry up and walk—”

The soldier fell silent upon seeing Hadis’s scary face.

How rude. I tried my best to smile as gently as possible; he doesn’t have to look so scared.

“Don’t worry. I’m a married man,” Hadis assured.

“Huh? Y-You’ve got a wife?” a soldier asked. “Then we’ll take her in too...”

“I don’t want to do anything that could make my wife hate me. I try my best not to, anyway.”

The soldiers released Hadis and started to back away. Instinctive fear colored each and every one of their faces—they looked as though they were facing a mighty dragon.

“Wait! You there!” a voice called out from behind.

Hadis narrowed his eyes and turned around. The soldiers, released from their paralyzed state, made one last attempt to sound tough and shouted back.

“Wh-What now?! Wait...you’re Roger.”

The soldiers recognized the approaching man with haggard breath, but Hadis had never seen this man before. And yet, he stood between Hadis and the soldiers.

“Sorry, can you let this man off the hook?” Roger asked.

“No way,” a soldier replied. “He went against us in public! We can’t let that slide!”

“Aw, come on. I’m begging you here.”

Roger clasped the shoulders of the soldiers, trying to quell their anger before swiftly sneaking gold coins into their hands. A bribe. The soldiers glanced at each other, stashed the money in their pockets, and turned on their heels as though nothing had occurred. They walked swiftly, likely wanting to quickly gain some distance from Hadis.

“You all right?” Roger asked.

Hadis glanced back at the man. *I don’t recognize him at all.* But Rave immediately melted into Hadis’s body. Why else would he? *This man’s strong... He’s got a lot of magical energy too,* Hadis realized.

Hadis remained silent, but Roger flashed a friendly smile. “Sorry for butting in. I know I shouldn’t have stuck my nose into your business, but...” This man, who emitted a powerful aura of magic, undoubtedly sensed something from Hadis as well. “What’s your name?”

“Hadis,” he replied honestly.

Roger blinked a few times before he looked down and chuckled. “I see. So, you’ve got a fake name. That’s the name of the Dragon Emperor, isn’t it?”

Hadis remained silent.

“You screwed up back there,” Roger continued. “You can’t oppose the Rave imperial army head-on. They’ve backed off for now, but you’re definitely their prime target now.”

“You saved me for a reason, didn’t you? What do you want?” Hadis asked.

“You got me there. You’re not a normal guy, are you? I’m guessing you were sent by the Rave Empire to investigate this place. Am I wrong?”

Hadis said nothing, causing Roger to back off. It seemed like he conveniently misunderstood the emperor’s quiet implications.

“I knew it,” Roger sighed. “So, the one at the military academy must be a bluff, huh?”

“The military academy?”

“Yep. Being the instructor at La Baier Military Academy is my cover. You’ve got a younger sister, don’t you?”

“A younger sister? I do...”

Both Natalie and Frida were in Rave, and Hadis had never heard of either of them being close with this overly friendly man. He stared back blankly, and Roger laughed.

“You know, the little girl, Jill. She became an instructor recently, and she said that she came with her older brother.”

Hadis froze in place. Jill indeed had an older brother, but that clearly wasn’t who she was referring to. *Is she talking about me? I’m not her husband, groom, lover, or fiancé?*

Rave, noticing Hadis’s thoughts, whispered into his head. **“You two have got an age gap, so it’s a bit tough for her to say that she’s married, I think. That’d be why.”**

What do you mean by that? Hadis thought back.

Roger, misinterpreting Hadis's strained smile, hastily explained himself. "Sorry, I thought you were related to her," he said. "I guess I jumped to conclusions."

"Seems like it!" Hadis replied brightly. "I've got a younger sister, but she's back on the mainland. I don't know a girl like her!"

"You! Stop being so petty! You know she was just lying to evade suspicion!"
Rave nagged him.

Shut up! She hid her relationship with me! That counts as cheating! I wouldn't hide a thing!

Roger mulled over Hadis's words. "So, that girl really came to just be an instructor there? I feel bad for acting wary around her. She really did seem confused about everything... What's the mainland thinking? I guess the same could be said for the Dragon Emperor, though."

"Mm-hm. So? What do you want me to do?" Hadis asked with a smile.

There was no reason for him to act so reserved for Jill's sake anymore. He'd do as he pleased.

Roger turned serious. "Can you cooperate with me? I want to inform the mainland about Laika's plight."

"A plight, huh... We can't make a move without proof. Have you got anything to go off?" Hadis asked.

"If you're asking, it means you're cooperating with me."

Hadis thought on it for a moment and finally nodded. "Sure. Okay. I'll help you guys out."

"Then I'll take you to our base. We don't have time. The Liberation Army has been pretty active these days. We have to do something before they use dragons to attack the Rave Empire," Roger muttered, turning to lead the way to his base.

Controlling dragons? Bingo.

A smile crept onto Hadis's face while Roger wasn't looking.



A student was kicked into the classroom through the open door. Jill raised her head.

“Good work, Sauté,” she said.

“Chirp!”

“Dammit! I hid in the dragon stables! How is this bird not daunted by them?!” the student groaned.

“All right, three left,” Jill grinned, seated on the instructor's chair. “Seems like I win today too.”

Over the past few days, her students exhibited different reactions. Some showed their frustrations, some consoled the other students for their efforts, and for whatever reason, others asked her questions, requesting her advice. This was a positive change. Jill, who'd successfully had all the students of the Azure Dragon class kicked into her classroom, chose a simple lesson plan. She knew that they wouldn't follow a normal curriculum. They would certainly try to flee or ditch class. And so, she had Sauté round them up.

Once the morning assembly was over, the students would scatter within the campus, and Sauté would round them all up. If everyone was caught before the end of morning lessons that was signaled by a bell, the students would lose. If Sauté failed, Jill would lose. She had a bet that was brought forward by Lutiya: the loser would listen to whatever the winner ordered.

The students were up against a single bird. Sure, they were caught off guard initially, but with a bit of time and preparation, they were confident they could outrun it. But Sauté could sense magical energy and give chase, easily climb to the top of the academy building, and had impeccable vision, allowing it to hunt them down anywhere. It was an intelligent game fowl.

On the first day, the lazy students didn't give it much thought when they hid—they were all caught within an hour and kicked into the classroom. Jill's order for the day was to spend the afternoon quietly in the classroom with a stuffed bear. The bear she was referring to, of course, was Hadis Bear, set to pounce if

any of the students even dared to move. She had Hadis make some adjustments and limit the intensity of its attacks, and Jill kept a keen eye to ensure that none of the students were gravely injured. Still, this weakened Hadis Bear was more than enough to beat the students who underestimated it to a pulp.

On the second day, the students started to cook up a few plans. Had they grown defiant from being on the losing end? In any case, they started to take this challenge more seriously. Sauté managed to round all the students up within two hours, but on the third day, there were students who successfully fled from the bear. In the afternoon, the students analyzed the bear closely. They didn't naively assume that Hadis Bear didn't attack Jill despite her movements because she was exempted from its list of targets. They were sure that there was a solution. It wasn't a fluke that these students were admitted into the most prestigious academy in Laika. Indeed, they were all brimming with talent.

The students were chattering away in the classroom.

"Ugh, I almost had it..."

"Nah, you made it pretty long. Impressive stuff."

"Don't worry. We've still got three left on the loose, and there isn't much time. We haven't lost yet."

With Lutiya at the center, the boys were crafting new strategies and analyzing what led to their defeat.

"Miss?" a girl piped up, one of Jill's female students. Each student had a lot of magical energy. "Isn't Mr. Bear dirty? Why don't I wash him for you?"

"I don't mind if you do, but the moment you try to cast a weird spell on it, it'll fight back," Jill replied. "I hope you have a backup plan for that."

"Ugh... Never mind, then."

It was clear that the girls were trying to cast something on the bear. Jill sighed at their antics and laughed at how fearless they were.

"Your retreat is a wise decision," Jill commended.

The girls glanced at each other and gave sheepish smiles, happy to hear her praise.

“Then can I just touch him?” a girl asked. “Mr. Bear is so cute. Oops, I might wake up Raw who’s sleeping with him.”

Raw, who’d been playing with the boys kicked into the classroom by Sauté, was now fast asleep inside a basket. The Dragon King had an adorable appearance, like a pet, but the fact that he wasn’t targeted by Hadis Bear made him intimidating to the students. Some students even correctly theorized that the dragons didn’t attack because of Raw—their analysis was rather astute.

“You can *touch* it,” Jill answered. “Just don’t attack, or you’ll get hurt.”

“I know. I saw the boys get beat up enough times to know better,” a girl replied. “Miss Jill, did you make this magical tool?”

“No, it was a gift.”

“Oh? From whom?”

Jill, who’d been writing a daily journal about the activities of her students, stopped writing. She could’ve quickly answered that it was a present from her brother, but the impressionable maidens in her class had picked up on her hesitation.

“Wait, was it a gift from your lover?!”

“You idiot! Miss Jill can’t have a lover at her age! It’s probably someone she has a crush on.”

“Oh, then it’s someone older than her! And you were treated as a child. It’s a one-sided crush...”

“It’s nothing like that,” Jill quickly responded, unable to take the sympathetic gazes of her students. “Besides, I didn’t say anything yet, did I?”

The boys in her class stared at her in shock.

“But Miss Jill, you’re only eleven,” one said. “It’s weirder if any guy actually took you seriously.”

“Look, I didn’t say anything...” Jill started.

“I’m rooting for you! Do your best!” a girl exclaimed. She started playing with the ends of her beautiful hair and talked down about herself. “I also have an upperclassman that I admire, but I don’t think I’ll ever have a chance to talk to that person. They’re at the top, and I’m a Sewer Rat.”

“If he’s a good man, don’t give up,” Jill said seriously. “Chase after him with the thought that one day, you can get back at him.”

“Get back at him? You’re always so over the top, Miss Jill.”

“It’s quite fun to step all over a guy you like,” Jill replied.

“I don’t doubt that you’d do something like that!”

The girls started to giggle. Jill noticed that Lutiya was staring at her coldly. When she turned toward him, he looked away, his face contorting with frustration. *Seems like it’ll take some time before I get through to that kid...* Jill thought.

Day by day, the number of students who started to talk to her increased. They claimed that they were doing some reconnaissance, but as they continued to converse, they began to let their guards down. Only Lutiya stubbornly refused to speak with her, though he was the one who gathered the students of this class together in an effort to defeat Jill.

The other students seem to rely on him, and he’s smart. He’s a difficult one. Yeah... I’d expect nothing less from His Majesty’s younger brother.

Jill steeled herself not to give in and spoil him as she glanced at the clock. This was a close battle; there was only an hour left before the bell would ring to signal the end of morning lessons.

It was great to see that the students were successfully escaping from Sauté’s grasp, but because of their running bet, she didn’t want them to win so easily. For the reward of today’s bet, Jill considered joining in on this game. The students would never win if she stepped in, but it was important for her students to learn that there were some opponents they could never beat.

But it wasn’t the sound of students being beaten by Sauté that suddenly reached Jill’s ears.

“Hey, guys!” Two students rushed into the room. “The principal’s trying to take a girl to the detention room!”

This clearly was no laughing matter. The rest of the students turned pale. A sleepy Raw raised his head, and the first one to stand up and act was Lutiya.

“Where is she?” he asked sharply.

“Wait, but for what reason?” Jill asked. “If they don’t have one, they can’t—”

“A reason? They don’t have anything like that. All they want is any excuse to hurt us,” Lutiya snapped back coldly. “Why don’t you just shut up, kind instructor?”

Jill frowned. “I can’t do that. I’m the instructor in charge of you all.”

“You’re so *annoying* when you act like that!”

“U-Um!” a student piped up. “Er, we were also almost carried away, but... Sauté let us go. I think it wanted us to fetch you, Miss Jill.”

Lutiya shut his mouth when the student faced down, squeezing his eyes shut. “I think Instructor Sauté’s trying to save the girl too. But the principal even brought guards with him and just started firing his spells away... I think even Instructor Sauté won’t last long.”

“Everyone, stay in the classroom. Raw, you keep watch and stay here, got it?” Jill ordered, turning around.

“What are you gonna do?” Lutiya asked.

“Directly negotiate with them, of course. Whether they have a reason or not, I have to confirm the situation first.”

“Then we’ll go too.”

“No. You guys won’t be able to change the situation in the slightest, and we’re in the middle of class.”

“I can’t trust you. I can’t be sure if you really will go save them.”

Lutiya’s icy glare sliced right into Jill. The other students looked on anxiously, unsure of which side to take.

“Fine,” Jill relented. “Come with me.”

It was a waste of time to argue here, so she took the fastest course of action and started walking. Lutiya and the other students followed close behind her without showing an ounce of hesitation.



JILL and her students were able to locate where the fuss was coming from right away. Sauté had kicked away a magical bullet, which gouged out a wall of the academy building, and smoke billowed in the air. Another attack was headed straight for the female students, and Sauté stretched its wings out, taking the bullet directly. Feathers floated in the air, but it was able to protect the girl behind it.

“Instructor Sauté!” the girl cried out.

The bird staggered but remained standing. “Ch...irp!”

“What *is* this bird-type magical beast? How can it take so much damage and still remain standing?” a guard asked.

“But it’s no longer able to move much,” Principal Gunther said, pushing the guard aside. “It’s been a real pain in the neck, but this’ll be its end.”

Sauté knew that it was the prime target, but the bird refused to budge. It had students behind it to protect. One girl was bleeding from her knees and ankles. Jill wasn’t sure if the girl had tripped, but it was clear that she was injured and unable to move. Another magical bullet was fired. The students behind Jill screamed, but she stared it down.

“Well done, Sauté,” she said.

The moment the bird heard its master’s voice, it staggered and fell to the ground. Jill summoned a barrier and negated the attack—the explosion caused her hair and clothes to flutter in the wind.

“M-Miss Jill!” the girl cried. “Instructor Sauté is...”

“Don’t worry, Sauté won’t go down with these flimsy attacks,” Jill assured. “Are you all right? I can see that you’re injured.”

“I-I just scraped my knees... Th-They chased after me, claiming that I set foot in the main building.”

The Sewer Rats were prohibited from stepping into the main building, but the girl was currently on the ground outside of the academy premises. The student, unable to explain herself further, carried a wounded Sauté in her arms and started sobbing. Jill stood up and faced Gunther, who was surprised to see his attacks nullified.

“What’s the meaning of this, Mr. Gunther?” she asked. “Did this girl truly enter the academy premises? It looks like she’s outside of that zone to me.”

“That student stuck close to the main building walls to hide,” Gunther spat. “Sewer Rats aren’t allowed in the main building because they’re forbidden from using our facilities. Using a wall to hide should then be treated as breaking our school rules.”

The principal was well aware that he was being stupidly nitpicky. Jill knew that further negotiations were meaningless.

“Indeed, it’s academy rules that the students of the Azure Dragon class can’t use the main building,” she replied calmly.

“Quite right. We might be an academy, but we should enforce strict punishments for breaking rules. Isn’t that how the military works?” Gunther said, approaching Jill.

“That’s correct. Soldiers are trained to follow even the most unreasonable of orders. And if they don’t like that...” She slammed the wall right behind him with her fist. A circular crack formed around her hand as Gunther twitched, and the wall soon shattered into pieces. “The superior dishing out unreasonable orders must die at their post.”

The principal gasped.

“I believe I told you to leave my students to me,” Jill growled in a low voice.

Gunther turned pale, his face contorting with vexation. “D-Don’t think you can get away with threatening me! This is why you mainland rats are so—”

“Then why don’t you report this back to the mainland?” Jill challenged.

“What did you say?”

“You just might be able to fire me,” Jill sneered, provoking the man.

Gunther's face turned serious for a moment before he quickly scoffed through his nose. "Hmph, it's not like the mainland will take the complaints of the Laikans seriously."

"Oh? And it's not because you want to hide how you treat the students of the Azure Dragon class?"

"You're just goading me to file a report, and the empire will once again crush our education and research that we spent decades on!"

Jill fell silent. It was difficult to negotiate with an opponent who distrusted the Rave Empire to an extreme degree. *'Once again?' Did something happen in the past?* A person who didn't even hide his loathing for the Rave Empire couldn't have served as principal of this academy just because. Gunther must've had a reason for his confidence. Either someone was backing him up, or he possessed extraordinary talent.

Unfortunately, Jill wasn't good with politics. She turned toward her students.

"Can someone lend her a hand?" she asked. "Let's return to our classroom."

"It doesn't matter where these Azure Dragon students go. They're all the same," Gunther spat. "They don't learn a thing, nor do they try to."

Jill couldn't let this comment slide. Just as she was about to turn to leave, she stood in place. "I believe they're a product of their environment. You don't even have a lesson plan for them, and now you're telling them to somehow learn on their own and cooperate?"

"It's the opposite. Precisely because they can't learn and won't put in the effort, they were unable to attain anything from their environment."

"Their bad grades and pranks are all simply results. It's incorrect to assume that they can't learn or put in any effort."

"It's fine, Miss Jill," Lutiya said indifferently. "It's meaningless to try to reason with them."

Gunther stroked his hair. "He's a prime example of what I'm talking about. Born into the Rave imperial family and blessed with his surroundings, he couldn't have hoped for anything better. And yet, his dependency and

indolence caused him to be abandoned by that very family.”

Lutiya remained expressionless, but in his arms was a wounded Sauté. And that wasn't all. The boy was the first to act when he heard that one of his classmates was in danger. Certainly, most of his actions weren't commendable, but he was exceptionally kind toward those who were downtrodden by adults. He did what he could to protect them.

“Water, fertilizer, and care are all finite resources. Pumping water, fertilizer, and care into a flower that won't bloom would only delay the growth of other flowers. Then indeed, it's nothing more than a parasitic weed. Am I wrong?” Gunther asked.

All the students looked away without refuting the principal's words. They weren't ignoring his claims—they knew more than anyone that they were abandoned by adults because they weren't good enough. Hence, they never denied the fact that they were Sewer Rats. They knew it all too well.

They tried their best to act defiant, hurting themselves every time they laughed it off and said, “So what if I'm a Sewer Rat? What's wrong with that?”

“Indeed, you have a point in your logic, Miss Jill,” Gunther said. “But during times of emergency, we must prioritize.”

Those who could be saved would be spared, and those who couldn't be salvaged were deserted. These decisions needed to be made on the battlefield.

“But right now, you can offer all the water, fertilizer, and care that you want, can't you?” Jill asked, staring right at the principal. Several students gazed at her back. “Your methods are a sign of laziness. It only sounds like an excuse simply because you can't raise these blossoming flowers.”

“Hah!” Gunther scoffed. “You talk as though *you* can raise them!”

“That's exactly what I'm saying. I can make these kids stronger than the Gold Dragon class.”

The man widened his eyes in shock, and Lutiya, who tried to leave the scene, stopped and turned around.

“Y-You make such bold claims!” Gunther cried. “Best the Gold Dragon class?”

That's impossible! You can't do it!"

"Then, if I can make them stronger, will you treat this class the same as the other classes?" Jill inquired.

"And I'm saying that it's impossible! Even arguing about this is foolish. What an idiotic bet!"

"Are you running from a fight you can't win?" Jill challenged.

"What did you say?"

"All right, then how about this?" Roger said, languidly butting into the conversation. As always, the elusive man hid his presence and appeared without warning.

"Where have you been, Mr. Brooder?" Jill asked.

"I just had something to take care of. In any case, I've got a suggestion. In two months, there'll be a class competition. Why don't we have the Azure Dragons and the Gold Dragons compete as an opening act?"

Jill furrowed her brows, but Roger closed one eye in a wink, conveying that he'd handle this.

"I didn't think you'd say that," Gunther said. "But the class competition is a valuable opportunity for the students to show off their skills. It'll greatly affect their grades for the following year as well. Residents of the city and even a few in the political world will watch this event. It's an event that puts the academy's prestige on the line. I have no reason to give special treatment to the Sewer Rats during such a momentous occasion."

"All the more reason to do it, then," Roger countered. "It's a perfect opening act to show off the Gold Dragon's abilities."

Gunther frowned. "But it'd cause a greater burden on the Gold Dragon students."

"They can rest while the Purple Dragon classes are fighting. And it'll be a perfect handicap for them. If they win despite their exhaustion, the Gold Dragon will be proven to be excellent flowers that you raised, Principal Gunther."

Roger's invitation fed into the principal's conceit. Gunther combed a hand through his hair. "Well, I suppose you've got a point... Very well. However! Since I don't want to increase the burden on the Gold Dragon, the academy will not supply anything to the Azure Dragon class. You'll only get the longsword that was supplied to you when you entered this academy."

Jill stared back blankly while Roger glanced her way. "It means that he's not letting you guys use dragons. I'm sure the Gold Dragon class will, though... What do you wanna do?"

"Wait!" Lutiya roared, taking a step forward. "That's an impossible request! You're just trying to make an example out of us!"

Gunther laughed. "Even if you *were* provided with these beasts, you wouldn't be able to use them at all."

"You won't let us use them even if we can!"

"Spoken like a true sore loser. We don't have dragons in limitless supply. They're finite resources, and it's necessary for us to give priority to the elite, don't you think?"

"Is that all?" Jill asked.

Everyone fixed their attention on her.

"We won't receive any resources from the academy. Is that the only rule you have?" Jill inquired, confirming the conditions that she'd agree to.

"Th-That's right," Gunther replied. "You can't borrow weapons and magical tools from elsewhere either. This is a school event, after all."

"I understand. Oh, but we can gather them during the battle, can't we? We can steal weapons from our opponent."

"I-I suppose so... O-Oh, but instructors aren't allowed to join! That bird-type magical beast isn't allowed to enter either!"

"Well, that goes without saying. This is a match between students. And where will the venue be?" Jill asked.

"There's an area dug out behind the school," Roger answered. "That'll be where you'd fight. But of course, you won't be trying to murder each other. The

place is surrounded by a barrier, and if you leave the arena, you'll be disqualified for fleeing. You'll also have an emblem on your left chest embedded with a detection spell. If that emblem is destroyed, it will count as a death, resulting in your defeat. There's also a military flag raised for each class, and if yours is toppled to the ground, it will result in your defeat. If both flags remain standing until the time limit, the victor is determined by the number of students remaining."

Huh... Jill thought, impressed. This seemed like a well-thought-out activity, and for the first time since she came to the academy, she found something that she wanted to include in her curriculum.

"The audience will be watching from elevated seats, and it's often packed with instructors, parents, and citizens as they cheer for their team. It's an annual festival of sorts in this city. There'll be some important political figures from the central city in attendance, too. They want to keep an eye on skilled students and potentially scout them," Roger finished.

"That sounds great," Jill replied. "It'd be interesting if we made it closer to actual combat and had all the classes join in at once. They can create an alliance if they wish, and it'll require some strategizing before the actual match. Sounds like fun."

"Wh-What did you say?"

"Oh, nothing at all. I get the gist. All right then, we accept this challenge. In two months' time, was it?"

"Hey," Lutiya interjected. "Don't accept this on your own. There's no way we can win! Have some common sense!"

"I thought about it, and came to my answer," Jill replied. "If we were asked to be victorious against the Neutrah! Dragon Knights, I'd decline."

"It's practically the same thing! We're up against the Gold Dragon class and we can't even use dragons!"

"Sure. I mean, then you can win, can't you?"

Lutiya was at a loss for words. All the other students exchanged stunned glances.

“I know I butted in on this, but are you sure?” Roger whispered in Jill’s ear. “I’ll be practically useless.”

“I don’t mind. I appreciate your advice,” Jill replied.

“Then how about it, Principal Gunther?” Roger asked loudly. “If you still refuse to participate, I’m afraid that it’ll truly look like you’re fleeing from a fight.”

Gunther ran a hand through his hair. “V-Very well. Why don’t we fight fair and square?”

“All right, then,” Jill shouted, giving out her order. “Training will begin! Let’s all return to class!”

The students hesitated for a moment before they followed her. Roger shrugged his shoulders and waved them farewell; Jill wasn’t sure if this assistant instructor was a friend or foe. As she stomped forward, Lutiya jogged over to her and whispered in her ear.

“You’re not being serious, are you? Can you exert some influence from the mainland or something?” he asked.

“Huh?” Jill replied. “Why do I have to do something like that? We’ll crush them head-on.”

“Huh?! There’s no way we can! Who do you think we are?!”

“In only a few days, some of you were able to flee from Sauté.”

Lutiya fell silent and gazed down at the bird in his arms. The other students gasped and hastened their pace to peer into the bird’s face.

“Is Instructor Sauté okay? Wait... It’s sleeping...”

“Isn’t its wounds healing? Huh? Can it recover by simply sleeping it off?”

“Sauté’s a normal bird, but it probably has enough power to defeat a patchy dragon,” Jill explained.

“Then it’s not a normal bird, Miss Jill!”

“Don’t worry about the small stuff. What I wanted to say is that you guys definitely have talent and a way to win this.” The moment she entered the

warehouse-esque classroom, she turned around. “You all just need to quietly follow me.”

“We can’t do that... You’re definitely the odd one, Miss Jill.”

“You’ll be fine. You guys can keep up.” The bell rang, ending the morning session. Jill grinned. “See? You guys followed me, didn’t you? You didn’t have to return to the classroom, and you guys would’ve won our little bet.”

The students stood still and glanced at each other, but Lutiya gave a thorny reply. “We just didn’t realize it, is all.”

“Then will you insist that you won? Will you be like those cowardly adults?” Jill queried.

No one said a word. It seemed like the students had their own pride.

“Then today is my win too,” Jill grinned at them. “And my order for today is that you guys will all participate in the class competition. Oh, you might almost die a few times, but I’m sure it’s just your imagination.”

The students turned pale while Jill cracked her knuckles and smiled faintly. “One can only call themselves a full-fledged soldier when they can punch a mere dragon to death with their bare fists. And that’ll be my first lesson to you.”



WHEN Hadis heard Jill’s story at the dinner table, he tilted his head to one side. “Won’t all the students die with that training?”

“I’ll make a few adjustments,” Jill insisted. “This is the training regimen for a five-year-old in House Cervel. I’m sure they can do it if they try.”

“I feel like your family’s methods shouldn’t be considered standard practice...”

“Mmm! This is so yummy! Eating your dinner after work is the best thing in the world! Where’s the seconds?!” Jill wolfed down her plate of pasta that contained a generous helping of fish and shrimp.

Hadis hastily stood up. “Wait, I’ll get it for you,” he said. “Or else, you’ll eat the whole pot, won’t you?”

“Leave it to me!”

“I can’t, so I’ll do it. If I don’t leave a helping for Rave, he’ll get cranky.”

“Speaking of which, Rave is late. What’s he up to?”

When Jill returned home from work, Rave was gone. He was apparently out to scout the city. Since only those with powerful magical powers could see him, he was perfect for reconnaissance missions, though it may have been a tad insolent to use a god in this way.

“He’s gone to see the dragons,” Hadis answered. “He’s wary of that flute-like sound.”

“Do the dragons know anything about that sound?” Jill asked.

“Even if they notice something odd, they can’t explain it well unless they’re a red or orange dragon. The military academy only uses green dragons.”

With Dragon God Rave at the top, the dragon rankings went black, red, orange, yellow, green, and then the other colors. These ranks determined a dragon’s power and intelligence.

“Did you not hear anything about this, Raw?” Jill inquired of the little dragon.

“Rawr?”

The Dragon King stuffed his cheeks with an orange, and he glanced around with his large eyes. Jill gazed into the distance at the sight of this all too adorable gold-eyed, black dragon, the second highest-ranked dragon after Rave.

“I guess you haven’t, huh...” she concluded.

“Rawr!” Raw cried defiantly.

“He was apparently told to be careful because an unpleasant sound could be heard every now and then,” Hadis translated, something he only did on very rare occasions.

“Then the flute that the principal was talking about must have something to do with the dragons,” Jill surmised.

“It’s not unusual to hear about. It’s common knowledge that there are sounds

that dragons dislike. The Rave Empire also has flutes that chase away dragons.”

“But they aren’t as useful as they sound, right?”

Indeed, dragons had sounds they disliked. For humans, it was like hearing someone scratch their nails on a chalkboard. Jill was aware of this fact, though she hailed from Kratos; she had studied up on dragons. However, while these sounds were unpleasant, they were useless on the battlefield. A flap of the wings and a roar could drown out the sound, and even the angry clamor on the battlefield could barely reach the dragons that took to the skies.

“It’s not a subject that’s been heavily researched,” Hadis admitted. “It’s necessary to know to live with dragons, but since they’re the messengers of the Dragon God, humans are forbidden from researching and using dragons in that manner. Here’s your seconds.”

Jill’s eyes glittered with delight as she grabbed her fork. *Wait... When MinerD gave us intel about research, didn’t it pertain to this subject? He’d mentioned something about controlling and manipulating dragons. Ultimately, Prince Gerald deemed this information useless, meaning this method likely failed, but it’s still something to think about. Did Prince MinerD possibly smuggle out some research from the Grand Duchy of Laika? What even happened to this nation in my previous timeline? ...Ah!*

Jill’s old memory came rushing back to her.

In her previous timeline, Laika had joined the uprising with Duke Verrat’s rebellious army to make Crown Prince Vissel the emperor. The rebels invaded the imperial capital through Laika. She’d forgotten all about it, but she’d been shocked to hear that Vissel, who’d managed to control the imperial capital, was quickly slain by Hadis. Since that point, the Dragon Emperor had annihilated anyone who went against him. Needless to say, Laika was part of his purge. The entire family of the Grand Duke of Laika was executed, and Jill had heard that the nation was razed after earning the ire of the dragons. *I think His Majesty changed after that point.*

Jill pursed her lips and gripped her fork. She couldn’t undo the past that had transpired in that timeline. It was a miracle that a human like her was even given a chance to do things over.

“What’s wrong, Jill?” Hadis asked. “Aren’t you going to eat?”

“It would’ve been great if I could lock you in my house for life and keep you under constant surveillance, Your Majesty...” she muttered.

Hadis sat across from her and was about to take another bite of pasta when he choked on his food.

“But since I can’t do that, I’ll do my best at work!” she finished. “I won’t return home starting tomorrow!”

“W-Wait, what? How did you reach that conclusion?! I’m confused!” Hadis cried.

“I told you about the class competition, didn’t I? We’ve only got two months, so I’ll be training my students nonstop. I’ll have them holed up in a mountain for about a month! I want to find a mountain with some dragons since I’d like for the kids to understand that they can defeat those beasts.”

The Gold Dragons may have had talent, but they were still students. The only edge they had over the Azure Dragon class was dragons. If that gap could be closed, Jill’s class had a good shot at winning.

“They sound tough, but they’re all spoiled kids,” she said. “To hammer them into shape, we need some kind of training camp.”

“Wait, does that mean that you’re neglecting me for a month?” Hadis asked.

“What would you like to do, Your Majesty? I’d like for you to wait for me...”

Hadis silently placed his fork on the table. Befuddled, Jill tilted her head to one side—she expected him to throw a tantrum to get her to stay, but he was quiet.

“I guess you’re unexpectedly a little devil,” he said with a smile. She couldn’t read his expression and sat up straight. Was her mind playing tricks on her? The emperor rested his chin in his hand and looked rather coquettish. “All right. I get it. Work is important, after all. I’ll endure it and wait for you.”

“Y-You’re quite understanding today. It’s a bit suspicious...”

“What are you on about? I’m lonely, of course.” Hadis pouted, making Jill feel guilty.

“U-Um, should anything happen, please use Raw to contact me immediately. I’ll come flying to you no matter what. You’re the most important person to me, and it pains me to think that I won’t be able to eat your home-cooked meals!”

“I know.” His kind eyes weren’t clouded with doubt, making her breathe a sigh of relief. “But in exchange, when you return, will you pamper me?”

As he gazed up at her with doe eyes, her heart skipped a beat. She placed her hands over her reddening cheeks and took a deep breath, buying herself some time. “Of course. I’m your wife, so I can do that much.”

Hadis chuckled. “I see. You’re bringing Raw with you, aren’t you? Contact me once every few days, all right?”

Jill had thought that she was the one spoiling her husband, but it felt like quite the opposite. At the end of the day, Hadis was an adult and didn’t require her protection. She couldn’t lose. She shoveled the pasta into her mouth; it was so delicious that it was a shame that she needed to swallow.



SINCE Jill would be apart from Hadis and his cooking, she wanted to bring back results for her sacrifice. Her husband had even stated that he would attend the class competition. Jill wouldn’t be participating, but she wanted to show off through the students that she’d trained.

There was only one thing for her to do.

There were quite a few mountains behind the military academy. Dragons nested there, and the area was usually left untouched. However, a splendid structure was built so that students could observe dragons in their natural habitat for class. It was an ideal location to hold a training camp. Since making loud noises could potentially earn the aggression of a dragon, it was rarely used for training, and Roger couldn’t hide his shock when he explained as much. But to Jill, it was dangerous enough that she was baffled as to why this place *wasn’t* used for training.

However, the students were still inexperienced, and she didn’t want the dragons to get in the way of their training. She had Raw keep the dragons at bay. When she communicated this to Hadis and Rave, the Dragon God replied

with, “You don’t have to ask him to do that. You’re scary enough that the dragons won’t approach you, Missy.”

But I’ll need some dragons for training, Jill thought. And so, she asked Raw to make a request of them. It’d take some time to win them over, but they had a mountain of work to do until then.

“Don’t just chase them with your eyes!” Jill ordered. “Get into the habit of tracking the presence of magical energy! Magic is muscle! Hammer how you use it into your head! Can several of you not take down one bird?! How can you call yourselves *human*?!”

“Chirp!”

Sauté’s battle cry echoed deep within the mountains, and Jill felt her students jolt behind her. Her students were within the range of an activated Hadis Bear and were learning how to control their magical energy.

“And don’t panic at every little thing! The flow of your magic is going awry,” she ordered. “His Majesty Bear will assault you.”

There was no response, attesting to how hard the students were concentrating. This was good. Her students had initially struggled to catch Sauté, but they were now learning to dodge its kicks.

It’d been a week since this training camp started. Her students complained incessantly, but no one quit or fled.

“You guys are all willing to fight. Very good,” Jill praised.

“Like hell! That bird’ll chase us wherever we go, and above all, you won’t give us a break, not one bit!” Lutiya yelled back. “And this mountain’s filled with traps! *You* must’ve done something, I know it! Wait, stop increasing the power of your restraining barrier! Owww! Ow! Stop it!”

“I have a name. You’ll refer to me as ‘Miss Jill.’ And just match your magical energy with the barrier and it won’t affect you.”

“You say it like it’s easy! The amount of magical pressure you can exert is absurd!”

It was an improvement that Lutiya was no longer dishing out scathing

remarks, but it sounded like his respect for her had gone out the window as well. He'd gotten ensnared by one of Jill's traps and was hanging from a thick tree branch by a rope, but he was the only one who still showed any defiance. Jill had thought that he was stubborn at first, but his perseverance was a sign of his iron will. In fact, because he couldn't run, he was far easier to handle than Hadis.

"If you're going to escape, I told you to risk your life and do it," Jill said. "And? Are you interested in joining our training?"

Just as Jill had advised, he had matched his magical energy with the barrier. Despite his protests, he was earnest and honest.

"No way!" Lutiya shouted. "How could I train for a match that I don't even have a chance of winning? How idiotic."

"I see. Well, I'm planning on marching us into the forest where the dragons are," Jill announced.

"Huh?! You're pushing it! Everyone will run from that kind of training! Are you stupid?!"

"Oh, don't worry. I'll keep you restrained and drag you along. The class won't just desert you, will they?" Jill smiled wickedly.

"You're a demon teacher!" Lutiya growled.

Jill laughed. "Since we don't have time, I'm currently dividing the class into the front and back lines based on their strengths. Are there any issues with my arrangement?"

"Why're you asking me?"

"You observe your classmates very well. You're suitable to become a commander."

This was also why Lutiya wasn't forced to participate and given the entire view of their formation.

"Flattery won't make me join your training," Lutiya said indifferently.

"But it's the truth," Jill replied. "Of course, a *real* commander wouldn't let these kids end up as Sewer Rats."

“What, lecturing me now? Are you saying that the upcoming match is for my sake?”

“Of course not. Training you is for my sake. I want to create my own academy, you see.” He stared at her quizzically as she grinned. “I can raise those kids so that they have enough power to beat the kids from Gold Dragon. However, I require a proper strategy and commander to pull it off in the end. Battlefields are unpredictable and accidents can occur. Since I can’t join and take command, I require your expertise. How about it? Wanna try to cook up a few plans as commander?”

“I know your type all too well. You have high hopes for me. You think I can do it if I try. You use flattery to raise me up; people like us aren’t used to receiving praise, so we become desperate to earn your approval. I’m sure it’s an effective strategy. You put your hopes in me of your own accord, and when they’re dashed, you cut me off.”

Lutiya’s dark voice was filled with contempt—no doubt he was talking from experience.

“I see. Someone told you that you were a disappointment, I presume,” Jill said.

“I doubt *you’ve* experienced something like that before,” Lutiya snapped.

“No, I have. Quite recently, too.”

She thought back to the time when she returned home to House Cervel. Hadis had abandoned her and decided that she wasn’t suitable to become his Dragon Consort. His attitude, expression, and icy gaze were still fresh in her memory.

“And? What’d you do?” Lutiya asked.

“I was so sad that I couldn’t move a muscle.”

“Huh... So, you can freeze up too.”

“Yep. I was embarrassed by my own actions. And so, I kicked my opponent and stomped on them.”

Lutiya blinked as Jill looked up at him and grinned.

“You should do as you like,” she said. “Don’t expect other people’s

expectations.”

Just then, a student called from afar, causing her to turn around. “Miss Jill! You’ve got guests!”

She assumed that Roger had come for her, but she couldn’t hide her shock when she saw Noyn with him. Lutiya noticed the two guests and glared.

“What do the high and mighty students from the Gold Dragon class want?” he spat.

“He wants to talk with Miss Jill,” a student replied. “I’m just here as a guide.”

“Can you drop out of the class competition?” Noyn requested without beating around the bush.

The students behind him heard his request and chattered in confusion. Noyn, however, didn’t waver and faced Jill.

“Since you’ve come all the way here, I’m sure you have a reason,” Jill replied.

“I’m sure that you guys will have a horrible experience,” he said.

“I’m asking for a specific reason. Is the principal planning on doing something?” Jill asked.

“No, but things have been odd recently. It’s not just this city, but even the academy’s up in arms about being anti-Rave and becoming independent. There are talks about a Liberation Army... It’s true that the people of the Rave Empire have acted horribly recently, but to have this competition as an opening act in the midst of this tension? I’m certain that there’s something political going on in the background.”

“You really are a diligent kid. I’d expect no less from the class president of the Gold Dragons.”

Jill meant her words as praise, but Noyn thought that she was skirting the issue. He glared back at her. “I don’t need your flattery. All I’m saying is that I won’t be happy to win an unfair match. It’s clearly abnormal to not even provide our opponents with proper weapons, much less dragons. We all know the outcome, and your class won’t stand a chance.” Noyn glanced up at Lutiya, hanging from the branch, but the latter glanced away. “I’m sure you’re aware of

this too, ma'am. This match between us and the Azure Dragons is a farce to vent our pent-up anger against the Rave Empire. The principal has taken matters into his own hands."

"You're right," Jill agreed. "But this is just a match between students. In a real battle, a head or two might get lopped off."

Noyn had balled his hands into fists as he gazed up. Jill stared back at him.

"The real world is anything but fair. It's filled with unfairness and unequal treatment," she said. "I do think that the educational policies of this academy are problematic and must be improved, but our world has plenty of unreasonable affairs, and almost nothing will go your way. Other people, much less this world, won't revolve around your whims and reasons. And since that's the case, I think it's imperative to teach my students so that they can fight even under unfair circumstances. I want them to think about how they can find a way out. That's what I think education should be about."

"Knowing when to flee is also part of battle," Noyn countered. "And barring myself, I'm certain that the other students won't hold back. I won't be surprised if someone gets injured... In fact, I think the principal wouldn't mind if that happened. No one will save you. But it's not too late. If we act now, I can step in and prevent you from participating."

"I'm grateful for your thoughtfulness. Really, I am. I want you to keep that straightforward honesty of yours and never let it go. But as a teacher, I suppose I must teach you a few things, especially how foolish you are."

Jill approached him and grabbed him by his collar. Noyn was a bit taller than her, and she had to look up at him. He was shocked by her actions, but froze in fear when she laughed at him with ridicule.

"Hold back? Save? Who the hell do you think you are? You think you're so great, Mr. Elite?" Jill asked.

Noyn had certainly seen the other students on his way here. They were all being kicked by Sauté and stood in front of Hadis Bear with cold sweat running down their backs. They were working hard so that they could win.

"Are you saying that losers should stay that way? That we should continue to

lose?” Jill inquired. “Are we not even allowed to fight?”

“Th-That’s not my intention...” Noyn started.

“Leave, you numbskull.” She gently pushed his chest back, causing the boy to stumble. He was visibly shocked. Jill smiled faintly and gave a word of warning. “What you guys should be thinking about is not losing to the Azure Dragon class.”

Noyn raised his head to refute, clearly not convinced. Words weren’t enough; he had to lose and be taught a lesson. Another voice entered the conversation.

“You’re an airhead as always, huh? Do you know what’ll happen to the Gold Dragons if you guys lose?” the class president of the Azure Dragons asked.

Noyn widened his eyes in shock. Lutiya had managed to undo the restraining barrier and landed on the ground. He snorted at the other boy.

“It’s your turn next,” he said. “You’ll get laughed at for being scum, and people will start pointing fingers at you behind your back! Hah! Serves you right!”

“I’ll take responsibility as the class president!” Noyn insisted. “The principal won’t punish the entire Gold Dragon class!”

“Then are you gonna become one of us? Your dad worked hard and obediently bowed his head to the Rave imperial army to make your tuition, and you’re just gonna throw all of that away?!”

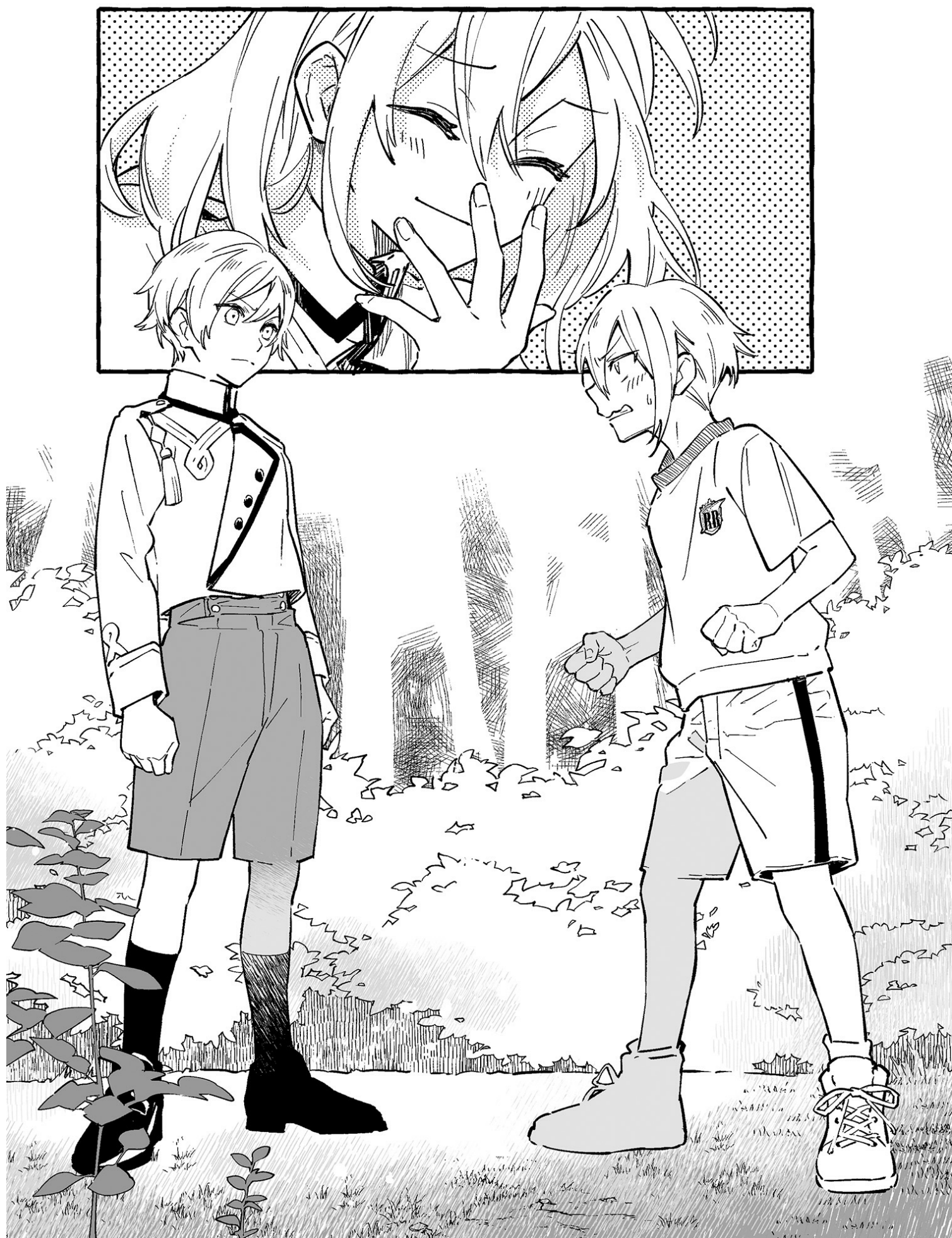
“Then can you seriously claim that you can win against us?!”

“I can! We’ll win!”

Just as Lutiya shouted it out, he realized that he’d done a one-eighty, but he couldn’t back down now, especially if he was against a boy his age.

“Then are you going to lead the Azure Dragon class during the fight?” Noyn asked.

“O-Of course!” Lutiya insisted with a hint of hesitation.



Jill managed to hold back her laughter, but a few students started to giggle. They immediately got in line upon noticing Hadis Bear. Noyn stared back at Lutiya and pursed his lips.

“Fine,” he said. “Miss Jill, I sincerely thank you for your kind instruction. Indeed, I was being a bit too nosy. Please forget my comment. Now, if you’ll excuse me.”

“Wait, head back with Mr. Brooder,” Jill warned. “There are dragons on this mountain.”

“I’ll be fine. I’m not like a certain boy from the imperial family. I can make it back on my own.”

Noyn glanced at Lutiya’s twitching face before turning on his heel to leave.

“It sounds like he’ll go all-out against us,” Roger whispered in Jill’s ear. “You sure about this?”

“Of course. That’s exactly what I want,” Jill replied. “Did something happen between those two?”

“Since the day Lutiya entered the academy, Noyn expressed his dissatisfaction toward the boy. He told Lutiya that his actions would only spread doubt toward the Rave Empire, and to act befitting for the imperial family. Ever since, they’ve been fighting.”

“Hey, you!” Lutiya shouted, whirling around with a scowl. “So, what did you want me to do again?”

“Didn’t you just say that you weren’t participating in our training?” Jill asked.

“Are you sure you want me to change my mind? *You’re* the one who told me to do as I liked.” He snapped back, trying to hide his embarrassment. Jill did her best to suppress her laughter, remaining as serious as she could.

“Since you can undo the restraining barrier, you don’t have to join our training for now,” she replied. “I’d like for you to teach the other students until they all get on the same page. I’d like for you to analyze each student’s abilities and create a battle plan.”

“Fine by me,” Lutiya replied. “Worst case, I can make all our opponents fall ill

before the competition so that they can't attend."

"You can't do that."

Lutiya didn't answer, but he headed to the students who were being chased by Sauté. He stopped the bird and gathered the students, presumably to devise a plan.

"Wow... I didn't think Lutiya would join the fray..." Roger said in awe.

Jill gave a meaningful nod. "That's the power of youth. It's good to be young."

"I don't think that's the only— Uh, Miss Jill, are you aware of your own age?"

"Mr. Brooder, will you help me out with this training?"

"Me? Goodness, a no-good instructor like myself can't possibly answer to your expectations."

"You're strong. You're far more powerful than the principal, and likely the strongest within this academy." As Jill gazed up at him, the sun's rays peeking through the foliage, the assistant instructor gave an exaggerated look of surprise.

He smiled. "Well, it's true that I've gone through quite a bit. Until I became an instructor, I was a vagabond without an address. I had to learn to protect myself; that was the basics of life."

"And are you interested in teaching these students your self-defense techniques?"

"I'm a little busy making preparations for the competition. Besides, I'll get in the way if I step in, don't you think? The class is finally beginning to warm up to you."

"I don't think you'll be in the way," Jill said. "I can only stay here for three months. Once the competition is over, I'll have to part ways with the class. I'd like for you to take over as their homeroom teacher and look after them."

"You're already thinking that far ahead? You really are an excellent instructor. You think so much about your students. I'm a no-good teacher, so I'm a little envious."

“A genuinely no-good instructor won’t notice their flaws, nor will they speak with such frustration about what they lack.”

Roger let out a small laugh as he stretched out. “I’ll think about it. Maybe I’ll give it some serious thought once the class competition is over.”

“What exactly are you working on, sir?” Jill asked.

“How rude! I’m quite busy with a myriad of things, I’ll have you know. This competition is an important event—Chancellor Minerd will be in attendance. If the Azure Dragon class leaves a lasting impression, it’s not a stretch to say that the class policies of this academy might change.”

He winked and walked down the slope without saying another word. *I don’t think a useless instructor would give me such advice*, Jill thought. He refused to help her out, cunningly hid his true power, and was suspicious beyond measure, but he was undoubtedly a good teacher. He knew the ways of the world much better than Jill, and she found herself wanting a teacher like him at her academy.

“Rawr! Rawr!” Raw cried, jumping out from the brush and clinging to Jill’s leg.

“Raw!” Jill said. “How did it go with the dragons? Are they coming?”

Before the Dragon King could respond, a powerful gust of wind blew the trees aside. Several students screamed, and Sauté held on to Hadis Bear so that he wouldn’t get blown away. The lead dragon slowly made its descent, its red scales glimmering. Jill’s eyes twinkled with delight.

“A red dragon?!” she gasped. “You did well finding one, Raw! And you even brought so many green dragons!”

“Raaawr!” Raw puffed out his chest and huffed proudly.

As Jill tried to step forward to greet the magnificent beasts, the scowling red dragon roared with fury. It was ready to fight.

“Th-This is sudden...” Jill said. “Raw, did you properly explain our situation to them?”

“Rawr?” The dragon stared back at her with large eyes as though he had no idea what she was talking about. Jill’s cheeks twitched.

“Graaar!” the red dragon roared.

Its howls were filled with sorrow and pain, but it was determined. “If you’re killing us all, you have to get through me first!” the dragon seemed to say. Upon closer inspection, Jill noticed that the red dragon was trying to shield the green dragons behind it. The students started screaming in terror.

“Th-There are so many green dragons! And there’s even a red dragon!” a student shrieked.

“Hide behind something!” Lutiya ordered. “Dragons dislike magical energy and will target anything that it senses! Don’t get caught! Don’t be intimidated—you can deal with them just like that bear!”

Jill agreed with his analysis, but she stood in front of the beast.

“What’re you doing?!” Lutiya yelled. “Run! I can’t take care of all these dragons by myself!”

“No, this is the perfect opportunity,” Jill replied.

The dragons were misunderstanding the reason for their summons, but they were only seeing Jill as their enemy. She braced herself and clenched her fists.

“I’ll show you that you can defeat dragons,” she said.

“Huh?! Hey!” Lutiya shouted.

“Miss Jill!” her students cried behind her.

But the Dragon Consort paid no heed and launched herself toward the dragons. She noticed tears glimmering on the edges of the red dragon’s eyes and felt apologetic.



“HEY, the dragons are filing complaint after complaint toward the Dragon Consort,” Rave said, his voice reaching Hadis’s head.

Hadis glanced down at the documents that were handed to him. He spoke in a voice so faint that no one could hear him as he moved his lips.

“A complaint toward the Dragon Consort?” the emperor asked. “So, they’re prepared to become slabs of steaks. I commend their bravery.”

“They might get turned into steaks by Missy before that, y’know! That’s what I’m being told! As part of her training for her students, the dragons were beaten to a pulp as an example. The dragons are complaining that they don’t want a consort like her.”

“Raw can quell their anger, can’t he? And I pity the students the most. They shouldn’t be allowed to fight dragons.”

“Usually, several people need to risk their lives to defeat a single green dragon.”

“But I won’t sympathize with them.”

Because Jill’s students were a handful, Hadis had been neglected by his wife. He had no sympathy to spare. However, as he glanced down at the internal affairs of the military academy and the class competition, he found that the academy’s treatment of the students was problematic. There was a difference in treatment to offer students an incentive to aim higher. At a glance, this was a logical approach, but the administration had clearly taken this too far. Their motives and methods had flipped completely. Yet, this nation didn’t find that to be a problem.

Why? Because the infamous Rave imperial family member served as the class president of the Azure Dragon class.

“Chancellor MinerD will attend the class competition,” Roger explained to the people he’d gathered. He was sitting at the counter in a tavern. He’d reserved the entire place and had a stack of documents in his hand. “On the day of, Gunther will have people under him placed throughout the city and the academy premises under the guise of having more guards. Unfortunately, it seems like he’s trying to start an uprising by wrapping the kids into this mess.”

A dozen or so people had gathered—it wasn’t a lot, but it was still a decently sized crowd.

“On the surface, they’ll be procuring weapons and dragons for the competition or for the guards. It’ll be difficult to expose him,” Roger went on. “I have no idea where they keep the Draco Flute—a flute that can manipulate dragons—or the results of this research. It’s frustrating for me to say, but we can’t stop them yet. I told Chancellor MinerD about this as well. I also informed

him that he was being targeted by Gunther. The chancellor acts as a liaison between the pro-Rave faction and the anti-Rave faction, coordinating between the two. I'm guessing that the primary motive for the riot is to capture the chancellor."

Indeed, one could argue that Lutiya was sent to an academy not because he was exiled from the palace court which was increasing its anti-Rave sentiments, but to give him a chance to escape. Unfortunately, no one could tell which was the real reason, but Roger thought it to be the latter. He claimed that the court was in a wretched state.

"If we can straighten out the issue with the dragons, we could move as we wished," Rave muttered.

That was the heart of the issue.

The Grand Duchy of Laika had prioritized education, allowing research and knowledge about dragons and magic to flourish. When a flute to chase away dragons was imported from the Rave Empire, the first person to advocate using magic to improve the tool so that humans could control dragons was a young Gunther.

But the Rave Empire had forbidden humans from exploring that field. Dragons were divine messengers of the Dragon God. Not only was it thought to be impossible to control dragons, but it was also considered taboo to even think about doing so. After being pressured by the mainland, Gunther gave up on his research and became a teacher. He switched gears, conducting research on humans and dragons conveying their thoughts; it was a topic permitted by the mainland.

However, even after he became principal, Gunther didn't hide his dissatisfaction toward the Rave Empire for forcing him to forgo his initial research. Combined with rumors that an influential noble had begun supporting Gunther's research, there was a recent slew of mysterious cases where dragons had suddenly been paralyzed. Those with magical energy claimed to hear the sound of a flute, and whispers of Gunther completing his Draco Flute had reached the ears of the citizens. Though there was no proof and it was based purely on conjecture, La Baier Military Academy and the city surrounding it

heightened their anti-Rave sentiments.

Roger believed that if Gunther waged war against the Rave Empire, the principal could lift the ban against his research, or have his results approved. And when Roger divulged his theory to Miner, the chancellor had personally requested Roger to begin an investigation and report his findings back to the mainland.

And so, he formed a small squadron, a group of spies that snuck into the Laikan Liberation Army. The army was vehemently anti-Rave and wanted to become an independent nation. Roger and his task force were given a mission: find the Draco Flute and the results of Gunther's research, or destroy everything related to it.

Roger decided to report back to the mainland after he confirmed the existence of the Draco Flute research. Hadis found himself agreeing with these decisions. If he had received a report about this flute, he would've given the same orders. Research could be passed on to future generations. Even if Gunther was captured, if his research had become widespread, the emperor would have to change his angle.

A half-baked purge would only cause this research to go further underground, completely hidden from view. Should that happen, all would be lost.

"But the class competition provides the perfect opportunity. If Gunther was seriously planning on rioting there, he would use his Draco Flute, the product of his research. In fact, if it's complete, he'd be more inclined to use it," Roger said. He took a moment to catch his breath and raise his voice. "Even with this flute, there's little chance that Laika can beat the Rave Empire. Yet, Gunther and the Liberation Army have been disguising themselves as the Rave imperial army to conduct violent acts, encouraging distrust and provoking the citizens. We can't let this go on."

"Listen, Roger," a voice said from a corner of the tavern. "I don't like what the Liberation Army's doing, and we can't have a guy like Gunther monopolize the Draco Flute research. That being said, I can't agree with you about Laika not standing a chance against Rave with that flute."

Roger shook his head. "The Rave Empire has a Dragon Emperor. Using

dragons to fight is like going against the God of Logic. They won't be unscathed."

"But the Dragon Emperor's Heavenly Sword was thought to be a fake or cursed or something. Even the mainland has its doubts."

"It's true that the Rave imperial army and the government officials have some problems. I can understand why you'd hold doubts against the mainland, and that should be their responsibility to shoulder. But we can't have the bad apples stand out and be a vocal minority. We can't buy into Gunther's propaganda and go to war. Doing so would earn punishment from the Heavenly Sword and the dragons. The Grand Duchy of Laika would be nothing more than a scorched ruin after that."

Roger, sensing dissatisfaction in the air, shifted into a cheery tone. "Why don't we talk about stuff like this after we steal the Draco Flute from Gunther and hand it over to Chancellor Minerd? I don't think it's too late to discuss it then."

"True. Chancellor Minerd won't mistreat Laika."

"Exactly. If you guys get exposed as spies here, all will be for naught. Let's pull ourselves together. Of course, if you've got complaints toward the Rave Empire, I doubt you'd get caught at all."

He ended the conversation with a smile and had everyone disperse. The group left in their own ways, but as a newcomer, Hadis didn't know a single person present. Introductions were likely unnecessary—or else, if one person was caught, everyone else would be dragged down with them.

Only one person was the exception to this rule. "How's it going? Are there any problems? You joined the Liberation Army, didn't you?" Roger asked.

This man had told everyone his name and his face was exposed for all to see. Was he trying to gain the trust of his subordinates? Was he just recklessly bold, or an idiot? Hadis couldn't tell; the man was hard to read.

"No problems," Hadis replied. "People saw me get dragged away by the Rave imperial army, so it wasn't too hard for me to join."

"But you're from the mainland. Don't people find you a nuisance?"

“We were all excitedly gossiping about how horrible the Dragon Emperor is. I’ve got the same name as him, so people found that amusing,” Hadis said.

“I see,” Roger laughed.

Hadis had received a bit of trust simply because he’d been introduced by Roger. The man was friendly with the Rave imperial army and expertly extracted information, making him an important asset to the Liberation Army. He was rather popular with others, and he was good at worming his way into people’s hearts.

“Can you drink?” Roger asked. “How old are you?” He pulled out a seat and sat diagonally next to Hadis. He took out two bottles of ale.

“Twenty,” Hadis replied. “I’ll drink if necessary, but I don’t like it.”

“Got it. Then I’ll take two bottles for myself. I’d like to prevent an uprising occurring at the military academy, but it seems like I’ll drag the students in no matter what.”

Hadis glanced down at the documents. “The riot is scheduled to start right after the opening act—when the Azure Dragons and the Gold Dragons fight, correct?”

“Yep. That principal wants to see Prince Lutiya get beaten and then use that to raise morale. I don’t know what else he’s scheming, but in any case, it looks as though the children will be fighting against Rave. He’s trying to encourage adults to follow suit. How absolutely disgusting.”

“But acting now might get you caught. And if he just wants to cause a riot but not invade the mainland, the mainland might not act quickly to quell the fuss. There’s an opportunity for negotiation, isn’t there?” Hadis pointed out.

Roger swirled the liquid inside his bottle and rested his cheek on his hand. “Right. I’m sure Chancellor Minernd reported this to the mainland, so I can only hope that he’s maneuvering this well. I’m a little relieved, though. At the very least, you were on the mainland until recently, weren’t you? If you can claim that there’s still a chance to negotiate, I can hold on to a sliver of hope.”

“Aren’t you from the Rave Empire too?” Hadis asked.

Roger took a swig of liquor and smiled. "I'm impressed. That's right. Seven years ago, I fled to Laika from the mainland and haven't returned since. So, I know nothing about the Dragon Emperor or the imperial family."

"And yet, you seem to believe in the Dragon Emperor and Dragon God."

"Well, the terror of dragons, among other stuff, was hammered into me when I was a kid. If I had returned home once before this happened, there may have been another solution, but I threw away my family name..."

It sounded like he felt a sense of inferiority. His melancholic eyes gazing at the liquor he sloshed within the bottle told a different story.

"What house were you— Ack!" Hadis cried.

Roger had suddenly reached out and tousled Hadis's hair. The emperor couldn't react since there wasn't a hint of malice. He was stunned for a moment before he glared coldly at Roger.

"Why did you just do that?" he asked.

"Ah, sorry. Don't get mad," Roger apologized. "I had a large family, you know. I had plenty of older and younger siblings. I even had a younger brother called Hadis, so I couldn't help myself."

"I've got older brothers, too, but they're never this violent with me. My older sister punches me, though..." Hadis muttered.

And my wife steps on me and kicks me, Hadis thought. *I feel like I'm treated a bit too roughly.*

"You've got a stouthearted older sister," Roger said with a laugh. "I see, I see. So, you've got siblings, too. If you mess up somehow, will your family come to save you?" he turned to Hadis with a serious expression. Hadis felt his anger dissipate.

"I wonder," the emperor replied indifferently. "At the very least, I think my older brother's angry at me right now. But I'm not at fault."

"Heh. If you can speak about them like that, seems like they'll help you out. I'm glad to hear it." His insinuation caused Hadis to look at him dubiously. "Later," Roger said, standing up.

“Is he implying that if you screw up, you should let them save you? That you should flee?” Rave asked, curious.

Hadis couldn't help but call out to Roger's back. “The Gold Dragons will lose.”

Roger was about to step away from the table when he stood in place. He turned around in shock.

“Things won't go according to Gunther's plan,” Hadis insisted. “I suggest you think of a separate strategy so that you can act when the time comes. You don't have to believe me, though.”

“Oh, I believe you,” Roger replied instantly, making Hadis doubt the man's sanity for a moment. “It's easy to doubt others. Thanks for the advice.” Roger didn't pry further, and he didn't ask for justification. He left it at that and walked away.

“I can't read that guy,” Rave said. **“Not sure if we can trust him or not.”**

“He's a spy,” Hadis replied. “We'll never know his true thoughts, so we can't trust him. He might be searching for the Draco Flute to use it for himself. At the very least, the other people in his group seemed tempted to do just that.”

“Speaking of, you sure you don't need to tell Missy about that flute?”

“I won't tell her. It'll only confuse her. She's got Raw by her side, and I know that the dragons will turn into steak if it comes down to it. Besides, she's got her hands full training her students. I don't want to make her push herself.”

“Are you seriously saying that?”

“I am. Jill's leaving me alone for my sake, right? I know.” Things were different now. Hadis huffed loudly as though he was declaring that he had no doubts. “Or else, I would've left for the imperial capital already. In fact, I'll make lunch and visit Jill on the day of the competition to cheer her on. She'll be happy to see me. I'll be delighted.”

“I feel like your ideas are becoming more twisted.”

Hadis ignored his rude parent and rested his cheek on his hand. His first priority was to think of a menu so that his cute wife's eyes would twinkle with delight. Hadis smiled broadly, looking forward to the day of the event.

Chapter 4: La Baier Academy's Class Competition

EVERY student in the Gold Dragon class believed that they were the cream of the crop and took pride in their status. Reality further proved what they already knew. Within Laika, the La Baier Military Academy was known for producing excellent personnel, and people from the Rave Empire came to scout for promising potential. The people of Laika had started to claim, "The Rave Empire scouts our best people," but that didn't deny the talents of the students and the quality of the education.

However, when Noyn received a small flute on the day of the competition from his instructor and principal, Gunther, he thought that those words were nothing but delusion.

"Take it with you, just in case," Gunther insisted.

"Mr. Gunther, I believe I declined this offer," Noyn replied. "We won't lose even if we don't have a flute like this, sir."

"A flute like this,' you say? Heed these words, Noyn. This is to protect the students from dragons."

Noyn found it difficult to refute. He looked down, at a loss for words. "I apologize. But I can control a green dragon even without this flute. I don't have a need for it, and the same can be said for the other students. The Azure Dragon class won't be supplied with dragons, so it will hardly be a battle as things stand. I don't think we need to do much more to further the gap between us."

"As I've said, take it with you just in case. Your honesty is admirable, but this is just a tool. Other students are using tools. It's not good to be so stubborn."

Noyn balled his hands into fists. He'd heard the rumors. The small flute that the principal had just placed on his desk was called a Draco Flute, and it was an item that forced dragons to do a human's bidding. Quite a few of them had made the rounds around school. At first, it was simply a flute that chased away

dragons. Gunther had continued his research in an attempt to make a tool that would sway a dragon's attention and momentarily paralyze the beast to ensure a student's safety. However, over time, the principal's research took a different turn.

The latest model was rumored to be able to manipulate dragons below green dragons. They were so close to controlling all the magnificent beasts.

Noyn knew that the flute could force dragons to follow simple commands such as ride, fly, and dismount. But the boy had successfully greeted a green dragon and didn't require the tool's assistance. He'd heard that a few students in the Gold and Purple Dragon classes had received this flute from Gunther as well, and he was aware that there was a drastic uptick in capable students who could ride dragons this year.

"I improved upon the previous model," Gunther explained. "Since you can already ride a green dragon, you should be able to force it to breathe fire and attack humans."

Noyn clenched his fist when he heard his instructor's enticing tone. "I have no need for that," he refused. "I'll fight with my own power and win."

"Hah! You speak as though this tool counts as cheating!"

"That's not my intention."

Though dragons were divine messengers of the Dragon God, Noyn didn't think it was underhanded for humans to devise methods to fight against these powerful beasts if the need arose. However, he felt like this wasn't the time or place to use it. Unfortunately, Noyn was unable to eloquently put his thoughts into words.

"Sir, I'm not accusing you of anything, but you aren't forcing the other students to use this item, are you?" Noyn asked.

"*Force?* Are you sure you can take that tone with me?"

"*Do you know what'll happen to the Gold Dragons if you guys lose?*" Lutiya's words echoed within the boy's head. Noyn bit his lip and chose his next words carefully.

“I have no intention of going against your instructions, sir,” he said. “I’m simply not confident that I can use the tool to its fullest during the competition, and I believe I can better display my talent with my usual methods.”

“Hmph,” Gunther scoffed. “Very well. Head on out and make your preparations.”

“I shall. Please excuse me.”

“In the end, you’re just like your father, who can only curry favor with the mainland. A coward,” the principal spat.

Noyn pretended not to hear those spiteful words, bowed his head, and left the principal’s office. Eager to be as far away from that office as possible, he walked down the hall with quick steps.

Since the morning, the academy brimmed with city folk and other guests. The event seemed especially rowdy this year. Some students even claimed to have received an interview from newspapers, conveying how focused everyone was on this event. There were numerous articles equating Lutiya to the Rave Empire and predicting the outcome of the battle. Everyone wanted the Gold Dragon class to win. Their victory implied that Laika could possibly win against the Rave Empire.

Things were moving at a pace that was beyond Noyn’s control. Students energetically claimed that Laika should become independent and that this match was the first step toward liberation. They couldn’t mask their excitement. Noyn agreed that the mainland had their issues, and he had his fair share of complaints.

But this academy and the dragons wouldn’t have existed without the aid of the Rave Empire. Noyn couldn’t respect his father’s methods of flattering the oppressive Rave imperial army, but thanks to his father’s efforts, he could attend school and receive an education.

Noyn was unsure what the correct answer was. However, he didn’t want to flee and remain confused just because he was a student. He was in an awkward position; Lutiya would sometimes shine in his eyes, as the boy was able to regard every adult as his enemy and loudly voice his opinions. Was Lutiya not afraid? Did he not fear shouldering others’ futures? Was he not scared of

doubting adults who were supposed to lead the way and openly oppose them?

“President, you’re late! The dragons have left the stables and entered the arena already!” a student called.

Noyn gasped and looked up just as he exited the building. The clock on the spire indicated that he was behind schedule. There was still time until the competition, but seeing as he had to participate in the opening act, it was wise for him to have an early lunch.

He jogged over to a tent. There was a tent for each class, and it served as a waiting room for the students.

“Sorry,” he said. “Is everyone ready?”

“Yep! We’re all planning on riding a green dragon today! It’s all thanks to this flute!” a student replied with a happy smile. They grabbed the small flute that hung in front of their chest as Noyn gulped. “We won’t be dead weight! We’ll show those Sewer Rats and the Rave Empire that they can’t beat us!”

What was the correct response in this situation? Noyn wanted an adult to tell him.

“I told you not to decrease your energy!” a familiar voice bellowed just as there was an explosion of light in the skies above.

A strong gust of wind caused the tent flaps to flip, making students scream. Noyn shielded his face with his arms and closed his eyes. Students from the Azure Dragon class placed a barrier to guard everyone from the tremendous blast of magical energy.

“Just because we’re warming up, doesn’t mean you can get lazy! Magical precision requires practice! Make a habit out of it! You think you can maintain proper levels to defeat dragons?!”

“But Miss Jill, we should end training for now! It’s the day of the competition!” a student protested.

“Yeah, using our magic here will put us at a disadvantage!” another agreed.

As the students of the Azure Dragon class huddled together to form a barrier, a small shadow descended from above. From her backpack, a bear plushie and

a magical beast resembling a black dragon peeked their heads out. Beside her, a bird glided through the skies to alight. Jill's amethyst eyes were wide as she shot her students an incredulous look—she was in the center of the powerful gust of wind.

"Using? You call this using your magic? How inefficient do you have to be to deplete your magical energy here?" she asked.

Every student who witnessed her, including the Azure Dragons, was petrified with fear. She had the adorable appearance of a young girl, but as magical energy coursed throughout her body, she was nothing short of terrifying.

"Who just said that? Who said those words?" Jill demanded. *"Step forward. I don't remember teaching you so inefficiently."*

"C-C'mon, Miss Jill! It was just a slip of the tongue!" a student hastily replied.

"Right! Boys always love to exaggerate things, you know? We should use our magical powers as easily as we breathe, right?" another added.

"We don't have time," Lutiya said wearily. *"We should change into our uniforms, Miss Jill."* He was dirty and covered in scratches. His sportswear was tattered as he spoke to his instructor floating in the air. *"Instructors won't be able to communicate with their students soon,"* he added. *"Why don't you go and eat lunch, ma'am?"*

"Ack! My lunch!" Jill cried, her eyes twinkling with delight. She landed on the ground. *"All right, then my work ends here. This is my final order, everyone. At attention!"*

Her voice came from deep within her chest, her tone emanating an overwhelming aura. At once, the students of the Azure Dragon class all stood straight, facing the black lizard and bird magical beasts and their tiny instructor.

"Sewer Rats! My training ends here!" Jill bellowed. *"The day has come to put it all into practice. I'd like to praise each and every one of you, but it's still a bit too early for that. You understand that, don't you?"*

"Yes, ma'am!" the students all shouted back.

The little instructor grinned. *"Then win! Show these elite, naive kittens how*

tough life can be! That's all from me!"

Jill was surrounded by the Gold and Purple Dragon classes. Though she was offering encouragement to the Azure Dragons, her words were akin to picking a fight with the entire academy. But she paid no heed to the consequences of other instructors potentially listening to her words. She confidently turned on her heel and left.

"Lutiya, I leave the rest to you," she said. "As for me, I'm gonna eat lunch!"

"Have fun, ma'am!" Lutiya called. "All right, we're free! It's been a while!"

"We're finally freed from the grasp of that demon instructor... Huh? Am I crying?" another student said.

"I can *hear* you guys!" Jill roared. "If you all act so disgracefully, I won't forgive you! Is that clear?"

"Yes, ma'am!" the students hastily replied.

"Good!"

The Azure Dragons had been pressured until the very end, and they saluted beautifully until their instructor was out of sight. Once she was gone, everyone breathed a sigh of relief and started chattering away.

"We were about to die before the actual competition. Who decreased their magical energy level?"

"Ugh... I wanted to land with a little flair, y'know? Act a little cool? I didn't think she'd find out."

"Of course she would. This is Miss Jill we're talking about."

Suddenly, mocking laughter rose around the Azure Dragons, slowly spreading throughout the crowd of other students.

"Look at them. They're all beat up."

"I knew I hadn't seen them recently. What were they doing?"

"At least they *look* like actual sewer rats now. They said they were gonna beat the Gold Dragon class, right? I hope they don't embarrass themselves after picking a fight."

“We should at least praise them for not running. Some newspapers predicted that the Azure Dragons would flee.”

The crowd was focused on the Azure Dragons.

Noyn didn't like how this situation was progressing and quickly stepped in. “Hey, let's stop taunting them. Each class should prepare for—”

“Hey, let's have a friendly match today, Gold Dragons,” a student from the Azure Dragon class said brightly without a hint of anger.

A few students from the other classes frowned, but the Azure Dragons only greeted them before cheerfully chattering amongst themselves, completely ignoring their surroundings.

They're different from before, Noyn thought. He turned around and raised his head when Lutiya walked past him. For a brief moment, their gazes crossed, but the Rave imperial family member didn't say another word. He would usually pick a fight with Noyn, but today, he had no such intention and walked ahead.

“What's with that attitude?” Noyn's classmate grumbled. This was the same student who happily stated that they'd ride a green dragon today.

The other students agreed and displayed their annoyance; the Azure Dragons' changed attitudes had taken the wind out of the other students' sails.

However, a select few who were sensitive to magical perception knew what had occurred. Indeed, there was a vast change in the Sewer Rats. Their presence was unlike anything they'd ever felt before. A voice echoed in Noyn's head.

“Who the hell do you think you are? You think you're so great, Mr. Elite?”

The corners of his mouth curled up. Why was he trembling with excitement? Why was his heart pounding with anticipation? His mind was filled with expectations. If he was truly in the wrong, he felt like he would be judged properly. He would be guided toward the correct path, and justice would be shown to him. He felt as though he was facing the God of Logic.

Right, Noyn told himself. There was no need to hold back against his opponents. He couldn't underestimate his foe. Only arrogant people in power

did that. He smiled and patted the shoulder of his classmate in front of him.

“Don’t get distracted. Let’s do our best today,” he said.

“Of course!” the student replied.

Justice will prevail. This was a horribly childish idea, but perhaps the world was unexpectedly as simple as that.



JILL was guided into a building when the Dragon God popped out from the shadows.

“Rave?” she asked. “Where’s His Majesty?”

“Ah, well, he could only get tickets to enter the academy premises just before the match starts,” Rave replied.

“There are tickets?”

Sensing the presence of people behind her, Jill lowered her voice. There weren’t many people in this corner of the building, but she didn’t want to be thought of as a weird person who talked to herself. She especially wanted to avoid negative impressions right now since her students were about to start their match.

“Haven’t you seen people from the newspaper here?” Rave asked. “The Rave imperial army is also here to act as guards. It’s not good for him to wander around; someone might recognize him.”

Jill agreed with these sentiments and stared at the ground. Raw gave a cry of confusion while Sauté peered up at her. She’d planned on returning home in a month, but she trained her students up until today without returning home. In other words, she hadn’t seen Hadis for two months.

“But, I’ve brought you lunch from him,” Rave said.

There was a small pop of magic and a large basket appeared in front of her. Jill’s eyes glimmered eagerly as she held it with both hands.

“Lunch!” she cried. “Thank you so much, Rave! I’ll eat and work hard!”

“Glad to hear that. Seems like your appetite is still important to you.”

“What’re you on about? I’d like to deduct points from His Majesty for not bringing me this lunch himself! I was looking forward to finally seeing him.” She couldn’t help but divulge her innermost desires, and she turned red as Rave stared at her. “Wh-What? His Majesty and his food come as a set to make my meal delicious! It’s my reward for working hard!”

“Hmmm... I see. Gotcha. Sure, I’ll scold Hadis for you,” Rave replied with a teasing grin.

“D-Don’t say anything weird, okay?!” Jill hastily added. “I’m in the middle of work, so of course I’d get hungry! I’m not lonely or anything, and it’s not like I was forcing myself to endure not seeing him for so long! Wait, His Majesty will come to view the match, right? He has to see his wife’s hard work with his own eyes!”

“That segue sounded pretty forced, but don’t worry. He’ll make it in time. Both Hadis and I are rooting for you.”

“I-I see. Well, I’m not participating, so you’ll be cheering for my students... Well, I’ll take my leave! I need time to eat my lunch!”

Jill couldn’t quite understand what her own point was, so she turned and fled. She pretended not to hear Rave laughing boisterously behind her, but she would be on guard when she finally did meet with her husband. She wasn’t sure what the Dragon God would say to Hadis, and there was a good chance that the emperor might let it go to his head. *Your Majesty, you’re an idiot! If you had come to meet me instead, this would’ve never happened!*

However, it was true that it was too dangerous for Hadis to be wandering around. Jill slowed down and cast a sweeping glance over her surroundings. There really were quite a few people and soldiers around today. Since dragons would be used for this match, security must’ve been tightened to prevent any accidents, especially since the chancellor would be attending. *I want to see his face and check if he really is the Miner that I’m thinking of.*

As Jill walked up the slope toward the venue, she searched the VIP seats. She cursed her childlike stature during times like these as she was starting to get lost.

“Miss Jill, what are you doing?” a voice called out. “Our seats aren’t over

there.”

“Ah, Mr. Brooder. There you are.”

Roger was on the hill and motioned for Jill to head toward him. “I feel like your tone is harsh with me these days,” he said. “I attended the staff meetings in your stead, you know.”

“Has Chancellor Minerd entered the venue?” Jill inquired, ignoring his comment.

“I think so... Uh, do you have business with him?” He looked at her quizzically.

Jill glared back. “I thought I’d tell him about the state of the Azure Dragon class beforehand.”

“Ah, I see. Well, the principal’s all over him, so I don’t think you can speak with the chancellor right now. But you’ll have plenty of opportunities after you beat the Gold Dragons. The chancellor congratulates the winner.”

“Huh? Do you think we can win, Mr. Brooder?” Jill asked.

“Yeah, you do sound a little harsh toward me... I’m your assistant, you know...”

She followed him inside the venue and stepped out toward the corner seats by the stairs. The viewing area was located on an elevated semicircular platform that surrounded the arena. Sauté jumped up and landed on an oak bench. Jill placed her bag beside her as Raw popped out and gave a cry of dissatisfaction. She couldn’t blame him. They were practically seated on a gouged-out cliff. A single misstep could lead them to plunge into the plains below—the battle arena. It was a dangerous place. The instructors for the Azure Dragons didn’t even receive proper seats, it seemed. But this location gave a fantastic view of her students. She stroked Raw’s head.

“Ah, it’s a bit far, but over there is Chancellor Minerd,” Roger pointed. “He’s sitting in the center of the seats with an awning.”

Jill looked where he pointed to and narrowed her eyes. In the distance, next to Gunther, was a nobleman wearing fancy clothes. The regal man’s hair blew slightly in the wind as he calmly talked with Gunther. *That must be the*

chancellor.

He had the same blond hair and blue eyes as Natalie. He was undoubtedly the man who once sold off the Rave Empire to the Kratos Kingdom. Jill had only seen him a handful of times, but she hadn't forgotten this seemingly good-natured man who decried the sacrifice of his younger sister with a foxy grin, implying that there was more to him than meets the eye. *That's him. The Miner.*

It was too rash to determine him as an enemy just yet. The timeline had changed completely. Natalie was still alive, and on the surface, Kratos and Rave were working together for a peaceful future. And Jill had never heard of Miner becoming chancellor of Laika.

The opening ceremony had started below—there was nothing she could do now. She bit her lip and lifted the cloth from her basket. A thick meat patty cooked with herbs and tomatoes was stacked high between a pair of buns. Beside her large hamburger were some crisp fried potatoes seasoned with consommé powder. There was a salad topped with steamed chicken and a soft-boiled egg. There was even soup filled with meatballs.

“Whoa,” Roger said from beside her. “You’ve got a feast! And a ton of food, too! Would you like to spare a bite for this old man here?”

“No, it’s all mine!” Jill shot him down at once.

She took the hamburger that she could barely grab with both hands and chomped down. *Delicious!* But she didn't want to let her smile show; she was still at work. She pinched Roger's hand as he tried to sneak a few potatoes into his mouth and ate her worries away. She'd done all that she could. All she could do now was believe in her students and wait for the result of their hard work.

The fanfare announced the beginning of the competition.



THE wind was strong today. The clouds flowed across the sky as the sound of the fanfare reverberated in the arena. Hadis looked up before squinting and fixing his gaze on the students entering the arena. He was on the highest seat on the bleachers. The Purple Dragon classes entered first, followed by the Azure

Dragons, and finally, the Gold Dragons made their appearance in neat lines. Their synchronized marching was impressive, and it was hard to believe that they were still students.

When everyone was in full view, it was easy to see how poorly equipped the Azure Dragons, the class that Jill was put in charge of, were. No student was heavily clad in armor, but they had some gear on them. In contrast, the Azure Dragons only had their school uniforms, and a single longsword hung from their waist. Since they weren't even allowed to use dragons, they were clearly at a disadvantage. At a glance, they didn't differ much from the rest in terms of magical energy either.

But Jill had determined that they could win. If the students could keep up with her, victory would be assured.

"The Cervels are known for their guerrilla warfare, and they're said to be the strongest in that field," Hadis muttered. "Ugh, my wife's family is terrifying."

"Ah, there you are, Hadis. I did an inspection from above, but I didn't notice anything yet," Rave said, descending from the skies like the god that he was. "Even the dragons only know that there's a flute that enhanced the effect to chase away dragons. The sound is unpleasant and orders them to have a rider mount them, so they begrudgingly do so. I wonder if there really is a flute that can control dragons."

The principal, who began his speech pompously, drowned out the surrounding sounds, including Hadis's voice.

"And we'll confirm that today by going along with Gunther's riot, right?" Hadis asked. "How's Jill?"

"Things went as expected. I was able to hand over the lunch without her getting suspicious."

"There's no way she didn't suspect something. Doubt she'd complain about my absence as long as she gets her lunch," Hadis pouted.

"She said that she wanted to see you." Hadis looked at Rave sternly, but the Dragon God continued nonchalantly, "Missy looked lonely. I pity her."

"I see." Hadis felt the same, of course. He covered his reddening face with

both hands and groaned, “A-Argh! Why does Jill always say... Why doesn’t she say it in front of me?!”

“You’re the one who didn’t want to come, you know,” Rave pointed out.

“B-But she’s the one who neglected me! For two months, to boot! She doesn’t care about that, does she? I won’t fall for her sweet talk! Sometimes, a husband has to show his dignity!” He clenched his fists while glaring at Jill’s students. “Besides, she’s so unfair! She didn’t return home at all until today, and she was playing around with a young man!”

“Missy is to blame for the time, but she wasn’t playing around. You should fix your phrasing...”

“I won’t be fooled. I’m sure that Jill became friendly with the other students and some of the boys admire her or have a crush on her or something!”

Jill was strong, but she was kind and adorable. She was also a compassionate lady. She might’ve acted like a klutz at times, but combined with her strength, it was all a part of her charm. As an instructor, she’d never desert her students. Such a lovely girl had eaten and slept with these boys who seemed to lack logic and emotion. Couldn’t she have caused misunderstandings?

They’d eaten and slept together. Did they spend the wee hours of the morning on pillow fights? Did they change in front of each other or even take a bath together? Just imagining the disgusting scene made Hadis’s gold eyes harden.

“I’ll kill them...” he muttered.

“Oh, come on,” Rave scolded. “Don’t let your imagination give birth to murderous intent. What happened to a husband’s dignity?”

Right... Hadis clicked his tongue and crossed his legs as he gazed down at the students. The person standing in front of the Azure Dragons might’ve been his younger brother.

The emperor had gotten used to his older siblings and younger sisters, but he never had a younger brother before. What was it like? Was it different from having a younger sister? Hadis was still nervous when he talked with Natalie and Frida, and he had no idea how to communicate with his younger brother.

And it seemed like the boy had a nasty personality that troubled Jill. She'd claimed that she'd make the boy turn over a new leaf for Hadis.

"I won't lose!" Hadis said. "I'm definitely more of a pain than he is!"

"Uh... Are you sure you're happy winning that one?" Rave asked, exasperated.

"I want to be Jill's number one at everything."

"Sure, okay."

Rave sounded weary, but Hadis pouted without regretting his feelings. Once the principal finished his speech, the Purple Dragon classes walked out of the arena. It was time for the opening act to begin—the contest between the Gold and Azure Dragons. The Gold Dragons needed more time to prepare as they'd need to mount their dragons. Meanwhile, the Azure Dragons should've used the vast arena space to hide and find an advantageous spot.

However, the Azure Dragons stood tall in the middle of the arena where nothing obscured them. They plunged their blue flag into the ground in a conspicuous area. If their flag was taken down, they'd lose. Then, as though to claim that they were ready, they made a circular formation and stood in place.

The audience that had been staring at the Gold Dragon class mounting their beasts gasped when they saw the Azure Dragons standing tall.

"Hadis, if they have their flag there, wouldn't it become the prime target?" Rave asked.

"It's bait," Hadis replied. "The Gold Dragons can only fight head-on, but there's no chance that these students are skilled enough to form such a neat formation with their dragons. They only have one angle of attack, and there are only a few plans that'd work against them. The Azure Dragons are aiming for a short match. I'd expect no less from my wife."

The Gold Dragon class placed their golden flag in an area nearest to the audience, and the class president stepped forward.

He faced the adults in the audience and bellowed, "An oath!"

An oath was sworn by the elites. The Azure Dragons weren't required to answer in kind, but the moment the sleep-inducing speech was over, the battle

would begin.

Lutiya took deep breaths. He was the commander. Every time he told himself to calm down, his heart raced even faster. He was feeling a sense of responsibility.

“Hah! Everyone’s on a green dragon? It’s absurd to have us go up against them,” a classmate said in a trembling voice.

But before Lutiya could answer, a different classmate replied, “D-Do you think these dragons are faster than Instructor Sauté?”

“In terms of raw speed, Instructor Sauté is way faster. Their sizes are completely different, and dragons are unexpectedly pretty slow.”

“But we’ve got an even stronger spell that works on us, don’t we? And it’s...”

“They’re not stronger than Miss Jill!” the entirety of the Azure Dragon class cried out.

Everyone started to smile. How could they be scared? Lutiya still couldn’t process that he was about to fight.

“Do you think Miss Jill would be sad if we lost?”

“Nah, I think she’d beat us half to death. She always gets physical with us. And she has a hearty appetite. I became a pretty good cook over the past two months.”

“Miss Jill did her best, too. She made hot milk for us every night.”

“I could barely drink it at first; it was awful. Will anyone have her as a bride?”

“You boys are so dense. Can’t you see? She’s totally got an older boyfriend,” one of the girls pointed out.

Lutiya blinked but remained silent as he listened in on the conversation.

“That’s impossible. There were no signs of a man during our training.”

“But I saw her periodically contacting someone. At first, I thought it was some sort of training or her filing a report to the academy, but it’s definitely personal. When I asked her who she was talking to, she hastily tried to hide it. And Mr. Bear is clearly a present from a guy, no?”

“True... Miss Jill is always hugging Mr. Bear when we go wake her up. She’ll always ask when food’s ready while she’s still sleepy... Do you think she lived with her boyfriend before this?!”

“I made a promise with her. If we win this fight, we’d talk about boys with her. It’s in exchange for snacks, so cooperate with me, will you?”

“Oh my gosh, you’re a genius!”

The girls were excitedly talking away, but the boys didn’t seem to understand and glanced around awkwardly.

Lutiya cleared his throat. “It’s time. Let’s stop talking. If we make a mistake right as the match starts, Miss Jill will definitely clobber us.”

“That’s what scares me the most,” a classmate replied. “You think we can win?”

“If we can’t, Miss Jill will take responsibility.” Everyone fell silent at Lutiya’s words. “They’ll go, ‘See? Look how useless they are!’ They’ll laugh at her like how we were treated by those annoying elites.”

“I...don’t want that,” a student replied.

“I’m used to losing, but I don’t want Miss Jill to...” another added.

“If you don’t want that, we gotta win. It’s as simple as that,” Lutiya said with a forced smile.

In truth, it was anything but simple, but by spending time with his instructor over the past few months, her reckless ways had rubbed off on him. A horn sounded, cutting off Lutiya’s train of thought—it was the ominous sound signaling that the match was about to begin. The elites, who’d finished their oath, arrogantly rode their dragons and aimed straight for the Azure Dragon class.

The only plan they had was to fight head-on without any tricks. That was the only angle that the Gold Dragons had. This entire event was created to mock Lutiya and his class. He’d be lying if he said he wasn’t afraid, but he bellowed as loud as he could.

“Let’s go! Azure Dragons, prepare for battle!”

The words of their foolish instructor, who placed her trust in them and trained them harshly, echoed in their heads.

“Win!”

All Lutiya and his fellow classmates had to do was answer those expectations.

Anti-flight magic popped into the air like fireworks. Jill clenched her fists. *Good. That’s it*, she thought. Roger, who wasn’t privy to the details of this plan, widened his eyes in shock.

“Anti-flight magic circles?” he gasped. “Students can’t control those! They’ll just needlessly use up their magical energy!”

“And that’s just fine. Control isn’t necessary here. Green dragons might be powerful, but the rider can’t dodge them skillfully,” Jill said before she shouted from the audience. “Get ’em!”

The students who’d been kicked by Sauté jumped forward. The students in the air were panicking and unable to counter the anti-flight magic. The Azure Dragons used this opportunity to utilize the dragons as footing and flew in the air, punching the riders to the ground. Sauté spread its wings and let out a powerful battle cry.

“Th-The circles weren’t meant for the dragons but to knock down the students on top...” Roger muttered. “The magic was to lock them in place...”

“A human just sitting atop a dragon is nothing but an easy target,” Jill replied. Then she yelled, “Don’t falter! Knock ’em to the ground! That’s right! Right there!”

“M-Miss Jill, calm down,” Roger said. “That goes for you too, magical beasts.”

“Rawr! Rar! Raaawr!”

Roger seemed to be panicking, but the audience was too excited by the match to care. Half the students of the Gold Dragon class had already been hammered to the ground, exactly as planned. However, one student flew gracefully without faltering at the anti-flight circles: Noyn.

Jill clicked her tongue. As she’d expected, Noyn was a head above his peers. He wasn’t just sitting on top of the dragon; he used his reins to expertly

manipulate his beast. To top it all off, he was even able to give out some orders.

You can do it! Come on! Jill internally cheered for her class. If she was allowed to participate, she would've knocked them all down into the dust. She was tempted to interfere, but she knew that it wouldn't resolve a thing. If she was unable to trust in others, to allow others to fight, and to raise them to their full potential, she wouldn't be able to maintain an empire, much less protect it.

Jill was learning just that. She was learning to become a teacher and a Dragon Consort.

"The Anti-flight magic circles can't target us well!" Noyn shouted. "Calm down! Use your dragons to descend and land on the ground!"

He determined that they'd have a better chance of surviving there. Noyn circled in the air as he bit his lip. Just because they could ride dragons, it didn't mean that they were automatically victorious. That was obvious. It was so obvious, and yet, Noyn and his class had failed to prepare any infantry, making a majority of their class into easy targets. It didn't matter if they had a seemingly unfair advantage because they could use dragons. It didn't matter if manipulating a dragon with a flute was considered cheating. The most important bit was the class's ability to control these powerful beasts.

The anti-flight magic circles were fired from the flag of the Azure Dragon class. Students adept at magic were working together to maintain these spells. Needless to say, they were protected by a squad who shielded them and the flag from attack.

Because of that, there weren't many Azure Dragons who were free to attack. Noyn had been confirming his opponents' formation from the skies when he locked eyes with Lutiya. A split-second decision made by the commander would determine the outcome of this match.

"Don't be confused by the anti-flight magic! Those on the ground, prepare to charge!" Noyn ordered.

"Frontlines, fall back! Shift the anti-flight spells to barriers! They're coming!" Lutiya roared.

The flames of a green dragon couldn't have possibly lost to a barrier created

by students, but the dragon's fire ordered by Noyn didn't reach his enemy. Lutiya had made a barrier with his class's flag in the center. As Lutiya protected the flag and the other students, Noyn unsheathed his blade and kicked the dragon's saddle.

"Now!" Noyn bellowed. "Charge! Aim for the flag! I'll take care of Lutiya!"

"I'll handle Noyn!" Lutiya roared. "Ground squad, don't let them approach our flag!"

Lutiya unsheathed his weapon and charged in. This simple act made Noyn grin with glee.

The Gold Dragons had abandoned their dragons and an ugly battle broke out on the ground. There wasn't an iota of elegance to it; the clangs of swords that clearly rang in the air conveyed that there was no need to hold back. Not one bit.

The cheers, heckling, and furious roars that came from the audience didn't bother Noyn at all.

"You can do it if you try!" Noyn praised.

"Stop talking down to me! It's disgusting!" Lutiya growled back.

Though his remarks were biting, it was clear that he was trying to confirm the situation of the match. The anti-flight magic circles must've taken a good chunk of magical energy, and it wasn't easy trying to jump onto the dragon to knock the riders off. The exhausted Azure Dragon class started to slowly break their circular formation. Lutiya tried to turn around to offer assistance, but he was immediately stopped.

"I won't let you go!" Noyn yelled. "If I beat you here, your entire formation will crumble!"

As the two boys crossed blades, Lutiya's lips formed his usual, cheeky grin.

"Gotcha, Mr. Elite."

A massive shadow loomed from above. Noyn, wondering if there was still a student riding a dragon, looked up and widened his eyes. The dragon was headed straight for their flag. And the rider? A student of the Azure Dragon

class.

Those who managed to enter the La Baier Military Academy were all considered the cream of the crop. Every year, there were new students who could ride dragons. If riding was all that was needed, surely a student or two from the Azure Dragon class could manage the same feat. And none of the Gold Dragon class knew how to stop the magnificent beast.

“No!” Noyn cried.

“You’ve stepped a bit too far from your territory, Mr. Elite!” Lutiya goaded.

Just as the distracted Noyn was blown back by Lutiya’s swing, a student from the Azure Dragon class jumped off the dragon and knocked over the Gold Dragons’ flag.

At first, silence filled the entire arena. The excited audience became as silent as a tomb, and one could practically hear a pin drop as everyone tried to confirm the situation.

“It can’t be. The Gold Dragons...”

“We did it...” someone muttered.

The stunned students of the Gold Dragon class fell to their knees as the Azure Dragon stood up triumphantly. Noyn gazed at Lutiya balling his hand into a fist.

All at once, a deafening roar filled the arena.

“We woooooon!” Lutiya’s small instructor screamed amidst the clamor of the crowd.

Like a bullet, she shot through the sky with her arms outstretched and charged at Lutiya. The boy, unable to stop his instructor’s energetic attack, was blown back a bit and fell to the ground.

“Hey, Miss Jill! Wh-What’s going on?” Lutiya asked.

“You won! You won! You guys wooooon!” she shrieked.

“Chiiirp!”

“Rawr! Rar! Rawr! Raaawr!”

Even Sauté and Raw followed in and charged into the arena. They went

around hugging every Azure Dragon student nearby, and Sauté started swinging around the plush bear from excitement. The students found this to be dangerous and yelled frantically, forgetting their momentous victory.

“Stop, Instructor Sauté! Please place Mr. Bear down! I’m begging you!”

“Raw, please stop crying! When you cry, the dragons approach us for some reason!”

Lutiya shouted in a panic. “Miss Jill, please stop Instructor Sauté! I don’t want to die after winni—”

“Well done, Lutiya!” his small instructor cried.

Her face was a mess, covered in snot and tears—it was a far cry from anything beautiful, but Lutiya couldn’t tear his eyes away from her.

“You...really did well. Truly superb. Your commands were excellent. You won! I’m so, so glad!” the little instructor sobbed.

She flung her arms around his neck, wrinkling her face with joy. Did Lutiya feel suffocated because she was squeezing him so tightly, or...?

“What do you mean?” Lutiya replied cheekily. “Did you not think we’d win or something?”

Only then did he realize that his teacher had been anxious the entire time. He couldn’t blame her. She’d entrusted this match to them, after all. If he wrapped his arms around her, her small body could fit snugly within them. And yet, her tiny back never wavered.

“I did! I believed you’d win, but still!” she cried.

Just as Lutiya was debating on whether to hug her back, she grabbed his head and planted a kiss on his forehead.

“You did well! You’re my pride and joy!” she declared.

Her blossoming smile made Lutiya’s heart stop for a moment. He thought he couldn’t breathe.

But his instructor seemed satisfied and immediately jumped onto another student. Once Lutiya remembered to breathe once more, he noticed that Jill

was giving everyone a kiss—she didn't seem to mind if they were guys or girls. This was simply her way of giving a compliment. Lutiya placed a hand over his forehead and took deep breaths, trying to calm himself down.

Just then, a shadow loomed over him.

"You've got a good teacher. I envy that," Noyn said.

At first, Lutiya thought that the boy was being sarcastic. But despite his calm tone, his lips were trembling; the Azure Dragon class president decided to remain silent.

"I'm frustrated," Noyn admitted. "I didn't think we'd lose. I'd like to laugh at how stupid I was. I wonder what'll happen to the Gold Dragons."

Like I care, Lutiya was tempted to say. They'd been mocked the entire time. But he knew that Noyn had never called them Sewer Rats. Not once. And there were a few other students in the Gold and Purple Dragon classes who'd refrained from it too.

But they were powerless students.

"The match just now has been declared null and void! The Azure Dragon class cheated!" the principal's voice echoed through the arena.

He'd been watching from the stands as he spoke into a loudspeaker. Confused chattering filled the venue. His claim sounded forced under the eyes of all these people. Lutiya tried to laugh back, wondering if the principal had snapped from rage, but Noyn immediately turned pale and yanked Lutiya to his feet. Lutiya was about to complain, when the riderless green dragon's claws came down behind them.

"Wh-Why is the dragon..." Lutiya wrenched out.

It can't be! he thought as he gazed up at the audience filled with adults. The faint sound that initially couldn't be heard over the excited roars of the audience finally reached his ears. Lutiya knew this sound all too well. *I thought Brother Miner would use it until he got the black dragon's cries to make it complete!*

The roars and the flaps of the dragon's wings blew away his questions. The

dragon slowly rose in front of them as the two boys inched back.

“Run!” Noyn shouted, turning to the other students. “The dragons are attacking us!”

“B-But why?! How?!” Lutiya asked.

“This is all Prince Lutiya’s doing! He controlled the dragons to win and is now making them attack us!” the principal’s voice echoed, taking advantage of the disorder.

For a split second, Lutiya stood frozen in place. Before he could refute the principal’s claims, he sensed a terrifying magical presence that trumped the dragons. His body instinctively reacted and flinched. The embodiment of fear blew away a part of the venue with magic.

The dragons all took to the skies at once and attacked the audience. Fire escaped from their maws as they stomped on the audience stands. Some attacked students. Screams and shrieks rose in the air as the Rave imperial army flooded into the arena, pointing their weapons at the audience and the students.

“The Rave imperial army?! But why?!” a student cried.

“Is this under the order of His Highness Lutiya?! So, the mainland’s finally shown its true colors!” someone else roared.

“This academy is the pride of the Grand Duchy of Laika! We won’t forgive anyone from the mainland who points their blades at children! This is oppression! And no one should dare attack the dragons!” the principal bellowed, landing the final blow. “Rise up, Laikans! Rebel! Capture Lutiya, the mastermind, and protect the children!”

The academy’s guards and students devoted to the principal unsheathed their swords. They leaped forward and crossed blades with the oncoming Rave imperial army while some students froze in fear, left behind by it all.

Noyn turned around to face the Rave prince. “Wh-What’s the meaning of this?! Did you really...”

Lutiya didn’t answer as he let a smile dance on his lips. *I get it now*, he

thought. He should've known from the start. Adults will easily trample over others. His tiny offer of resistance and pride was stomped on while being told, "This is all for your sake. You'll understand when you're older." Just like that, they justified their claims and pretended that their acts never happened.

A portion of the cliff exploded and crumbled into the depths below. Their largest exit was now blocked.

It must be because the targets are students, Lutiya analyzed calmly. If word spread that the Rave imperial family ordered the imperial army and the dragons to attack other students, even the most temperate of Laikans would rise up in fury to aid the revolt. Lutiya would be nothing more than a tearful sacrifice.

The dragons started going berserk because of Gunther's Draco Flute. His forbidden research would be covered up by the mainland—the principal used that to his advantage. Lutiya wasn't even sure if the current soldiers fighting were really from the Rave imperial army. *Do they not know that they're dancing within the palm of that principal's hand? Everyone should just die, then. Serves them right.* The fact that these thoughts plagued Lutiya's mind may have been proof that he was starting to become a good-for-nothing adult himself.

"Rise up, Azure Dragon class! There's no way that Lutiya would do something like this!" a powerful voice rang out as though admonishing the boy for his thoughts.

His small instructor kicked the soldiers away while bellowing—she didn't falter amid the explosions.

"This is a trap! Someone wants to get rid of Lutiya!" she shouted.

"D-Don't be ludicrous! The principal just said that Lutiya was the mastermind!"

"This must be the work of the Sewer Rats who envied us!" another added. "Y-You can't fool me!"

"If Lutiya could just control dragons, he didn't need to think of a plan to stop them, and he certainly didn't need to take command!" Jill roared back. The Gold Dragon class gasped and raised their heads. "If he had the authority to deploy the Rave imperial army, he wouldn't be here in the first place! Am I

wrong?!”

Someone stood up. The Azure Dragons grabbed their weapons.

“Something’s clearly amiss!” Jill said. “Use your heads and think about it! Sauté, go!”

The bird gave a loud cry and started kicking the butts of the stunned students, rounding them up. As the soldiers piled into the arena, Sauté threw a stuffed bear toward the army. Soldiers started entering from another direction, and dragons circled above, looking for their prey. A portion of the students were still suspicious of Lutiya and pointed their blades at him.

“B-But what can we do then?!” a student shouted, justifying the actions of the others who couldn’t fight.

A shower of magical energy exploded through the skies, shining down on the students and dispelling their hesitation. The instructor raised her sword toward the skies as though indicating that she was on the side of justice.

“Then believe in me! I’m your teacher!” she shouted.

A powerful ray of light stole the attention of the students as it glittered through the skies and created a path.

“The Rave Empire? The Grand Duchy of Laika? None of that matters! This is *your* school! Don’t be conveniently used by adults!” Jill yelled.

Her encouragement provided hope for students precisely because they were in the middle of turmoil. They were able to stand once more with trembling legs.

“Azure, Gold, and Purple Dragon classes! Follow me!” she ordered. “I won’t let any of you die!”

Cheers rose from the students. This was their answer.

“Lutiya, Noyn,” Jill said without turning around. “Take command and retreat. I’m sure that you two can do it.”

Noyn suppressed his tears and gulped. Lutiya clenched his fists and raised his voice—there was no time to cry.

“We’re good at running,” Lutiya shouted. “Azure Dragons, let’s lead the way! Let’s teach these elites how to flee!”

“Gold Dragons, take control of the Purple Dragon classes! Retreat! Don’t let the Azure Dragons get the best of us!”

Just as Raw had covered his ears, the dragons changed course and started attacking humans. People claimed that this was the work of Lutiya and the Rave imperial army. That made little sense. Jill knew that such a foolish claim couldn’t be justified as she swung her fists around. *We just ended the competition, and they were just beginning to change!* she thought.

Luckily, though it was only a portion, there were students who acted with her. She was especially grateful to Noyn, the class president of the Gold Dragons, for his cooperation. The confused students went with the flow and followed him. However, the enemy attacks were extremely efficient, and it was safe to say that this entire commotion was planned far in advance. Jill and her students would be at a disadvantage should this battle drag on.

“Miss Jill, the waiting room under the stands is open!” a student reported.

“There are no signs of enemies!”

“Good, then evacuate there for the time being!” she ordered. “Start by bringing in the injured! If you can still fight, make sure to maintain your formation!”

A few students, eager to escape the terrifying scene in front of them, couldn’t help but step forward. They were excited as they faced their first actual fight. Jill grabbed and flung a dragon headed toward them.

“Don’t step in front of me!” she ordered. “Is that clear? Continue defending!”

“B-But it feels like an unexpectedly easy fight,” a student of the Azure Dragon class shouted, their voice rising with excitement. “The dragons don’t seem to be unified under a leader.”

Indeed, the dragons seemed to be running wild just because they could, and they didn’t seem to be in a formation. However, the fact that they continued attacking Jill despite being with Raw was unheard of. And the Dragon King refused to pop out from Jill’s bag. Above all, a moment before the explosion,

she'd felt a presence for a split second—the presence of immense magical energy.

“Don't let your guard down,” she warned. “There's a powerful person somewhere. Did you guys not feel the overwhelming energy?”

“B-But Miss Jill, I'm sure you can—”

“No, I'm not confident that I can win.” The students turned pale as Jill maintained her composure. “They're hiding right now, but you guys mustn't do a thing. Got it?”

“O-Of course! But a person that even you can't handle?”

“A-Are they really a person? I can't believe it...” another student chimed in.

“How rude,” Jill replied. “There are quite a few people stronger than me, I'll have you know. The world is vast.”

For a moment, she wondered what her beloved was up to. If Hadis's identity was exposed in the middle of this confusion, it would cause a huge uproar. He had Rave by his side, and he was an expert when it came to fleeing, so Jill was sure that he'd be fine, but she was still anxious. Her impatience only grew when she knew that she couldn't have Raw communicate with them right now.

Once her students' safety was ensured, she wanted to head over to Hadis immediately. The emperor's judgment was imperative in this situation. The enemy was trying to make Lutiya take the fall and have the entirety of Laika up in arms against the empire. In short, the enemy was planning a rebellion.

Jill wasn't sure how many people would believe Gunther's claims, but currently, he was fanning the flames of anger that the Laikans had toward the Rave Empire. The students falling victim to the dragons could easily cause this situation to explode and escalate into a full-on war. And that wasn't all. What about the dragons? If the flute in question was this effective, *who* was behind it all, and what was the scale of this entire operation? MinerD was close to Gunther. What was the chancellor up to? She lacked vital information to fit in the pieces.

For now, the safety of her students took priority. Above all, she was determined to never hand Lutiya over to the enemy. Should a member of the

Rave imperial family be killed, Hadis would be forced to make a decision about invading Laika.

“Miss Jill, the enemy’s starting to retreat!” a student cried joyfully.

“It could be a trap! Don’t pursue them and retreat!” Jill shouted.

A flash of light destroyed the students’ sliver of hope. The intense power was so overwhelming that dragons and other attacks couldn’t even compare. A fissure gouged out the ground, creating a line that separated the students from the battle. Dust and smoke billowed in the air. Jill had managed to create a barrier, protecting everyone from the blast, but she soon lasered in on one person within the smoke. *This is who I sensed earlier.*

The soldiers had retreated so that they wouldn’t fall victim to this attack.

“Wh-What was that?! What was that power?!” a student cried.

“Th-The ground cracked...”

The terrified students voiced their confusion as some fell to the ground in fear. That single attack had lowered morale drastically, and Jill clicked her tongue in annoyance.

“I’ll handle them,” she said. “In the meantime, I need you all to run. Evacuate this place.”

“Huh? So, *you* want to go against me? Interesting,” a familiar voice replied.

Jill froze in place. The smoke slowly started to disperse, but the dragons never once tried to attack. They were still going berserk, but their instincts had kicked in. They intuited that they couldn’t stand a chance and couldn’t oppose this man. And they were right.

“I’ll handle this. All of you, stand back,” he said.

He didn’t even have a title here, but he ordered others around as though it was natural. He exerted such power that even Jill’s enemies used this opportune moment to flee. Indeed, Jill had been wary about a powerful presence lurking about, and as the wind blew, the answer appeared right in front of her.

“Are you so shocked that you can’t speak?” he asked. “But I had a hunch, you

know. Ever since I joined the Liberation Army, I thought that I'd go against you. I didn't want to make such a sorrowful reunion."

His silky black hair fluttered in the breeze as his long eyelashes encapsulated his golden eyes. His gentle demeanor only accentuated his beauty as he elegantly unsheathed his blade that glimmered under the blue skies.

"Now then, may I ask you to be my opponent, teacher with the amethyst eyes?"

It'd been two months since Jill saw her husband, but he flashed a needlessly handsome smile. Jill felt something snap within her.

"You little!!!" she roared with anger.

The world was indeed a vast place. But at times, it felt so very small.

Chapter 5: The Young Dragons' Resistance

HADIS Teos Rave was strong. Jill had never doubted that. In her previous timeline, she'd experienced as much firsthand. He always seemed to taunt and toy with her on the battlefield.

However, she never expected to face him in this timeline.

A blow came from above, and Jill, unable to absorb the attack, fell to the ground and barely managed to parry it. She got right back up, but another flash of light came at her from the side. She just barely managed to defend herself with her longsword, but she was blown back in the process.

Dammit! He's not even using the Heavenly Sword, but he's so strong! And it pisses me off that he's sort of holding back!

"M-Miss Jill!" a student cried.

"M-Magic squad, take aim! Try to at least stop the enemy!" another shouted.

"No! Stay back!" Jill ordered sternly.

The emperor glanced at the students and quirked up one side of his perfect lips. "Your students look up to you, Miss Jill."

Together with his insinuating comment, he brought down another attack, but Jill was able to defend herself. She was certain he was holding back.

"What...is the meaning of this, Your Majesty?!" she gasped. "Please tell me!"

She countered his swing, but he easily parried it. Hadis widened his eyes in an exaggerated manner.

"Explain? But why? I don't know you," he replied coolly.

"You don't know the face of your wife?! How can you call yourself a husband?!" she shouted.

"Wife? How could I possibly marry my younger *sister*?"

His cold tone made Jill gasp. She remembered that she'd called Hadis her

older brother.

“Is *that* why you’re doing all this?! Are you stupid?!” she roared.

“Oh? So, you’re turning defiant now. Yeah, I don’t think I know you,” he replied.

Just as Jill lost her balance, another attack came from the skies. She used both hands to support herself under her longsword, using all the magical energy she had. A circular crack ran through the ground under her as magical energy coursed through her surroundings. Hadis, who’d only used one arm to fight, looked at her coolly.

“You’re strong. I’d expect no less from you, Miss Jill,” he said.

Every word that left his lips annoyed Jill. She hoped that he’d obediently wait for her back home, but he had apparently been sulking the entire time. Hence, he didn’t even bring her lunch. And away from his wife’s watchful eye, he started hanging out with some suspicious friends. *Yep, I don’t even want to begin to understand that!*

“Y-You’re not cute when you become this jealous!” Jill yelled. When she heard Hadis loudly snort, she braced herself and shouted, “Do you want to get stepped on again, you idiot husband?! I won’t divorce you! I never will!”

“Underneath the waiting room that you guys are trying to escape to is a hidden passageway. I finished cleaning the place for you,” Hadis replied. His face was obscured by the crackles of magic, making it difficult to make out his expression. “The passageway connects to the academy. You can either stay holed up in there or escape—I’ll leave that choice to you. I’ll look into why the dragons are acting weird. I’d have trouble sleeping at night if the students were all massacred. Why don’t you protect those students instead of me?”

“Are you *still* sulking?! So not cute when you’re this jealous!” Jill snapped.

“Did you know? I’m unexpectedly good at what I do.”

She felt the weight on her blade lifting as a shockwave of magic flew toward her.

“You don’t need to worry about me, Miss Jill,” he said.

As Jill was blown in the air, Hadis turned on his heel and headed in the opposite direction. Just as she did a somersault and landed, he was gone. While she'd been fighting Hadis, the enemy had started retreating.

Though only temporarily, Jill and her students were spared. She wasn't happy about it at all, and she couldn't feel the least bit relieved.

"Miss Jill! I'm glad you're all right. What was that guy's problem?" a student asked.

"Are you injured? Are you okay?!" another asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. But we should quickly retreat," Jill replied.

"Miss Jill? What's wrong? You're not acting like your usual self..."

"There's a hidden passageway underneath this room that apparently leads to the academy building," she said. "Search the area."

The students glanced at each other, but Noyn immediately headed inside and searched the floor. He soon found a hidden door that reacted to magic. The staircase that headed down was filled with unconscious and tied-up soldiers.

"Wh-What's going on?! Aren't they allies of the guy who just attacked us? Did they have a falling out?" a student gasped.

"You didn't do this, did you, Miss Jill?" Lutiya asked dubiously. "You've been acting a little odd."

Jill smiled weakly. "You're an honest and good kid, Lutiya..."

"Huh?! How could you come to that conclusion? You've seen me in action, haven't you?"

"A truly twisted person will proudly boast about how honest and good they are, and they'll claim that all's well that ends well while acting victorious and laughing through their nose at you!" she huffed.

Simply remembering Hadis's smug face made her want to punch him, but for now, she had little choice but to follow his orders.

"We'll move to the school building for now," she ordered. "We need to pull ourselves together before we can do anything."

“But Miss Jill, someone might be after us or waiting to attack...” a student protested.

“Doubt it. And even if there is, I can handle them.”

All right, then, she thought. If you're so good at everything, why don't you show me what you can do? And if you can't...I'll stomp on you with everything I've got.

With that, Jill stepped forward.



ROGER had given a simple order for Hadis, who was acting as a spy. His goal was to sneak into the Liberation Army, which was disguising itself as the Rave Imperial Army, and observe his surroundings. Hadis didn't expect to receive an important role, having just joined their ranks, and he was surprised by Roger's decision to assign it to him. The man surely knew how strong the emperor was, and yet, he was told to simply watch on. *Thanks to that, I can move pretty freely, but I can't shake this suspicion,* Hadis thought.

He blended into the crowd of evacuating people and glanced around. The audience and citizens cowered in fear as the dragons flew high above while destroying the arena. The teachers of the academy claimed to be a part of the Liberation Army and declared that Prince Lutiya had ordered the Rave imperial army to invade while they guided the people to safety.

The Liberation Army's plan had been that the Gold Dragons would be victorious, and allies sneaking into the academy under the guise of being from the imperial army would declare the start of a riot. Roger had been cautious, fearing that some radicals would try to capture Chancellor Miner.

However, it soon became clear that Lutiya was the one being targeted, and the crowd showed no signs of calming down. The Azure Dragons' victory had thrown a wrench into their plans, but the sudden appearance of the Rave imperial army that attacked students and the Liberation Army that protected students and the audience was far too convenient.

Their plan had always been to act like the Rave army and attack students, using that as justification to start a rebellion. The spies were being fed false

information. The spies had likely been exposed to Gunther.

Above all, this grating flute sound was problematic. Rave's voice couldn't reach the dragons, much less Raw's. Hadis, who'd received the protection of the dragons, felt his skin tingle unpleasantly. If he stepped too far away, he wouldn't be able to communicate efficiently with Rave. This ominous feeling was akin to the Goddess humming in his ear. *Is Kratos involved in this? Disgusting.*

"Hadis, over here!" Rave called. "I think we've found the Draco Flute."

Hadis had Rave accompany Roger. The Dragon God spotted the emperor from the skies and glided down onto his shoulder.

"But it seems like Gunther saw through this undercover operation," the Dragon God warned. "A fight's broken out."

Hadis expected as much and sighed. He teleported to the location that Rave had told him. He landed on the highest floor of the academy building. The floor was an obvious symbol of status as the ground was fixed with plush red carpets, reminiscent of a manor of a noble family.

"It's quiet..." the emperor muttered.

Suddenly, there was a flash of magical energy, causing him to look up. Rave disappeared into Hadis's body. There was an explosion from within the principal's office. A familiar man that Hadis had talked with in the tavern flew out and rolled on the corridor.

"Why don't you understand, Roger?!"

"Because the Draco Flute didn't begin its research for this purpose!" he yelled back.

There was a clang of metal and a sharp explosion landed precisely on its target. Hadis narrowed his eyes, trying to see through the thick smoke. A man clicked his tongue and ran past Hadis, believing that he couldn't win his fight. The emperor recognized this man from the tavern as well. Roger lowered his stance and propelled himself off the ground, slashing at the back of the man who tried to flee. That was likely the last person. Silence settled within the corridor.

“Oh, so you came, Hadis,” Roger said in his usual aloof manner as he turned around. “Well, I would’ve expected as much.”

His entire body was covered with red splotches. Hadis wasn’t sure if the blood belonged to Roger or someone else, but the man had sweat dripping down his smiling face.

“Whew, that was rough,” Roger said. “I didn’t think all of my spies aimed to monopolize the Draco Flute. Some of them were even connected to Gunther.”

When Hadis peered inside the half-broken door, he saw some people on the ground—they were part of the group he saw at the tavern.

“Did everyone betray you?” Hadis asked.

“Seems like it. I had an inkling that they might, but I’ve got a bad habit of wanting to trust the best in people.”

“What about the Draco Flute? Did you get it?”

“Hadis, are you anti-Rave too? Do you want to destroy the empire?” Roger asked, pointing his blood-soaked blade at the Dragon Emperor.

“And what if I said that I was?”

Roger widened his eyes in surprise. “I was actually joking, but...”

“What if I said that I wanted to destroy the Rave Empire and that the imperial family were all wrong?”

Roger tried to laugh it off, but he pursed his lips. Doubt and suspicion flickered behind his calm gaze.

Hadis looked back at him with icy eyes. “And who are you? How can you ask me that question?”

Roger lowered his blade, flinging the blood that was on his hand and weapon. He sheathed his sword and gave a strained smile. “I told you that I’m just joking,” he said. “I found the Draco Flute. Over here.”

He turned on his heel and returned to the principal’s office. The moment he placed his hands on the luxurious desk by the window, the amber desk glowed with magical energy, and veins of magic coursed through the entire room.

“It’s connected to the bell tower above,” he explained. “It’s where the bell rings for classes. This desk serves as a switch, channeling magical energy to activate the sound. I think I stopped the sound.” He pulled his hands away and tapped a finger on the desk. “No wonder I couldn’t find the flute. This entire room was the device, after all.”

“It’s like a giant music box that plays with magic,” Hadis observed. “It seems impossible to carry around.”

“You’d think that, right? But take a look at this. These are the documents that Gunther tried to dispose of.”

Hadis was offered a stack of papers that had been scattered on the desk and the floor. There was a diagram and simple explanation on the highest floor of the building and the bell tower. He sifted through the documents and read them out loud.

“The one at the academy is a prototype... Research has been handed to another party in hopes of making this device more compact and increasing the effect of the magic. The academy will continue to gather the cries of dragons in hopes of completing this device. The cries of the black dragons in particular, will become necessary.”

To train excellent students, the academy received dragons from the Rave Empire, and they didn’t struggle with procuring this rare resource.

“The research itself has been passed along to someone else...” Hadis muttered.

“Yep,” Roger nodded. “And this is the worst part.”

Roger unfurled a half-burned letter. Only the upper half of this document remained, but the date was visible—about four months ago. The sender was unknown, but the receiver’s name was legible.

“To Chancellor MinerD. Regarding the Dragon’s Music Box...” Hadis read.

The phrasing was indirect, but the implication was clear.

“You were fooled,” Hadis concluded. “MinerD already has the Draco Flute.”

Roger’s role was to collect the Draco Flute at the academy and turn it into

Minerd and the Rave Empire as proof. But according to the letter, Minerd had received the flute or an item awfully close to it nearly six months ago. And yet, the chancellor had claimed that there was no proof to convict Gunther—a clear ploy to buy time.

“Minerd’s guilty. In fact, there’s a good chance that he’s connected to Gunther,” Hadis theorized.

Minerd never even tried to stop Gunther. The fact the mainland wasn’t hearing about any of this would make sense if Gunther was in on it from the start.

“We can’t say for sure yet,” Roger countered. “I heard that Minerd was injured and carried into city hall.”

“That intel came from the people who betrayed us, no? Are you going to believe them? The fact that all your spies were exposed and the squad that he created under his order only left you as the sole loyal man could all be explained away if he was guilty.”

Roger had been squatting on the ground with a fist on his forehead. He stood up and smiled. “I’m sorry. I just need to meet with Minerd first. I don’t want to believe it. I don’t want to believe that he took this research and used it for nefarious purposes.”

“Are you...perhaps involved in this research?” Hadis asked.

Roger didn’t look like a researcher, but perhaps he was. However, the man in question narrowed his eyes and fixed his gaze on the ground before giving a bright smile.

“Nah,” he said. “I just knew someone who was one of the first to research about humans communicating with dragons. They wanted me to prevent anyone from using it for nefarious reasons. So, I’ve gotta stop this. I might be too late, though.”

“Hmm...” Hadis replied. “Is this person your lover? A friend? Or a family member?”

“Whoa, you’re a curious guy. But it’s a secret!”

“Don’t mess with me. Do you wanna die?” Hadis countered.

“Arnold.”

Hadis was paralyzed with shock as he heard that familiar name.

But Roger didn’t meet his eyes as he continued, “Arnold Teos Rave. He was the man who suggested researching better means of communicating with dragons. This was about a decade ago. He was a wonderful crown prince. Do you know him?”

“I...know his name,” Hadis admitted.

“Then we can cut to the chase. Even if people aren’t trustworthy, if the dragons could prove their trustworthiness, Arnold felt like the Dragon Emperor would be welcomed warmly. It started as political research, but I guess some people found this to be inconvenient in Rave. It passed through many hands and ended up in this form. This isn’t doing him justice at all.”

Roger left the room without an ounce of hesitation. He was likely headed for city hall and left Hadis behind.

“What do we do?” Rave asked gingerly. **“If you don’t quickly return to the Rave Empire and act, it’ll be too late.”**

“We can’t use dragons, and the fact that you think it’s too late implies that it already is. I should try to end it here,” Hadis replied. “And...”

“I’ve gotta stop this,” Roger had said. His profile, which displayed his resignation yet clung to a sliver of hope, bothered Hadis. And the inclusion of Arnold’s name struck him.

As Roger took large strides down the corridor, Hadis tried to follow suit, but he suddenly covered his ears. He only realized that this was the sound of a flute after Rave shouted.

“I thought he stopped it!” the Dragon God yelled. **“Where is this coming from?! And this sound is on a different level!”**

A dragon’s wingbeats blew the side of the building open as though to answer the question. The Draco Flute in the principal’s office should’ve been shattered, but the dragons continued their attacks. The red dragons took the lead as

multiple beasts targeted Roger.

Roger braced himself, but it was impossible to fight back against several dragons, especially a red one, in this cramped space. He swiftly unleashed a ray of magical light, scattering the dragons' flames as his footing started to crumble.

Hadis dashed ahead and grabbed Roger's arm, bringing them to a corner of the corridor. A dragon's talon scratched the emperor, ripping his clothes. Roger stared at him in shock.

"Let go!" he said. "I'm fine! You'll—"

"Shut up," Hadis snapped.

These dragons were clearly not in their right mind. They didn't see Hadis as the Dragon Emperor and didn't listen to orders. However, surely these beasts could intuitively understand who was stronger.

"Stand down," Hadis ordered, his piercing golden eyes causing the dragons to falter.

He'd let his guard down just a hair, and he noticed a precise bullet of magical energy making its way toward him. It cut through the air like it was threading a needle, and its power couldn't be stopped by a normal barrier. Hadis was a moment too slow to notice the attack. *Someone's shooting at me?! Are these dragons bait?!*

But Hadis could dodge just enough to prevent a fatal injury. He'd be able to overcome this situation with just a scratch...if Roger didn't jump out.

A red bead whizzed past Hadis's cheek. The barrier that had been set to diminish the attack's intensity had been penetrated, and the dragons took to the skies and fled in surprise.

"You're safe..." Roger managed to mutter with a strained smile as he collapsed.

Hadis looked on in astonishment, but he quickly clicked his tongue and scooped up Roger. With the injured man on his back, the emperor jumped out of the crumbled wall and outside of the academy building. The sniper was so

skilled that they'd hid their presence from Hadis until the absolute last second—there was a chance that the emperor was still being aimed at.

“Are you an idiot?” Hadis scolded. “I could’ve dodged the attack and been fine!”

“Yeah, I know... Heh... But I tried to protect you anyway,” Roger replied weakly.

His frail voice caused Hadis to panic. The emperor glanced around the moment he landed, but there were no signs of a sniper. They were likely making sure that their position wasn't given away. Hadis placed Roger's body behind some thickets and inspected the wound. The bullet had cleanly penetrated his side, but it was filled with magical energy. Roger should've been able to use his magic to prevent his organs from taking the brunt of the attack, but he used too much of his stamina. Blood continued to flow out of his injury.

“Hey, keep it together!” Hadis shouted. “You know that I'm the Dragon Emperor, don't you?!”

“Hmm? Yeah... I sort of thought so midway...” Roger muttered.

“Then why?! What's your relationship with Arnold and Minerd?! I'm not letting you leave this battle without explaining yourself first! Don't mess with me!”

Hadis grabbed Roger's jacket to stop the blood. Roger's breathing turned shallow.

“If...Gunther and Minerd...were joining forces...it wouldn't be weird...if they tried to invade Rave... You might've...noticed it too...” Roger whispered hoarsely.

That was definitely possible. The sniper from before was clearly aiming at Hadis.

“I kept it quiet...from Minerd...but maybe he...saw through my half-baked... effort,” Roger muttered, mocking himself before he clasped Hadis's shoulder. “Hadis... Listen well. If... If Minerd can't...be stopped...and it's too late...take my head. You can use it as proof...of a rebellion.”

Hadis, who was hastily tying the jacket around the wound in lieu of bandage, stopped moving his hands.

"I think...Elentzia will at least remember...my face," Roger whispered. "Not sure...about Vissel or Risteard... Haha... Seven years is a long time..."

"You..." Hadis started.

"You've grown...Hadis."

The emperor widened his eyes as Roger smiled and closed his.

"Hadis! Will this guy be okay?!" Rave shouted in a panic.

"His heart's still beating. He's just unconscious. But..." Hadis bit his lip as dragons flew above him.

They were circling the academy. If Hadis was caught now, he might come under attack again. It would be easy to crush this rebellion, but he couldn't let the research on dragons make its rounds.

One wrong move, and this research would bend logic. And if Kratos ever got a hold of this... *What would happen to Rave? Will he lose his divinity again?* Hadis placed a hand on his forehead to calm down and took deep breaths. *On the surface, MinerD is in a non-radical faction. If a temperate man like him were to switch sides and start an opposition, he'd gain the trust of other non-radicals and the citizens who would follow his views. The sacrifice of students at the academy is the perfect reason to change his political stance. In other words, if a student doesn't fall victim, MinerD won't show his true colors... What do I do?*

He couldn't leave Roger here either. He was tempted to hurl his rage at someone.

"Ugh, I knew I should've killed all those students..." Hadis muttered. "Jill will immediately try to protect people who aren't me... It's hard being a married man."

"That again?" Rave asked, incredulous.

Hadis ignored the Dragon God's grievance and stood with Roger pulled onto his back. *He's heavy. What a pain. I've had enough of this crap!* It would've been far easier to lay waste to this land, but if he didn't execute the happy

family plan perfectly, his wife would get angry within. He had no choice.

Hadis had chosen to kneel before his wife, after all.



HADIS'S claims weren't all lies, it seemed; he could do some things well enough. There weren't any enemies in the hidden passageway, and the students made it to the massive basement without issue. Perhaps it was created to serve as a storage space; shelves lined the walls and candle stands stood in the corners, but they were all covered with dust and cobwebs. There were also a few adjoining rooms, and in the back was a staircase. Above them was a handle.

"Miss Jill, it won't open," a student reported back, trying the shaft. "It might be blocked by something."

Hadis had likely blocked off the area so that the soldiers couldn't make their way inside. Jill stepped forward, touched the handle, and felt a hint of magic.

"This probably won't open unless you resonate with the same magical pressure," she said. "It's probably the exit, so I'll open it."

"Miss Jill, why don't we use this as our base before we leave?" Noyn suggested, worried about the injured students. "There aren't any signs of people coming after us for now, and the only exits are the one above us and that door over there. We should rotate people keeping watch and rest."

Jill nodded in agreement.

"Then let's send a few people to scout the area," Lutiya suggested. "If the academy's right above us, we should gather some food and medical supplies. Or else, we can't rest well. Miss Jill, if you open the door, I'll go out with you. Azure Dragons, come with me."

"Then I should go," Noyn insisted. "The Gold Dragons are more familiar with the academy building."

"But we're better at sneaking in. And if people charge in here, it's better if I'm gone. They're after me, and we've got wounded students here."

Noyn frowned, but he couldn't refute this logic. Lutiya flashed a smug grin,

but flinched when he saw Jill.

“Wh-What’s with that face, Miss Jill?” he demanded.

“I just thought that this is what youth is about...” she replied. “Being young is great.”

“You’re younger than us, ma’am. Come on, open it and let’s go.” Lutiya pouted and urged Jill to open the door, but she was happy to see him mature a bit.

But his older brother still has some growing to do...

As her husband’s face flashed across her mind, irritating her, she adjusted her magical pressure. An exit slowly emerged and automatically opened. Jill peeked her head out, confirmed that the coast was clear, and had Lutiya and a few other students step outside. Luckily, they were right below a kitchen—the basement may have been used to store food in the past. Lutiya quickly called out to Noyn, and they had a few students keep watch while food and water were carried to the corridor below.

The exhausted students welcomed these supplies with open arms, but dragons were soaring through the skies out the window. There were likely no enemies around because they didn’t want to get caught in the crossfire. If Jill and her students were caught, there was no telling what would happen.

Jill peeked out of the kitchen and glanced down the corridor.

“If you’re gonna scout, I’m going with you,” Lutiya said, clasping her shoulder.

“I’ll go too,” Noyn chimed in. “We’ve finished carrying the supplies.”

“But if you guys don’t stay with them, I think the students will be anxious...” Jill refuted.

“We’re going,” the two boys replied firmly.

Jill wasn’t sure what to do, her expression clouding.

“We’ll be fine, Miss Jill!” the other students called out. “If you close this door with the magic you used earlier, we can make do. Instructor Sauté and Mr. Bear are with us, too!”

“Chirp!” Sauté energetically cried.

Jill gave a reluctant nod. “All right, the three of us will go,” she relented. “Both of you will listen to my orders. Is that clear?”

“I know,” Lutiya replied. “The infirmary’s this way.”

“We’d have to cross a passageway with that route. We should go to the second floor and then descend to the infirmary to stay out of view,” Noyn replied.

“Huh? We’ll be going the long way around then. Can’t you see that needlessly spending more time in the open is more dangerous?”

“And no fighting!” Jill barked firmly.

The two fell silent and followed her. Luckily, they arrived at the infirmary without running into anyone. They grabbed everything they could and made their way back, carefully scanning their surroundings.

Noyn gave a sidelong glance at a completely destroyed corridor. “This entire building’s a mess...” he muttered glumly. “Do you think the dragons went around and wreaked havoc? The school’s so...”

“Heh, serves ’em right,” Lutiya snorted. “Oh, I know. Maybe I’ll leave this academy and enroll in your school, Miss Jill.”

“Are you starting an academy, ma’am?” Noyn asked in surprise.

“Yep. That’s my current goal,” Jill replied. “It’s still in the far future, though.”

“Want me to help you out?” Lutiya offered. “I’m sure I can grant your wish in an instant. If the next Grand Duke of Laika is a student, many would want to join to curry favor with me. Finances, networking, and influence can be all left to me.”

Jill, who was carrying medical supplies, chuckled. “I’m grateful for your offer, but I’ll have to turn you down. It’s not good for a teacher to be indebted to their student.”

“Then it’s not an issue if we’re not student and teacher, right?” Lutiya asked.

“I guess so. If you can help me out when you become an adult, I’d be

grateful,” Jill said.

“...Miss Jill, is it true that you’ve got a boyfriend?”

“That’s random. Did the girls tell you something?” Jill stopped and turned around, but Lutiya’s downcast eyes didn’t meet her gaze. For some reason, Noyn was anxiously glancing between the two. “Speaking of, I *did* promise to tell them if they won,” Jill said. “But it’s hard to explain. I don’t like blabbing about this to others, and things currently aren’t going well with him...”

“Is it a political marriage?” Lutiya asked. “Then I—”

“Hello? Uh, testing, testing. Hello, ladies and gentlemen, students of the academy!” a familiar voice suddenly said as Jill was gazing into the distance. It belonged to the very man that she currently wasn’t getting along with.

Before Jill could turn around, Noyn and Lutiya crouched behind a corridor as they gazed at the roof of the building across from them.

“The academy has been completely surrounded. So, yeah, stop resisting and please surrender or something,” the emperor said.

His deliberately deadpan tone made it apparent that he lacked enthusiasm, but Noyn and Lutiya grew more serious than before.

“Isn’t he the man that you fought at the arena earlier, Miss Jill?” Noyn asked. “And isn’t that...”

“Your teacher tried to steal information from us to protect you kids. What a bad guy, huh?” Hadis announced with a man beside him.

“That’s Mr. Brooder! He was caught?!” Lutiya gasped.

Hadis’s appearance aside, Jill didn’t expect to see Roger here. She quickly hid herself and turned toward the building across from her. Hadis was leading several soldiers with a megaphone in one hand. In the other, he was restraining Roger, who’d been bound with rope. And one more figure entered only Jill’s vision.

“Ah, there you are, Missy! Yoo-hoo! Heya, I’ll be your translator for today!” the Dragon God called.

“If you don’t surrender, I’ll drop this instructor from the roof. I’ll count down

from ten before I do it,” Hadis proclaimed.

“Missy, can you catch that instructor and flee? You can do it, can’t you?” Rave asked.

“Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three...”

Jill couldn’t keep up with Hadis’s flat tone and Rave’s half-baked explanation, but she managed to hold Lutiya and Noyn back as they tried to jump out and save their teacher.

“I’ll save Mr. Brooder,” she said firmly. “You guys stay here. I’ll leave the supplies to you.”

“We’ve told this teacher our next move, so have him tell you all about it later,” Rave said.

“Two... One! How unfortunate. No one surrendered. Okay, goodbye, instructor,” Hadis said.

“I’ll leave the rest to you, Missy!” Rave shouted.

These requests were nothing short of unreasonable, but Jill leaped out the window. She caught Roger, who’d been pushed off the roof, kicked the wall of the building, and jumped back up to the roof. The soldiers panicked upon seeing her and awkwardly fumbled around. She had more than enough time to look up and lock eyes with Hadis. Jill expected him to be smiling haughtily, but she was astonished to see him still sulking. His thin lips started to move, and she narrowed her eyes, trying to parse his silent message.

Do you love...

“*Do you love me?*” His lips formed his message.

“Huh?! Why’re you asking that now?!” Jill cried, clearly flustered.

Hadis took that moment to unleash a burst of magical energy at Jill. It just barely went above Jill’s head and made contact with the crumbling building. Smoke billowed in the air. Jill used it to obscure herself and returned to Noyn and Lutiya’s side.

“Darn, I knew you survivors were hiding somewhere,” Hadis called in the same deadpan tone. “Listen up. In three hours, we’ll go all-out and attack you

guys, so you best be prepared. All right, thanks for gathering today. Good work. Let's disperse and rest until the attack."

"Miss Jill, how's Mr. Brooder?!" Lutiya gasped.

"He's fine. He's still alive," Jill said before turning to Roger. "Please bear with me for a bit more. I'll let you talk once we get to a safe location."

Hadis lacked enthusiasm, but it'd be troublesome if there were any attacks. Jill felt a pang of guilt, but she kept Roger tied and hoisted him onto her back, his legs dragging against the ground behind her. Noyn and Lutiya carried the supplies and followed her.

"Miss Jill's back! How was— Mr. Brooder?!" a student gasped.

"Make way, please," Jill replied. "And don't forget to close the door."

She first untied the rope that bound Roger's hands and removed his gag.

Roger gasped for air, taking deep breaths. "He really pushed me off, didn't he?! I protected him and got injured and this is the thanks I get?!"

"Huh?? What're you on about?" Lutiya asked.

"Lutiya, stop," Jill said. "Mr. Brooder, have you heard anything about the attack?"

The students started to anxiously chatter away as Roger snapped back to his senses and lowered his tone.

"R-Right, I suppose that takes priority..." he muttered. "But why did he want me to tell you, Miss Jill?"

"Please, we don't have time," she urged. "Just tell me what he said, and I'll understand."

Encouraged by her firm words, Roger gave a hesitant glance at his surroundings before he steeled himself and began to explain. "Then I'll just say it outright. He said, 'I'll attack. I need you all to die.'"

"Die?!" a student gasped.

"Everyone, remain quiet!" Jill ordered. "There's more to it, isn't there?"

Roger nodded. "If that happens, Laika will go to war against Rave."

“So we *are* going to war then?!” a student said.

“There’s more,” Roger continued. “‘Conquer the city hall for now. I leave that to you.’ And that was it.”

Everyone fell silent at the last bit. They had no idea what this message meant, and even Roger looked befuddled.

Jill slumped her shoulders. “I understand. In other words, the massacre of the academy’s students will be used as propaganda for Laika to wage war against the Rave Empire. We have to die and become sacrifices, or else the enemy won’t show themselves. However, once they do, it should lead to our victory. And if the students who had supposedly died took control of city hall... That was easy to parse.”

“I don’t understand at all!” Noyn cried. “What do you mean by we all ‘have to die,’ ma’am?!”

“We just have to act like we were wiped out, using the attack that’ll come in three hours,” Jill replied.

“He said that he’d completely decimate the academy...” Roger said carefully.

She nodded. “We’re underground. I’ll set up a barrier and hold out. Fortunately, we’ve got two to three days’ worth of food and medical supplies. It’s a bit cramped, but I think we can make do. And this is annoying to say, but I’m sure His Majesty will go easy on us.”

“I was given this. It’s a map of the entire city,” Roger said, taking a piece of paper from his chest pocket. He narrowed his eyes. “I see now. You call him, ‘His Majesty,’ and he asked you to take care of this. You must be the Dragon Consort.”

The students all looked taken aback, but Jill forced a smile and stood up.

“There isn’t time,” she said. “Noyn, Lutiya. While I’m defending this area, I want you two to think of a rough plan to take control of city hall. The rest of you, please treat Mr. Brooder’s wounds.”

“B-But Miss Jill, dragons burn magic. I don’t think you can handle all of this alone,” Noyn said, speaking his mind though he couldn’t mask his hesitation.

Jill made a humorous attempt to look offended. “How rude. Are you saying that a Dragon Consort would lose to *dragons*?”

“Are you really the Dragon Consort?” Lutiya asked quietly. That would make this child her brother-in-law.

“Right now, I’m your teacher,” Jill said with a smile.

You’ll become my in-law after this is all over.



“DRAGONS attack the military academy, killing all students. Academy in ruins. What do we do about the sacrificed children?”

“Academy principal heads to save students and is now missing. Chancellor sustains a few injuries.”

“Is the mainland ignoring Chancellor Miner’s protests? Shadows of military forces loom as they monitor the ports.”

The newspaper headlines made it easy for readers to understand what had occurred within the past two days. The articles were plastered all over the walls of the basement where the students hid. According to their instructor, they were receiving a lesson on propaganda.

“Everyone’s so stupid...” Lutiya muttered to himself.

This bored him. The citizens of Laika didn’t realize that they were being brainwashed. But every time he ridiculed these articles, he was tempted to shout at himself. What was he doing here, then?

“Lutiya, it’s our turn to keep watch. Here’s the lantern,” Noyn said, thrusting the lantern toward the dazed boy. He sounded as though he’d been longtime friends with Lutiya. Lutiya angrily grabbed the lantern from Noyn’s hand.

“I know. You’re so noisy these days,” Lutiya grumbled.

“Then be more punctual,” Noyn countered. “Didn’t Miss Jill tell you never to neglect being ready on time?”

For a split second, Lutiya stopped when he heard the name of his teacher. Noyn realized that and shut his mouth. Lutiya was annoyed by this reaction, but

he pursed his lips and quietly left to keep watch. He climbed up the ladder, adjusted his magical pressure, and opened the door to head outside. The former kitchen for the dining hall had a view of the night sky. This was all thanks to the magical attack that had occurred two days ago. Dragons were no longer flying nearby.

“It’s only been two days, but what a transformation...” Noyn said, stepping on debris.

Some of the walls and ceiling remained intact, but as the newspapers had said, it was practically in ruins.

“What are you being so wistful for?” Lutiya asked. “You knew this would happen. There were signs.”

“Signs... I guess so. You’re avoiding Miss Jill, aren’t you, Lutiya?”

The sudden topic made Lutiya’s foot get caught in the rubble and he almost tripped.

“Honestly, I feel awkward about it too,” Noyn admitted. “A Dragon Consort? I didn’t think she was someone’s wife.”

“D-Don’t say it like that! That phrasing implies a lot of weird things, you pervert!” Lutiya cried.

“What?! But you’re also— No... Are you perhaps...”

Suddenly, a light entered Lutiya’s vision. He grabbed Noyn’s arm, and the two hid behind a crumbling wall. Noyn, getting the hint, turned off the lantern just as he heard footsteps walk past the wall.

“Mr. Brooder, there you are,” a voice said. “You’re making your rounds? That’s rare.”

“Your comments are as thorny as ever, Miss Jill,” Roger replied. “I don’t want to keep relying on the students.”

“I see. To tell you the truth, I’ve always wanted to ask you something, sir.”

Feeling relieved upon hearing the cheery voices of his instructors, Noyn tried to join them, but Lutiya grabbed his arm to stop him.

“I’ve said all that I can,” Roger said. “I’ve told you how I met Hadis, too.”

“No wonder His Majesty kept insisting that I was his younger sister...” Jill replied.

Noyn quietly whispered that eavesdropping wasn’t appropriate, but Lutiya glared at him to shut up.

“What do you wanna ask about? My identity?” Roger inquired.

“No, it’s about His Majesty,” Jill replied.

His Majesty, the Rave Emperor, Hadis Teos Rave, wasn’t related to Lutiya by blood. They were simply brothers on paper. Hadis, who’d been sent to live on the frontier before Lutiya was even born, was a complete stranger to him.

“I can imagine him sulking because I called him my ‘older brother.’ And I understand how he came to join the Liberation—I mean, the rebels. But did something happen before you were pushed off the roof, Mr. Brooder? He seemed a little...odd,” Jill said.

“I’ve got no idea,” Roger confessed. “He was working quite hard, though he looked disgruntled the entire time.”

“His Majesty is, in general, always smiling. I knew it. Something’s off. I thought he was just sulking, but he...he...he...”

Jill, possibly remembering something, covered her reddening cheeks with her hands. Her eyes were misty as she bit her lip. Lutiya wasn’t familiar with this expression, and even Roger looked a little troubled by it. Jill didn’t notice her shift in demeanor and looked down.

“H-He never acted spoiled like that before!” she mumbled. “His Majesty’s a real pain! He should just be more honest!”

“S-Sure...” Roger replied. “Uh, in any case, seems like it’s something only you can notice.”

After a moment, Jill’s entire face turned beet red, and smoke rose from her head. She was acting like a normal girl. Lutiya dug his nails into the wall as though he was subconsciously picking a scab.

“Y-You’re right. I understand,” Jill finally said. “I’m sorry for asking such a

weird— Why are you laughing?!”

“Nah, I just thought that the rumors were true. The Dragon Consort’s been leading the Dragon Emperor by the nose,” Roger replied.

“I am not! His Majesty doesn’t listen to me at all! I take my eyes off him for a few moments and look how he moves as he pleases! I asked Raw to contact him, but he won’t answer, and if I keep pestering Raw, he starts sulking too! I just can’t leave him alone for... Hey! Please stop laughing!”

“Sorry, sorry. It’s just that you guys really get along, huh? It really looks like you guys are in love.”

“Is that a problem?! How else could I have worked so hard as a teacher despite my inexperience?!”

These words stabbed Lutiya’s heart. Unable to bear it anymore, he stood up and swiftly fled from the scene, holding his breath to erase his presence. *Why did I expect anything else? She wasn’t doing this for me*, he thought.

“Lutiya, another crown prince died. The day you become the Rave Emperor is drawing near!”

“You’re splendid, Prince Lutiya! I’d expect no less from the next Rave Emperor!”

“Another Dragon Emperor with the Heavenly Sword appeared? I’m sure it’s just a rumor. He’ll die soon too.”

“He’s the true Dragon Emperor? So, Lutiya can no longer claim the throne?”

“The Rave imperial family isn’t related by blood to the Dragon Emperor?! Impossible... Then why did my daughter...”

“Prince Lutiya isn’t related to the Three Dukes either. We can only bow down to the Dragon Emperor and beg to be spared.”

“Are we seriously lowering our heads to the mainland just to have this boy accepted?! We’re mistaking the means for the end!”

“Then he’s nothing but dead weight. Who was the one who heralded the boy as the next Rave Emperor?”

The adults placed their own expectations on Lutiya before selfishly changing their tune. He thought that he'd already learned his lesson and stopped caring about these adults, but before he knew it, he placed his own expectations on others once more. He believed that his instructor could accept and spare him in his current state.

"I understand. I felt the same. I don't care about Laika or Rave."

The words of his half-brother echoed in his head. *Right, I can't forgive those who one-sidedly stepped all over me.* And the man who stood on the top of all of them was the Dragon Emperor.

"Hey, Lutiya! Why're you running away?!" Noyn asked, grabbing his arm.

Lutiya snapped back to his senses, but he couldn't look up. "I'm not running. We have to make our rounds, don't we? Oh, and you also seem to be placing quite a bit of trust in Miss Jill, but be careful. You heard what she said, didn't you? She didn't protect us for our sake. She's doing it for the *Dragon Emperor*."

"Wait! How'd you jump to that conclusion?"

"Our goals are the same for now, but you don't know when she can cut us off. Be prepared for that."

"Lutiya, face me! Miss Jill will never do something like that!"

"You don't know that!"

That's right, no one knows! Lutiya thought. His kind grandfather had always praised him for his excellence, and the adults around him had treated him kindly. Lutiya felt like their expectations were a bit exaggerated, but he didn't expect them to completely change their attitude. They started acting like Lutiya was at fault and cut him off while blaming him for everything.

As Lutiya staggered back, he was suddenly grabbed by the neck and restrained. Noyn, unable to react, failed to notice another person jumping out from the thickets and cutting him down.

"Noyn!" Lutiya shouted.

"Please be quiet, Prince Lutiya. We haven't killed him."

A blade was pointed at Noyn's neck. He was lying face down on the ground,

but he was taking shallow breaths. He was still alive, but blood seeped out from his wound.

“I was searching for your corpse just in case, but I’m glad to see you doing well,” the attacker said. “Do you have the item I told you about?”

“What are you talking about?” Lutiya asked.

“Were you too engrossed in your academy life? Have you forgotten your role? I’ve told you that the lizard-type magical beast is suspicious. And we’ve received intel that the beast is undoubtedly a black dragon. The Dragon Emperor is hidden somewhere, it seems. Where’s the device with the recorded cries of the black dragon?”

“I don’t know what you’re...” Lutiya started as a blade was raised toward Noyn. “Stop! I have it hidden away in a different location!”

The blade stopped just short of Noyn’s neck.

“I’m glad to hear that. Your brother would’ve been disappointed, I’ll have you know. Unlike the other one, who was kind to a fault, he thought that you were just like him.”

“What...are you planning on doing to me?” Lutiya asked. “Are you gonna kill me?”

“Weren’t you the one who claimed that you didn’t care what happened to you as long as both Laika and the Rave Empire could be crushed? But as you are the mastermind who dispatched the imperial army and attacked the academy, you still have your uses. His Excellency, Chancellor Miner, has ordered us to bring you back alive.”

Lutiya prayed that Noyn was unconscious and hadn’t heard any of this. He felt like a coward. Karma had finally caught up to him. He was just like his grandfather, who’d replaced the sorrowful loss of his daughter with anticipation of his grandson becoming the next emperor, only to become overcome with despair when that didn’t come to pass.

No one would come to save Lutiya. He was a traitor all along—no one needed to spare him. And that was just fine. The moment he told himself that, he immediately felt a lot better.

“All right. Then take me away,” Lutiya said. “But don’t kill him. He must’ve heard our conversation and realized that I was the true traitor—the mastermind behind the attack on this school. He’ll serve as a witness.”

“Hm, that’s true,” the attacker replied.

“Let go. I can walk by myself,” Lutiya said. “I’ll lead you to the item that you guys wanted.”

“Lu...tiya...” Noyn said in a hoarse whisper.

Lutiya’s back trembled as he erupted into laughter. “Yeah, this is the kind of guy that I am. You knew that, didn’t you? You can go on and tell everyone, including Miss Jill and even the Dragon Emperor. The dragons can’t be stopped. I’ll tell everyone about our plans to control city hall. Laika and Rave’s done for. Serves them all right.”

“From the start...you were...”

“That’s right. I knew. I knew everything. Brother Minerd came to me and said that we should ruin Laika and Rave together. I came to this academy to encourage Laika’s division from the mainland.” Lutiya laughed brightly and turned to his enemy who he felt could’ve been his friend one day. “I’ve been your enemy all along. Right from the start.”

He knew that no one would save him. He knew that very well. He just... wanted to confirm that once more.



EVERYONE fell silent as Jill’s fist slammed against the wall. The entire basement seemed to shudder. Noyn, who’d just explained how Lutiya disappeared, stiffened as bandages were wrapped around his body.

“So, you’re saying that the fact that I’m alive and our plan to take over city hall are exposed now?” Roger said calmly. He acted like the mature adult that he was.

“Exactly. They could attack us at any moment,” Noyn said.

“Then we should prepare to flee. Let’s postpone our plans, Miss Jill.”

“No...” Jill said, lowering her fist and casting a sweeping glance around the

room. “We should do the opposite and attack. Even if Lutiya blabbed everything, it doesn’t mean that our opponents can immediately react. They’ll prioritize completing that dragon-manipulating flute. Of course, our goals and routes will have to shift.”

“I guess we can pivot that way too...” Roger said. “Did Lutiya really betray us?”

“It’s all my fault,” Jill said. “I should’ve been more perceptive. I didn’t notice a single thing.”

As Jill faced down, she noticed everyone glancing at each other anxiously. *No, I have to hang in there*, she thought, raising her head. She needed to recharge during times like these.

“Raw, summon His Majesty. This is an emergency,” she ordered.

“Rawr...” Raw replied in protest.

The dragon sat beside Sauté against the wall and tried to hide inside of a bag. Jill grabbed his bottom, dragged him out of the bag, and plopped him on top of the desk.

“It’s an emergency!” Jill yelled. “Call him out! You can do that, can’t you?!”

“Rar... Rawr rawr rawr...”

“M-Miss Jill, you can’t force him. Raw doesn’t seem to like this,” Roger said gently.

“Or else, I’ll cry!” she proclaimed.

Raw and the others locked up when they heard her childish threat, but Jill paid them no heed.

“Do you want me to cry? Are you gonna leave me alone?! Is that what a husband does?! Tell him to come right this instant! Right here! Right now! Teleport right in front of me! His wife’s downhearted! Hey, are you listening to me, you idiot husband—”

“I’m the Dragon Emperor,” a voice called out from behind. “If you call me out so casually, it’ll affect my dignity, I think.”

Jill jolted upon hearing the voice, not expecting him to appear so quickly.

When she turned around, Hadis was standing there with a tiresome face.

“Not once did you call for me when you were training the students,” he said. “So, what? Do you want me to save your students or something, Miss Jill?”

She couldn’t find the words to refute.

“I’m having Rave scout out that kid’s whereabouts right now,” he continued casually. “I’ll also hear him out, I guess, but that’s it.”

“That’s it?” Roger asked. “Lutiya’s your younger brother, Hadis...”

The emperor glared at the man. “We’re brothers. So what? Look at this situation. And I have a justified reason if he plans on dragging me down.”

“I know. I just want some time. You don’t have to step in, Your Majesty. This is my fault, so I’ll take responsibility and resolve it,” Jill said before she raised her voice and clenched her fist. “I’ll educate Lutiya properly! I’ll do it as a teacher, and I’ll use my fists to hammer it into him!”

“Wait, Miss Jill, I feel like violence is a little—” Roger said.

“And Your Majesty, I want to hug you, so hug me back!” Jill shouted.

She felt everyone around her take a few steps back, clearly a little taken aback by her words. She knew that her request came out of left field, but she thought it was rude for even Hadis to look so shocked. Why else did he think she called him here? Did he truly think that she only wanted to discuss taking care of Lutiya? She’d stated earlier that she was downhearted.

As she waited for him with open arms, Hadis knelt down and reached out to her. She stood on her tiptoes and hugged him. His neck and silky black hair gave off the usual, pleasant aroma.

“It’s a little sly to act spoiled during times like these, don’t you think?” he asked.

“It’s not,” Jill insisted. “I’m recharging. You’re feeling a little weak yourself, aren’t you, Your Majesty? Are you hiding something again?”

“I’m not. I just thought that it’d get a little troublesome if the dragons started acting even more unusual. Dragons are divine messengers of the Dragon God and are creatures that are more affected by logic than humans. It seems only

temporary for now, but controlling dragons and alienating them from us might go against logic.”

Jill’s eyes widened before she carefully chose her next words. “And...what did Rave say?”

“He said that he’d be fine. If I act and get rid of the problem, I’m simply just putting logic back on the right path. But...”

One wrong move, and Rave could lose his divinity. Hadis couldn’t hide his worries, and Jill squeezed him even tighter.

“I understand. Don’t worry,” she assured. “I’m here too. Let’s stop the dragons together.”

“I hear you, but there are just way too many dragons.”

“Don’t worry, I can punch as many as you need! I came from a house that specializes in taking down dragons!”

Hadis smiled faintly. “And you’re...a little down for not realizing your student’s motive, I take it? What’s his name again? Lutiya, was it?”

“Just a little. But I’m fine. It’s not irreversible just yet. I’m just recharging so that I can get the motivation to fight again. Anything else from you, Your Majesty?”

“Hmmm... A mysterious old man tried to cover for me of his own accord. It was gross.”

As Jill stared back blankly, a voice came from behind.

“Are you talking about me?! You’re so mean!” Roger interjected.

“You’re just embarrassed about being protected, aren’t you?” Jill asked Hadis. “And did you express your gratitude to him?”

“I’ll do it later...” Hadis mumbled.

“Please do. You’re so helpless, Your Majesty. That’s what makes you so cute, though.”

“I’m not cute at all. And I’m still mad at you. You abandoned me for work, and you introduced me as your older brother.”

“In terms of my work and personal life...you’re right. Let’s talk about that later.”

“Fine. We’ll talk right after this fight. So, where’s my goodbye kiss?” Hadis requested.

“We can’t. We’re in front of my students.”

She pressed her index finger against Hadis’s thin lips. He blinked a few times before he broke out into a smile.

“I think it’s too late to worry about that, but I get it. We can save the best for last,” he said. He stood up, acting like his usual self. Jill sighed in relief and stepped away. “If something happens, I’ll let you know immediately. Good luck, Miss Jill,” Hadis said. He sounded a touch sarcastic, but his eyes and tone were kind, showing that he approved of Jill’s methods. That alone was enough for her to work hard once more.

“Please leave it to me, Your Majesty,” she replied.

Once Hadis gave her a weak smile, he turned around and teleported away. His gold, downcast eyes glowed brightly with his magical energy—his beautiful profile was breathtaking as always. Jill did everything she could to prevent herself from smiling, pulled herself together, and turned around to face her students.

“All right, let’s start our— What?” she asked, noticing that her students were all gaping at her.

Roger said, “W-We’re just surprised, you know? Like wow...you guys really are a married couple.”

“I’ve told you that I’m the Dragon Consort,” Jill answered. “But right now, I’m also a teacher.”

She had no idea what Lutiya was thinking or why he had assisted MinerD. However, the boy had been victorious in a battle where he was at a clear disadvantage, and not once did he cheat. An honest child like him had been dragged into the foolish ploys of evil adults.

“We’re taking Lutiya back. He’s *my* student!” Jill declared.



THE next morning, newspapers were thrown about the city with breaking news. The mastermind behind the destroyed school, Lutiya Teos Rave, had been captured. He would have a public interrogation at the port, and depending on his answers, he could be cause to launch the beginning of a counterattack against the Rave Empire.

All were welcome—those for and against the war were encouraged to drop by the port to confirm the truth with their own eyes.

Chapter 6: A Beautiful Sky of Logic Envisioned by a God

THE sky was beautiful. Yet, on such a beautiful day, a certain boy thought, *My life was boring*. Adults were quick to insult him and call him a cheeky brat. However, Lutiya had his own questions that he wanted to pose to these adults.

Does life change drastically just because you're older and have lived longer? Can you change yourself so easily? Do you have the power to change something? Can you remain strong even after you were thrown into a plot that someone wrote with firm intentions? Even now, at this very moment?

Light spilled in through the windows, but the corridors were surprisingly dark. The soldiers standing guard went down without a sound, and Lutiya held his breath and watched, his hands in chains. The boy didn't think that help had arrived for him—the man was obscured by the darkness behind the sunlight, and it was difficult to make him out. Only his gold eyes glowed in the shadows.

"Hello," the man said. "You must be Lutiya Teos Rave."

The man remained calm despite single-handedly defeating the soldiers that were supposed to escort Lutiya to his execution. The boy was terrified, but he was determined not to let his fear show.

"Or perhaps 'nice to meet you' would've been a more apt greeting. My name is Hadis. I just want to ask you a few things."

"I have nothing to tell you," Lutiya replied with a defiant glare.

The Dragon Emperor blinked a few times. "I came here to save you, you know... Huh, are you still not aware of your situation? Do you also still want to trust Minerda or something? They won't just interrogate you. You'll be executed."

"So what? I knew that from the start. Laika and Rave should just be destroyed. That's what I've always thought," Lutiya said darkly.

"But there are people trying to save you, like your friends and teachers."

The man couldn't hide the befuddlement in his voice, causing Lutiya to boil with anger.

"My teacher is the Dragon Consort!" Lutiya yelled. "She doesn't want to save me!"

To Lutiya, she was the same as the rest. Hence, why he was here. Because he shouted at the top of his lungs, the sound of his heartbeat rang loudly in his ears. He was growing impatient as no other guards were coming. Since he was supposed to be present for the interrogation, people would surely notice his absence; he was eager to end this farce quickly. For whatever reason, he didn't want the man in front of him to view his current self.

"Oh, I see. You want Jill's attention," the man said casually as though he finally understood. As Lutiya's eyes grew wide, the man chuckled, amused by him. "Everyone's trying to save you, yet you ungratefully claimed that you didn't want to be spared, so I thought it was weird. You're acting spoiled toward Jill. You're such a kid."

Lutiya's cheeks grew warm—he wasn't sure if it was due to embarrassment or anger, but he bellowed back, "That's not it! There's no way I—"

"Yeah? Then why didn't you try to destroy Laika and Rave with your own hands? Why're you here, waiting for help?"

"I'm not! I told them everything, including her plans to conquer city hall! I doubt even Miss Jill would come to save someone like me now!"

"Do you *really* think so?"

Lutiya raised his head to refute, but the moment he saw the man's smile, his throat grew tight.

"You really think Jill won't come save you?" the man questioned. "Seriously? You're lying to yourself. You know that Jill will come for you. So, you're just throwing a tantrum until you're satisfied. And you're allowed to do that. You've got that privilege as a child who knows they'll be spared. I'm envious. You can do as you like because you'll be saved."

The man pushed his hand down on top of Lutiya's head. The Dragon Emperor crouched down and smiled darkly.

“Hey, if I abandon you, do you think Jill will be angry with me?” he asked. “Do you think she’d hate me?”

“Huh?” Lutiya replied. “I-I’m sure Miss Jill will...”

Get angry. She’d be sad. In any case, she’d show distrust toward the Dragon Emperor, he thought. Lutiya felt his chest flutter, and he felt better, but his feelings of superiority soon faded as the man in front of him smiled as if he had just found a new toy.

“I agree!” the emperor said. “Do you think she’d desert me for good this time? Is that the extent of her love? Or maybe she’d forgive me! I’d expect no less from my wife! Which do you think? Yeah, I’ve got this nasty habit, you see... I want to fix it since Jill gets angry, but...maybe I’ll test her a little.”

As those predatory gold eyes peered at him, Lutiya’s hair stood on end. He wasn’t terrified of dying because he hadn’t once thought he’d die today. He believed that he’d be saved, after all. Only now did he truly realize his naive thoughts.

The Dragon Emperor narrowed his eyes as though he’d seen through Lutiya’s expression. “Your method’s too childish.”

The emperor’s gaze was spine-chilling—he had the eyes of a person who didn’t expect help to arrive. The eyes of a man who believed in no one.

“What happened to the black dragon’s cries? Is the Draco Flute completed now? What’s Minerd plotting? Answer me,” the emperor demanded.

Lutiya remained silent.

“You don’t want to answer unless your kind Miss Jill questions you? Is that it?” he inquired. “Do you want to be praised and loved for telling her everything?”

His jeering tone instilled fear within Lutiya.

“I handed them the magical tool with the recorded cries!” Lutiya shouted. “But I doubt they can easily get ahold of the sound. The magical tool looks normal on the outside, but I destroyed the magic used to collect sounds, so it should take quite a bit of time and effort to restore it. The dragons didn’t attack

the teachers or students, did they?”

The emperor looked surprised, and Lutiya, feeling a bit superior, forced a trembling smile. “I’m not stupid, you know. The Azure Dragon class truly thinks that I’m their friend. And Noyn does, too... Once the war starts, Brother Minerd won’t be so focused on killing the students. Since I’ll admit that I’m the mastermind and die, he’ll praise their luck if they survive. No matter what the students say, it’ll just be considered a conspiracy. If I’m abandoned, everyone will survive. Even I’d...work to have my bases covered, at the very least.”

Once Lutiya vocalized his plans, he realized how immature he was. His plots only got him out temporarily, but none of them were well thought out. He looked down to hide his reddening face when suddenly, he felt his hair being tousled.

“Wh-What’s with you?” Lutiya asked.

“Hm, I wonder? I just thought that you weren’t half-bad...” Hadis said, standing up as he trailed off. Footsteps sounded in the distance—the soldiers could no longer wait for Lutiya’s appearance and had arrived to check for themselves.

“Wanna run with me?” Hadis offered.

Lutiya shook his head. “I’ll take a little responsibility, at least. Why don’t you run? If you get caught, Miss Jill would be furious.”

“Hmmm, okay. Sure. Do as you like. Worst case, I can come save you.”

“Why’d you change your tune all of a sudden? It creeps me out.”

“Well, I’ve always wanted to act like an older brother, at least once in my life.”

Lutiya raised his head and for the first time, he saw his older brother smiling under the sunlight before vanishing like a phantom. But Lutiya knew that what he saw was anything but. *If I’m gonna be spared, I should at least prove that I’m a person worth saving.* He knew that he’d realized this all too late, and there wasn’t much he could do now, but he wanted to do what he could.

Luckily, his clothes were neat. Minerd feared that disheveled clothes would

draw unwarranted sympathy toward the boy. Before Lutiya was given an order, he stood up with his back straight and walked ahead. His hands were in chains, but he walked out with pride.

It wasn't much, but he could at least have a little dignity if he wished; he was undoubtedly blessed with his position.

"There he is! Lutiya Teos Rave!" someone shouted.

Lutiya was initially puzzled as to why there would be a public interrogation, but he was placed on one of the warships that lined the port. As he stood on the ship's bow, he noticed throngs of people standing on the pier, the quay, and the wharf. Blame, confusion, and curiosity filled the countless gazes of people that pierced right through him. Even he thought it was impossible to be saved in this crowd. There were quite a few soldiers standing guard too.

But Lutiya felt oddly refreshed. The hollers and insults thrown at him didn't reach his ears.

"Silence! We will now state Lutiya Teos Rave's crimes. Any objections will be placed after!"

Lutiya cracked a smile. He thought he was being interrogated, but they were already listing his crimes. However, he noticed that Minerd was nowhere to be seen. There were reports that he was injured—if Minerd and Gunther were working as a team, this seemed like an odd outcome.

"These are Lutiya's crimes! If there are any objections, state them now."

As the boy was absorbed in his thoughts, his crimes had already been announced. He turned defiant toward the people who glared at him. No matter what anyone said, no one could change the punishment that was about to come.

Which was why Minerd had abandoned Lutiya. The boy slowly focused on reality. He hated this nation. They tried to take advantage of the confusion in the mainland and had one-sidedly placed their expectation on Lutiya, hoping he'd become the next emperor. The moment the bloodline of the Rave imperial family was doubted, everyone changed their attitudes and used him as a puppet. And now, these stupid, brainwashed citizens were all watching him.

I hate all of you, he thought.

“My beloved Laikan citizens,” Lutiya started with a smile.

Everyone was stupid in his eyes. They were all tiny and powerless, just small cogs in a machine. And like him...they were all human.

The crowd fell silent, waiting for his words.

“It’s true that I was involved with this recent incident. But it’s not because I was working with the mainland. I was raised being told that I’d eventually become Rave’s emperor. But once the Dragon Emperor appeared with the Heavenly Sword and it became clear that I couldn’t become emperor, I was cast aside. Not a single adult reached out to help me. I wanted to destroy both Rave and Laika, and cooperated with this scheme. I have no intention of making excuses. At this point, I doubt this plot could be stopped, no matter what anyone says. I was the same. I had plenty of opportunities to make a choice, but I threw all that away. It’s terrifying to admit my faults. But if you think I’m a fool, I implore you all to take a moment, just a small second, to stop and think. Take a look around.

“It’s true that the Rave imperial army is oppressive. But can that truly only be resolved through war? The academy was indeed attacked, but who did it? And for what purpose?”

Lutiya’s voice was carried on the sea breeze and rang pleasantly in Hadis’s ears. The emperor folded his arms and listened intently; from behind the sails, he could see Lutiya’s back standing tall and firm.

“Your new younger brother isn’t bad at all,” Rave observed.

“Yeah, I think he’s useful. I expect no less from my wife—she has a good eye,” Hadis replied.

He was overcome with an odd sense of wanting to watch over Lutiya. Was this the feeling of an older brother? The problem now was the emperor’s new older brother. The man was supposed to appear at the top of the ship to gaze down at the young prince, but he was nowhere to be seen. Hadis was growing tired of blending in with the guards and scouting for any movements.

“You *are* just making excuses! It’s true that you aided with this attack!”

“That’s right! My child won’t return! My child was killed by your hands!”

The angry roars of the crowd caused Hadis to look down once more. He thought he saw Lutiya’s back tremble ever so slightly. It was easy to save the boy, but the prince had declared that he would take responsibility.

“That’s right,” Lutiya shouted. “It’s my responsibility. You can blame me all you like, and you don’t have to forgive me. But should your anger be directed toward those who have nothing to do with this? This shouldn’t act as a justification for our nation to add on to the atrocities of war!”

You can do it! Hadis was rooting for him before he realized it.

“I did this, not the Rave Empire! The attack on the academy was disguised to make it seem like the empire was responsible! The ones behind this were Principal Gunther and—”

“The principal might’ve died trying to save those kids!” someone cut him off.

“Don’t let him speak anymore! Bring the gag!”

“Your excuses are over, Lutiya.”

A long piece of cloth fluttered on the stern of the ship. People started gasping Chancellor Miner’s name as they expressed their awe. From the shadows of the sails, Hadis narrowed his eyes, but the man was wearing a hood to shield him from the sunlight. Only his eye patch and bandages could be seen—the chancellor had apparently injured his face.

“Execute Lutiya Teos Rave!” the people cried.

“Kill him! He begged to be spared while pushing the blame onto the dead!”

The crowd, encouraged by Miner’s appearance, howled with rage. There were surely a few people in the mix egging others on to be up in arms. The guards pushed Lutiya to the ground and placed a gag around his mouth, his face contorting with frustration. He knew this would be the outcome. This was simply how the world worked. Efforts never came to fruition.

“This is a ploy of the Rave Empire! Don’t be fooled!”

“Show me some proof! I doubt you can produce any! The killed students won’t return to our—”

But sometimes, efforts *do* pay off.

“We’ve got proof right here!” a voice bellowed from the skies.

A wooden vessel suddenly slammed into port, spraying water onto the pier and causing the warships to rock violently. The drenched crowd screamed while the soldiers clung to the ship for dear life. Hadis also used the mast to maintain his balance and gave a strained smile.

“I didn’t know where she’d come from, but I didn’t think it was from the sky,” he muttered.

This was exactly what she did when they arrived in Beilburg. She was traveling a shorter distance than that, but Hadis wondered if her students, who were also forced to jump off the ship, were safe.

However, the students knew that if they didn’t show their faces here, they wouldn’t serve as proof. They were staggering, but students in ragged school uniforms managed to make it onto the deck. Someone from the crowd pointed at them as confused murmurs filled the air. The class president of the Gold Dragons stepped out in front and shouted from the top of his lungs.

“We’re still alive! His Highness, Prince Lutiya, and the instructors of the Azure Dragon class saved our lives! The Rave Imperial army didn’t attack us! Lutiya isn’t lying!”

As the crowd couldn’t hide their bewilderment, a soldier snapped back to his senses.

“Those students are traitors siding with the Rave Empire! Kill them!” he yelled.

Soldiers aimed their guns at the vessel and shots rang in the air. But the students trained by Jill didn’t flinch. They formed a line and created a barrier that bounced the bullets back. A different squad pushed back against the soldiers who tried to climb on board. The class president of the Gold Dragons was taking command.

A brawl broke out at the port and turned into a huge mess. Screams and roars came from the audience as they desperately tried to flee the scene, hoping not to get caught in this fight. A portion of the soldiers were pushed back by this

crowd. It was impossible for the students to save Lutiya from the ship.

However, one little girl launched herself from the deck of the ship and used the warships as footing to head for the prince. No one could stop her.

“Shoot her down!” a soldier shouted.

Anti-flight magic circles formed all around her, but she smashed each of them down with a golden flash of lightning. As she soared through the sky, her beauty was akin to the Goddess of War.

“Ugh,” Rave muttered. “Raw’s in her bag, but he’s about to get motion sickness.”

“I wish she’d treat my spirit just a little more carefully...” Hadis replied.

“Lutiya!” Jill shouted.

The prince looked over his shoulder upon hearing his name being called. As the ship started to careen from the impact, Lutiya used this chance to escape from the hands that restrained him. Jill flew straight for her student.

Hadis was a little jealous to watch this scene unfold in front of him, but he decided to let it slide for now as he spotted a gold ring glistening on her left hand. The Sacred Treasure of the Dragon Consort shattered the magic circles and was sprayed with water as it glistened under the afternoon sun.

“Hang on to me!” Jill shouted.

She drew Lutiya close as she brought her fist down on the deck. The bow of the ship lurched violently, shaking people off from the deck and into the ocean below. Hadis praised himself for instantaneously using his magic to prevent the ship from splitting into two. *Yep, I’m a man who’s good at what he does.*



JILL knew that her fist made contact with the warship, but it only rocked back and forth before returning to normal. She found this suspicious; it had practically leaned on its side for a split second, and she didn’t sense any enemies nearby. They were either in the ocean or, if they managed to still stay on board, they were stuck somewhere or knocked out. Her first order of business was to undo Lutiya’s gag.

“Are you all right?” she asked him.

“M-Miss Jill, I—”

“You’re fine. That speech earlier was more than enough.”

When she was hiding with her students inside a ship, looking for the chance to strike, she almost cried when she heard Lutiya’s words. He could’ve easily provoked the crowd’s ire and encouraged the two nations to split, but at the very last second, he stood firm. As Lutiya sat on the ground, she hugged his head to her.

“Your scolding will come later. Take everyone and leave. Leave the rest to me,” Jill said.

“That guy earlier wasn’t Brother Minerd!” Lutiya shouted, clutching Jill’s arm tight. “The bandage and eye patch covered his face, and he stood so far away to make it difficult to make out, but...”

“Hey, let go! Release me, you insolent fool!” a familiar voice barked.

“Miss Jill, can you call for Hadis?!” Roger asked. He’d already jumped onto the warship and threw a man at her feet.

The man’s head was covered in bandages, and for a split second, Jill couldn’t recognize him. But when his eye patch came off from being thrown on the ground, her eyes went round with shock.

“Principal Gunther?!” she gasped. “So, your disappearance was a bluff all along! And you switched places with Minerd?!”

“You noticed it all too late!” Gunther shouted. “His Highness Minerd is already far away from here and is prepared to mobilize the military toward the mainland. And—”

The sonorous sound of a bell drowned out his voice as everyone gasped and faced the same direction. It came from city hall—the bell signaled 12 p.m. Roger grabbed Gunther’s collar and raised him in the air.

“Is the city hall built just like the principal’s office?!” Roger growled.

“Not quite. We built this one properly, you see, with the cries of the black dragon,” Gunther replied.

“I broke that tool! There’s no way you can restore it so quickly,” Lutiya said.

“Heh, and this is why students like you who make a mockery of teachers are so naïve!” Gunther gloated. “I’m the leading pioneer in the Draco Flute research! I created the magical tools and spells required to gather sounds. Restoring it is a piece of cake for someone like me!”

Jill and the others widened their eyes in horror as Gunther gave a triumphant smile.

“If the dragons burn the cities to the ground, the citizens’ animosity toward the empire will increase,” he said. “It no longer matters if the students are alive or dead! My decades’ worth of research will finally be proven!”

“Are you going to make the dragons attack the city?!” Jill asked.

“And this is the final touch! The Draco Flute is complete! Now all the dragons will go wild!”

The final ring of the bell was followed by static mixed with magical energy. And finally, the voice of the Dragon King could be heard loud and clear.

“Raaawr!”

For a split second, everyone hoped that the voice couldn’t be used. The cry was so adorable and sweet that it completely destroyed any tension that filled the air. But that sliver of hope was soon destroyed as a flight of dragons took to the skies from the island.

“Raw... You really are the Dragon King, aren’t you?” Jill said pensively.

“Rawr?!” Raw cried.

He poked his head out as though he was offended by the statement, but finding the noise to be unpleasant, he immediately buried his head in his paws. As Jill panicked, Raw’s head was grabbed, and the dragon was lifted out of the bag into the air.

“What’re you acting like the victim for?” a man accused. “Do something. You’re the Dragon King, aren’t you?”

“Your Majesty!” Jill cried.

“Rawr! Raaawr! Rar! Rawr! Raaawr! Rawr...”

The Dragon King flailed around and tried to reason with Hadis, his head still firmly in the emperor’s grip. The Dragon Emperor sighed.

“You’re so useless...” he said. “Well, I expected as much since they don’t listen to Rave.”

“Rave? *The* Dragon God Rave? So you must be the Dragon Emperor that His Highness Minerda was talking about!” Gunther said happily despite being restrained. “How does it feel? How does it feel to know that the research that you have been forbidding will be your downfall? Dragon God? The Rave Empire? To hell with them all! The dragons that you’ve relied on won’t listen to your orders! The Rave Empire will fall with your generation! It’s a fitting end for the cursed emperor!”

Gunther grunted as a dull thud reverberated in the air. Roger had smashed Gunther’s face into the deck.

“Sorry about that, Hadis,” Roger said with a smile. “Don’t worry about what he says. You’ll be fine.”

“I’m...not bothered by it or anything,” Hadis replied.

Jill, a little bothered that she was beaten to the punch, stood in front of Hadis. “What should we do, Your Majesty? I can easily take down half of them myself!”

“Wait, Miss Jill...” Lutiya said. “The dragons are acting weird. They’re not attacking the city.”

She glanced around and saw those words to be true. The dragons were high in the air and refused to descend on the city, paying zero attention to the screams and calamity below. As the beasts headed toward Jill, they flew right above her head at the last second.

“Are they planning on crossing the sea for Rave?”

“Impossible!” Gunther cried in confusion. “I ordered them to target the residential district. My research is perfect!”

“Shut up. I don’t give a shit about your moronic desire for recognition,” Hadis

spat. He turned to the deity on his shoulder. “Rave, what’s your take?”

“No good...” the Dragon God said. “They’re not listening to me at all. At this point, we can’t neglect this situation as the intellectual advancement of humans.”

“It goes beyond what logic can tolerate?”

“If we leave this as is, yep. But as long as we can’t completely destroy the flute and its research, anything we do will only be a temporary measure. I can change the biology of dragons and make the entire research worthless. I’ll rewrite logic,” Rave said.

“And what will happen to you if you do that?” Hadis asked stiffly. “Surely that would infringe on logic.”

Rave gave a carefree smile. “Don’t worry. My current self might not be enough to rewrite logic, and I’d need to push my limits just a bit to use immense power, but this is an act to correct logic. I’m sure I can cheat just a little.”

“Doesn’t that mean you’ll be bending logic? You’ll lose your divinity, won’t you?” Hadis choked out. The emperor refused to look away from Rave, making sure that he wouldn’t miss a thing.

“Normally, yes. I’d be reverting to my former self when I had the power to rewrite logic—before I lost my divinity. Turning back time is an unforgivable act,” Rave replied. Jill gulped and clung to Hadis’s sleeve. “But this is a special case—I’m doing this to correct logic. And so, my act will be permitted. I’m more worried about you, quite frankly. It’s tough for me to do this without a vessel, so I’ll be using your body for a bit.”

“Is that what you meant by cheating?” Hadis asked. “Don’t scare me like that. And I’ve always been your vessel, so it’s not a problem for me.”

“Though temporarily, I’ll revert you to the previous Dragon Emperor. I’m guessing that I only need to go one back, so the guy three hundred years ago should be enough. Still, I’m not certain how far we’ll revert you until we actually do it.” Rave turned his lithe body and appeared in front of Jill. “Missy... This is no doubt a cheating ability, so if anything happens, I’m counting on you. At

most, it'll only be a few minutes, and he should immediately turn back into Hadis."

"R-Right," Jill replied. "But, um, will His Majesty really be all right? Will he be okay?"

"Well, since I'll be using a lot of power, I'm sure I'll collapse," Hadis said, kneeling in front of her and clutching her hands. "So, can I leave the rest to you?"

The Dragon Emperor entrusted everything to the Dragon Consort. After a moment of surprise, Jill felt something warm and fuzzy spread through her chest. Both Hadis and Rave were surely worried—she had to be the one to stand firm this time around. She clenched Hadis's hands tightly.

"Of course!" she claimed firmly. "Leave it to me!"

"All right, then. Let's go, Rave," Hadis said before turning to the Dragon King. "And you too."

"Rawr."

The Dragon Emperor placed Raw on his shoulder and floated in the air above the deck. Jill, wanting to keep her eyes on him until the last second, jumped onto the top of the mast with the nation's flag fluttering about. Like the setting sun, a pale glow surrounded Hadis, Raw, and Rave, before melting away.

The gentle specks of silver and gold formed a pillar of light as the sky glittered gold. A magic circle emerged, raining stars down on the people in the middle of the afternoon. Those who knew nothing of this battle would've been awestruck by the falling stars. Those fighting in the port or fleeing also stopped and gazed up at the sudden spectacle that appeared in front of their eyes.

The sun would always rise and set. Rain would fall from the sky. Land that received nourishment would bloom with beautiful flowers. The changing seasons would bring fertility to the soil. Those that fell and withered away would return to the earth. And those born would all die. Dragon God Rave displayed it all in the skies, presenting the world with beautiful logic.

The dragons soaring through the air all stopped at once. A dragon that was headed for its destination immediately turned around. The one that had flown

over Jill's head also froze in the sky. A cry sounded in the distance, echoing like a song, and the dragons all turned around.

There was an explosion behind Jill. The bell tower at city hall was stomped by a red dragon as it gave a proud cry. The dragons all heard the voices of the Dragon God, the Dragon Emperor, and the Dragon King, allowing them to shake off the sound that was controlling them and destroy the source.

"We did it, Your...Majesty?" Jill called.

The light that surrounded Hadis started to fade as his body once more appeared into view. Jill jumped off the mast to reunite with her husband, whom she knew so well. But midway, she came to a realization. *Something's different. I recognize him, but he looks a bit different*, she thought.

His hair was a little longer than before and his face exuded an air of maturity. But above all, he emanated a cold aura as his frosty, golden eyes narrowed with suspicion.

"Are you...the god of war's daughter?" he asked.



This was the face of the emperor that Jill had fought in the past—the very man who turned her hometown into a sea of flames and destroyed her. The Dragon God was still rewriting logic in the skies.

“Where am...? No, that doesn’t matter. I’ll kill everyone anyway,” Hadis muttered as he chuckled. He gazed at the port and the people holding their weapons below him. In contrast to his smile, his gold eyes were clouded with darkness.

“It’s all your fault,” he growled.

With a crackle, magic enveloped his Heavenly Sword.

“Retreat, everyone!” Jill shouted instinctively. “Now! Go!”

“Because of you all, Rave had to disappear!”

He swung his Heavenly Sword down, and Jill quickly tried to guard the attack with her longsword. However, her efforts didn’t even last her a second as she was blown back. She was lucky that the ocean was under her as water sprayed in the air when she plunged into the depths below. Had she fallen onto land, she would’ve been destroyed along with the city.

“Don’t get in my way, god of war’s daughter!” Hadis roared.

Jill was glad that she had his attention. In the nick of time, she managed to dodge the blade that was about to slice her in two as she tried to drag him away from the port as much as possible and into the sea. As she looked up, she noticed the magic circle in the skies growing fainter.

It’d only take a few minutes until Hadis returned to his usual self, but that was all the time he needed to land a fatal blow. In the blink of an eye, he passed Jill and stood in front of her.

“Die.”

Hadis’s voice was devoid of hesitation; he was fueled purely by murderous intent. Jill gritted her teeth and transformed her Sacred Treasure of the Dragon Consort into a sword. Dragon Consorts protected the Dragon Emperor—using her Sacred Treasure against him would surely go against logic. *But I’m getting him back on the right track! Surely, this would be an exception! Make it one!* Jill

thought.

“I’m your consort, Your Majesty!” she yelled, using her Sacred Treasure to defend herself against the Heavenly Sword. Magical energy clashed in the air, crackling as they made contact.

“My Dragon Consort?” Hadis guffawed. “What buffoonery are you on about, god of war’s daughter?”

“Unfortunately for you, this is reality! Can’t you see my weapon? It’s the Sacred Treasure of the Dragon Consort!”

“Like hell! If I had someone like that, I... Rave is...” Hadis’s lips trembled behind his Heavenly Sword as he shouted as though he were in pain. “Come back to me! I’m fine... I don’t desire love. I don’t need anyone else. I don’t need a Dragon Consort or a family. Rave, as long as you’re by my side...”

His eyes were losing focus; his vacant gaze shook with confusion. The overwhelming force he brought down on Jill was slowly weakening. The magic circle splayed in the skies was slowly beginning to close, signaling that logic was being rewritten.

“It’s all the Goddess’s fault...” the Dragon Emperor muttered. “If I defeat the Goddess, I’m sure I can guide the world correctly and...”

Jill gritted her teeth as her Sacred Treasure pressed back against the Heavenly Sword. The Hadis she was currently facing would be gone in a matter of a few moments—there was no need for her to take his words seriously. And yet...

“I’ll destroy everything! Then I’m sure Rave will return to me!” Hadis roared, his Heavenly Sword glowing brighter still.

Jill retracted her Sacred Treasure. The Dragon Emperor, surprised by his opponent suddenly sheathing her weapon, staggered and lost his balance. She reached out and grabbed Hadis’s head, hugging him with all her might. The Heavenly Sword cut into her shoulder, but she didn’t care—her heart was in even more pain. *I’m so stupid*. She could’ve easily let him be, and she laughed at herself for caring so much.

“You’ll be fine, Your Majesty,” she assured. “You’re a man stronger than me.”

“God of war’s daughter? Why? /... I...” Hadis stammered.

“I’ll spend my entire life trying to make you happy. That’s a promise. So, please...” She knew that her voice would no longer reach him, but she couldn’t help making a wish. *Please, God...* “Don’t give up.”

The blinding glimmer of light disappeared from the skies as Hadis slumped in Jill’s arms, completely out of strength. The two plunged into the ocean below.

As they fell into the water, Jill hugged Hadis tightly while looking up at the surface. She could see the light and she knew that she could reach it. It wasn’t time for her to cry just yet. Hadis said that he’d leave the rest to her.

“Miss Jill, are you okay?! How’s Hadis?!” Roger called.

“We’re both fine,” Jill said, popping her head above water. “What’s the situation on the port?”

Roger and Lutiya arrived on a small boat and reached out to collect the soaked married couple.

“The dragons have obediently returned to their homes. The humans have also put down their weapons and surrendered. Gunther’s been restrained and is being kept under the close eye of Instructor Sauté,” Lutiya reported.

The unconscious Raw was placed on the small boat first, followed by Hadis, who was dragged up by Roger. Jill gratefully borrowed Lutiya’s hand and made it on the boat last.

“But some of the radicals won’t let up and are still running wild,” Roger added. “The students have managed to hold them back so that there won’t be any damage to the city, but some are trying to stuff warships with weapons to flee. We don’t have enough hands to stop them.”

“I understand,” Jill replied. “Then I’ll go. I’ll leave His Majesty in your care.”

Roger stopped a shocked Lutiya from butting in and lowered his voice. “You sure? Are you all right? You’ve used quite a bit of your magic and you’re bleeding from your shoulder.”

“But from here on out, it’s the job of the Dragon Consort.”

She wrung her skirt and looked up, noticing a red dragon descend in front of

her as though it was waiting for the opportunity. This was the very dragon that had assisted her during her training camp with the students.

“Will you take me there?” she asked in astonishment.

The gold-eyed beast nodded. Raw was knocked out (or sleeping soundly), and while Hadis’s hair had returned to normal, he didn’t move an inch. Rave was likely within the Dragon Emperor’s body. In other words, this red dragon had appeared of its own free will.

Jill tried her best to suppress a smile, knowing that she had to control the chaos at the port. She carefully leaped onto the red dragon, making sure that she wouldn’t rock the small boat. The beast, as though it read Jill’s mind, flew straight for the port. She squinted her eyes and saw Noyn commanding the students below, holding those who tried to rampage into the city at bay. Some were piling weapons into the warship—no doubt they were preparing to flee.

Jill narrowed her eyes as she stood up on the dragon and bellowed at the top of her lungs. “I’m the Dragon Consort and Hadis Teos Rave’s wife!” She transformed her Sacred Treasure into a sword and raised it into the air. The golden weapon shone brightly like the sun. “The Dragon Emperor has entrusted me with controlling the riot! Rebels, cast aside your weapons immediately, and I won’t treat you badly! Obediently surrender!” she shouted.

“The Dragon Consort? A child like her?” a rebel jeered.

“Shoot her down!” another added.

“Then I suppose I’ve got no choice,” Jill said. As someone fired at her, she swung her blade down. The cannonball exploded in the air and a fleeing warship was cleanly sliced in two. “I’ll eliminate you all.”

She was determined to end this battle quickly. When her husband awoke, she wanted to be by his side.



THE sound of the splashing waves filled his ears. He felt like he was enveloped in a gentle presence. Hadis tried to turn around when he woke up, but the blinding sunset caused him to squeeze his eyes shut and curl into a ball. Noticing this, the small hand that was stroking his head stopped.

“Are you awake, Your Majesty?”

“Jill...” he murmured.

He realized that he was sleeping on the deck of a ship. But he felt something soft on his head—Jill had offered her lap as a pillow. No wonder he felt at ease and was so happy. He felt like he was dreaming. But as the sun set in the west, casting a red glow over the sea, he saw that quite a bit of time had passed in reality.

“I... Where’s Rave?” Hadis mumbled.

“Heya. I’m here,” the Dragon God replied. “Raw’s still...fast asleep.”

Rave appeared in front of his eyes. It was difficult to see with the light behind the God, but the deity looked the same—he was the same Dragon God that Hadis had known since childhood. Rave hadn’t lost his divinity and remained by the emperor’s side.

“Princess Elentzia arrived earlier with her Dragon Knights,” Jill said. “She’s working on handling the situation. Crown Prince Vissel had apparently told her about the situation here, and she’s been on standby so that she could fly to Laika at a moment’s notice. Your Majesty, do you remember the magic circle in the sky? They’d apparently seen it too.”

“I don’t remember it at all, but I see...” Hadis replied. “The dragons would surely notify them if magic was conducted on such a grand scale.”

He was sure that his siblings, surprised by the fuss, flew over here immediately. Elentzia wasn’t skilled in politics, but she was used to restoration efforts. *Speaking of, Roger must be...* Hadis thought.

“You can still sleep,” Jill assured. “Everyone will be with you soon.”

Jill placed her hand over his eyes as though to protect him from the sunlight. Hadis agreed that he needed to rest a bit more. He was very tired, like he’d cried so much that he no longer had any tears.

“But my legs are starting to feel numb, so maybe we can shift this position a little...” Jill started, trying to get up.

“I had a nightmare. A horrible dream. Everyone was gone...” Hadis said.

She stopped in place as Hadis closed his eyes and hugged her waist.

“I’m so glad it was just a dream...” he said.

“Of course, Your Majesty,” she replied. “We’ve got a happy family plan, don’t we? We’ll be together until we become old and wrinkly.”

“Whoa, your plan’s growing, Missy,” Rave noted with a laugh.

Hadis was so glad. For whatever reason, he went through the plan numerous times in his head. The salty droplets that fell on his cheek were surely his imagination.

“Missy? Why’re you crying?” Rave asked.

“Please keep it a secret from His Majesty. I think I’m just feeling sentimental,” Jill replied.

“I knew it. Did something happen earlier?”

As he solemnly faced Jill, it was clear that Rave had no memory of when he rewrote logic. She found this to be humorous and laughed while she sniffled and wiped snot from her face. What she saw earlier was nothing more than an illusion, a phantom. Hence, the injury she sustained on her shoulder had disappeared without a trace.

It was simply an image shown by incorrect logic.

“Missy, you mentioned before that you knew the future. Does it have anything to do with that?” Rave asked.

“No, that’s all in the past now,” she said firmly.

She stroked Hadis’s face as he slept. The Hadis she’d faced was the Dragon Emperor before Rave had lost his divinity. That was something that required further thought in the future. *His Majesty didn’t go berserk because his siblings had betrayed him, but because...*

For now, she gazed up at the sky. It was changing colors and turning dark, welcoming the night. She knew that.

Time only ticked forward—that was logic.



A crude bell rang out, signaling the beginning of lunch. The moment the students in the training grounds heard the bell, they made a mad dash for the building.

“Lunch! Today, we, the Azure Dragons, will claim the cutlet sandwiches for ourselves!”

“Huh?! You think the Gold Dragons are gonna lose?! Whoa! The Purple Dragons are fast!”

“The Dragon Emperor’s supplying the food today! Hurry!”

“Hey!” Jill scolded. “I didn’t dismiss you guys yet... They aren’t listening, huh.”

She had to lecture them about their behavior later, but it wasn’t as though she *couldn’t* understand their feelings. Jill had spent the morning training too, and she was famished.

It’d been two weeks since a mysterious magic circle glittered over the skies of the continent of Platy. Thanks to Elentzia taking command with her Neutrah Dragon Knights, restoration efforts in Laika were progressing smoothly. The fragments of the rebels who managed to flee were being captured swiftly as well. Slowly but surely, the Laikans were easing their suspicions toward the mainland.

However, there were injured and killed soldiers as a result of this battle. The academy was completely destroyed, and Miner, suspected of being the mastermind behind this rebellion, was nowhere to be seen. Gunther had aged practically overnight as his decades’ worth of research was nullified in a matter of minutes, and when he finally divulged where the chancellor had fled, only the corpse of the Grand Duke of Laika was found. The smaller Draco Flute that Miner had snuck out likely wasn’t effective anymore, but he couldn’t remain on the run.

Despite this perilous situation, the students were as lively as ever. There wasn’t much backlash from the Laikans because the students, the greatest victims from this mess, were so attached to the Dragon Consort, or so Elentzia had claimed. Jill couldn’t hide her embarrassment.

“Single file, please. Don’t push. You’ll all get your turn. Today’s menu is curry,

and only two cutlet sandwiches per person,” Hadis called.

Perhaps another reason would be thanks to the efforts of the Dragon Emperor, who acted as a lunch lady, for some reason.

He can remain as an apron emperor for the rest of his life. The cafeteria was simple—a few desks were lined up for students to eat. Hadis and the Dragon Knights brought in a huge pot of curry as students and other residents lined up to eat. The massive battle for the food that ensued under the blue welkin was no doubt because the curry was delicious.

“Are you sure you don’t need to line up too?” Noyn asked as he approached Jill. He wasn’t involved in the brawl for food.

“Don’t worry, I’ve got my lunch packed,” Jill said, revealing a five-layered lunch box. Noyn looked a little put off by it.

“A-As usual, you eat quite a bit...” he said.

“You’re still viewing Miss Jill as an elegant lady?” Lutiya interjected. He’d quickly gotten his turn for food and threw a sandwich wrapped in paper at Noyn. “Here. I don’t owe you for my loss earlier now.”

Jill furrowed her brows. “For your loss? You guys aren’t betting with your training, are you?”

“What? Us? No way. We’re earnestly tending to our studies,” Lutiya replied.

“Quite so,” Noyn said before he casually changed subjects. “Since you’ll be leaving, we’ll only get to train under you for a bit longer.”

Lutiya had undoubtedly been a bad influence on Noyn.

“It’ll take quite a while to restore this place,” Jill said. “We can’t have you guys idly waiting around in the meantime, can we? But even if we’re apart, we’ll always be friends. It won’t get lonely.”

“Huh?” Noyn asked. “But we’re all planning on attending your academy, Miss Jill.”

“Huh?” Jill inquired.

Lutiya clicked his tongue as he unwrapped his sandwich. “Don’t give it away.

We all agreed to keep quiet to surprise her.”

“Wait, what?” Jill asked. “My academy doesn’t exist yet.”

“I showed your draft proposal to Brother Vissel. He’s already secured budgeting.”

Hadis, dressed in an apron, popped up from behind the students. He’d apparently let the others hand out food in his stead. He lifted Jill up in his arms in front of her students, but she was so surprised that she let him do as he pleased. She idly observed how beautiful his face was today, as always.

“We can reform the abandoned school building in Radia,” he said. “We’ve still got a mountain of work ahead of us, but since we’ve already got the frame, we can barely make it in time to open next year. And everyone’s so attached to you. These two students represented the school and directly appealed to us. If they’re all going to transfer schools anyway, they’d rather go to yours.”

Jill turned her head toward the two boys. Lutiya turned away while Noyn gave a strained smile.

“And once we rebuild this school, it can become a sister school to the one in Radia,” Hadis finished.

“B-But what are you guys gonna do until my academy is finished?” Jill asked.

“We’ve all got our own plans,” Noyn explained. “Some of us will go back home. His Majesty, the emperor, has kindly offered to allow me to study abroad in a school in the imperial capital. I wanted the opportunity to visit the mainland, and some of the other students felt the same. Lutiya will be staying at the imperial castle, so I’ll visit you. Oh, but perhaps it’s difficult to meet the Dragon Consort and other members of the imperial family...”

“The Rave imperial family? Hmph,” Lutiya huffed. “I’m just a hostage from Laika.”

Since the Grand Duke of Laika had passed, the successor would be Lutiya. However, in an effort to look after the boy who’d been used as a reason to spark a rebellion, he’d be staying at the imperial castle back in Rave. While the initial reason was to protect him, it was true that he would be a Laikan hostage. If Lutiya didn’t return to Laika, the nation would be governed by an official

chosen by the mainland. But abandoning the boy here would cause him to be killed by the empire for leading the rebellion.

“You say that, but we’ll have you returned to Laika,” Noyn said.

“Huh? From whose point of view are you saying that?” Lutiya retorted.

Watching Noyn and Lutiya banter made it seem like the future was bright. Jill was about to laugh, but she stopped herself when she saw Lutiya glaring and cleared her throat.

“So...am I really going to have my own academy?” she asked.

“Yep,” Hadis replied as he threw Lutiya a meaningful look, a smile dancing on his lips. “It might get a bit busy with the wedding preparations, though. I’ll do my best, so let’s work together.”

“Of course! I’ll do anything! And if these kids are coming to Radia...I can teach them again, can’t I?”

“Well, every now and then... As an *instructor*...” Hadis muttered.

“Yep,” Lutiya suddenly said. “I don’t want to refer to you as my sister-in-law, Miss Jill.”

She blinked. “Right... If I’m getting married to His Majesty, you’d be my brother-in-law.”

“Stop. It’s too late for that. I want you to remain as my teacher,” Lutiya said peevishly.

“Y-Yeah? Well, this is a bit embarrassing... I don’t think I was a great teacher. I’m terrible at lecturing and I’m younger than you,” Jill said.

“What are you talking about? You changed my life,” Lutiya said, unusually serious.

Jill couldn’t tear her eyes away from his solemn gaze.

“So, I don’t want you to become my in-law. Just stay as my teacher,” Lutiya finished. “Or else, I’ll become a delinquent.”

His thorny remarks were reminiscent of Hadis, causing her to burst out laughing. It seemed she was weak to this kind of awkward attempt to act

spoiled.

“All right,” she relented. “Then I’ll remain as your teacher. Please put me down, Your Majesty.”

She tried to leave the emperor’s arms, believing that she’d look a bit more dignified on the ground, but Hadis didn’t listen. In fact, he only held on to her tighter still, adamantly refusing to release her from his grasp.

“You little brat,” Hadis growled.

“Don’t glare at me, Brother Hadis,” Lutiya said. “You’re acting immature.”

“Jill! He’s just trying to act laudable, but he clearly has a horrible personality!” Hadis cried.

“Huh? I know that,” Jill replied. “But he’s still better than you, Your Majesty.”

Hadis froze like he’d been struck by lightning. Jill wasn’t sure what went through his mind, but she patted his head.

“You’re the most troublesome of them all,” she assured. “You’re a huge pain and a real piece of work. You said that yourself, didn’t you? I know all about it. But I find that part of you so cute, so I guess it can’t be helped.”

Hadis gasped and released Jill from his arms. She gracefully landed on the ground as the red-faced emperor covered half his face with both hands and inched back.

“I-I’m still angry at you for neglecting me!” he bemoaned.

“How long will you be sulking for?” she asked. “I’ve already apologized.”

“I’ll sulk forever! Tonight’s dinner will be chicken steak!”

He stormed off with a puzzling declaration. Jill folded her arms in front of her.

“He really is such a spoiled emperor,” she said.

“Hey, Noyn?” Lutiya whispered. “Did I just win or lose?”

“I think you lost, but I’m pretty sure you didn’t want to win that one,” Noyn replied.

“Hey, Miss Jill!” Roger said, trying to snatch up some food. “Could I have a

bite of your lunch?”

Lutiya and Noyn jolted in surprise as he approached them from behind. As usual, this man was excellent at hiding his presence. Jill cradled her lunch box with her arms.

“No,” she said. “Why don’t you line up for the food?”

“Because the Dragon Knights are serving us,” he replied. “You know that I’m being chased by Elentzia, don’t you?”

“If you agree to show yourself at the imperial castle, you won’t have to flee. Why don’t you give up already?” Jill asked.

“Because that won’t be right. I cut ties. I’m not a part of the imperial family anymore.”

This difficult-to-grasp man who operated under a fake name was formerly a part of the Rave imperial family. His real name was Rudgar Teos Rave. Seven years ago, before the curse of the crown princes had circulated the empire, he found that his biological mother was trying to kill his siblings by using the crown prince debacle to her advantage. He was the crown prince who personally rescinded his claim to the throne—in other words, he was Hadis’s half-brother.

“I’m the idiot older brother who quickly fled with my tail between my legs because I didn’t want to get involved,” he said. “I didn’t expect the imperial family to fall into such a state of disarray. But Arnold passed and...I just can’t bring myself to face Risteard. And I wasn’t able to stop Minerd either.”

Jill presumed that Risteard wouldn’t mind, but whatever she said would fall on deaf ears.

“Then why don’t you become the principal at my academy?” Jill offered.

“Huh? Oh, the one in Radia... Wait, are you being serious?” Roger asked.

“I am. You’re strong and well-connected, and you looked after the students well. And if she knows where you are, Princess Elentzia won’t try to forcibly drag you back to the castle. I’m sure of it.”

Elentzia was chasing him around because she didn’t want her older brother, who had disappeared for several years, to vanish once more.

Roger folded his arms and pondered her words. “That’s a thought... But I can’t simply let Minerd be either.”

“The Rave Empire is also hunting down his whereabouts, and it’s a lot more efficient to wait for more information,” Jill reasoned. “And my academy is planning on continuing research about dragons. He might reach out to us first.”

“Hmm... All right. Okay then. Radia’s in a geographically convenient location too.”

“Brother Rudgar! There you are!” Elentzia shouted from above on her beloved dragon. “Return to the capital and— Hey!”

Roger didn’t even glance her way as he ran as fast as he could. He was quick, and the princess clicked her tongue.

“He runs fast!” she said in frustration. “Jill, if you see him again, tie him up for me! Lutiya, I’m relying on you too!”

“There’s no way I can do that,” the young prince mumbled. “I still can’t process the fact that Mr. Brooder’s my brother.” It seemed he still wasn’t used to Elentzia either.

“Got it!” Jill replied loudly. “He agreed to become the principal of my academy, so we’ll need him to visit the imperial capital once anyway! I’ll capture him without fail.”

“Is that so?” Elentzia shouted back. “Then I’ll leave him to you!”

“Miss Jill, is that why you suggested he become principal?” Noyn asked.

Jill shrugged. “Deep down, Mr. Brooder actually wants to see his siblings. If he didn’t, he would’ve been long gone. I’m just creating an opportunity for him.”

“You are unexpectedly quite astute,” Noyn said. “Lutiya, you should hurry up and become an adult.”

“Shut up,” Lutiya replied. “Why’d you turn this on me? Everyone’s calling for us. Let’s go.”

The young prince turned away and walked toward his classmates, who had their bowls of curry. Noyn gave a small bow and followed close behind. The Gold, Purple, and Azure Dragon classes all mingled together and opened up two

spots for the boys. Their laughter didn't cease.

Jill was determined to create a splendid academy. She wanted these kids to laugh with each other like they currently were and grow up into fine adults. Her goal was to create a time and place for that to happen. Only then did she realize her new outlook. *Is this how people feel when they want to create a good country? Does His Majesty feel the same way?*

If so, perhaps she'd gotten a tiny bit closer to reaching Hadis's point of view. Perhaps she was taking a step in the right direction. She was no longer being carried by him but standing firmly on the ground and trying to match his line of sight.

"Jill," he called.

"Whoa! Your Majesty? You came back?" she asked.

"Is that a problem? I just remembered that I'm here to watch you be a teacher." Hadis pouted at how surprised Jill was to see him again. He added, "I want to see what you're seeing."

That was exactly what she had just wished for herself. Overcome with emotion, she hugged him tightly.

"Your Majesty, I love you!"

"H-Hey! Don't say that so suddenly! I keep telling you that!"

Hadis's face was beet red as he inched away, but she didn't let him go. Jill clutched onto him as she laughed. Wanting to introduce the husband that she was so proud of to her students, she took his hand and walked forward.





AS the young queen shifted on the sofa, her blanket slipped off her. Lawrence went to pick up the blanket and place it back on her, but the queen was already awake. Her adorable, angelic face grew dark as she glanced around. At once, Lawrence knew that she was searching for something.

“I saw a black spear jumping around the corridor earlier,” he said.

The young girl furrowed her brows. “She went to view the sky again, did she? I can’t believe that she doesn’t get tired of gazing up.”

“I believe I was told to ignore the black spear moving on its own and act as though it doesn’t exist,” Lawrence replied. “I left it be, but shall I search for it?”

“No need. I shall retrieve her myself. If she wanted to move around, she should’ve used her true form. Why does she insist on moving around in the shape of a spear? Perhaps I shall change her name to Goddess Hermit Crab.”

Lawrence wasn’t allowed to laugh here. He used all the common sense he had to form a smile. “Goddess Kratos is an elegant deity, isn’t she?”

“You’re quite kind. I can’t believe you’d commend this useless, airheaded goddess,” the young girl answered.

“I believe only a vessel like you could call her as such, Your Majesty the Queen.”

“I’m not a queen quite yet, unfortunately.”

But once it became the new year and they welcomed spring, she’d be proclaimed as the new queen. The young monarch was mostly a puppet. When King Rufus had regained control with the absence of Gerald, Lawrence was suspicious of the king’s plot. And when Lawrence was designated to be her attendant, he believed it to be a demotion.

But as he conversed with her, he couldn’t believe that the girl was a puppet of the king or the like. In fact, Rufus, who’d been pulling some strings to abdicate the throne to her, ignored his confused surroundings and guarded his child precious. And Faris had kindly persuaded those around her, steadily earning their cooperation.

News of the new queen hadn't been publicized yet, fearing confusion and interference. Lawrence used this to his advantage, making sure that Faris's succession would be kept confidential, so that she could change her mind any time she wished. He believed this to be in line with Gerald's wishes while he was still held by Rave. Gerald would surely be against his younger sister taking the throne. Faris knew this, which was why she quickly requested her father's cooperation in the crown prince's absence.

When the princess was first introduced to Lawrence, she acted befitting to her role as princess and possessed high intelligence, but due to the age gap with her brother, she still had a tendency to rely on him. She was an adorable girl. This adorable girl was trying to surpass her older brother.

Since when? Since when did she plan this? Lawrence thought to himself. Thinking back, he felt like there were signs of change ever since he brought Faris to the Rave Empire. She searched for the Sacred Spear all on her own without relying on her older brother, and she had made contact with the Dragon Consort of her own volition. Even Gerald was surprised by his younger sister's unusual actions.

That trip was also the first time Lawrence had a proper conversation with the new queen, making him a little wary about how overprotective Gerald was. She surely wouldn't remain a child forever. But now, he felt that this was actually the first sign of change. He was unable to hide his suspicion about it all.

For the past year, the seeds of war that Gerald had sown didn't sprout much. Lawrence believed this to be due to the appearance of the Dragon Consort. Everything had gone awry ever since the Dragon Consort rejected her engagement with Gerald. If Faris had changed during that time too, was this a mere coincidence?

"How is Minerda Teos Rave?" she asked calmly. "You were forced to be in attendance by my father, weren't you?"

Lawrence formed a smile like a force of habit. "As you predicted, my queen, he came to us to discuss his future with the Draco Flute. But that item can no longer be used. Gods are cruel—they destroy the wisdom of humans in an instant."

“But he proved one thing. Dragon God Rave won’t forgive humans who have attained knowledge. And the chancellor still has a claim to the throne. Do you think he’d be useful?”

The girl’s cruel gaze and voice were clear without an ounce of hesitation. The vessel of a Goddess seemed like a tall tale, but Lawrence was tempted to believe it. When he saw the black spear jumping around within the palace, he knew it was more foolish not to believe the legends, but he wanted to keep thinking for himself. He didn’t want to blindly trust everything.

“If you allow, I shall use him,” Lawrence replied. “But Prince Gerald is currently in Rave.”

“Then why don’t we exchange hostages?” Faris suggested. “I doubt my brother would be returned for money.” Though the younger sister was trying to take the throne in her brother’s absence, she still wanted to save him.

“I understand. He can be used as an excuse to attack the Rave Empire,” Lawrence said.

“I’m counting on you, Lawrence. And? How is your sister doing?”

He thought that she was threatening him and looked at her with doubt, but Faris’s calm gaze didn’t seem nefarious. He gave a hesitant nod.

“Much better, thank you. She’s gotten used to life in the royal capital.”

“I see,” Faris replied. “I’m glad your efforts have reached fruition just a little.”

She spoke as though his efforts had been all for naught in the past. There was a small knock on the door, and Faris quietly stood up. A servant entered the room, making final outfit adjustments for the princess. Lawrence quietly watched on.

Tonight, there would be a party celebrating the birth of a new monarch, Queen Faris. Since Gerald was gone and his birthday party was canceled, many looked forward to this upcoming celebration. Though it was publicly stated that the crown prince was studying abroad in Rave, many couldn’t hide their worry. And so, this small queen would work to wipe all of their anxiety away—it would surely be an effective move.

“Now, Lawrence,” Faris said, inviting him along. “This is my first social event. Let’s go, shall we?”

“You’re aware that I’m familiar with the Knights of the Dragon Consort, aren’t you?” Lawrence inquired in protest. “And I’ve fought alongside the Dragon Consort as well. May I ask why you try to keep me in important posts? I hold pride in my abilities, of course, but...”

“Have you ever thought about challenging the gods? About denying their existence?”

Lawrence looked astonished as the small goddess smiled. He’d toyed with the idea before. Kratos prioritized those who possessed high amounts of magical energy. Wanting to flip that way of thinking was surely a challenge to the Goddess. His constant refusal to use love and logic in his military plans was in the same vein.

“I apologize if I’m misunderstanding, but I believe you’re far more suited to be their enemy than an ally who betrays the Dragon Consort and her knights,” Faris said. “And if you were to be a traitor, it’d be easier for you to betray us than them.”

“You talk as though I’m a master of betrayal,” Lawrence said. “But I’ve never allied with the Dragon Consort before.”

Faris chuckled. “I know how you feel now. I understand wanting to save a person, even if it takes betraying them to do so. That’s why you interest me. If serving me pains you, you may quit any time you wish. Please, feel free.”

The young girl gracefully walked ahead as though she was claiming that she wouldn’t borrow wisdom from anyone. Lawrence pursed his lips and followed her—he could easily catch up to the young girl’s short strides.

“‘Feel free,’ you say? Please don’t easily request something so difficult,” he said. “I need money to care for my sister, and I’m indebted to Prince Gerald. I don’t think your actions are in line with his ideals, but I can’t leave you be to take responsibility for your actions.”

“Ah, I suppose my brother would do that. I’m sorry. I’ll be troubling you.”

“If you truly are aiming to be a queen, please reveal your Sacred Spear as the

finale. That will imply your power.”

The queen’s brief gaze seemed to be testing him.

“The master of House Cervel is here as well, so please greet him first,” Lawrence continued. “Have our surroundings believe that his daughter becoming a Dragon Consort is all part of our plans, so that he’ll be indebted to us. It’s imperative to have that house’s loyalty.”

“I agree. If we are to go past the Rakia mountains, there’s no better house for the job than the Cervels,” Faris answered.

“Please give me full authority to make our first move should the war start. That’s my condition for my cooperation.”

Could he be allowed such power? As Lawrence challenged the Goddess, her smile grew even broader.

“Very well,” Faris said. “I shall leave it to you. I won’t let even my father get in your way.”

“Can you really?” Lawrence asked. “Can you trust me so much?”

“I’m very good at trusting others. That’s where love starts, you see. It’s quite foolish when compared to logic, which always pursues justice, isn’t it?”

Indeed, logic would never forgive the folly of a human who dares to challenge the gods. Only love would forgive that. In short, this young girl believed in gods. She was claiming to be the Goddess of Love, after all. Yet, in an absurd act of self-denial, she proclaimed to challenge the deities. However, there was a growing curiosity within Lawrence about the world this girl wanted to create.

“It truly is foolish,” Lawrence finally said.

Faris gave a satisfied smile as she delicately fluttered her dress behind her. “Now, why don’t we preach the teachings of love to the God of Logic?”

Her singsong voice had a tone of destruction. She elegantly stepped onto the stage under the dazzling chandelier to begin her play.

Epilogue

“**DONE,**” Jill said, raising a stack of papers in the air.

The papers were titled, *Final Proposal for the Radia Military Academy*. She’d checked the numbers numerous times and was sure that her calculations were correct. Her proposal would barely make it in time for the meeting before the year was over.

“Your Majesty, I did it! Look! Your—” Jill jumped out of her seat excitedly but fell silent when she saw Hadis lying down on the sofa beside the window.

He remained asleep with quiet breaths when she approached him. *No wonder it was so quiet*, Jill thought. He’d been nagging about Jill being wrapped up in her work recently and encouraged her to get some rest, but he grew tired of waiting and fell asleep. When she glanced at the clock, she noticed that it’d been more than an hour since that fuss; usually, she’d be long in bed.

Ever since they returned to the imperial capital from Laika, Hadis had been swamped with work. He had to clean up after the mess he made there and prepare for the wedding. His biggest loss was Risteard’s absence—the prince had left for Beilburg. Jill had brought her work into Hadis’s room to match his stride. The emperor was so busy that if they didn’t work together, they’d hardly have the chance to meet, and before they knew it, the day would be over.

“He must be tired...” Jill whispered. “It’s rare to see him sleep earlier than me.”

She fell asleep early, and Hadis woke up early. It was rare for her to be able to see her husband’s sleeping face. She was almost never able to see him look so calm without groaning about a nightmare. *I’m sure I can watch him for a while.*

Jill picked up the blanket on the floor and placed it back on him. This act made her happy—she felt like a loving wife. She took the opportunity to crouch down and stare intently at her husband’s sleeping face.

As she inspected him, she once again noticed his long eyelashes and silky hair that covered his face. His well-shaped nose, the lovely color of his thin lips—he was beautiful from every angle. This man would officially be her husband by next year, and Jill couldn't suppress a smile when she thought about it.

Jill gently poked his cheek, but he wouldn't stir. She mustered up the courage to grab his large hand. When she placed her hand against his, she noticed that their difference in size was decreasing. *And I'm growing taller, too.*

When she was measured for her wedding dress the other day, the seamstress had mentioned that the outfit would be a bit larger for the first fitting. Jill gingerly placed a finger between his and slowly entangled her fingers with his, filling in the gaps of space. She glanced at his face, but he was still asleep. He must've been exhausted, as his defenseless visage only made her want to tease him.

"I'll attack you in your sleep, Your Majesty," she whispered.

She placed both knees on the ground and peered down at his face. His ears that poked out between his hair and his smooth nape caused her to gulp as though she was famished. She wanted to swallow him whole and keep him within her body—she was overcome with a dangerous urge to monopolize him.

"Pervert," a low voice echoed through the room.

In her panic, Jill backed away, but the golden eyes that opened reflected her within his gaze.

"T-Tell me if you're awake!" Jill cried.

"I was curious to see how you'd attack me. Rave's with me, too. You're so bold."

Hadis chuckled. Jill pouted.

"Er..." the Dragon God said, appearing on his shoulder awkwardly. "Don't tell her. You'll only make this awkward."

"I'm not bothered by Rave's presence," Jill replied. "It's too late for that."

"Oh, but I think you should be, Missy."

Hadis gave a wide yawn, hinting at his exhaustion.

“Are you sleep-deprived, Your Majesty?” Jill asked. “You usually lead a healthy lifestyle.”

“I haven’t been able to sleep well these days,” Hadis replied. “Maybe I’m dreaming. But I don’t remember anything.”

“Dreams, huh? They’re tiring. I’ve dreamt about a grand feast in front of me, but when I woke up, it was all gone! The despair I’ve felt!” Jill lamented.

“I-I don’t feel that much despair, but I feel like someone’s been calling me ‘Brother,’ the entire time.”

Jill tilted her head to one side. “Are you dreaming about Princess Frida or Princess Natalie? Or perhaps it’s Lutiya.”

“That cheeky brat won’t call me ‘Brother’ so adorably.”

Hadis frowned and Jill gave a strained laugh. He was acting immature about it, but it showed that the brothers were getting along just fine.

“Well, it’s just a dream, so don’t be so bothered,” she replied. “Rave? Where are you going?”

“Hm? On a walk,” the deity replied.

“But it’s already midnight...and it’s snowing outside.”

“But you guys are gonna start flirting, yeah? I don’t wanna be the third wheel.”

With a cackle, Rave flew out the window near the sofa. Jill locked eyes with a seated Hadis, and the red-faced emperor opened his arms up.

“Sh-Should we flirt?” he asked.

“We should sleep. You’ve got work tomorrow too, don’t you?” Jill replied.

“Your tone’s so icy that I’ll catch a cold! You tried to attack me earlier! Oh, what’s this?”

“No, Your Majesty!”

Hadis tried to reach for Jill’s proposal on his desk, but she quickly snatched it away from him.

“You can look over it tomorrow,” she said. “Rest for today. You’re so tired that you fell asleep here! It’s good that you’re working hard, but you can’t work *too* hard!”

“I don’t want to work hard either, but I don’t think I can fall asleep now...”

Jill gasped. “I know! Then why don’t I make you a cup of warm milk? I’ll add honey! I’m sure you’ll be able to sleep well after that!”

“Huh? You? Make me?” Hadis asked with wide eyes.

She puffed out her chest. “I mastered it during my training with my students! Just you wait, I’ll make it in a flash!”

Hadis’s renovated living room had a splendid kitchen, and Jill knew where everything was. As she eagerly headed for the kitchen, Hadis anxiously followed.

“Wait, isn’t it better if I made it?” he asked.

“No. Just sit tight, Your Majesty!”

“But it’d be much safer if I made it. Oh, why don’t we make some hot cocoa?”

She took out a pot and pointed it at the emperor. “No! You’re exhausted, so I’ll make it!”

Hadis sighed and stood beside her to keep watch. “You should use that smaller pot over there. And don’t keep the flame on high. Warm it up slowly on low heat. You can use this wooden ladle.”

“I said that I’ll make it!”

“I can help you, can’t I?” he replied, taking out the mugs. “I know more about the kitchen than you.”

Jill reluctantly nodded. She poured the milk into a pot and took the jar of honey from Hadis.

“You don’t like it if it’s too sweet, right?” Jill asked.

“Huh? You do though, don’t you? Don’t worry about me. Just don’t blow anything up.”

“I won’t! I’m trying to be nice here, jeez! I think...this might be enough.”

She carefully mixed the honey together and warmed the milk on low heat. It wasn't difficult at all. At first, she kept the flames on high, causing the milk to bubble over, and had gotten the amount of honey or milk wrong, but the students carefully watched over her until she'd gotten the hang of it.

"If this is too sweet, please let me know. I want to learn what you like," Jill said. "What? What's with that face?"

Hadis glanced at her face and back at her hands. "You really did learn how to make it... But why?"

"I first noticed the students making it at night. It was getting cold, and they wanted to keep warm. And so, I learned it along the way! I worked hard every night!"

"How many people were sacrificed? Did you explode anything?" he asked.

"Wh-Why would I cause an explosion? I won't do that. It's just a warm mug of milk. Explosions don't normally occur there."

"But I'm certain that you did something unnecessary and caused one."

"...I didn't."

"If I ask Lutiya, I'm sure he'd tell me."

"I dropped a pat of butter onto the fire, so I hastily tried to pick it up and accidentally ignited it with magical energy!"

Hadis laughed as Jill came clean. "I see. Still, it's awesome that you can make this."

"I-It is, isn't it? I can do it if I try."

"I haven't heard stories about that training camp yet."

"Because you always hold a grudge and are quick to criticize me. I didn't forget about you at all, but you started sulking on your own. I totally forgot to show you that I could make warm milk. I wanted to surprise you."

The pot of milk in front of her was proof of this. As it started to bubble, she took the pot off the heat.

"Do you want to add in some cinnamon? It's delicious," Hadis said.

“Really? Then I’ll take you up on that offer,” Jill replied.

“Yeah, this is nice.”

His eyes softened as the milk was poured into the mugs. He took a mug, blew on it to cool, and took a sip. Jill, who hadn’t readied herself just yet, waited for his comment with bated breath.

“It’s delicious,” Hadis said with a sigh.

Jill was glad that she wasn’t carrying a mug. She would’ve surely dropped it when she heard his sweet words.

“I-I see...” she muttered as she took a sip to hide her embarrassment.

But she couldn’t tell if the milk was too sweet or not. She couldn’t even register the temperature of her drink. Every time Hadis swallowed, his Adam’s apple would bob up and down, and she couldn’t tear her eyes away from him.

“I might like it if it was a bit sweeter,” he said. “I won’t drink much before going to bed, so it might be better if it was sweeter and richer.”

“W-Well noted! Then next time, I’ll add a bit more honey.”

“I’ll make it tomorrow and add your favorite marshmallows.”

“Th-Then I’ll make it the day after tomorrow!”

“If we ever stay up late, why don’t we take turns making it, then?”

Hadis smiled, his mug still in his hand. He used his other to clasp Jill’s fingertips and bring her close, inviting her to sit in front of the fireplace and drink together. This was anything but unusual—it was a normal nighttime scene. But watching him drink the milk that she made caused a sweet sensation to fill her tongue. *Wow... Wow... Whoa...*

She was glad she worked hard during the training camp. She was glad she did her best at work. She was glad that she was able to spend this time with him. Love was scary—this fleeting moment was all it took to make her feel like her painstaking efforts were worth it.

And yet, it had the power to destroy everything in a moment.

The moment a knock was heard at the door, it opened. Jill turned stiff. Who

would visit them at such a late hour? She soon felt the strength leave her body as Hadis turned to the door while trying to sit in front of the fireplace.

“Brother Vissel. What’s wrong? I’m not going to work anymore,” he said.

“I’ve got an emergency report,” Vissel replied. “It’s from Risteard and my annoying fiancée. I’ll start with what we know for sure.”

The crown prince, who arrived without guards in tow, made it clear that he wanted to be away from the public eye. He didn’t even nag at the fact that Jill was in Hadis’s room so late at night.

Jill had a bad feeling about this. Hadis narrowed his eyes and placed his mug on the floor and Jill sat up straight.

“Princess Faris will take the throne,” the crown prince reported.

Hadis turned expressionless, and it took Jill a moment to process it.

“This announcement will go public next month. For the first time in Kratos’s history, they’ll have a nine-year-old queen,” Vissel said.

The first order of business was to ensure that Gerald would be kept in the dark about this. They had to think of a plan. As a complicated discussion ensued, Jill heard the faint ringing of a bell. Perhaps she was escaping reality, but suddenly, the realization of this day hit her. *It was tonight.*

It was a snowy night, right after Princess Faris’s fourteenth birthday. Five years from now, Jill Cervel, the god of war’s daughter, would be killed by the Sacred Spear of the Goddess. And just like that fateful day, a blizzard began to whip up.



“BROTHER,” a voice called out.

“Must be because I bent logic,” the God of Logic muttered.

Hadis served as the god’s vessel and was peering into the Dragon God’s memories through his dreams. However, this phenomenon should stop soon. Humans weren’t permitted to hold a God’s memories.

Rahelm, the imperial capital, was a brightly lit city at night. But the lights and

the dark sky were buried by the white speckles of snow like a storm of flowers. Petals danced from the white flower crown within a divine flower field—a holy precinct. A fourteen-year-old girl had downcast eyes as she gazed at the world.

“Brother, I can become your bride one day, can’t I?”

By tomorrow, the snow would pile up and paint the entire world white as though it was creating a new world.

“Brother, I love you. You’re so dear to me. I’ll do anything for you.”

The world, however, couldn’t become anew so easily. Even if memories were wiped to become a blank slate, there was always something buried underneath.

This was called fate. This was the logic of the world.

“What about you, Brother?”

Rave opened his eyes. He couldn’t remember his sins. He no longer remembered what was wrong. Yet, he wasn’t allowed to make a mistake with logic that couldn’t recall love. This was the burden that he had to bear. And so, unsure of what would go against logic, he repeatedly made the same mistakes. Hadis’s predictions were right.

Should a Dragon Emperor and a Dragon Consort fall in love, they would be going against the very same logic. This was the God’s punishment for not understanding love.

“Brother, since you love me, you’ll make me your wife, won’t you?”

“Don’t mistake your role. You make me sick. We’re siblings.”

He wasn’t allowed to reach the wrong answer. He repeated the conversation countless times in his head and always used the same words.

“Your love is wrong, Kratos.”

“Then live your life with logic, devoid of love!” the younger sister screamed, digging her nails into the ground covered with white.

“Then live your life with love, devoid of logic!” the older brother spat from the skies amid a flurry of white petals.

Afterword

HELLO, Sarasa Nagase here. Thank you for picking up the fifth volume!

This volume includes a few tweaks and additional stories from the fifth arc of the web version. This is released alongside the tenth volume of *I'm the Villainess, So I'm Taming the Final Boss*, which got an anime in October 2022! I hope you can enjoy both! I've also got a Drama CD and a second manga serialization thanks to Anko Yuzu. Please check the official site for details.

Now for some acknowledgments. Thank you to Mitsuya Fuji for the beautiful illustrations despite your busy schedule. Thank you to Anko for drawing Jill and Irene (from *I'm the Villainess*). I continue to be in your care. Thank you to the editors and their department, the designers, proofreaders, and everyone involved in the making of this book.

Above all, thank you to those who decided to pick up this volume. Thank you so much for cheering Jill on. I'll do my best so that you can continue to enjoy this series.

I hope we can meet again.



Let's Get to Villainessin': Stratagems of a Former Commoner

By **Hiironoame**

Illust **Misumi**

Would you become the villainess to save your beloved baby sister? Mio agrees to do just that! Survive three years at an elite academy where the progeny of tycoons and moguls roam, and in return, the real villainess will cure Mio's terminally ill sister. What lengths will Mio go for her sister?



Soup Forest: The Story of the Woman Who Speaks with Animals and the Former Mercenary

By **Syuu**

Illust **Muni**

Olivia has a secret she can't tell anyone: she can hear not only people's thoughts, but also animals'. She's lived surrounded by animals at her soup restaurant on the edge of the forest, until a former mercenary appears on her doorstep. How will they change each other's lives?



The Former Assassin Who Got Reincarnated as a Noble Girl

By **Satsuki Otonashi** Illust **MiRea**

High Society Is Rough For Assassins!

A cold-blooded former assassin has to figure out a new use for their killer skillset in high society after they reincarnate into a noble young lady!



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