

# Advent of the Three Calamities

## Chapter 16: Mirror Dimension [1]

Power over emotions.

It was an interesting power.

Sadness, anger, joy... In one way or another, they were all intertwined with one another. If exploited right, sadness could bring anger, anger could bring fear, and fear could bring joy...

They were all connected, and the combinations were endless.

But...

"Can I keep my sanity?"

The power came with a massive drawback.

.....My sanity.

It slowly ate at it.

"Huuu."

I took a deep breath to relax my mind.

"Status."

A familiar screen appeared in my vision. My gaze eventually fell on the spells that were listed.

There was something that I was curious about.

- └ Beginner type spell [Emotive] : Anger
- └ Beginner type spell [Emotive] : Sadness
- └ Beginner type spell [Emotive] : Fear
- └ Beginner type spell [Emotive] : Happiness

↳ Beginner type spell [Emotive] : Disgust

↳ Beginner type spell [Emotive] : Surprise

"..."

I wordlessly raised my hand and reached for the window in front of me.

"...Nothing."

Yet again, my hand phased through the panel. It wasn't a surprising result. I had tried a lot of methods but it didn't seem to be possible to physically touch or.

Or is it?

I tried something different.

Closing my eyes, I focused my attention on the area near my abdomen. Slowly, a warm current passed through me, which I guided toward my fingers.

My hand experienced an odd tickling sensation, reminiscent of when my hand fell asleep—paresthesia.

Unbothered, I reached forward toward the panel. More specifically, toward the first spell.

Anger.

"...!"

↳ Beginner type spell [Emotive] : Anger

↳ Lvl. 1 [0%—[13%]—————100%]

A small bar appeared right beneath.

"...Finally."

A change occurred, and I was able to get an idea of my current progress.

I proceeded to tap on the other bars.

Sadness — Lvl. 2 [23%]

Fear — Lvl. 1 [37%]

Happiness — Lvl. 1 [37%]

Disgust — Lvl. 1 [37%]

Surprise — Lvl. 1 [37%]

"Interesting."

The only spell that was level 2 was [Sadness]. The revelation didn't come as a surprise to me. I had already been aware of it.

What I wasn't aware of was its progress.

23%...

That was a lot more than I thought.

"...So in the end, real-life experience does count in the progress. My real-life experience. Not Julien's."

The fact that I was already level 2 and that the other emotions also had a little progress served to affirm my thoughts.

If that wasn't enough proof;

Hands of Malady — Lvl. 1 [0%]

Chains of Alakantria — Lvl. 1 [0%]

"Haha..."

A laugh escaped my lips.

How could it not?

0%...

Not even one percent. Simply zero...

"I guess that proves it."

The previous Julien was capable of using such spells. Though not brilliantly, he was capable. That was what Leon told me.

Since it was at 0%, I was able to confirm my previous thought.

My current progress.

Be it Emotive, or Elemental.

They were all mine. Not the previous Julien's, but mine.

"Huuu."

I took a deep breath.

Closing my eyes, I extended my hand forward. A small circle floated in the air in front of me and several runes started to light up.

"Again."

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Located a five-minute walk from the Rondeo Dorms was a training facility called the [Karlson Hall].

This facility, spanning 1000 square meters, housed an array of enchanting devices and exercise equipment for training purposes.

Typically bustling with cadets, the hall was relatively empty. With it being the start of the year, the cadets were all busy socializing with one another.

Socialization was important in the noble circle. It was, therefore, encouraged by the households to attend such gatherings.

All with the exception of a few people.

"So you're here."

An exception to all of this was Leon. He was drenched from head to toe, sword in hand. In front of him stood a dummy, its body cut in two.

His movements came to a stop upon hearing the familiar voice behind him.

"Evelyn? What brings you here?"

"...I can't train?"

With a helpless shrug, she pointed toward the training dummies nearby. Seeing them, Leon made a look of understanding.

"I see."

He proceeded to wipe the sweat from his forehead.

"...."

An awkward silence followed suit.

Evelyn made an exasperated face when she looked at him.

"I'm not going to talk about him."

"...Yes?"

"I won't ask so you don't need to be so tense."

"..."

Was he that obvious...? For a moment, Leon struggled to answer.

"I get it. You don't want to talk about him. I also don't want to talk about him. It doesn't always have to be about him."

"...Is that so."

Leon's shoulders relaxed, and so did his expression.

"How have you been?"

Five years. That was how long the two hadn't seen each other.

The Evenus Household was one of the fastest-rising noble houses. Naturally, their circle was vast. The Verlice family was one of the families that they had gotten close to over the past years.

There was a time when there were talks between the houses to have Evelyn and Julien engaged.

That, however, fell through in the end.

"Well... I've been good, I guess?"

Evelyn shrugged and smiled wryly. Waving her hand, she pointed at the broken dummy.

"Forget about me. I'm surprised that you managed to get the second seat. You've improved quite a lot. You could hardly hold the sword the last time I met you..."

"I've train—What's with that look?"

"So bland."

Evelyn's face scrunched up.

"...I didn't take you for such a bland guy."

She then mimicked his expression, going all stony.

"I've trained. Worked hard~"

And flexed her muscles.

Staring at the scene, Leon turned his head and covered his mouth with his fist.

"...Kuhum. Sorry."

"Please, the fact that you don't even realize..."

Evelyn's face changed and she stopped mid-sentence. Covering her mouth, she leaned closer.

"...What?"

"What."

Leon turned his head further.

"Don't tell me..."

But Evelyn insisted.

"You."

Finally catching a glimpse of his face, her eyes widened.

"You're blushing, aren't you? Holy shit, don't tell me you don't know that's how you react?"

"I..."

"Fuuuuuckk..."

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'Mirror dimension' — A phenomenon that took over the continent of Aurora.

There wasn't much information regarding the Mirror Dimension. All that was known was that it expanded each year, slowly swallowing up the continent in the process.

From there, existences known as 'Children of the Dark' emerged into the continent.

These entities of chaos shook the very foundation of humanity, swallowing up territories at a fast pace.

The general situation was as such.

At least, that was how I understood things.

"Although the situation sounds dire, the Empire is still holding up well. In fact, we've managed to regain some of our territories as of late. Which is why you need to memorize the monsters that are on the list. It'll be useful for you for when you enter the Mirror Dimension."

The class I was attending was called 'Heritage Recollection and Monster Analysis.' There were a lot of things to remember, from the history, monster types, classifications, and so on...

Looking at the long list of things that I needed to memorize I felt my head hurt a little.

It reminded me of the times back when I was in school.

That said, it didn't seem like I was the only one struggling.

Staring at the white-haired figure sitting a few rows ahead of me, I held myself back from laughing.

With a "Unnng" she ruffled her hair, muttering things like, *'I'm fucked. Should I just sell myself? Fuck, no. Shit...'*

Just a lot of nonsense.

At that moment, as if she could sense my gaze, her head turned and our eyes met. My expression stiffened at the sight of her, and an image flashed in my mind.

*'...It's her.'*

One of the girls from the vision.

Before I could process the information, she tilted her head and mouthed, 'What are you looking at?'

I thought about answering but decided against it when I felt the professor's gaze pause on me.

Clicking her tongue, she returned her attention to the front.

The lecture continued from there.

It only ended when another hour passed. By then, I was mentally drained.

"We've only covered a portion of the syllabus. We've still got a lot of things to go through. Please go back home and digest the information."

As if he wasn't satisfied, the lecturer added.

"I'll review what you've learned in the next lecture."

A pained groan followed his exit as the white-haired girl gripped her head.

"I'm fucked... I'm done. Shit. At this rate, I'll fail... Do I have no choice but to sell myself?"

She looked around before settling her gaze toward the nearest boy.

"Oy."

"...Hm?"

"How much would you pay for me?"

"Eh?"

Flustered, the boy took a step back. She didn't seem to mind and approached him. Her every action attracted the gaze of those around her. She was that pretty.

Too bad she was crazy.

Bat shit crazy.

"How about this..."

She leaned her elbow on his shoulder. Learning her head closer, she scratched her chin and nodded. As if she had just made a big decision.

"You give me all your money, and in exchange, I'll let you hold my hand. How about it?"

"....Eh?"



"Is that a no?"

"..."

"Tsk."

She clicked her tongue and proceeded to her next target. It went on like this for a while before she left with a gloomy look.

I thought about leaving, but the scene was rather entertaining. I wanted to know if anyone was willing to pay all their money just to hold her hand.

That, and...

The fact that I dreaded the next class.

[Dimension Diving]

As the name suggested, it was a class designated to emulate the environment of the 'Mirror Dimension'. While it wasn't the real deal, and the monsters were fake, it didn't mean that it was impossible to get injured.

Quite frankly.

I didn't want to go.

My skills were not up to par.

The only thing I could do was stay behind and watch.

"Please gear yourself and put on your suits. We'll be starting in the next half hour."

A loud voice reminded me of the impending doom. Sighing to myself, I turned to look at Leon who had remained quiet the entire time. Turning his head to look at me, he raised his fist as if to say, 'Cheer up' before packing up his staff and heading for the door.

"Hey, wait. Why are you leaving?"

"...Yes?"

Leon stopped to look at me.

"Aren't you supposed to be my knight?"

Wasn't his entire job to protect me?

"Oh."

He nodded.

"That's right."

"So..."

"...Are you going to file a complaint?"

"No."

"Then..."

He nodded his head and excused himself.

"Ah."

I held my hand over my forehead.

Fuck.

I really didn't want to go.

## **Chapter 17: Mirror Dimension [2]**

It was as if the air itself had cracked. Fragments, like that of a fractured mirror, lingered suspended in midair.

A small crowd formed outside of the shattered space. There were over several hundred students, all of them huddled together in their cliques.

The same couldn't be said for me.

Be it because they were avoiding me, or just didn't like me, nobody appeared anywhere around me.

....I was the only one who was alone.

"Mirror Dimension..."

Not that I minded since my attention was on the cracked space in front of me.

*'Yeah, I really don't want to go.'*

Everything about it felt ominous.

Still, it wasn't like I had a choice. Whether I liked it or not, I had to go. Perhaps I'll be able to find answers here...

While I was in the midst of my thoughts, the instructor, Amir Wallow, showed up.

The surroundings went quiet.

"Since everyone is gathered here, I'll make things short. We will now be diving in groups of five. I'll announce the list shortly."

The noise that had previously taken hold of the space increased as the cadets grew restless.

*'So we're doing this in teams.'*

"It'll be random so the balance won't be right. However, that shouldn't matter since you aren't being graded for this. It's all about getting used to the environment for when you end up entering the more dangerous parts of the mirror dimension."

He then proceeded to give a rundown of the team's compositions. A team generally was composed of four to five members — two damage-dealers, one long-range, one tank, and one support.

It generally alternated between one and two damage dealers per team.

In that sense, I was assigned the support role.

"It is up to you to decide the team leader. Be it the strongest person, or who you feel will be able to lead better... It's up to you."

The teams were announced shortly after.

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「Team Seven」

? : 1. Julien Evenus

? : 2. Rosanne Brighton

? : 3. Aoife Megrail

? : 4. James Milner

? : 5. Adan Whitelock

"...Team Seven."

A lot of unfamiliar names appeared on the list. There were over a thousand first years, and it was hard for me to remember everyone's name.

However, there was one name that stood out from the rest.

Aoife Megrail.

The Megrail name stood out immediately. It was the name of the ruling house and one of the women that appeared in my vision.

Taking my eyes away from the board, I met her gaze. Her expression was hard to read, and briefly, I felt a certain coldness flash in her eyes. That went by really fast.

She was the first one to approach me. Her red hair gracefully swung in the air as her beautiful lips parted open.

"We're on the same team."

"...So it seems."

My tone came out rather stiff. I wasn't quite sure how to address her. With her being a princess, I had to be careful with my words.

That was until she spoke again.

"You're weak."

She spoke in a manner that left no room for debate.

"...That's why I will be the team leader."

I didn't answer and just stared at her. She looked back at me. Straight in the eyes. It was as if she was challenging me.

Wanted me to refuse her.

But...

"Do as you see fit."

All she did was do me a favor.

I didn't want to be the leader. I wasn't fit to be one as well.

As her composed expression began to reveal cracks under the impact of my actions, a smile tugged at my lips while I lowered my head.

".....Team Leader."

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The air was dry.

The world appeared monochromatic, enveloped in shades of gray, with the sole exception of the vivid red and orange tones emanating from the sun in the sky.

I was running through a rocky field.

The other team members were running ahead of me. Unlike me, they didn't seem to be struggling.

My stamina was starting to run low.

Was this the difference between us...?

"Let's stop here."

Thankfully, we stopped just as I couldn't hold my composure. Halting, Aoife looked around before settling her gaze over a large rock.

"Let's take a small break for now. We're almost near our destination."

Taking advantage of the situation, I sat on the rock to catch my breath. There were a total of five people in the group, and as I sat down, none of the members approached me and huddled over to Aoife.

*'Can't blame them... She's a princess.'*

Had I been in their position, I too would've been like them.

It was unfortunate that in the future, there was a chance she'd kill me. I needed to be careful around her.

An appropriate distance was required.

Still, from where I was, I could overhear their conversation.

"Team Leader, where exactly are we going?"

"...Gathering point. We should be able to meet with the other members there."

"Ah, is that so."

A woman with gold locks sighed in relief. Rosanne Brighton. With a long staff in hand, she was the long-ranged fighter of the team.

An elemental user with dual attributes.

Fire, and water.

She looked around.

"Things have been proceeding rather smoothly. We still haven't seen many monsters yet. Is it because this is one of the safer areas?"

"The point of this excursion is for us to familiarize ourselves with the environment. There shouldn't be that many monsters."

Standing at an imposing height of 2 meters, he towered over all of us. James Milner, the team's tanker, replied.

"Ah."

"That's right."

Chewing on a jerky, Aoife glanced around.

".....Still, keep your guard up. Always stay alert. Don't let your guard down."

"Got it."

Nodding, Aoife finished the jerky and patted her hands.

"Let's go."

We were back on the move.

The terrain shifted, and trees emerged in my field of vision, their leafless branches stretching out and gradually surrounding us as we advanced.

*Scrunch... Scrunch...*

Our group was engulfed in silence, disrupted only by the steady rhythm of our footsteps resonating against the uneven ground blanketed with a layer of damp, decomposing leaves.

Gradually, the light dimmed, and I sensed myself losing my sight. Wisps of fog clung to the gnarled trunks of the trees around us, making it hard for me to see.

"....Continue."

A sense of dread assaulted my mind as we marched forward.

From eyesight to hearing... We were gradually losing sight of all our senses.

"Haaa... Haaa...."

My breath started to feel heavy.

...Was it because I was growing tired?

A thought that accompanied my mind as I continued forward.

"Ukh...!"

My head throbbed all of a sudden.

The pain wasn't intense. It came as fast as it left. By the time I regained my senses, the light started to return.

*'What was that...?'*

Checking myself, I felt nothing strange with my body. Staring at my hands, I frowned but continued forward.

My mind eventually relaxed after a couple of minutes.

"....I'm probably tired."

Just as I felt my chest grow lighter.....

*SHIIING—!*

Something streaked through the air, coming at me from a nearby tree. It was so fast that I had no time to react.

Before I even had the chance to gather my bearings, an intense pain flooded my chest.

*Thump.*

And I fell to my knees.

"Pfft."

Blood spilled from my mouth as I felt my head grow light.

The world became a blur from there.

"W-what..."

I could hardly speak and the words refused to leave my mouth.

The pain was hard to describe.

It was intense, and my consciousness grew faint.

*Clank—!*

The last thing I managed to see before I lost consciousness was a small creature diving from the front, right toward Aoife who just barely managed to react.

"Sh-it..."

And then the world grew dark.

Or so I thought.

"Uahp...!"

As if oxygen had been removed from my lungs, I took a deep breath. My consciousness returned and clarity returned.

*Scrunch... Scrunch...*

The familiar sound of my footsteps echoed through the ground, and as I looked ahead, familiar backs came into view.

*'What just...'*

The memory of the situation was still vivid in my mind. Although my vision was hindered, the path was familiar.

From the trees to our current location. It was all the same. Just in a couple of minutes, we should be coming out...



Indeed, as I thought, lights started to return. A familiar view.

Gradually, my feet started to slow down.

Noticing my situation, the others stopped as well. With a frown, Aoife looked at me.

"Are you tired?"

I didn't answer her.

Scanning my surroundings, everything appeared to be the same as before. So much that it felt eery.

"...Julien?"

The positions of the trees, the placement of the rocks, and the sensation of the air—every detail rushed vividly back to my memory.

It can't be, right...?

"Hey...!"

I snapped out of it when two large hands grasped my shoulders. A rough face inched close to mine.

"Someone is talking to you, pay attention."

"..."

That was when I realized everyone was looking at me. Closing my eyes, I took a deep breath before opening my eyes again.

"Let go."

"You."

Raising my hand, I was just about to grasp his shoulder when he let go and cursed.

".....Arrogant bastard."

Ignoring him, I patted and adjusted my clothes. Feeling Aoife's intense gaze, I felt compelled to say something.

"There's an ambush ahead."

Maybe.

I wasn't too sure.

"An ambush...?"

Making a dumbfounded look, James's mouth dropped.

"Is that really the best excuse you cou—"

*Step—*

Ignoring him, I took a step forward.

"Hey, you...!"

*Step—*

And then another. Carefully counting each step, I closed my eyes and replayed the memory in my mind. Gradually, I arrived near the exact spot where the memory ended.

I was just one step away.

"..."

My feet stopped.

Just one step. As long as I took a step...

"Are we seriously going to waste time waiting for him? He's just trying to save himself from the embarrassment. If—"

*Step—*

I took that step.

And...

*SHIIING—!*

Just as in the memory, the moment I took the step, the tree rustled and something fast streaked through the air. But unlike last time, I was prepared. Tilting my body ever so slightly, it passed right before me.

With a 'thud,' it came crashing toward the ground, revealing a glimpse of its features.

"..."

I didn't pay much attention to it's looks. Turning my attention toward my group, I nudged with my chin.

"...Get rid of it."

This chapter is updated by

### **Chapter 18: Mirror Dimension [3]**

Foresight.

The gift of glimpsing into the future—a power I held. It was the third time now, and even now, I didn't fully understand it.

What triggered it...?

Was it just random, or did it follow a set pattern?

Questions flooded my mind.

But I didn't have long to ponder over them.

*Splat—!*

Grabbing my attention, a black substance splattered on the ground, presumably from the monster that had just been killed.

I didn't care to look, though. The vision grabbed my thoughts as it replayed in my mind.

Every detail, from the minutiae to the grand, was etched vividly in my memory.

With a thought, I could recall everything that had happened. From the pain to the very last moments when something dashed at the team leader.

The memories were vivid in my mind, and as my gaze settled on a specific tree, my hand instinctively reached out, extending a finger to point at it.

"That one."

I was sure.

The memories told me so.

".....Get rid of that one too."

Another one was hiding in that tree.

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'How did he know...?'

Aoife looked at his back, her eyes falling on the creature on the ground.

*'Rabbleflit'*

An 'infant' ranked beast. Though the lowest of all classes, it was a beast that specialized in stealth and ambushes.

They were both deaf and blind. They attacked based on nearby vibrations, limiting their range to a small area.

Even so...

To compensate for this evident flaw, their mastery over stealth was unparalleled.

Unless one possessed proficiency in search magic or had extremely keen mana senses, detecting them was nearly impossible.

Was Julien proficient in search magic...?

She didn't think so.

So how?

Mana sensitivity...?

"It's hiding on that tree over there."

Aoife followed his finger. Again, she could see nothing.

".....Team Leader."

Aoife looked back at him, immediately noticing his annoyed expression.

"Yes?"

"As far as I'm concerned, there's another creature hiding over there. I'm not proficient in long-range magic. If you wouldn't mind."

"Right..."

Aoife eyed the tree in the distance and flicked her finger. The tree shriveled up, compressing like a scrunched-up paper.

It all happened so fast that the creature was unable to react.

"Hieek...!"

After a deafening screech, what followed was the creature's shriveled-up body.

"...."

Aoife took a look at the creature before turning her head away.

'How ugly...'

Just like Julien, she was talented in two fields.

[Mind] and [Body].

Unlike Julien, who was proficient in the Emotive field under the Mind classification, she was more proficient in Telekinesis.

With a single thought, she could manipulate an inanimate object.

"Yuck, it looks nasty."

A different figure drew near, leaning forward as her golden locks cascaded over her face while she grimaced.

"They really do look different than the textbooks, don't they? Team Leader."

It was...

What was her name again?

Aoife struggled to recall. Nonetheless, she nodded her head.

".....Yeah."

That was when two other figures approached her. With bright smiles, they started to praise her.

"You were amazing."

"That was great. I can't believe you're so strong."

It was a situation she had grown used to. Typically, she didn't mind such flattery.

But strangely, they felt rather annoying at the moment.

'...I didn't do anything.'

She found it odd.

Since when did she mind such things?

"..."

At heart, she already knew the answer.

Swallowing her pride, much to the surprise of the others, she moved toward a certain figure. He stood alone, his gaze lingering over the nearby trees.

"..."

She stopped when she was a few meters away from him.

Taking note of her appearance, he glanced at her.

"What?"

His tone was as flat and rude as ever. However, she didn't mind it.

She knew he could take advantage of her cracks if she showed them.

"...Thank you. The situation would've been difficult had you not warned us."

"Ah."

He extended his hand to brush his shoulders.

"You're right."

"...?"

Aoife found the entire situation somewhat funny. She somewhat expected such an answer from him.

It seemed fitting.

Could she be starting to get an idea of his character?

"Can you continue doing it?"

Aoife believed that moving forward, if they wanted no accidents to occur, they needed his assistance.

He had proven his abilities worked.

Even as the other members showed clear signs of refusal, she ignored them. For this journey to go smoothly, she needed him.

Pride was meaningless under such circumstances.

She expected him to feel the same too, but as their gazes met, he shook his head.

"No."

Casually taking out a jerky, he bit into it and turned away.

"...Even if I want to, I can't."

Staring at his back, Aoife's expression didn't change.

Such response... It was fitting of him.

But as expected.

*'I really can't stand him.'*

\*\*\*

The Mirror Dimension was an expansive space devoid of any life.

The amount of manpower used by the kingdom to keep the space from expanding was enormous.

Thankfully, just as threatening as the Mirror Dimension was, it was also a land filled with opportunities.

Black Region Supply-Station.

In front of a levitating panel adorned with a myriad of shifting images stood a gracefully poised woman with flowing black hair.

Delilah's gaze seemed fixed on a certain panel.

".....Could it be that he's very perceptive to mana?"

[Get rid of that one too.]

The way he was able to detect Rabbleflit so effortlessly despite not specializing in such magic. The way he was able to avoid its ambush...

It aroused curiosity.

When one thought about it, what he did wasn't all that impressive. Recognizing the mana flow of a creature was something that most mages were capable of doing after reaching a certain point.

The key point, however, was 'certain point'.

Tier 3 and above was the requirement.

In other words, he was able to achieve something like that before even reaching Tier 3.

"Fascinating."

Truly.

But that was all.

It was just fascinating.

Her lingering interest in him waned when she brought her attention to a specific paper.

"...."

It was a document detailing Julien's background.

The contents weren't very thick. However, a certain page caught her attention. It was a close-up image of him.

Her eyes slowly traced down toward his forearm, where a small black tattoo appeared.

It was an unremarkable tattoo. One that any other person could have.

But...

She was confident.

After doing an intensive background check, she was sure of it.

"...So you've finally shown yourselves."

Delilah gently closed her eyes and took a deep breath. The paper in her hand wrinkled under her grasp.

"To think you'd even try to target this place..."



Finally, cracks appeared on her usually composed expression as her lips twisted up. A sneer marred her features.

"How bold."

She spat out, trying her best to suppress the raging storm that was boiling in her chest.

Staring at the tattoo in the picture, her expression turned frosty.

"How very bold..."

\*\*\*

"Looks like all the teams have gathered."

There were no other hiccups on our journey to the designated spot. That was good because I still struggled to clear my mind of the vision.

I still felt the lingering after-effects of my death. Thankfully, it happened fast... but the very last moments were still deeply rooted in my mind.

"What you guys currently experienced was merely a taste of the dimension. The deeper you venture, the harder things will become. Thankfully, our empire set up several safe stations located throughout. This one being one of them."

Amir Wallow gave a long-winded statement. He gave us a short overview of our current location.

Looking around, I had to hold myself from expressing my surprise.

High walls constructed from sturdy rock enclosed the area, while tents were scattered throughout. In the distance, a fissured space marked the entrance and exit points where people came and went.

It was a strange sight. One that I didn't think I would get used to easily.

"This is a rather small safe-station. There's plenty deeper within the dimension, but you won't get to experience those just yet. For now, enjoy yourselves here. We will return to the institute in an hour."

The cadets all separated.

Perhaps because everything seemed so new, everyone looked strangely excited as they scattered to check out the safe zone.

I thought about checking the place, too, but...

"I'm tired."

I felt strangely tired.

My eyelids were growing heavier, and each step felt heavier than the last. It was to the point where I had no choice but to find a place to sit.

"Haa..."

Taking a deep breath, I covered my face.

What sort of situation was this?

It wasn't as though I did much coming here. My group members did most of the killings while I watched from behind.

The only time I acted was when...

"Could it be that?"

Was this the consequence of the 'insight' ability?

If that was the case, I was more than happy with it. Compared to the backlash from 'immersion,' this felt like nothing.

"Haha.... shit, have I become too used to this?"

Physical pain, tiredness, mental trauma... It felt like I had experienced a lot of things over the past week.

"This is crazy. This i—Ukh!"

Pain seized my body all of a sudden.

It was so intense that I couldn't even shout. Spit flew from my mouth as I lost control of my body.

My vision blurred, and the world tilted.

"...Ukh."

'Wh-what's going on...?!'

Clutching the side of the bench I occupied with all my strength, my legs quivered.

It was hard to describe the pain I was in.

It seemed as if it aimed to consume my mind, stimulating every corner of my consciousness before honing in on a particular point.

A familiar spot.

"...Ah."

And as my gaze fell on the spot, I finally found my breath again.

I didn't know how to feel.

Lowering my head, I stared at my forearm, where a small tattoo appeared.

It was unlike how it was before.

Something changed.

"T-his...haa... of all things..."

The second leaf of the tattoo.

It had lit up.

## **Chapter 19: Language [1]**

...It was 12:45 AM.

The stars hung in the sky, and an unusual quietness enveloped the surroundings. It felt strangely peaceful.

"....."

Taking a deep breath, I submerged my body in the bathtub.

The water was cold but it helped to keep my mind clear.

Splash...

The water splashed as I raised my arm out of the water. Focusing my attention on it, my eyes fell on the four-leaved clover.

Two of the leaves were currently lit.

The top and bottom.

"...How strange."

It was a mysterious tattoo. It had been with me ever since I appeared in this world. Even now, I struggled to understand what it did.

What exactly was it? ...and what was the meaning behind it.

"Four leaves, so... Four abilities?"

It seemed logical.

I had already experienced one.

My mind shuddered thinking about the first ability. From what I gathered, every time I used the ability, it would take an entire day for it to recharge before I could use it again.

That said...

"It's impossible."

While the ability replenished within a day, my mind couldn't recharge at the same pace.

It was a dangerous ability.

Every usage threatened to eat at my sanity.

There was a reason I was so desperate to learn my other abilities. I didn't want to completely rely on this ability.

Of course, that didn't mean I wasn't prepared to use it.

Every advantage was necessary.

But...

*'It's best if I tread lightly.'*

Yeah.

So that I wouldn't lose sight of myself.

I had to tread lightly.

"Hoo..."

I floated on the water, with only my neck and hand breaking the surface.

Considering the after-effects of the first ability, the prospect of using the second one felt daunting.

My eyes continued to linger over the tattoo.

What was going to happen if I pressed on it...?

Was the side-effect going to be greater? If so, will I be fine by the end of it?

So many questions, and so few answers....

"....Shall I try?"

There was only one way to find out.

Although the idea seemed daunting, my mind was firm. Something was weighing heavily on my mind, and it was eating me up from the inside.

All I wanted was for it to stop.

And for that...

"I'll do it."

Even if it meant more pain.

With such thoughts, I reached for the second leaf.

"....."

Silently I felt my finger touch my skin.

It pressed on the area where the second leaf lit up and I closed my eyes in preparation for what was to come.

But...

".....Nothing?"

When I opened my eyes again, I noticed that everything was the same.

There was no change.

No, there was a change.

"What's this?"

The second leaf.

It had lost its light. It was now back to how it was before.

"....."

I silently stared at my hand for what felt like forever.

Eventually, my head sank into the water.

A part of me felt relieved, but another felt disappointed.

Submerging myself deeper into the water, I let myself relax.

In this strange silence.

I felt at peace.

\*\*\*

The next day.

Classes were running as usual. First years weren't allowed to select their own courses. Therefore, as I glanced at the name of the lecture, I had to resist the urge to audibly groan.

".....Language study."

As expected.

Even in this world, these types of lectures were unavoidable.

The language that was used in this empire was called 'Lumoraic'. A modern language that was only a few centuries old.

It was good that when I came to this world I was already able to speak, or else...

"Let's not think about it."

I silently entered the classroom.

The classroom was rather large. With over a hundred students, it had to be spacious.

The moment I entered the classroom, several gazes fell on me. Their gazes still felt burdensome, but I was slowly starting to get used to them.

I looked around before eventually making my way toward where Leon was.

It was strange.

Before, he'd used to follow me everywhere. As if he was studying my every move.

However, now... He didn't seem to care as much.

Still, he did save me a seat.

So that's that.

I had just taken a seat when Leon glanced at me and frowned.

"....You look quite tired."

"Ah, yeah."

I hardly slept last night.

"I'm still adjusting."

"Oh. Take care of yourself."

"...Yeah."

The conversation ended there. He was a man of little words, and so was I. Our conversations usually lasted for this long.

To an outsider, they probably sounded like an extremely stiff conversation. However, I liked it to be like this.

It was the perfect distance.

Not too close and not too far.

It was exactly 8 o'clock when the professor in charge came in.

"Looks like the class is packed. It's nice to see so many students eager to learn a new language."

The professor was a middle-aged man adorned with a meticulously groomed mustache and gray hair. Clad in elegant attire, his demeanor exuded an unmistakable aura of grace.

It was obvious at a glance that he was a high-end noble.

"As many of you know, the mirror dimensions hold many mysteries. From resources to ancient scripts... There are a lot of hidden treasures within the dimension."

There was a reason why the Empire had many supply stations constructed within the Dimension.

It wasn't just for the sake of stopping the expansion of the dimension. It was also for the sake of gathering resources. From the ruins of old civilizations to ores, and monsters... It held a lot of opportunity.

"As one says. Knowledge is power. Within the ancient civilizations, there are many books detailing a lot of useful information regarding the expansion of the Mirror Dimension. By studying their language, we're empowering ourselves with the ability to understand their mistakes and technology."

The professor seemed enthusiastic about the lecture.

He went on to brag about the Empire's achievement in this field and how they were ahead of the other Empires.

But...

I couldn't feel the same excitement he felt.

"...Huam."

A light yawn escaped my mouth.

It was a quiet one.

To the extent that no one else seemed to notice.

But it perfectly reflected my state of mind.

I was tired, and the lecture was boring.

Having barely slept the previous night, coupled with how interesting the lecture was, I found myself succumbing to drowsiness.

I had to pinch myself several times to keep myself from falling asleep.

But there was a slight problem.

While I did try my best to hide my drowsiness, it wasn't enough.

—*Cadet Julien, is my lecture boring you?*



A shadow cast over the area I was in.

Looking up, the professor was standing a few meters away from me.

"...?"

I scratched the side of my head.

—*Did you manage to sleep last night?*

I thought about an appropriate answer but,

—*No.*

I shook my head and came clean.

—*I wasn't able to sleep much last night.*

The professor's expression stiffened all of a sudden.

A small commotion followed suit as multiple eyes fell on me.

The situation took me aback.

*'What's going on...?'*

And then, I heard a small voice behind me.

".....Was it just me or did his pronunciation sound even better than the professor's?"

Pronunciation...?

I thought back on the conversation I had with the professor.

All he did was ask whether his lecture was boring me.

What was so strange ab-

"Ah."

That's when I realized.

*'This...'*

We were both speaking English.

\*\*\*

The language class ended after one hour.

Evelyn walked with her head lowered, accompanied by a young woman with short brown hair.

"Ah~ My back hurts. I can't believe we had to go through that."

Theoretical classes always tended to be more boring than practical ones.

"And the fact that we have to memorize the alphabet before the next class is even worse. Kill me already...!"

As Josephine grumbled, she suddenly recalled something and tilted her head.

"Evelyn, didn't you say you were acquainted with Julien?"

"Uh, ah?"

Evelyn snapped out of her thoughts at the mention of Julien's name.

"Did you say something?"

"Geez~ Pay attention when I'm talking."

Rubbing her forehead, Josephin repeated,

"Didn't you say you were acquainted with Julien?"

"...Ah, yes."

Julien. An image of a man appeared in her mind.

It stuck there and refused to leave.

"Was he always like that? I mean, not only is he the Black Star, but he also seems to be very proficient in English. Shee~"

Josephine rubbed the sides of her arms.

"Did you notice the professor's expression when he was talking to him? For a moment, I found myself questioning who the real expert was. Did you not feel the same way?"

"...."

Evelyn remained silent at the question. She had been quietly biting her lips for a while now.

Josephine tilted her head in confusion.

Why is she so quiet?

She usually wasn't this quiet.

"What's wrong? Did you not feel the same?"

"...."

But yet again Evelyn remained quiet.

Realizing that something was off, Josephine followed Evelyn's line of sight.

"Ah."

That was when she saw a figure in the distance.

He stood erect, his presence distinct from the others, and his strides measured and steady. His presence alone gathered the stares of those around him.

Staring at him from the distance, Evelyn's eyes narrowed.

Julien. What happened in the five years she hadn't seen him?

Gradually, the distance between the two of them shrank.

*Step—*

With one more step, he appeared in front of her.

As he passed, their gazes met briefly.

"...."

She thought he'd continue forward, but...

"...."

His feet came to a stop just as he passed. Evelyn felt her shoulders grow tense at the fact. Turning around to face him, her eyes met with his.

They were cold.

Detached of any feelings. If before she could feel the emotions in his gaze, now... all she could feel was emptiness.

Alienation.

His words soon broke her thoughts.

"Your lips."

He pointed.

".....They're bleeding."

## **Chapter 20: Language [2]**

"I'm bleeding...?"

Evelyn was taken aback. Of all the things she expected him to say, that was the last thing she could've imagined.

She raised her hand to touch her lips.

Feeling something wet trace over her finger, she looked down to see it stained in red.

'How did this...?'

Evelyn had a hard time coming to terms with the situation.

Just how hard had she been biting her lips?

".....Ah."

Raising her head, her expression changed.

He was no longer in front of her.

Looking around, she caught a glimpse of his disappearing back. Even now, his back stood straight and composed.

As fast as he appeared, he had left.

"Haha..."

Staring at the scene, Evelyn let out a bitter laugh. Even now, she has a hard time understanding how to feel.

Perhaps, this was for the best.

Wiping her lips, she noticed Josephine looking at her with a dumbfounded expression.

"What?"

"...So you really did know him?"

"Uh?"

Clasping her hands, Josephine brought her head closer to hers. A strange smile marred her face as she leaned closer.

"He's pretty wealthy, isn't he?"

"Wealthy...?"

Evelyn thought about it. Well, yeah. He did belong to an up-and-coming noble house. The Evenus household wasn't one to be trifled with.

So,

"Yes."

"He's also handsome, right? Pretty intelligent, too..."

"Hm?"

Evelyn's eyes narrowed.

"Where are you going with this?"

"...You think you can introduce me?"

"Introduce?"

Why?

"...I think I'm in love~"

What sort of fu—

\*\*\*

The Institute boasted a massive library that spanned over several hundred square meters.

With tens of thousands of books, it was the perfect place for me to familiarise myself with the world and its laws.

"English... English..."

My current focus was the 'Languages' section, or more specifically, the 'English' section.

I had been so drowsy that I hadn't noticed it then, but that was definitely English. I was all too familiar with the language. There's no way I wouldn't recognize it.

So...

"How?"

Was this part of the game setting?

".....That would make sense."

But at the same time, it didn't. If you were to create an entirely different language and social hierarchy, what was the point of adding English?

Some sort of easter egg?

That too seemed plausible.

"This should be the place."

: [Language and literature]

A bold sign was all it took for me to know where to go. Looking around, I scanned through the books before settling my gaze on a specific one. It was rather thick, and the cover felt extremely familiar.

"As expected..."

Taking the book, my hand glossed over the cover, and I took a deep breath.

[English Vocabulary]

A book I would've never expected to see in this world.

*Flip—*

Even the contents were the same.

"..."

I felt a mixture of different emotions staring at the book in front of me. In a sense, it reminded me a lot of home.

Earth.

There wasn't a day that passed when I didn't think about home.

It was all I ever thought about.

...And while it was true that I had somewhat adapted to this world, I had no choice but to adapt to it.

I would've been dead otherwise.

"There's a thesaurus as well..."

Scrolling through the books on the shelves, a lot of familiar ones, such as the dictionary and thesaurus, appeared. There also appeared to be a lot of s. From romance to fantasy...

Grabbing a certain book, I opened to a random page to see what it was about, but...

"His warm body slowly embraced her..."

I closed it just as fast as I opened it.

"Just what were the game developers thinking...?"

It was smut.

Was this type of book even appropriate?

But,

"Something feels off."

I couldn't quite put my finger on it.

But it all boiled down to a certain point. Or location.

".....Mirror Dimension."

That was the place where these books were found.

What I wanted to know was... What else did they find, and where exactly did they find it?

*Grip—*

Unknowingly, my grip on the book intensified.

Though I wasn't certain, I felt a little closer to an answer. At the very least, I now had a direction.

But...

"...Do I have no choice but to go?"

The Mirror Dimension.

It was an extremely dangerous place. One where a single mistake could cost one's life.

However, as I thought about how these books came from such a place, I had no choice but to go there to get an idea of what was happening to me.

Even if it was dangerous.

But before that...

I looked around me and took note of the numerous books that surrounded me.

"I should check out the other books."

Perhaps I'd be able to find the answers to some of my questions.

With how many books were present, I was bound to find something.

"Whooo..."

Putting the dictionary back, I headed deeper into the library.

It was time for me to read.

\*

The library was teeming with books on all sorts of topics.

"How long...?"

Before I knew it, the sky outside was dark. I had been so immersed in reading that I hadn't noticed that a lot of time had passed.

"It's already past dinner time."



The time said 10 p.m.

By now, the canteen was already closed, and there was no way for me to get food.

But I didn't let that bother me.

In the end, I learned a lot of things.

From the history of the continent to how the Mirror Dimension worked.

From my understanding, it was a fairly complicated place.

While reading, what I grasped was merely rudimentary knowledge. The place was extremely mysterious, and despite the time invested, my questions remained unanswered.

I wasn't disheartened, however.

There were plenty of books for me to read. I was bound to find an answer sooner or later.

"Huaam..."

A yawn inexplicably escaped from my lips.

My tiredness was starting to catch up to me. I had no choice but to call it quits for the day.

"Let's see..."

I sorted out the books in front of me.

A student could only be allowed to borrow a maximum of three books per semester. In front of me were sixteen different books.

All of them interested me, and if not for the rule, I would've brought them all back with me.

Even so, rules were rules, and in the end, I settled for the ones that I had already read.

: [History of the Aurora Continent]

: [The basics of Curse Magic]

: [Rune language and its distinctions]

These were the books I deemed to be the most useful for me in the long term.

I stood up and packed my stuff, placing the books I didn't choose back to where they belonged.

Thud.

One of the books fell as I positioned them on the shelf.

I reached out to grab it when...

My hand paused.

"..."

There was a certain scent in the air that triggered my nose.

"This smell..."

It brought certain memories that I had buried deep within my mind. Unknowingly, my feet moved toward where the smell came from until I eventually neared a secluded area of the library.

"...Ah."

There, a person stood.

A familiar face.

Long, platinum hair cascaded down her back as she leaned on the table. Wedged in her fingers was a cigarette.

"....."

Unwanted memories started to resurface in my mind all of a sudden.

So much so that I felt my breath grow heavy at the thought.

I felt a strange tightness in my chest. It closely reminded me of the pain that had taken over my life during the later stages of it.

Perhaps that was why...

Without realizing it, I blurted out loud,

"It smells like shit."

At that, she furrowed her brows.

*\*Puff\**

She took a long drag of the cigarette before blowing the smoke in my direction.

"Tough luck."

"...."

I stood blankly.

As the smoke drifted past me, unwanted memories clouded my mind once again.

To the point where I unconsciously moved forward.

"Oy."

Flicking the cigarette away, she clicked her tongue and stood more alert.

"...What the hell are you doing?"

*Tik—*

The cigarette fell right in front of me, and my feet paused.

As if bewitched, I focused my attention on the lingering orange glow at the tip as smoke drifted through the air.

My hand unknowingly trembled.

"...."

Stomp...

I raised my foot and stomped on it.

The weight on my chest lightened, and I felt like I could breathe again.

It was an impulsive action.

One that I normally wouldn't have taken.

But,

"Was that so hard to do?"

The side effects of the spell were still lingering in my mind, and the cigarette served to trigger painful memories I tried to hold deep within my mind.

It was something that I had trouble controlling.

"Ah, shit."

Ruffling her hair, her face crumbled.

"I didn't take you for such a fucker. Just like that bitch, you are the fucking same."

That bitch?

I never had the chance to figure out who she was referring to.

By the time I focused my attention back on her, she was already gone.

That was perhaps for the best.

I wasn't in the right state of mind at the moment.

Especially since,

?| Lvl 2. [Sadness] EXP +0.01%

?| Lvl 1. [Anger] EXP + 0.03%

Notifications continued to appear in my vision. However, despite their appearance, I couldn't bring myself to focus on them.

The only thing in my mind was the thing beneath my foot.

Right.

The cigarette.

It was beneath my foot.

If I just moved it...

"....Gulp."

I swallowed.

The tip of my finger twitched, and I licked my lips.

A strange anxiety overtook my mind.

One that I was only able to calm down after taking a deep breath.

"Hooooo..."

Only then did I feel a little better.

I shook my head and kept my foot firm.

Doing everything possible from letting myself see it.

"Haaa... Really."

I took another deep breath.

Even in this life...

You still haunt me.