

THE ACADEMY IS DOOMED

The Academy is Doomed

#C51 - Read The Academy is Doomed C51

Chapter 51

Late afternoon.

Amon was lost in deep thought after finishing his history class.

'...This won't do.'

As Marion had said, once he took on the role of the academic affairs director, he would undoubtedly be swamped with endless tasks.

Right now, with no other teachers at the academy and few students, it was no problem that his words, as a mere ordinary teacher, were listened to.

'But once the academy revives and grows in size, it's only a matter of time before the hierarchy becomes important. With others watching, I won't be able to easily dismiss nonsense like I do now.'

Eventually, he might have to just 'do as he's told'!

Worries that spiraled out of control plunged Amon into deeper contemplation.

'What should I do? How can I get out of this crisis?'

He liked the title of academic affairs director.

But now that he had taken a closer look, the title was covered in dirt!

'...The title itself is innocent. Then shouldn't I wipe away the dirt?'

Having made up his mind, Amon got up and immediately headed to the principal's office.

"Professor Amon...no, Director Amon. What brings you here?"

Amon looked at the principal who greeted him with a beaming smile and opened his mouth.

“Principal.”

“Yes, please go on.”

“If I become the academic affairs director, wouldn’t I be writing the drafts of most of the principal and vice principal’s work?”

“Well... that would be the case, wouldn’t it? Of course, we would write the larger issues separately, but Amon would be in charge of conceiving the relatively lighter issues and trivial matters. The position of academic affairs director is such a laborious one...”

Suddenly stopping, the principal covered her mouth and was startled.

“Co, could it be that you’re...refusing the position of academic affairs director...?”

“No, no! That’s not it.”

“Phew...that’s a relief. As I said, Professor Amon is the only suitable person.”

“...That’s true.”

It would be better to leave the position vacant than to assign it to the lazy Sloth or Marion who was always drunk.

The principal stared intently at ‘Amon’, the perfect fit for the position of academic affairs director, and said.

“Hmm, anyway, I’m glad it’s not a refusal. So, what brings you here?”

Nodding, Amon brought up his business.

“Once I receive my teaching certificate, shouldn’t I immediately start working as the academic affairs director?”

“That’s right?”

“The problem is, I’m worried whether I, who have only been doing the work of an ordinary teacher, will be able to immediately perform the duties of an academic affairs director. So, what I’m saying is...”

Amon’s eyes flashed as he said.

“I would like to try performing the duties of the academic affairs director in advance for the sake of efficiency. That way, I will be able to work more efficiently when I officially take up the position of academic affairs director.”

“Oh, Professor Amon! No, Director Amon!”

Grasping both hands in excitement, the principal even teared up.

“How dedicated are you to the academy? You’re already preparing to do your best in your position... That attitude, it’s truly an example for all teachers! You’re amazing!”

The pinnacle of emotion that a principal could feel!

Amon smiled modestly at the praise flying towards him.

“Ha ha, no. Isn’t it only natural for the sake of the academy?”

“How could you!”

“Anyway, what do you think of my idea?”

“On the contrary, I’m the one who wants to ask you! But for Director Amon to suggest this first...”

Overwhelmed with emotion, the principal flapped her ears.

“Hmm, then without further ado, can I take a look at what kind of work is scheduled first? I might need to supplement or modify the work.”

“Ah, yes! Of course! But there probably won’t be anything to touch.”

“I see.”

Amon smiled wryly as he looked at the file the principal handed him.

‘Huhu, as expected, there will probably be something like a snail race.’

Then he immediately planned to give the principal a taste of his ‘Amon-style backhand to the crown’.

‘I’m invincible now. I’m an ordinary teacher, but my work authority is temporary but that of an academic affairs director. I’m truly perfect.’

Hitting the principal as an academic affairs director and hitting the principal as an ordinary teacher are worlds apart!

If an ordinary teacher hits the principal, most people would react with, 'That guy is crazy, he's completely out of his mind.' However, if an academic affairs director hits the principal, it's a sign of 'rebellion'!

'Huhu, it might be difficult to overlook a hit from an academic affairs director, but a hit from an ordinary teacher can be overlooked as a joke.'

No!

It can't be overlooked, even for an ordinary teacher! It mustn't be overlooked!

However, Amon was so focused on maintaining the title he would use that his eyes were bloodshot.

'If I properly discipline her before officially performing the duties of the academic affairs director, I won't have any trouble later, will I? I'm a genius after all!'

Amon, who had plastered gold on his own face, glanced at the file.

'Well then, let's take a look.'

He prepared to swing his backhand at any moment and opened the file.

And the rows of letters that came into view!

[Request for maintenance of official residence]

[Additional request for magic books and ordering of teaching materials]

[Procedures for reopening the library]

[Distribution of flyers for new student enrollment and recruitment of new teachers]

Amon tilted his head.

'...What is this? Why is it so normal?'

All the issues currently needed by the academy were included in the file.

Quickly looking at the principal, Amon closed his eyes tightly and spoke.

"Ah, Principal..."

"Yes? Why the sudden long face?"

"I was so moved! You were doing your job properly!"

“...Yes?”

Who would have thought that instead of just having a snail race and accidents on her mind, she had been looking at tasks for the academy without realizing it!

‘The elf seems different.’

Overwhelmed with emotion, Amon closed the file and returned it to the principal.

“As you said, Principal, there’s nothing to touch separately.”

“Right?”

The principal, who had smiled brightly, suddenly made a serious expression and said.

“More than that, setting aside my work...”

“...Yes?”

“Isn’t there a bigger problem?”

At those words, Amon’s face hardened.

“You mean the vice principal’s work.”

“...Yes. Right now, since the academy is small, I’m handling all the work, but I can’t keep doing this forever. Eventually, later on, I’ll take care of the big tasks, and you, as the vice principal and academic affairs director, will be fully responsible for the lighter issues.”

“....”

“You can probably guess what the vice principal is trying to do.”

“...I can.”

It would probably be full of tasks related to putting things in her mouth.

The principal continued.

“Because I’m taking care of all the work right now, I’ve been rejecting the vice principal’s work every time, but that will be difficult when you become the academic affairs director. It’s because a regular organizational framework will be established with the creation of the academic affairs director.”

Amon groaned and said.

“...To summarize, from then on, the principal will only be in charge of big tasks due to the division of work, so you won't be able to get involved in tasks that can be finished at the level of the vice principal.”

“That's right.”

In the end, the principal would suggest 'the direction and path the academy should take', and below that, the vice principal and academic affairs director would completely solve the 'trivial matters of the academy'.

Come to think of it, Marion had said this earlier too.

'Hmm... If I had to compare, the position of academic affairs director you'll take on could be said to be like a non-commissioned officer in the military.'

'...Yes?'

'The principal would be a general or officer.'

'As expected of a former war mage. You use military analogies.'

At the time, it was an analogy that didn't resonate, but after hearing the principal's detailed explanation, it was more or less understandable.

“Now I understand why they say the position of academic affairs director is laborious.”

“Th, that's right? So... are you going to quit?”

“Of course not.”

Amon smiled brightly and nodded.

“I have to try hard. No, I have to do well.”

“...Ah!”

“And to do well...”

Amon slowly turned his head and looked in the direction of the vice principal's office and said.

“I'll have to kick the vice principal.”

Late in the evening.

Brestle, a dark elf who was, as she said, a 'night owl', came down to the dining room late when everyone else had finished eating.

"Yawwwwwn..."

Brestle went to the chef and said.

"The usual, please."

"Yes! Vice Principal!"

The chef was an extreme pro-vice principal party member.

It was only natural, as it was Brestle who had actively advocated for the chef's recruitment.

Moreover, she insisted on maintaining the highest quality equipment and ingredients for the dining room, so the chef had no choice but to be loyal.

A short time later a mountain of food was piled up in front of the vice principal's seat, enough for several men to feast on.

Looking at the mountain of food, Brestle muttered.

"Phew, dieting is hard after all..."

By Brestle's standards, this was a small meal!

"But I can't help it. I've been gaining weight lately..."

Just as Brestle took a large spoonful of pilaf from a huge bowl with a spoon almost as big as a shovel, a voice suddenly came from behind.

"Vice Principal."

Brestle's ears flapped vigorously at the sudden voice.

She seemed startled to be suddenly spoken to, despite her expressionless face.

Anyway, Brestle said bluntly without turning around.

"...It's Professor Amon."

"Ha ha, how have you been?"

"Nothing much. It's been a while since I've seen you."

“That’s right.”

Indeed, they hadn’t seen each other recently.

After finishing his history class in the afternoon, Amon would lock himself in his room and immerse himself in studying for his teaching certificate, and Brestle, being a night owl, would wander around after the sun went down, so they simply didn’t have the opportunity to meet.

“So what’s up?”

“Well, nothing much...”

Amon smiled and said.

“I’ll be taking on the duties of the academic affairs director soon.”

“...Gulp, is that so?”

Amon’s eyes narrowed at the unexpectedly bland reaction.

‘Is there something bothering her?’

Amon casually said.

“Yes, so I would like to take a look at the progress of your work in advance to get a better understanding of my duties... is that okay?”

“Hmm...”

Brestle swallowed the pilaf she had been chewing and said.

“There’s nothing wrong with that. After all, we’ll have to share our opinions in the future.”

“Um.”

“Anyway, I understand. Please wait until I finish eating. Or you can go to the vice principal’s office and do other things.”

Amon smiled wryly.

“No, I’ll wait.”

“Well, do as you please.”

Brestle nodded as if she understood.

“Oh, but right now, there’s almost no ongoing work, so I’m not sure if it will help you learn your duties. You should keep that in mind.”

Three hours later, in the vice principal’s office.

Brestle was lying unconscious, having been hit on the head by Amon’s backhand.

Amon was weeping while holding a stack of work documents almost as thick as an encyclopedia.

[Support for the King Wyvern Extermination Squad]

[Purpose of the request – King Wyvern’s oil (very good for use in stir-fried dishes)]

There was already a secret project underway, hidden from the principal’s eyes.

Chapter 52

At the current point when the Academy officially resumed operations, the management of finances, including the operational funds granted by the royal family and other revenues, was overseen by the headmaster and vice headmaster.

The two agreed to split the Academy’s operational funds evenly: the headmaster would use her share for the Academy’s “future,” while the vice headmaster would use her share for the Academy’s “present.”

However, the safe, where the vice headmaster’s operational funds should have been stored, was completely empty.

‘I don’t know the exact amount, but since the royal family granted it directly, it must be substantial. But she spent the entire half of the operational funds on ordering King Wyvern oil?’

Tears streamed down Amon’s tightly closed eyes.

“Vice Headmaster...”

“...”

“No, not just the Vice Headmaster.”

Amon looked down at the writhing Brestle and muttered,

“You damn Dark Elf...”

“Ugh... ow... my head...”

Holding her head as if it had been split in two, Brestle cried out in pain,

“What the hell are you doing?”

“What am I doing? Why are you asking the question I should be asking?”

Amon shoved the contract in front of Brestle’s face.

“Sponsoring a King Wyvern subjugation team? You invested all the Academy’s funds under your management here? What were you thinking?”

“Hmph... You fool, knowing only one thing and not the other...”

Brestle growled, raising her head defiantly and shouted,

“Do you have any idea how delicious pilaf made with King Wyvern oil is...!”

Brestle’s words were cut short.

Amon’s chop landed squarely on her crown, slamming her head back to the ground.

Amon, who had interrupted her in a somber tone, meticulously reviewed the contract.

‘Damn it, there’s got to be a loophole somewhere...wait? The contract is with a mercenary group?’

Amon’s eyes gleamed.

The King Wyvern subjugation contract was with a mercenary group.

‘The Silver Sword Mercenary Corps... I’ve heard of them. They were active in the Great War and are famous for clearing dungeons and monsters. But...’

A sly smile appeared on Amon’s lips.

‘Mercenaries? Do they even know how to read? They probably scribbled this contract in a rush!’

A crossing-the-line disparagement!

However, Amon’s assumption was only half correct.

Hastily formed mercenary groups, desperate to make a living, often fell into such dubious contracts.

Most mercenaries Amon had seen in the nearby towns of the remote Arma Mountain Range were like that.

But this was Amur, a commercial city!

Amon, trembling, pointed to the seal at the corner of the contract.

“...Count Deblé? He’s the guarantor of this contract?”

Brestle, struggling, raised her head and said,

“C-Count Deblé is a noble in this city and a sponsor of the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps.”

“...”

Large mercenary groups were often backed by nobles.

An unimaginable luxury for the shabby mercenaries near the Arma Mountains!

‘It’s over.’

With a noble involved in the contract, even if there was a loophole, it would be hard to break.

‘...But there’s not even a loophole. It’s a straightforward contract.’

Half of the Academy’s entire operational funds were wasted on oil for pilaf.

Yet Amon, a man who didn’t know how to give up, wasn’t ready to surrender to this setback.

“...Get up.”

“Uh, what?”

Brestle hesitated, her drooping ears twitching as he got up.

“Are you going to hit me?”

“No.”

Brestle’s ears perked up a little.

“But I might soon.”

Her ears drooped again at that.

Watching Brestle closely, Amon turned and said,

“Let’s go.”

“G-Go? Go where all of a sudden?”

Amon replied with a grim expression,

“To the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps’ office.”

Tomorrow was the weekend.

‘So, we have time. Yes, plenty of time... but...’

However, the problem was that the King Wyvern the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps had to face was a monster on par with an Elder Drake.

Amon, who had a grudge against Elder Drakes for ruining his potato fields, was wary of the King Wyvern, a monster of comparable power.

‘A mere mercenary group tackling such a beast? Not a chance.’

That’s why he rushed to meet the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps.

Since canceling the contract outright seemed impossible, he intended to persuade them somehow.

It would be suicide to set off like this.

He planned to imprint that fact on them and either cancel the contract or mutually agree to terminate it.

How long had they waited in the commander’s office of the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps?

“Thank you for waiting, Ms. Brestle.”

A middle-aged man with a sharp appearance entered the office, smiling warmly.

“I was a little delayed because of the departure preparations. So, what brings you here today?”

As Brestle silently averted her gaze, the man realized it was because of Amon sitting beside her and asked cautiously,

“And who might this gentleman be?”

“Ah, Amon from our Academy...”

Amon quickly cut Brestle off,

“I am Amon Drake, Head of Academic Affairs at Amonis Academy.”

“Ah, the Head of Academic Affairs. Pleasure to meet you. I’m Maitre, leader of the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps.”

After a brief handshake, Amon got to the point.

“I’m here to discuss the King Wyvern subjugation commissioned by our vice headmaster.”

“Ah, yes, Ms. Brestle’s commission... the King Wyvern oil request?”

Maitre’s pleasant smile vanished the moment business was mentioned, replaced by a more dangerous expression befitting a mercenary.

“Alright, let’s hear it.”

Maitre’s words implied Amon should get straight to the point, so Amon spoke directly.

“The King Wyvern is dangerous. I advise you to give up on the subjugation because your mercenary corps might be annihilated.”

“...What?”

Blinking in disbelief, Maitre laughed out loud.

“Haha! What nonsense are you talking about...?”

Shaking his head, he said,

“You don’t seem to know much about our Silver Sword Mercenary Corps...”

“Oh, I do. You were active in the Great War, conquered the Asurai Grand Dungeon, and defeated numerous large monsters like serpents and krakens. I believe that’s enough to acknowledge the capabilities of the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps.”

Maitre narrowed his eyes.

“So, you’re saying that even with our skills, we won’t be able to handle the King Wyvern?”

“Yes. Have you ever hunted a King Wyvern before?”

“...Do you even know what a King Wyvern is?”

“Yes.”

Amon’s voice was as sharp as a blade as he continued,

“I’m from the Arma Mountains.”

“Wait, Arma Mountains...?”

Maitre also appeared visibly taken aback by Amon’s words.

“A-Arma Mountains? Isn’t that the land of death at the continent’s edge?”

“...People live there. It’s not exactly a land of death.”

“But I’ve heard it’s a den of dangerous monsters swarming everywhere...”

As his hometown was insulted again, Amon responded with a twisted smile.

“Then, am I some beast that crawled out of that den? Sure, there are plenty of monsters, but it’s still livable.”

“Hmm...”

“In any case, King Wyverns are extremely, extremely dangerous monsters. Think Elder Drake level, if that helps.”

“E-Elder Drake?”

“Yes. Elder Drake.”

For a moment, a smile flickered across Mate’s eyes.

“Haha...Elder Drake.”

“...”

“Elder Drakes are nothing but legendary creatures mentioned in old books or fairy tales, right?”

“What?”

What nonsense is this?

Amon had just seen one ravage the Drake Estate's potato fields not long ago!

But, outside the Arma Mountains, that was the perception. Even Marion didn't believe in Elder Drakes appearing.

To Maitre, Amon's words seemed like a desperate attempt to renege on the contract.

"Tch, I think I understand why you're here."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

Maitre pulled out a document, sighed, and began scribbling with a quill.

"Changed your mind after signing the contract, huh? No need for roundabout excuses. I'll terminate it for you."

Amon's eyes widened in surprise.

Maitre seemed to misunderstand, but Amon's goal was being achieved.

"Really?"

"Yes. However, since more than half the advance has already been spent on supplies, I can't refund that."

"What?"

"And after deducting penalties..."

Maitre handed over the document.

"This is the remaining amount you can reclaim."

Amon's jaw dropped.

It was less than one-fifth of the original sum!

But more shocking was the amount Brestle had sunk into the oil request.

Without realizing it, Amon delivered a sharp chop to Brestle's neck.

"You crazy Dark Elf!"

"Ugh!"

"All that money! For oil!"

“Kehack! Cough, cough!”

Brestle coughed violently, clutching her neck, while Maitre, startled, watched the scene unfold in disbelief.

It was a rare sight—a director beating a vice-principal!

Mate quickly composed himself, clearing his throat.

“Hrm, well, I’m only adhering to the contract. If you have further issues, take it to court.”

“Grr...”

Grinding his teeth, Amon retorted, “Forget the contract. I’m seriously warning you. Attempting to hunt the King Wyvern will result in annihilation.”

“Haha! You’re underestimating us too much.”

“I’m not—”

“Our mercenary group’s record of slaying Wyverns could fund Amur’s annual budget. We’ve even slain dozens of Drakes!”

Amon closed his eyes in frustration.

He had seen King Wyverns casually snatch up regular Drakes and soar away like pigeons.

‘Ignorant fools.’

If they went, annihilation was certain.

Not that Amon cared. But...

‘The contract fee would vanish into thin air.’

Even the measly fifth they’d recover would disappear if they canceled.

‘That won’t do. I need to recover the principal.’

If not, the Academy would face another financial crisis. And who knows what the Headmaster would do next? Bet on unicorn races?

Lost in thought, Amon finally spoke.

“You’re departing tonight?”

“Huh? Oh, yes. We plan to camp near the King Wyvern’s nest and launch our assault at dawn.”

“Understood...”

Amon opened his eyes.

Tomorrow was the weekend. No classes.

“We’ll accompany you.”

“...What?”

“As the client, it’s only right we observe.”

“Well... It’s dangerous.”

Pointing at the dejected Brestle, Amon said, “We are vice-principal and director of the esteemed Amonis Academy. We can handle ourselves.”

“...True. You were prestigious once.”

“Was that sarcasm?”

“Apologies. Well, if the clients wish to come, I won’t object.”

Maitre ripped up the termination papers and grinned.

“Haha! Good. Relax. By the time we’re done, you’ll have your King Wyvern oil!”

Brestle’s ears perked up in excitement, only to droop again under Amon’s glare.

‘This all started because of that oil...’

With their participation set, Amon saw a glimmer of hope.

On the way, numerous monsters and Wyverns would appear.

‘I’ll make up for the losses by capturing them.’

Resolute, Amon nodded, prompting Maitre to laugh heartily.

“Still worried? Let me assure you!”

Mate raised a thumb.

“Our Silver Sword Mercenaries are among the Empire’s best! Relax!”

The next morning, at dawn the Silver Sword Mercenaries, who set out to capture the King Wyvern, screamed in terror.

“Aaaaah! Help!”

“The King Wyvern is too strong!”

Amon nodded.

‘I knew this would happen.’

Chapter 53

Turning back the clock to late at night.

The Silver Sword Mercenary Corps had finished preparing for departure to the King Wyvern’s nest.

“Are the two clients ready to depart?”

“Yes.”

“Good. But our schedule isn’t exactly generous.”

Maitre looked seriously at Amon and Brestle, offering advice.

“We’ll be moving quite quickly, so you’ll need to keep up. If you fall behind, we won’t be able to wait for you.”

At this stern warning, Amon replied with a bored expression.

“Yes, understood.”

“...I hope you really got that.”

Muttering to himself, Maitre turned around, raised a hand to the mercenaries, and called out.

“Alright, Silver Sword Mercenary Corps! Move out!”

“Yeah!”

With a resounding cheer, the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps left Amur’s gates.

Amon spoke with an irritated face as he looked at Maitre.

“Is it okay to go this slow?”

“...Excuse me? Slow?”

“I mean, why are we walking so leisurely when we could get there much faster by running?”

Maitre furrowed his brow.

The ‘Amol Mountains,’ where the King Wyvern’s nest was located, was at least a two-day journey by horse without rest.

The Silver Sword Mercenary Corps’ mobility meant they’d arrive within a day, yet here Amon was, complaining about the pace.

‘What’s his game...? He’s acting suspicious. Just like when he hit the vice-principal. Could it be...?’

Maitre’s eyes gleamed coldly.

‘Maybe he’s not really from Amonis Academy. Could he be an outsider planted to shake things up internally?’

There were plenty of possibilities.

He could be a spy from another academy, or perhaps even a debtor running from creditors.

‘With all my years as a mercenary, my instincts don’t lie. No one would dare treat the vice-principal that way otherwise.’

While maintaining his guard, Maitre smiled with a calm face.

“Haha, please bear with us for a bit longer.”

“Hmm...understood.”

Amon moved to the rear of the group while Maitre chuckled quietly.

Meanwhile, at the back of the line, Amon grumbled.

“Honestly, I don’t understand why we’re moving so slowly. Right, Vice-Principal?”

“Munch, munch...I know, right?”

“...Are you eating again?”

Brestle, pulling dried meat from the bag strapped to her front, answered.

“As you can see, jerky.”

“...Why now?”

“A foolish question. I’m eating because I’m hungry.”

“You were eating a loaf of bread as big as a head earlier, and you’re hungry again?”

From her bag, which was almost child-sized, Brestle kept pulling out food and eating non-stop.

Amon stared blankly at her.

“Nom, chew, chew.”

“.....”

“Gulp... ahh... delicious.”

“.....”

Her enjoyment was so infectious that Amon, though not hungry, started feeling peckish.

“Um...”

“Chew?”

“Could I have a piece of jerky...?”

Brestle suddenly recoiled, glaring sharply as she growled.

Not metaphorically—she actually growled.

“...Ah, never mind.”

Losing his appetite due to her dog-like reaction, Amon turned away.

After walking for a while, Brestle, now finished eating, caught up with him, speeding up.

“Ah, that hit the spot.”

“.....”

“But you’re right—it’s definitely slow. If it were just me, a Dark Elf, I’d have been there by now. Tsk.”

“.....”

Watching him walk in silence, Brestle quietly slipped a piece of jerky over his shoulder.

Catching it with his mouth, Amon replied.

“Munch, munch... yeah, they’re planning to attack during the day because wyverns have good night vision. But wouldn’t it be better to arrive quickly and rest longer?”

“Hmm...”

Brestle, chewing thoughtfully, remained silent, prompting Amon to suggest,

“Shall we go ahead?”

“...Shall we?”

“You think you can keep up?”

Brestle scoffed at that.

“Ha! Maybe some weak, pale elf like Anar’el would struggle, but you’re underestimating me, one of the night folk.”

“I’m not underestimating... So, you’re in?”

“Of course.”

“Alright then, let’s go.”

Amon lowered his stance and stretched, then leapt forward, streaking through the night sky. Brestle followed close behind like a shadow.

Meanwhile, the rearguard of the Silver Sword Mercenaries turned to check on Amon and Brestle.

“...Huh?”

Noticing their absence, one of them rushed to report to Maitre, who grumbled in annoyance after hearing the news.

“Tch, they were complaining about going slow and now they’re lagging behind?”

“What should we do, Captain?”

“What do you think? I told them we’d leave anyone behind if they couldn’t keep up. We keep moving.”

“Understood.”

After some time, however...

“...Huh?”

Ahead, they found Brestle sprawled on the ground.

She had lost track of Amon and was left behind.

Amon, now near the Amol Mountains, stood atop a towering tree, staring intently at something.

In his sight was a massive structure in the heart of the Amol Mountains.

“...Is that the King Wyvern’s nest?”

Normal wyverns build nests from branches, trunks, and stones, forming tall, pillar-like structures.

They lay their eggs at the top and protect them.

But the King Wyvern’s nest was beyond extraordinary in scale.

‘That thing’s as tall and wide as a fortress tower!’

The nearby dense forest couldn’t even reach halfway up the pillar.

‘I’ve seen King Wyverns near our domain plenty of times. But I’ve never seen a nest like this in the Arma Mountains...Is this a regional behavior difference?’

It was a mystery he wouldn’t solve as a non-monster scholar.

Staring intently at the King Wyvern’s nest, Amon nodded to himself.

‘Hmm, fortunately, the King Wyvern isn’t here right now. In that case...’

Amon smirked slyly.

‘I’ll take this opportunity to hunt some regular wyverns to make up for the losses.’

Since the Silver Sword Mercenary Corps hadn't arrived yet, it was the perfect chance to monopolize the spoils without worrying about others' eyes. Amon leapt forward and, upon entering the Amol Mountains, struck the ground hard with his foot.

BOOM!

The sudden roar startled the wyverns, causing them to rise from the trees like a flock of mountain birds.

Screeeech!

As the wyverns, initially panicked, regained their composure thanks to their keen night vision, they spotted Amon and swooped down at him like arrows, eager for unexpected prey.

Just as the first wyvern lunged to take a bite—

CRACK!

Amon's punch landed squarely between its eyes, smashing the wyvern to the ground with a dying shriek.

Screech!

The other wyverns jeered as they watched one of their own fall to a mere human's punch.

Cack-cack-cack!

How feeble must it be to succumb to a human's fist? Disgraceful for a wyvern!

Spurred by the sight, the rest charged at Amon—only to fall beside the first, one after another.

'Hmm, that's three down.'

A broad smile stretched across Amon's face, already savoring the profit from the four wyverns he had taken down.

'This could make me a fortune.'

The sky was teeming with wyverns. Every part of a wyvern fetches a high price.

'Even in our territory, we caught quite a few, but it wasn't enough for our people's equipment and tools. Supplies were always lacking.'

Even tools made from wyvern bones broke within days due to the harshness of the Arma Mountains.

'But here's a different story. I can sell everything! And with so many merchants around, I can get top prices!'

With most of the monsters around the cities hunted to extinction by the Empire's military might, now was the perfect time for a windfall. Amon bellowed:

"Come at me, wyverns!"

Any aggressive wyvern should react to such a shout and charge. But surprisingly, the wyverns flinched and flew higher.

"...Huh?"

Why? Confused, Amon hurled rocks at the wyverns, but they merely circled higher in the sky.

"Why aren't they attacking?"

Are these just mountain birds, not wyverns? He continued to provoke them desperately, but they only ascended further.

Amon realized something.

"No way..."

Glancing at the three wyverns lying beside him, he muttered.

"Only three?"

Amon wasn't a monster scholar, but he wasn't wrong about wyverns being aggressive. However, a group led by a King Wyvern prioritizes safety. Seeing three fall in quick succession, the remaining wyverns decided it was wiser to wait for their leader.

"You cowards! Don't run! Fight me!"

Cack-cack-cack!

"Don't run! Fight me!"

Unaware of their motives, Amon continued to shout in frustration.

At the predetermined campsite, Maitre blinked in surprise.

“...Huh? Isn't that the Director?”

A despondent Amon, seated in despair after realizing no more wyverns would come, turned sluggishly.

“You're finally here?”

“How did you get here? I thought you fell behind...”

“I overtook you because you were too slow.”

“You overtook us?”

Maitre, who hadn't sensed Amon passing, was baffled.

‘I'm a high-level Sword Expert. How did I sense nothing from this man?’

Amon's presence here, and the three wyverns he had already killed, raised suspicions.

‘This strength...something's definitely odd.’

Maintaining his vigilance, Maitre said,

“Well, then. We'll set up camp here and rest until dawn before we advance.”

“Got it. What about the Vice Principal?”

“There.”

Maitre pointed at a wagon where Brestle lay.

‘...I'll leave her be.’

Amon retreated to the prepared tent for rest.

The next morning, Amon brushed his teeth, glancing at the King Wyvern's nest.

“The commander?”

“...Yes?”

“The King Wyvern isn't here yet.”

“I can see that.”

“What's the plan?”

“...Wait.”

At noon, while eating, Amon stared at the nest.

“Still not here.”

“I know.”

At sunset, Amon quietly eyed Maitre, who gritted his teeth.

“I know already.”

“I haven’t said anything yet.”

“...”

As Amon watched the sun set, he asked,

“Did it move its nest?”

“Stop jinxing it.”

Maitre grumbled, standing up.

“You rest. Understood?”

“...Hmm.”

Amon glanced at the darkening sky when suddenly—

WHOOSH!

A deafening sound sliced through the air, and he saw it: a massive shadow enveloping the blackened sky.

The King Wyvern had arrived.

“...It’s here.”

Maitre smirked.

“I know.”

Currently...

“Help! Someone help!”

“It’s too strong!”

Watching the Silver Sword Mercenaries scream in terror, Amon sighed deeply.

Chapter 54

An outcome that was anticipated early on.

With a single flap of the King Wyvern’s wings, the mercenaries were thrown to the ground. When it let out a terrifying roar, they wet themselves and fled in terror.

Honestly, even Amon would bolt if faced with an Elder Drake of equal strength to the King Wyvern—unless his mission to protect the potato fields was at stake.

‘How reckless they are, going against such a powerful monster.’

The only fortunate thing was that the King Wyvern, seemingly having already filled its belly, did not seem intent on outright killing the foolish mercenaries.

However, it also didn’t appear to be letting them off easily.

“Ahhhh! The King Wyvern is rolling me over!”

-Creeeeech!

It was a scene reminiscent of a cat toying with a mouse, even the ordinary wyverns stood by at a distance, seemingly unwilling to steal the toy from their leader.

Amon watched the unfolding chaos from a safe distance and reflected.

‘But this won’t last long.’

Cats don’t intend to kill their prey, but size matters.

A frog can die from a stone thrown in jest, and a bear’s playful swipe can crush a human skull.

Moreover, the King Wyvern was bound to grow bored eventually.

‘Hmm, I need to save them somehow. Any good ideas?’

The most immediate solution was to draw the King Wyvern’s attention himself.

Though he didn’t have his favorite axe from the estate, plenty of weapons were scattered nearby. If he hit the King Wyvern hard enough, it would shift its focus to him.

But then he thought:

'Why should I? Seriously, why?'

Hadn't he warned Maitre repeatedly about the danger posed by the King Wyvern?

Who ignored those warnings?

'I did nothing wrong!'

Thus, Amon decided to sit back and observe.

'I'm sure the King Wyvern means no real harm. It's just having a bit of fun.'

Amon even found himself defending the creature.

'Now, do I have something to snack on while I watch? Oh, the vice principal's backpack should have something.'

As Amon approached Brestle, who was still tied to the wagon, and reached for her backpack—

"Don't leave me behind!"

"Gah!"

"Wait... you didn't leave me behind?"

"Huh?"

She had assumed she'd been abandoned. It seemed her memory had cut off when she passed out, falling behind the group the day before.

Sensing an opportunity, Amon seized it.

Knowing he would have to manage the vice principal later, he decided to earn some points now.

"Ahem. Of course, I wouldn't leave you behind. When I saw you collapse, I came back for you. Naturally."

"I see."

She sighed in relief before realizing she was still tied up.

"Why am I tied up, though?"

“Oh, you were thrashing a lot in your sleep.”

“I’m usually a peaceful sleeper...”

“Must be the unfamiliar sleeping arrangement.”

“Hmm...”

Though skeptical, she nodded and wriggled her feet.

“Anyway, could you untie me?”

“Sure.”

As Amon untied her, he deftly slipped some jerky from her backpack.

Once free, Brestle stretched and grumbled.

“Ow, couldn’t you have tied me more gently? My stomach hurts.”

“Oh, I tied it gently, but the mercenaries probably tightened it for safety.”

The truth was, Amon had tied it tighter.

Just as Brestle was about to scold the mercenaries, she finally noticed the situation.

The King Wyvern flapping its massive wings, mercenaries being tossed like dolls—

She gasped.

“My oil!”

“Whoa.”

She was focused on the King Wyvern’s oil? Amon silently admired her determination.

But then Brestle began taking off her backpack, as if preparing to act.

“What... what are you doing?”

“This is our chance! While it’s distracted, we can slay the King Wyvern!”

“Huh?”

Amon, stunned, repeated incredulously:

“We?”

Since when were they a team?

But Brestle, unfazed, declared confidently:

“Yes! Together, we can defeat it!”

“...What nonsense.”

“No, I’m serious!”

Realizing something, Amon muttered:

“Oh, I get it. You’re offering yourself as bait to dive into its mouth.”

Even a full-bellied King Wyvern would salivate over a plump, well-fed dark elf.

“Perfect! When it devours you, I’ll launch a surprise attack!”

“What nonsense are you spouting!”

Brestle shouted, then calmed herself with a deep breath. She smoothed her silvery hair and began to recite:

“The night is the time of the duke.”

“Huh?”

“When shadows stretch across the land, you shall arrive.”

“...What?”

“One, one, one, two.”

Amon starred as she muttered cryptic phrases.

‘She’s lost it.’

He thought she was showing signs of schizophrenia, mumbling gibberish.

But just as he was about to sneak away—

Boom!

From beneath her feet, shadows surged like an inverted waterfall.

Amon's eyes widened as Brestle finished her chant:

"I beseech you, heed the call of this lowly servant who offers her blood. Set foot upon this land."

At that moment, Amon realized:

'It's...dark.'

Even though the sun had set, the surroundings were excessively dark.

Amon instinctively looked up at the sky.

Was the moon hidden by clouds?

No, the moon hung bright in the pitch-black sky...but only for a moment.

Dluk-!

The moon in the sky slowly rolled away.

It soon became clear that it wasn't the moon—it was an "eyeball."

Realizing this, Amon's jaw dropped in shock, and Brestle quietly muttered.

"Duke of the Night, Crescent Night."

"Is this spirit magic? I've never heard of a spirit of the night before..."

Brestle shook her head.

"No, it's a form of black magic."

"...What!?"

"It calls upon a portion of the power of the great Duke of the Night, Crescent Night..."

She couldn't finish her sentence as Amon had struck her neck with a sharp hand chop.

"Kegh!"

"How can an elf, the vice principal of an academy, use black magic?"

"Cough, cough! It's not even forbidden, so what's the big deal!"

“It’s not technically forbidden, but do you know what kind of reaction black magic gets? Using black magic—you’d think you were a dark elf...”

He wasn’t wrong.

Still, rolling her eyes in search of a rebuttal, Brestle yelled.

“Is that important right now? The mercenaries are about to be wiped out—no, the wyvern’s oil is at stake!”

Brestle, appealing to compassion! But Amon was calm.

“That is fate.”

Brestle clenched her eyes shut.

‘He’s crazy, too.’

Fully aware now, Brestle wracked her brain for a way to persuade Amon.

‘How can I ensure I get that wyvern oil...Oh!’

Her eyes lit up, and she shouted.

“If we do nothing, we won’t even get the remaining payment!”

“...What?”

“The mercenaries are about to be annihilated. If they all die, we might have to pay compensation out of the remaining balance! It’s not written in the contract, but that’s customary!”

It wasn’t entirely accurate, but it wasn’t wrong either.

Telling the grieving families, “Your mercenary failed, so pay us for breaching the contract,” wouldn’t end well.

Especially if a teacher from an academy said it.

“So...”

“What are you doing?”

Amon, now holding a battle axe from a fallen mercenary, had a resolute expression.

“Let’s go take down that evil wyvern.”

“...Pfft!”

They clasped hands as an alliance of desperation was formed!

“Aaaargh!”

–Screech!

Maitre, rolling on the ground from the wyvern’s wing strike, coughed blood.

“Damn it...”

He had confidence in his skills.

Yet his sword, swung with all his might, couldn’t even pierce the wyvern’s wing membrane.

‘Amon was right.’

The wyvern was beyond what the Silver Sword Mercenaries could handle.

But regret always comes too late.

The wyvern, seemingly tired of playing, extended its claws toward him.

“Huff, huff... Is this how I die?”

Maitre squeezed his eyes shut.

‘If only I’d listened to the director...’

Regret mingled with resentment.

‘Why didn’t he convince me harder!? I would’ve listened!’

As pointless blame filled his mind, Maitre reopened his eyes.

He saw the wyvern’s claws approaching and shut his eyes again.

‘So, this is the end.’

He braced for death.

One second, two seconds, three...

‘...Why hasn’t anything happened? Am I already dead?’

Feeling no pain, Maitre cautiously opened his eyes wide.

“What the...!?”

The wyvern was trembling, entangled in a dark shadow.

–Grr...?!

Its mouth sealed by the shadow, the wyvern twitched and convulsed. Maitre hastily stood.

‘W-what is this...?’

As he stood frozen in shock—

Boooooom!

A crimson flash descended from the sky.

A hallucination?

The light slowly, leisurely imprinted on Maitre’s eyes.

‘That’s...’

The young man who introduced himself as the Head of Academic Affairs, Amon, falling from the sky, wielded a battle axe, aiming for the wyvern’s crown.

He moved so fast that the battle axe heated, glowing red, resembling a streak of light, like a meteor.

Then—

Boom!

The massive impact as Amon’s axe collided with the wyvern’s head swallowed Maitre whole.

“Guh...”

Maitre and the other mercenaries were thrown into the air from the shockwave.

They crashed into the ground as Amon, panting, discarded the shattered battle axe remains.

“Damn it...”

He grumbled, tossing the weapon aside.

“Stubborn thing.”

Even after unleashing his most powerful strike, the wyvern stood unscathed.

–Grrrr...

Its eyes bloodshot, the wyvern’s feral growl echoed, clearly enraged.

‘But...’

If it’s angry, it means it felt something.

Compared to the Elder Drake that didn’t care about his attacks, this was progress.

Which meant...

Clank.

Picking up a sword lying on the ground, Amon glanced at Brestle.

“Can you bind it a little longer?”

He planned to finish it off while it was immobilized.

But Brestle, pale, shook her head.

“No.”

“Ugh.”

At that moment—

Boom!

The wyvern violently shrugged off the shadows binding it and roared skyward.

–Screeeeech!

The air trembled with an ear-splitting scream and Amon instinctively realized.

‘I’m screwed.’

Chapter 55

The power of black magic is immense. However, its power is as unstable as it is great.

Therefore, it is not recommended for ordinary magicians to learn it, and the cost of pursuing such overwhelming power with mediocre talent is severe.

A lich.

A cursed existence devoured by black magic.

However, a very small number of exceptional magicians can masterfully control the instability of black magic and unleash its overwhelming power.

Moreover, being a Dark Elf, Brestle could handle black magic more perfectly than other races.

In the end, the point is that if handled properly, black magic can be extraordinarily powerful.

But

“Damn it! I was stupid to trust you!”

The Grand Duke of the Great Night, Crescent Night!

After mumbling through a grandiose incantation, the mighty King Wyvern struck a blow and sent it flying immediately!

Amon gripped his sword tightly and shouted.

“Is there no other way to bind that beast!?”

Brestle shouted back in desperation.

“There is none!”

“Damn it!”

“I only trained hard with Crescent Night!”

“You damned...what!?”

In the midst of swearing, Amon jumped as the ferocious King Wyvern rushed towards him with incredible speed.

Amon flipped in midair and swung his sword, avoiding the beast’s charge that grazed the ground.

Crash!

As his sword struck the monster's back, sparks flew, but it only chipped the surface.

'Damn it! This thing's as tough as an Elder Drake!'

If only he had his favored axe, he might have managed to pierce the Wyvern's scales, though it was harder than the Elder Drake.

But lamenting didn't change the fact that his axe was still back at the territory.

As soon as he landed, Amon saw the King Wyvern charging straight at Brestle.

"Get out of the way!"

But it was too late.

"Aaaaah!"

Brestle was struck, her body flung backward.

'Damn it! The vice-principal is...wait, no!'

Shadows writhed around her, encasing her body with Crescent Night as she had barely avoided a direct hit.

However, relief was short-lived. The Wyvern King, now intent on finishing her off, raised its claws to strike again.

'This time, it's going for the kill!'

Unlike the previous mercenaries, the Wyvern King had decided to eliminate this threat quickly.

Desperately scanning the ground, Amon searched for a weapon.

'I need something better! I need at least a battle axe to hurt that thing...'

Unfortunately, mercenaries tend to travel light. Mobility is key for their lifestyle, so the battle axe he grabbed earlier was a rare find.

'Damn it, there's nothing decent... huh?'

Amon spotted Maitre lying nearby, unconscious but clutching his sword tightly.

'The leader of the Silver Sword Mercenaries? No way that's a cheap weapon!'

He rushed over to Maitre.

'Just borrowing it for a moment!'

Amon tried to pry the sword from Maitre's grip, but even unconscious, Maitre held on tight.

'This guy...'

Gritting his teeth, Amon forcibly wrenched the sword free.

"Just borrowing it! Who said I'm stealing it!?"

With a snap, Maitre's fingers broke.

Amon flinched at the sound, but there was no time for hesitation. The Wyvern was closing in on Brestle.

Taking a deep breath, Amon gripped the sword and charged.

With a deafening roar, he launched himself like a cannonball at the King Wyvern, twisting his body in midair to deliver a powerful strike.

Smash!

The King Wyvern was hurled across the ground, writhing in pain as Amon's strike left a deep scar on its flank.

The mighty beast's scales had been shattered.

'Unbelievable...'

Even though it wasn't as tough as an Elder Drake, the King Wyvern was still formidable. No ordinary sword could pierce its defenses.

Yet Amon's blow had broken through.

'This sword... it didn't even crack. Just what kind of weapon is this?'

He didn't know, but the Silver Sword Mercenaries weren't named lightly. The blade was mixed with mithril, renowned for its durability.

Though not pure mithril, it was still strong enough to withstand Amon's full strength.

'Expensive weapons really are different. No wonder the leader of the Silver Sword Mercenaries uses it!'

He wasn't entirely wrong.

Amon's confidence surged as he scanned the surroundings.

'Where's the vice-principal? Did she get eaten?'

He quickly spotted Brestle crawling far away.

'She was just here, but now she's way over there?'

She must have been flung by the earlier impact.

'Well, at least that distance buys us some space.'

Smirking, Amon exhaled.

"Now I can fight without worry."

With a weapon capable of piercing the Wyvern's defenses, the blood of the "Alley King of Drake's Domain" boiled within him.

The enraged King Wyvern suddenly looked skyward and let out a thunderous roar.

ROOOOAAARRR!

Amon lifted his sword and roared back.

"Bring it on!"

Then, out of the nearby forest, ordinary Wyverns rose like doves taking flight.

Seeing them, Amon widened his eyes.

'Are they launching a full-scale attack?'

For a moment, the thought of fleeing crossed his mind, but Amon was a man who turned crisis into opportunity.

'Perfect! I thought I'd only bag three, but now I can score big!'

With confidence, Amon raised his sword higher.

"Fine! Bring it all on!"

But the unexpected happened.

Flap!

The King Wyvern abruptly turned and soared over the mountain range, and the ordinary Wyverns followed suit, disappearing.

“...?”

Amon, still holding his sword high, was stunned.

“What the...?”

Why were they fleeing?

In bewilderment, Amon stood frozen, confused by the strange turn of events.

Had he been a monster scholar, he would have known:

[Monster Compendium: Complete Edition]

[King Wyvern—Highly aggressive but will relocate to a new habitat if the situation becomes too dangerous.]

Amon would have known this fact!

However, unaware of this, Amon quickly composed himself.

‘...I see! They must be planning a sneak attack from behind!’

Remaining on high alert, Amon prepared for the King Wyvern’s assault.

‘Come at me anytime! That will be the day you meet your end!’

Three hours later...

Kuh kuh kuh kuh!

The King Wyvern was overjoyed, having found a new nesting spot.

‘This is taking too long, King Wyvern...At this rate, I’ll grow old waiting.’

Four hours passed and Amon finally realized that the King Wyvern wouldn’t be returning.

‘Of course. My life never goes smoothly.’

Tears welled up in despair.

'...Huh?'

Hearing hoofbeats from afar, Amon turned his head.

'Who's that? Seems like quite a group is approaching.'

Soon, a few men arrived on the scene.

The middle-aged man at the front surveyed the area, letting out a heavy sigh.

"This is terrible...Was I too late?"

Covering his face with one hand, he muttered bitterly.

"Good people have been lost...How should I face this?"

Seeing the man murmuring sorrowfully, Amon cautiously spoke up.

"Um... who are you?"

"Huh? A-a survivor?!"

The middle-aged man rushed over in surprise.

"Who are you? Are you with the Silver Sword Mercenaries?"

"Huh? No, I'm the client."

"Client?"

"Yes, I had reasons to accompany them."

"I see..."

Sighing, the man muttered.

"Well, I'm relieved at least you survived."

"...What?"

Amon glanced around.

"I think they're all still alive, though."

"...What?"

"The King Wyvern only toyed with them, so I doubt anyone is dead."

“Is that true?!”

The men accompanying the middle-aged man searched the mercenaries and shouted in surprise.

“Count! It’s true! They’re all breathing!”

“O-oh!”

The middle-aged man let out a cry of relief.

‘...A count?’

Could he be Count Deblé, the patron of the Silver Sword Mercenaries?

Amon slowly stood and bowed, but Count Deblé waved it off.

“It’s fine! You must be exhausted—rest!”

Amon sat back down.

As Count Deblé’s men busily tended to the mercenaries...

“Ugh... ugh...”

Maitre, the leader of the Silver Sword Mercenaries, staggered to his feet with a groan.

Seeing this, the count shouted.

“Maitre! Are you alright?”

“C-count Deblé...Why are you here...?”

“You said you’d return in a day, but you were late, so I came quickly!”

“M-my lord...!”

Maitre bit his lip in emotion and bowed his head.

“I’m sorry, my lord. You entrusted me with the King Wyvern subjugation, but I failed to deliver good results. How can I apologize...?”

At this, Count Deblé bellowed.

“Stop! It’s enough that you and your men are alive!”

“M-my lord!”

Tears streaming, Maitre wept in gratitude, while Count Deblé’s eyes reddened.

The retainers sniffled and smiled as well.

Meanwhile, Amon thought:

‘Why are they so emotional by themselves?’

He glared at them with a face like he’d eaten something bitter.

‘I’m the one who suffered, so why are they the ones overwhelmed?’

‘...Ugh, whatever.’

Amon quietly approached Count Deblé.

“Excuse me, Count.”

“Ah, yes, the client, right? What is it?”

“I heard you guaranteed this contract. So, I’d like to ensure everything is handled properly.”

“Hm...Yes, everything must be done properly.”

Nodding, Count Deblé continued.

“The King Wyvern subjugation failed, as did your request. Normally, the mercenary group pays a penalty in such cases.”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“However...”

Count Deblé looked at Maitre.

“Do the Silver Sword Mercenaries have the means to pay the penalty?”

Maitre hung his head in silence.

They had invested heavily in this job, leaving them unable to pay.

Seeing this, Count Deblé spoke.

“They don’t seem to have the means.”

“...What?”

Fury flashed across Amon’s face.

‘These scoundrels... Are they trying to cheat me?’

If a high-ranking noble like a count decided to avoid paying, there was little Amon could do.

‘But I won’t tolerate being cheated out of money. Let’s see how far this goes.’

He resolved to use every connection to ruin Count Deblé.

‘I’ll even grovel to Senior Sloth to get the Marquis Pid’s support!’

Just as he burned with anger, Count Deblé said:

“I have no choice. I’ll pay the advance and the penalty myself.”

“...!”

Amon’s jaw dropped, and Maitre’s eyes widened.

“My lord! You mustn’t! How could you...?”

‘Shut up, you fool!’

Count Deblé laughed heartily.

“Since I guaranteed the contract, it’s my responsibility. Besides, I’m just glad you all survived. Lives are more important than money—don’t worry!”

“A-ah... My lord...!”

Maitre sobbed in gratitude, and Count Deblé smiled warmly.

Watching them, Amon felt his heart swell with emotion.

‘Such kindness, transcending rank and employment!’

Moreover, the thought of being paid handsomely warmed his heart further.

“Well, I’ll be going now!”

“Yes, take care!”

Leaving the tearful two behind, Amon walked over to where Brestle lay trembling.

“Vice Headmaster, you heard that, right?”

“....”

“They’re paying both the advance and the penalty!”

Brestle’s trembling increased, and Amon grinned.

“You’re thrilled too, huh?”

“....”

“Let’s head back!”

Supporting Brestle, Amon began walking. Finally, Brestle spoke weakly:

“Ki...”

“Yes?”

“Kiiii...”

“Take your time. What are you saying?”

Brestle, barely able to move her lips, muttered:

“King Wyvern oil...”

“....”

Amon decided to leave her behind.

Chapter 56

~Early Morning~

Sloth was sitting in a corner of the training grounds, rubbing her sleepy eyes.

“Yaaawn...”

After letting out a huge yawn, Sloth fidgeted with her hands.

The palms of her hands throbbed from swinging her sword throughout the night.

'I trained too late today...I got so immersed because I felt like I might suddenly grasp something.'

Although all members of the Pid family sent outside were at least Sword Masters, Sloth was uniquely at the level of a Sword Expert.

'Father and my brothers told me not to worry too much about my skills...'

Thanks to their words, her burden of worry and impatience had lightened somewhat but Sloth had her pride.

Though she carried it lightly as an emotional weight in one corner of her heart, the sensations she felt while swinging her sword today transformed that burden into hope.

'Sword Master. Perhaps I'll reach that level soon.'

Laughing to herself in satisfaction, Sloth lay down on the ground.

Her body had already reached its limits, so she intended to rest while mentally reliving the sensations she'd felt earlier.

'Yeah, not sleeping—just lying down to think for a bit...'

Sloth fell asleep just like that. But her sleep didn't last long.

Boom—!

Suddenly, a massive explosion echoed from the teachers' dormitory building.

The sound, which seemed to shake not only the academy but the entire city of Amur, startled Sloth awake.

"W-What was that!?"

It was evidently not just a dream-induced hallucination.

Even in the civilian houses just outside the academy walls, people were clamoring with, "What's that noise?" or "Is it thunder?"

The sound was so loud that even the elven principal of the school, Anar'el—whose keen hearing was typical of elves—fainted in shock.

Regardless, Sloth hastily got to her feet.

'Th-That sound seemed to come from the dormitory building!'

With her sleepiness entirely dispelled, Sloth sprinted toward the dormitory.

What she encountered were other teachers who, like her, had rushed out of the dormitory in alarm.

“Sloth, did you hear that as well?”

“Ah, yes, Marion. What on earth was that sound?”

“Well...I’ve only just arrived myself, so I don’t know either.”

Kai, who was standing with Marion, spoke in a hesitant voice.

“It sounded like a human voice, though.”

Sloth shook her head at that remark.

“No, it was way too loud to be a human voice.”

“That’s true...”

“And it was too eerie.”

“That’s also true.”

While Kai and Sloth nodded in agreement, Marion furrowed his brow.

‘...I feel like I’ve heard it somewhere before.’

He vaguely remembered being startled by a similar sound once when he was drunk, so much so that he had fallen off his chair.

While Marion was lost in thought, Kai scanned their surroundings and spoke.

“But where’s Senior Amon? There’s no way he didn’t hear that sound. If he had, he’d have come out like the rest of us.”

Marion replied, “He seemed to have gone out late last night with the vice principal. Maybe he hasn’t returned yet?”

“Hmm...Right, he did go out late last night. Hasn’t he come back yet?”

Sloth frowned and spoke.

“Amon went out late at night with the vice principal?”

“Huh? Oh, yes. Didn’t you know?”

Sloth hadn’t known because she had been training in the practice field at the time.

“...What business took them out late at night?”

“Well, he mentioned accompanying the vice principal for some business with a mercenary group.”

Crossing her arms, Sloth murmured with a discontented expression.

“So they’re not back yet...”

“No, the two of them returned a little while ago.”

“Oh.”

Turning at the sudden voice, the group saw Reinbelt approaching.

“They came back just before this. But what on earth was that sound?”

Marion shrugged.

“Who knows, Elder? We’re as clueless as you.”

“Hmm, I see. Kai, you have no guesses?” Reinbelt glanced briefly at Kai after nearly making a slip of the tongue.

Kai shook his head.

“I don’t know either. But...”

Kai’s eyes sparkled as he muttered.

“If Senior Amon hasn’t come out despite all this commotion, could it mean...?”

At that, everyone nodded grimly.

He was either the one responsible for the incident or a victim caught in the chaos.

And so, they hurried toward Amon’s room.

“Amon, are you in there?”

Marion knocked and called out, but there was no response from inside. Not even the faintest hint of movement.

Shrugging, Marion spoke.

“Doesn’t seem like he’s in his room.”

“Hmm...”

“Or maybe he never came back here and went somewhere else instead.”

As Reinbelt stroked his beard in thought, his eyes glinted sharply.

“No, he must’ve returned to his room.”

“Huh?”

“I left a letter for him by the door.”

“...Ah!”

The letter was no longer there.

This meant Amon had taken the letter into his room. That much was a natural conclusion.

It was unlikely he had taken just the letter and gone elsewhere immediately.

“Elder, you’re quite the detective.”

“Hahaha! People have always said I was sharp-minded as a child, though I lacked an academic inclination.”

“Indeed, indeed.”

As the others murmured, Sloth impatiently interrupted.

“Why not just open the door and check?”

“Hmm? But it’s rude to enter someone’s room without permission...”

“What’s the harm? If no one’s there, we can leave. If he’s inside, we can say we were worried and checked because he didn’t answer.”

“...Makes sense.”

They all had lingering doubts that something might have happened to Amon, so they decided to accept Sloth’s suggestion.

“Ahem. Amon? Then, we’re coming in!”

Marion opened the door and immediately gasped.

“Gasp!”

Amon was sprawled out on the floor so Marion rushed to him in alarm.

“A-Amon! Are you...!”

After checking his pulse, Marion let out a sigh of relief.

“Phew, he’s alive. But what in the world happened...?”

At that moment, Marion noticed a letter clutched in Amon’s hand.

‘Is that the letter I left for him earlier?’

Could this letter have shocked him so much that he fainted?

‘What kind of letter is this?’

The guilt of reading someone else’s letter without permission first came to mind, but the curiosity that followed quickly suppressed it.

“Hmm! Ahem! Since it seems like Amon fainted because of this letter, I think we should read it to resolve the matter. What do you all think?”

Marion made a cunning attempt to share responsibility with others!

Fortunately or unfortunately, everyone agreed with Marion’s suggestion. Marion quickly picked up the letter and skimmed it.

First, it was urgent to check if its contents were suitable for sharing with others.

‘Hmm? Notification of teacher certification exam results?’

Marion frowned and scanned the first line.

‘To Mr. Amon Drake, regarding your application for the Level 2 Teacher Certification Exam.’

Then the following words:

‘Unfortunately, Mr. Amon Drake has failed the exam this time. We appreciate your interest and encourage you to reapply in six months....’

Having read that far, Marion spoke up.

“It’s a letter saying he failed the teacher certification exam.”

“...What?”

Kai blinked in confusion.

“Ah, oh. Level 1 Teacher Certification? That test is quite difficult.”

“No, Level 2.”

“...What?”

Kai’s jaw dropped.

“He...failed the Level 2 Teacher Certification Exam?”

“...Yeah.”

Sloth’s eyes widened, and her jaw dropped as well.

“Is it even possible to fail Level 2...?”

“I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

“...Me neither.”

“Good grief...even blockheads pass Level 2!”

Even Reinbelt muttered in shock.

“I got my Level 2 certification, thinking I might need it if I ever took on an apprentice...”

As the group was whispering in disbelief, a groaning noise came from Amon.

“Ugh, ugh...”

Amon groaned, slowly sitting up and clutching his head.

“My head...huh? Why is everyone in my room?”

“...Amon, are you okay?”

“Huh? Oh, I had a terrible nightmare, but I’m fine.”

“ ... ”

“Huh? Marion, is that my letter you’re holding?”

Amon snatched the letter from Marion with a grumble.

“Why are you reading someone else’s letter without permission?”

“ ... ”

“Seriously. Anyway, let’s see. Today’s the day I get my teacher certification results.”

Amon opened the letter and chuckled.

“I just dreamed about failing. That’s ridiculous...there’s no way...”

As he read the letter, Amon’s eyes started trembling violently.

One second, two seconds, three seconds.

After a brief moment of silence:

“ARRRRRGH!”

Amon let out an earth-shattering scream, flopped backward, and fainted again.

The unidentified scream that had echoed across the city earlier was none other than Amon’s cry of despair!

Marion, who had been standing closest to the source of the scream, realized something as he was thrown backward by the force of the sound.

‘I thought I’d heard it somewhere before...it’s the same scream Amon let out during the tournament!’

Meanwhile, in the headmaster’s office, Anar’el, whose elven hearing far surpassed that of humans, had fainted in shock at the initial scream. Now awake, she sat trembling, her long ears folded tightly against her head.

‘What was that sound? It was so shocking I fainted...’

Looking around cautiously, she let out a sigh of relief and removed her hands from her ears.

“Whew... what a scare. I should go check...”

-ARRRRRGH!

Another deafening roar echoed through the academy. Anar'el's eyes rolled back, and she fainted once more.

Several days later.

During history class, Chloe, Raymond, and Boris exchanged worried glances.

"It's been three days...will it be the same today?"

"I'm not sure...probably?"

"...I don't like this new teacher."

Raymond, grumbling under his breath, suddenly fell silent.

Kai had appeared behind the podium.

"Ha ha ha, Ray! Sorry to hear you don't like me!"

"...I'm sorry, sir. I was joking."

"Ha ha, it's fine! I just have to work harder, don't I?"

"..."

That was exactly what Raymond didn't like.

The overzealous attitude of the new teacher was making him uneasy.

Kai's overly enthusiastic style made Raymond uncomfortable, a stark contrast to the laid-back atmosphere Amon used to provide.

Regardless, after the lesson, the students huddled together to chat.

"Let's visit Mr. Amon. Maybe seeing us will help him recover faster."

"Sure, but what should we bring as a gift?"

"Hmm..."

Raymond and Boris emptied their pockets, revealing only three coins.

Raymond, who had never received pocket money from Reinbelt, and Boris, whose circumstances didn't allow for such things, both looked helpless.

Then Chloe spoke confidently.

“I have money.”

“Huh? What money... oh!”

Chloe produced a pouch containing her prize money from the tournament. Though some mischievous teachers had borrowed from it, she'd charged them interest, leaving her with a hefty 13 gold coins.

As Chloe proudly displayed her wealth, she turned to Raymond.

“But you won the tournament too. What happened to your prize?”

Raymond looked down with a sorrowful expression.

“Grandpa said gold is a luxury for swordsmen and threw it into the river.”

“...”

Chloe and Boris gazed at Raymond with pity.

“So, Chloe, are you going to use that money to buy Mr. Amon a gift?”

When Boris asked, Chloe shook her head.

“No.”

“Huh? Then what?”

“This isn't enough.”

“What?”

After doing some mental calculations, Chloe nodded to herself.

“Boris, you remember, right?”

“Huh? Remember what?”

“That arena we went to before.”

“...!”

Boris's eyes widened as Chloe grinned.

“Let’s grow this money. Then we can buy the best gift for Mr. Amon.”

Chapter 57

The students first went to see Amon.

At the very least, they needed to know his preferences to decide on a suitable gift.

Of course, they had no intention of asking directly.

As a teacher, Amon wouldn’t likely be forthcoming about his tastes when asked by students trying to give him a gift.

This was their assumption, though, and if it were Amon, he’d likely say, “Ahem, I’ve been hearing good things about this recently,” prioritizing the bond between teacher and student.

Regardless, when they arrived at Amon’s quarters, they found Marion being shoved out of Amon’s room, almost as if she’d been chased away.

“Whew, that Amon guy is really something...”

“Sir Marion?”

“Oh, what brings you all here?”

“We heard teacher Amon wasn’t feeling well, so we came to visit him.”

Marion waved his hand dismissively.

“Phew, you should avoid going in for now. I teased him a bit about failing the teacher certification exam, and now he’s flipping out whenever he sees anyone.”

Marion sighed and recalled how he had “teased Amon a bit.”

“Hahaha! Even the kobold next door managed to pass the certification exam!”

“Grr! Gnash!”

“Oh, look at this! You actually passed all the other sections, huh? But you completely bombed the teacher suitability test!”

The suitability test included a question like:

“Question 1: When a student makes a significant mistake, what should a teacher do?”

Amon’s answer: “Scold them thoroughly!”

Sloth, who saw Amon’s answer sheet, tried to reason with him calmly.

“At least write something more politically correct for the test.”

“But... but...”

“Even I became a model teacher just for the exam.”

This was possible because Sloth recognized her own shortcomings as a teacher. However, Amon, confident that his methods were flawless, wrote down his true thoughts.

If students ever made serious mistakes, Amon would surely scold them until they cried. The only reason it hadn't happened yet was that none had made such mistakes under his watch.

“If they mess up, they should be firmly scolded! That way, they'll never repeat the mistake!”

“You're not wrong, but this is an exam. The right answer is: Calm the startled students, resolve the situation, and later teach them about their errors.”

“How can such a soft approach make anyone reflect on their mistakes?”

“...Well, you have a point there.”

Before long, even Sloth was convinced by Amon's reasoning.

Afterward, Marion and Sloth teased Amon relentlessly.

But Amon endured all of it—up to a point. What he couldn't endure was this:

“Did you call for me, Headmaster?”

“Ah, Amon. I heard you failed the teacher certification exam?”

“...Yes, I did.”

“Then, I suppose the head of academics position is off the table.”

Amon swallowed his tears and nodded. Since passing the certification exam was a condition for the position, there was nothing he could do.

“I'll aim for it next time...”

“Hmm, it's not an urgent position. But you know...”

The headmaster chuckled before delivering the final blow.

“You always called me a blockhead. So, who's the blockhead now?”

At that, Amon finally broke down.

To be humiliated and mocked as a blockhead by someone he'd always deemed one—it was a crushing blow.

And so, Amon was currently bedridden, sick with rage and humiliation.

“That’s how things are, so it’s best to leave Amon alone for now.”

“Oh, I see. Then do you have any suggestions for a good get-well gift?”

“A gift?”

Marion stroked his chin.

“Well, naturally, alcohol...”

No, gifting alcohol to someone sick with anger would only create another alcoholic like Marion himself.

“And it’d look odd for students to gift their teacher alcohol in the first place.”

After a moment’s thought, Marion chuckled.

“But it’s sweet of you to think about that. Young ones worrying about their teacher’s recovery.”

Marion ruffled Boris’s hair as he spoke.

“Would you visit me too if I fell sick?”

“Uh... yes, of course.”

“What’s with that pause?”

Marion laughed, half-jokingly disappointed, and nodded.

“Anyway, listen carefully. Let’s go together to find a gift for Amon. But remember this one thing.”

Smiling warmly, Marion said,

“Amon wouldn’t expect an expensive gift.”

He would.

“So think of something heartfelt that will truly convey your feelings. Got it?”

“Yes, sir!”

“Uh, kids? I’m pretty sure I said something quite profound...”

Marion frowned as he looked around.

“...So why are we here?”

They were at an arena tavern.

A place utterly unsuited to the kind-hearted advice Marion had given as a teacher.

When Marion asked, Boris pointed at Chloe.

“Chloe said she wanted to make a little extra money to buy teacher Amon a better gift.”

“...I see.”

It seemed Marion’s heartfelt advice hadn’t resonated with Chloe. Still, she wasn’t ready to give up.

“But Chloe, think carefully.”

“Yes?”

“If you earn money in a place like this and buy a gift for Amon, do you think he’ll truly appreciate it?”

Chloe imagined Amon receiving the gift.

“Thank you, Chloe!”

Marion also imagined Amon.

“I’m so grateful, Chloe!”

Both Chloe and Marion nodded in unison.

“He’ll be grateful.”

“That seems likely.”

Clicking his tongue, Marion crossed his arms and said,

“But kids, as a teacher, I can’t condone this behavior...”

“Here’s your drink.”

“Gasp! Amur’s third-best brew, All-Day Amur!”

Marion licked his lips as he stared at the bottle.

Seeing this, Chloe nodded in satisfaction.

“Just as I expected.”

She had brought Marion here before, so she knew he wouldn't refuse to enter.

However, she also knew he would oppose students earning money in a place like this.

“That's why I ordered this expensive drink to keep her quiet. Looks like it worked.”

Marion ended up being no more than a reluctant guardian for the students in the tavern.

As Marion eagerly downed the bottle, Boris glanced nervously at Chloe.

His eyes betrayed an unmistakable fear of her.

“S-So, Chloe, what's the plan now?”

“We bet and fight. I saw Amon do it before, so I can handle it.”

“...When did you see that?”

Chloe never took her eyes off Amon as he left to place his bet on Boris.

“Well, that's how it is. Anyway, how should we decide the order?”

“Hmm...”

Boris glanced at Raymond.

“Ray, want to give it a try? It's your first time here, right?”

However, Raymond didn't seem eager to step forward just yet. He was busy wolfing down the snacks that came with the drinks they had ordered.

“I, I'll go after I finish this.”

“Sure...Take your time, I won't steal it from you...”

Having lived with Reinbelt, where they foraged every edible herb from the mountains, leaving wild animals starving, Raymond now found himself indulging in luxury at the academy. Every meal was a feast, and the greasy bar snacks were a delicious treat he couldn't afford to miss.

With a sigh, Boris finally said:

“Fine, Chloe, you go first.”

“...You’re not doing it?”

“I mean, I haven’t been keeping up with sword training lately...”

“...Alright, got it.”

Chloe rose from her seat, seemingly accepting the situation, and said:

“Just admit you’re scared.”

“...What?!”

An indignant Boris snapped:

“You think I’m scared of this? I’m not scared!”

“Then want to do it?”

“...”

“If not, never mind.”

At this point, Boris realized something was going wrong. But seeing the concern in Chloe’s eyes as she told him he didn’t have to do it if he didn’t want to, Boris couldn’t back down. After all, he was a man!

“I’ll do it!”

“Okay, got it.”

Chloe walked toward the reception desk, thinking to herself:

‘I’m worried about Boris, he’s such an easy mark!’

When Chloe handed her pouch of coins to the receptionist, she said:

“I’d like to bet 1 gold on Boris.”

“Uh?”

The receptionist was taken aback by the sight of a girl, who seemed completely out of place in this kind of establishment, approaching to place a bet.

“You, you came alone?”

“No, I’m with that table over there. My guardian is too drunk, so he sent me instead.”

The receptionist glanced over at the table Chloe had pointed to, where a middle-aged man appeared to be passed out drunk.

“Ah, I see. Alright, 1 gold on Boris.”

As Chloe returned to her seat, the receptionist, writing down names, suddenly frowned.

“Hmm, Boris? That name seems familiar somehow...”

The receptionist’s thoughts were interrupted by a jolt of realization, prompting him to pull out a file.

[High-Risk Clients]

[Boris – Brown-haired boy]

[Chloe Aran – Blonde-haired girl]

[Marion Rumdom – High-risk individual. Chronic drunkard.]

[Scammed winnings and fled. Must report immediately upon re-entry.]

Squinting his eyes, the receptionist thought:

“As I suspected... That girl must be Chloe.”

He smirked as he hurried off.

On the second floor of the arena pub, a man seated at a premium spot overlooking the arena furrowed his brow.

“Oh? Those brats are back?”

“Yes, master.”

“Heh, so they didn’t learn their lesson last time and crawled back again...”

Sipping from his wine glass, the man ordered:

“Summon the enforcer, Dexon.”

“Yes, master. But the match has already started...”

“Hmph, no matter. Those two brats—Boris and Chloe—entered the match last time too, didn’t they? If they’re here again, they’ll surely join two rounds.”

With a smirk, the man added:

“Just make sure they’re thoroughly crushed in the next match.”

“But master, last time, they escaped because of that approach.”

“...”

The man drained his wine and muttered:

“Then make sure they don’t leave this time.”

“...Understood.”

“And summon Dexon!”

“He’s already here, sir.”

“...”

The man awkwardly cleared his throat and turned his attention to the arena below. Just in time, Boris’s match was beginning.

Outside the arena, a man with a large scar on his face—Dexon, the enforcer—sneered as he watched Boris’ match.

The master of the arena had instructed him to crush the boy thoroughly, but from what Dexon could see, there was nothing special about the boy’s skills.

“Hyaah!”

“Hah! Too slow, kid!”

“Take this!”

“Ha! Is that all you’ve got? Wait, what the—GAAH!”

Boris landed a decisive blow to his opponent’s most vulnerable area, sending the man sprawling. The audience cringed and crossed their legs in sympathy.

Even Dexon instinctively clamped his legs together and muttered:

“Hmph, the kid’s got solid fundamentals, but that’s about it.”

After all, how skilled could a child really be?

The man beside Dexon said:

“Sir Dexon, you’re up next.”

“Hm. Got it.”

Moments later, Dexon’s name was called, and he stepped into the cage. Eyeing his young opponent, he sneered:

“Hey, kid.”

“...Yes?”

“You lot have been causing too much trouble. Should’ve known when to stop playing around.”

“...?”

“I’ll make sure you understand what happens when you mess with adults.”

Grinning menacingly, Dexon drew his sword. The boy’s eyes widened.

“Oh? We’re allowed to use swords?”

“Haha, of course. Normally, it’s barehanded, but this match is special.”

“Ah, I see.”

“Yeah.”

Dexon’s sword began to glow with a blue aura—the hallmark of a Sword Expert’s skill, Sword Aura.

“Feel free to use a sword if you’ve got one.”

“Alright.”

The boy nodded, and as he stretched out his hand—

Whoosh!

Out of nowhere, a sword from a nearby table flew into his hand as if drawn by a magnetic pull. At that moment—

Kwooosh!

The blade erupted with the radiant energy of a Sword Master's signature ability: Aura Blade.

Biting into an apple he had saved for dessert, the boy, Raymond, smiled and said:

"Well then, let's get started."

At the sight of the Aura Blade, Dexon's legs gave out, and he collapsed, wetting himself in terror.

Chapter 58

After the match Chloe and her group were escorted to the master's room on the second floor.

The owner of the arena tavern, Johnson, was rubbing his hands together nervously, while Dexon lay collapsed nearby, his face bruised and swollen.

He had been beaten too harshly by Raymond.

"He-hehe...I deeply apologize for this incident," Johnson said, bowing his head repeatedly.

"There seems to have been some sort of mistake. A 'special match'? I have no idea what that could be about..."

Dexon, trembling on the floor, shuddered at the blatant scapegoating, but Johnson continued as if unaware.

"I will personally take responsibility for this fool. So please, forgive us, Sword Master."

A Sword Master is a national treasure.
Wherever they go, they could easily be granted noble titles.

Because of this, Johnson's attitude toward Raymond was exceptionally respectful. But Raymond, the person in question, seemed indifferent. To say he wasn't even angry would be more accurate.

"Oh, yeah. Sure."

"Hahaha! How magnanimous of you. By the way..."

A rare opportunity!
'A Sword Master at such a young age? This is my chance to leave a good impression!'

Just as Johnson was about to start small talk with Raymond, Chloe interrupted.

“Mister, shouldn’t we settle the payment first?”

“...Excuse me?”

“I bet 10 gold on Raymond. That man, Dexon, is famous around here, so his odds were high. About four to one.”

Johnson frowned.

Ten gold at four to one.

While not a huge amount for the tavern owner, it was a considerable fortune for a young girl. It was understandable that she might be impatient—but interrupting an adult’s conversation?

“How dare a little girl cut in!”

At Johnson’s outburst, Raymond’s eyebrows twitched, and his hand moved toward his sword. But Chloe quickly grabbed his hand and kept him from drawing it, continuing as if nothing had happened.

“I apologize. But this was under the orders of Viscount Rumdom.”

“...Viscount Rumdom?”

“Yes, I’m just following the Viscount instructions.”

It was a lie.

Marion was passed out drunk and had given no such orders.

But Johnson had no way of knowing that, and the name of Viscount Rumdom carried enough weight to be effective.

‘...Tsk, Viscount Rumdom. If I had known, I wouldn’t have sent Dexon. Who could’ve guessed there’d be a Sword Master among them?’

Dexon was a former knight and a Sword Expert.
He wasn’t someone who should’ve been participating in tavern arena matches.

Because of that, Johnson realized it wouldn’t be hard for Marion to figure out Dexon’s role as his “fixer.”

'Of course, there's no direct connection between me and Dexon. But Viscount Rumdom might suspect otherwise, which makes withdrawing now the best option...'

Clicking his tongue, Johnson glanced at Chloe.

'Viscount Rumdom... So, despite working as an instructor at Amonis Academy, he's stooped to this kind of money-grubbing with kids? What a disgrace to his name as a war hero of the Great War.'

Shaking his head, Johnson pulled out a pouch. With the possibility of Viscount Rumdom investigating him, appeasing them was the safest choice.

"Here, take it. I've made it generous."

Chloe opened the pouch and narrowed her eyes. It contained at least 50 gold coins.

Noticing this, Chloe smirked slightly and gestured toward Dexon with her eyes.

"Don't worry; I'll make sure to put in a good word for you with the Viscount."

With that, Chloe grabbed Boris and left. Johnson's face twitched as they walked out.

'Could Viscount Rumdom...have been aware of everything from the start?'

Once again, Marion was still asleep. As Chloe and Boris made their way downstairs, Chloe thought to herself:

'Well, anyone with a brain would've figured as much.'

At that moment, Boris asked, "Why did that guy give us more money?"

"...Boris."

"Yeah?"

"I really worry about you sometimes."

"What are you talking about? You're the same age as me, so stop pretending to be my older sister."

Back at their table, Chloe and Boris supported the drunken Marion and prepared to leave. That's when Raymond caught up to them, grumbling.

"What, are you just going to leave me behind?"

Seeing Raymond already returned, Chloe blinked in surprise.

“Huh? Why are you here so soon?”

“I told that guy I’d be back after chatting with you and then just left.”

“Oh, I see.”

Honestly, Chloe didn’t care much now that she’d secured the money.

As they left the tavern with Marion, Johnson was busy ordering his subordinates around.

“Prepare a banquet for the Sword Master’s return!”

“Yes, sir!”

Rubbing his hands together, Johnson’s eyes gleamed.

“Haha...To think I have the chance to form a connection with a Sword Master. Spare no expense; make it as grand as possible!”

“Yes, master!”

Meanwhile, outside the tavern...

Chloe said, “Didn’t you say you were just going to talk and come back?”

“I’m not going back. I just made that up to leave.”

“Oh.”

“What would I even talk about with that guy?”

“True...So, how was it today? Want to come again next time?”

Realizing Raymond could be a valuable asset, Chloe tested the waters. But Raymond snorted dismissively.

“I’d rather spend that time swinging my sword. You guys go without me.”

“...Oh, okay.”

Back at the tavern...

Johnson was immersed in dreams of grandeur.

“Haha... If I can rope in the Sword Master, I could double—no, triple my business!”

He urged his subordinates on.

“Hire the best entertainers and top chefs! Spare no expense for the banquet in honor of the Sword Master!”

“Yes, master!”

Oblivious to the fact that Raymond had no intention of returning, Johnson continued dreaming big.

Outside, Chloe patted her now bulging pouch.

“Well, now that we’ve got the money, let’s think about what to get as a gift for Mr. Amon’s hospital visit.”

Hearing this, Marion raised his hand enthusiastically.

“Alcohol!”

“Please exclude yourself. Boris, do you have any good ideas?”

Resting his chin in thought, Boris suggested, “Hmm... Mr. Amon teaches history, right? How about getting him a new history book he can use for his classes?”

Hearing this innocent suggestion, Chloe sighed.

As Marion had said earlier, it wasn’t a bad gift—if you were a student giving a teacher a present.

“Well, Boris, I’m worried about you.”

“There you go again, acting like you’re older.”

“Think about it. Imagine you’re a potato farmer, sick in bed. Then someone gives you a new potato sack as a present. How would you feel?”

“...Huh?”

Boris imagined being bedridden and receiving a potato sack.

“What? Am I supposed to get up and harvest more potatoes?”

Realizing this, Boris exclaimed, “Oh, I see! It wouldn’t be right to give something work-related when he’s sick.”

“Exactly.”

Chloe shook her head.

“That’s not it.”

“What? It’s not?”

Looking confident, Chloe explained, “The gift has to be expensive.”

“...What?”

“A history book isn’t expensive.”

“...What?”

“Why do you think I worked so hard to make money?”

“Oh, right...”

Although Chloe was at the bottom of the hierarchy, she was still royalty of the Aran Kingdom in name!

When she was in the royal family, every single gift other nobles brought as a “small gesture” was always an expensive item.

Moreover, despite calling them small gifts, they always added, “it’s pricey.”

Because of that, Chloe realized one thing early on in life:

‘For adults, the value of a gift is what matters.’

It wasn’t entirely wrong but Marion, who had been quietly listening, suddenly interrupted with a stern face.

“Hey! Chloe!”

“...Yes?”

“Who taught you such a wicked idea that expensive gifts are the best?!”

“But...”

“Gifts are best when they’re alcohol! Hic!”

“Please, Mr. Marion, I’m begging you, step aside.”

With a sigh, Chloe turned to Raymond this time.

“Raymond, what do you think would make a good get-well-soon gift?”

“Me? I think....”

“Put in a doll. Okay, a doll will do.”

Chloe stopped Raymond, who was slowly pulling out a handmade doll from his pocket, and sighed deeply.

‘Is our academy really going to be okay like this...?’

Chloe repeated the same question that Amon had asked countless times before.

“Well, I guess there’s no choice...Follow me, everyone.”

Chloe, taking the lead, strode off with her group of simpletons.

The principal’s offhanded joke had been snowballing in Amon’s mind.

‘Now, who’s the dumb one?’

“Ugh, ughhhhh....”

‘Oh ho ho! Now, who’s the fool?’

“Ughhhh....”

‘Ha ha ha! So dumb! Look at this blockhead!’

“Anar’el...! I’ll kill you...!”

Suffering from what was practically a nightmare, Amon groaned at the sound of someone knocking on his door.

“Wh-Who is it...?”

“Sir, is it okay if we come in for a moment?”

If it had been someone like Sloth or Marion, his fellow teachers, he would have shouted at them to leave immediately.

Amon would never forget how they had mocked him!

If it had been the principal, well, the principal's office would've been vacant by the end of the day!

But it was the students who had come.

"Come, come in."

"Yes, we'll just be a moment."

The students tiptoed in and looked at the groaning Amon with worried expressions.

"Sir, are you feeling any better?"

Amon forced a smile and replied.

"Ha, ha ha... I feel a little better, thanks to your concern."

"Please get well soon."

"Yes, yes. Seeing you all makes me feel like I should get up right away."

Smiling warmly, Amon tried to lift himself.

But his body, still drained from the deep despair he'd been wallowing in, collapsed again.

"Ahhh...."

"Are you okay?"

"Ha ha... Y-Yes, I'm fine."

Chloe, supporting the pitiable Amon, carefully spoke.

"Um, sir. This is a gift for you to get well soon."

"A... get-well-soon gift?"

Amon's eyes widened.

"You...you all bought this?"

"Yes. We pooled our money together. Though I did chip in quite a bit more."

"Th-That's...."

“Actually, it wouldn’t be wrong to say I covered most of it.”

“I... I see.”

Amon’s eyes glistened with deep emotion.

‘Those so-called fellow teachers came empty-handed....’

No, they had brought gifts, but Amon had growled and chased them off at every glance, leaving them no chance to give anything.

In any case, Amon looked at the students and said,

“May I open it?”

“Of course, sir.”

“Then....”

As Amon carefully unwrapped the packaging, his eyes widened in surprise.

‘A pen! A fountain pen!’

Emotion surged in Amon’s eyes.

A proper fountain pen would cost at least a few gold coins—a valuable item!

For someone like Amon, who had been using cheap quills, it was an incredibly thoughtful gift.

‘What a heartfelt gift this is....’

Amon’s eyes glistened with tears of gratitude.

The overwhelming mental anguish he had been enduring seemed to ease slightly.

“Thank you so much, kids.”

“It’s nothing, sir. Please recover quickly.”

“Yes, yes. For you, I must get better soon.”

“You must be tired, so we’ll take our leave now.”

“Alright, thank you, everyone.”

After the students left, Amon collapsed back onto his bed with a sigh.

Just sitting up had been exhausting.

‘Heh heh...But seeing such thoughtful students gives me strength.’

Smiling softly, Amon gazed at the pen the students had given him.

‘Hm? Wait, but this....’

He noticed the engraving and inscription on the top of the fountain pen.

Amon rubbed his eyes and examined the marking again.

‘Gold Horizon.’

Even the cheapest models cost 30 gold coins—a premium fountain pen.

Realizing this, Amon sprang out of his sickbed.

His emotional wounds were instantly healed.

Chapter 59

The imperial crown prince, now just an ordinary teacher at Amonis Academy, Kai, was lost in thought, sighing quietly.

‘To think Senior Amon would be so despondent...’

At that very moment, Amon was dancing gleefully with the Gold Horizon fountain pen in hand, but Kai, unaware of this fact, let out a deep sigh.

‘It’s true that teaching credentials are important for a teacher, but for someone as capable as Senior Amon, those credentials are insignificant. I can’t believe he’s so upset about it...’

Kai was feeling sorrowful, as though Amon’s sadness was his own.

‘No, it’s not the credentials themselves; he’s likely disappointed in himself for failing to obtain something so trivial as a teacher’s license, leading to this state.’

Kai, who held Amon in such high regard, interpreted everything in a favorable light.

But there was nothing Kai could do about Amon’s condition.

The teaching certification exam was an official imperial test. Even as the crown prince and future emperor, interfering in such matters would be overstepping his authority.

'Besides, even if I could, Senior Amon wouldn't be happy about passing that way.'

No. He'd likely be overjoyed, affirming that his abilities were never in doubt.

Seated in a quiet spot in the academy's park, looking up at Amon's dormitory, Kai sighed in frustration.

"What are you doing here?"

"Ah, sir."

The Azure Sky Sword King, Reinbelt, approached, patting his lower back.

"Whew, I must be getting old. Just a bit of sweeping, and my back hurts."

"You started early this morning. It's already nighttime."

"Haha, has it gotten so late already? Anyway, what are you doing here?"

Though Kai was the crown prince of the empire, he was still young. Seeing someone so youthful with such a worried expression, Reinbelt couldn't just walk away.

When asked, Kai sighed and answered.

"Whew, it seems Senior Amon is deeply troubled. He's been like this for days now."

"Hmm. That does seem to be the case."

"I've been taking over his history classes in his absence. The students have been following me so enthusiastically that I'm starting to worry whether I might unintentionally take his place."

Reinbelt, whose daily routine included hearing Raymond badmouth Kai after cleaning, found the prince's concerns peculiar but chose not to comment.

"...Hmm. I see."

"Anyway, I'm at a loss. Isn't there some way to help Senior Amon recover and return to work?"

"Hmm, asking me..."

Reinbelt, stroking his beard with a pensive look, suddenly let out a small exclamation.

“I’ve got an idea.”

“Really? What is it?”

“Haha, hear me out.”

Reinbelt recounted his first encounter with Amon to Kai. The moment he proposed taking Amon as his disciple, Amon was overjoyed.

“From that, I gather he has a desire to grow as a warrior.”

“Oh, Senior Amon? Ah, indeed...”

Kai recalled the time Amon challenged him to a duel, and similar thoughts crossed his mind.

‘Indeed, Senior Amon is an extraordinary raw gem. Though unrefined, the sheer weight of his raw talent alone overshadows even polished jewels. If he were to receive proper training in swordsmanship...’

Kai shuddered.

It would be like giving wings to a tiger or placing a dragon pearl in the hands of a dragon.

‘However, given the circumstances of the Drake family, he likely never had access to proper training from a prestigious school of swordsmanship. Their territory is too remote.’

Snapping out of his thoughts, Kai spoke.

“Sir Reinbelt, could it be that you mean...”

“Yes.”

Reinbelt nodded and said.

“You’ve learned more styles of swordsmanship than I have, haven’t you?”

“Well...”

While his depth in any single style didn’t compare to Reinbelt’s, Kai had indeed studied a vast array of swordsmanship styles as the imperial crown prince.

Among them were Reinbelt’s techniques and those of the Pid family. Even the swordsmanship of fallen kingdoms and secret, esoteric traditions were in his arsenal.

“Why not teach one of those styles to Amon?”

“...”

“After all, teaching is a form of scholarship. A scholar’s desire for new knowledge surpasses that of ordinary people.”

“That’s true...”

Kai agreed, and Reinbelt grinned broadly.

“If nothing else works, try dangling the royal family’s secret swordsmanship as bait. He’ll fall for it, hook, line, and sinker.”

Kai curtly dismissed Reinbelt’s jest.

“That’s absolutely out of the question.”

“Huh? Is the royal swordsmanship so secretive? I’ve learned most of it, though.”

“That’s because you’re one of the empire’s four great knights. But Senior Amon is...”

Kai stopped himself.

Even though Reinbelt was deeply tied to the imperial family, there was no need for him to know about the disgraceful entanglements with the Drake family.

“Hmm. So, teaching swordsmanship to Senior Amon, huh.”

He remembered his promise to his father, the emperor, to conceal his identity and abilities.

‘The main point is to keep others from knowing I’m the crown prince. But since Senior Amon already knows about my skills, teaching him swordsmanship shouldn’t be a big issue.’

Resolving himself, Kai nodded firmly.

“I should at least bring it up with Senior Amon first.”

“Haha, good idea. And if possible, try teaching him a bit of my swordsmanship too. From what I’ve seen, it seems to suit him.”

“Oh, your techniques too? Would that be alright?”

“I’ve already told him I’d take him as a disciple. Why not? Just don’t mention that it’s my style.”

“Pardon? Why is that...?”

Reinbelt smiled faintly.

It was a seemingly gentle smile but concealed dark schemes and ulterior motives.

“I don’t want to burden Amon unnecessarily.”

Kai gasped in admiration.

“Ah, as expected of the humble Azure Sky Sword King.”

“Hahaha! You flatter me!”

Turning away with a laugh, Reinbelt smirked mischievously.

‘Once he learns my swordsmanship, I’ll have him completely in my grasp.’

After all, having learned his techniques, there’d be no escape for Amon! He’d become a true disciple.

So, let him cast aside worldly attachments and walk the path of a warrior!

‘Hehe, Amon. What a promising talent. If I tie him to me now, he’ll be useful later.’

Unaware of Reinbelt’s schemes, Kai headed to Amon’s dormitory.

Amon, lovingly polishing the fountain pen gifted by his students with a handkerchief, turned his head at the sound of a sudden knock.

“Senior Amon, it’s Kai. May I come in for a moment?”

Hearing the voice accompanying the knock, Amon frowned.

‘Kai? What’s that brat doing here at this hour...?’

Had it been Marion, Sloth, or Anar’el, he would’ve shouted at them to leave. But Kai was different.

‘At least that kid hasn’t teased me.’

As his junior, he likely didn’t even dare to think of making fun of him.

Thus, compared to the delinquent colleagues like Sloth or the useless principal, Kai was at least someone Amon considered worth treating as a human being.

Still, Amon quickly hid the fountain pen in his chest pocket and lay back in bed.

It wouldn't do to jump out of bed after receiving a gift—it would look too silly.

“Alright, come in.”

“Yes, I'm coming in.”

When Kai entered and saw Amon lying in bed, he let out a sigh of pity.

Amon, who had often feigned illnesses in his youth to avoid digging potatoes, was so adept at pretending that Kai mistook him for a genuine patient.

“Se-Senior, are you okay?”

“Uh, yeah...I'm fine.”

“You don't look fine at all.”

Kai murmured in a voice tinged with concern.

Amon quickly scanned his hands.

‘Empty-handed.’

Not even knowing the common courtesy of bringing something when visiting the sick.

‘Does he not even know the saying, “Arrive with full hands, leave with empty ones”?’

Well, he is a young noble and just starting in society, so perhaps it's understandable.

Presuming as much, Amon managed a feeble smile and said:

“So, what brings you here?”

“Oh, yes, senior.”

Kai smiled faintly and said:

“How about learning some swordsmanship?”

After pushing Kai out of the room, Amon flopped back onto his bed, grumbling.

“Does he really think that’s something to say to someone who’s bedridden? Well, I’m mostly fine now, though.”

Lying on the bed with his legs crossed, Amon pulled out the fountain pen from his pocket.

“Ah, just looking at this relieves some stress. Who would’ve thought I’d get to use a Gold Horizon fountain pen in my lifetime?”

When it comes to gifts for the sick, there should always be a generous ‘jeong’ (affection).

“But coming empty-handed and talking about swordsmanship? Seriously?”

Well, to be fair, learning swordsmanship could be quite useful in many ways.

“But the continent seems peaceful for now, and even if something big happens, I’ve already fallen out of favor with that damned emperor, so earning merit probably won’t lead to success.”

Initially, Amon thought becoming the disciple of Reinbelt, the Azure Sky Sword King, might help him climb the ladder by leaning on the support of one of the Empire’s Four Great Knights. But Reinbelt had chosen a life of picking wild herbs over ambition.

“In the end, learning swordsmanship would just be useful for peeling potatoes or prepping wild vegetables. So, I suppose...”

Amon twirled the Gold Horizon fountain pen and smirked.

“I’ll just trust the students I’ve raised and live my life.”

Students who were truly the light and salt of the earth!

As he twirled the pen and chuckled:

Clink!

The nib of the pen flew off and rolled on the ground.

Amon blinked.

“What the...?”

The Gold Horizon fountain pen wasn’t just valuable for its brand name—it was renowned as a luxury item for its durability.

“B-but why did the nib fly off? How is this even possible?”

A chill ran down Amon’s spine as he hurriedly examined the pen.

Gold Horizon.

As he stared at its emblem and brushed it lightly with his thumb:

‘It smudges...?’

The emblem wasn’t properly engraved but had been drawn on with ink.

In other words, this item was—

‘A counterfeit.’

Realizing this, Amon rolled his eyes back and collapsed.

The betrayal by the students he regarded as light and salt of the earth dealt him such an overwhelming shock that he fainted.

It turned out the pen being a counterfeit was due to a mistake by the merchant guild.

A highly detailed counterfeit had accidentally been mixed in with the genuine items.

As such, the guild issued a formal apology, refunded the purchase, and as a gesture of atonement, provided a genuine fountain pen.

At least, up to this point, the situation seemed resolved.

However, the emotional scar Amon suffered showed no signs of healing.

“S-sir, this one is genuine.”

“.....”

“The counterfeit was a mistake by the guild.”

“.....”

To Amon, who had already shut the doors to his heart, those words did not register.

Though the students forcibly handed him the genuine fountain pen, Amon only scrutinized it with suspicious eyes, over and over.

“Sir! Please pull yourself together!”

“C-Chloe, calm down. Let’s step outside for now.”

Raymond and Boris dragged the wailing Chloe out of the room. Left sitting blankly in his chair, Amon was approached by someone.

“My, my, what a pitiful sight.”

It was Reinbelt.

Having heard the gist of the story, he clicked his tongue and handed something over.

“Take this. It’s mail for you.”

“.....”

“Oh, come on. I’ll just leave it here.”

Clicking his tongue again, Reinbelt left, leaving Amon alone to stare blankly at the mail.

‘...Mail?’

Even in his state of emotional shutdown, Amon found himself curious about the unexpected correspondence.

Thus, he absentmindedly picked up the mail and opened it. His eyes narrowed as he looked inside.

A letter and a hefty pouch.

‘This pouch is...?’

As he fiddled with the pouch, color began returning to Amon’s face.

A strange vitality coursed through him.

Realizing this, Amon carefully untied the pouch.

And then—

“H-huh!?”

A pouch brimming with gold coins!

The sight flung open the tightly shut doors to Amon’s heart.

‘W-what is this...?’

Gold coins?

No, who sent them?

As questions bubbled up, Amon hastily opened the letter that had come with the pouch.

But as he read it, his expression grew increasingly rigid.

Chapter 60

[To all the teachers currently employed at Amonis Academy by the Imperial Ministry of Education, this is a notice regarding the ongoing, highly confidential teacher evaluation system. We are informing you of your evaluations according to this system.]

Amon narrowed his eyes.

A highly confidential teacher evaluation system?

‘When exactly did they do something like this?’

But he quickly figured it out.

‘Right. Not long ago, there was an inter-academy competition, wasn’t there? The inspectors from the royal family attended at that time.’

It was probably then that they evaluated the teachers. Having deduced that, Amon continued reading the letter.

[Anar’el, Headmaster]

[Excellent – Encourage the current management to be maintained]

Upon reading this, sparks flew from Amon’s eyes.

‘What is this nonsensical evaluation?’

Anar’el is excellent? That’s impossible.

How could the headmaster, who insulted and mocked him as a fool, be considered excellent?

‘This is why people in higher positions get away with everything, always sticking together and profiting.’

Though it didn’t look like it at all, Anar’el, the head of Amonis Academy, was a high-ranking official within the Empire.

As mentioned, it didn't seem that way, but it was a fact.

'If I had to compare, she would be equivalent to nobles like earls or marquises. And I've heard that she has known the crazy emperor for a long time...'

That must be why Anar'el received the "excellent" evaluation.

Amon, who couldn't hide his disdain for the widespread corruption within the Empire, moved on to the next line.

[Brestle, Vice-Headmaster]

[Excellent – Encourage the current management to be maintained]

Amon dropped his jaw.

'What kind of crazy talk is this!'

Brestle, who had nearly ruined the academy's finances for some wyvern oil, is considered excellent?

'That dark elf almost destroyed the academy's finances just to get wyvern oil!'

It was understandable that the headmaster would be at the center of corruption and scandal, but how could the vice-headmaster also receive such an evaluation?

'Something's terribly wrong here. Are the inspectors blind?'

Could it be that the vice-headmaster has some strong backing as well?

Sighing over the dark future of the Empire, Amon continued reading.

[Marion Rumdom]

[Serious Concern – Regular abstinence and self-discipline needed]

[Recommended Action – Salary cut and a written apology required]

Amon nodded.

'Finally, a proper evaluation has come up.'

It seemed that even the inspectors with eyes like holes in a log could sometimes make sharp judgments.

Of course, since the academy was a rather independent institution, unless the headmaster took action, recommendations would be useless.

'But the bad evaluations circulating within the royal court won't have a good long-term impact.'

Even if no action is taken immediately, every journey starts with a single step!

'Heh heh, senior Marion. You teased me so much, but this is your fate.'

The next evaluation was for Sloth.

[Sloth Pid]

[Serious Concern – Due to lazy tendencies, difficulty in fulfilling teaching duties]

[Recommended Action – Salary cut and self-reflection]

Amon smacked his knee.

'Of course!'

Nodding as if he understood, Amon muttered.

"It seems like the headmaster and vice-headmaster elves were evaluated by blind inspectors, but Marion, my senior, was evaluated by someone who's truly awake. This is the Empire for you."

Amon, filled with patriotic pride, quickly turned his attention to the next section.

'...So the last one is my evaluation.'

Swallowing, Amon took a deep breath before reading his own evaluation.

[Amon Drake]

[Excellent – Demonstrates a correct philosophy of education and diligently guides students. A promising young educator with great potential. Maintain current status.]

A tear rolled down Amon's cheek.

"Looks like justice really does prevail."

With such a truthful and fair evaluation, Amon muttered.

"This is the Empire."

Though he didn't like the emperor, Amon's chest swelled with patriotism for the Empire itself as he suddenly re-read the letter.

Under his evaluation, something more was written.

[Teacher Amon Drake is awarded a reward and prize from the Imperial Ministry of Education.]

[Reward – 300 gold coins.]

[Prize – A pocket watch engraved with the Imperial symbol.]

300 gold coins as a reward!

No wonder his pocket felt heavy; the pocket watch was also included in the pocket.

'A pocket watch engraved with the Imperial symbol...'

A black pocket watch, with an engraving of the dragon, the Empire's symbol.

'It looks incredibly expensive.'

Though he was dying to sell it, it was an item engraved with the symbol of the Empire.

And selling something given by the royal family would cost him his life.

'I'll have to be satisfied with the watch itself. It's not like I'll use it...but I'll keep it as a souvenir for being recognized as a great teacher.'

With a satisfied face, Amon strapped the pocket watch to his waist but then furrowed his brows.

'...Huh?'

There was something else written on the back page.

'Why is there so much written here?'

As Amon read the writing on the back page, he widened his eyes in surprise.

[The 300 gold coins reward is given to all teachers listed, with the excellent teacher receiving it first, to be distributed equally among the teachers listed.]

[Thus, excellent teachers are awarded with a prize and honor, while those with insufficient evaluations are encouraged to make efforts in the future.]

[Imperial Ministry of Education.]

Understanding the meaning of the words, Amon hurriedly tried to tear up the letter.

‘Evidence! Let’s destroy the evidence!’

He had been awarded 300 gold coins with his impeccable educational philosophy, and there was no way he would share it with anyone else!

However, just as Amon was about to tear up the letter, his cheek began to twitch.

‘But if I tear this...’

If he destroyed the letter, he would have to suffer the mockery of Marion and Sloth, who had insulted him.

‘But... is it worth sacrificing 300 gold to get my revenge...?’

Torn between hoarding the gold and seeking revenge, Amon sighed deeply.

Buuuk-!

After tearing up the letter, Amon smiled slyly.

‘Yeah, insults will be forgotten one day. But 300 gold will stay.’

Gold is an unchanging, eternal symbol of wealth!

Thus, Amon, having decisively let go of his desire for revenge, tossed the torn letter into the trash can.

Clunk-!

With a loud bang, the door burst open, and Marion entered with a beaming smile.

“Amon! Did you see the letter?”

Marion was holding the same letter Amon had just read.

‘...Damn it! It wasn’t just for me!?’

Shocked but quickly hiding the pouch with the gold coins, Amon feigned innocence.

“Eh? What letter?”

“Heh heh heh! Don’t try to hide the pouch! Looks like you’ve already seen the letter.”

Marion stretched out his hand.

“Now, enough talk. Hand it over. 300 gold, right? If we split it, that’s 100 gold each.”

“...”

At that moment, Sloth ran in as well.

“Amon! Hand over my gold!”

“...”

“Hey, I was looking at a new sword recently, and now I’ve got this extra money. It was a little awkward to ask my family for money.”

“...”

Amon’s cheek twitched in frustration.

His colleagues, who had received terrible evaluations from the Imperial Ministry of Education, didn’t care at all and were only focused on the gold!

Judging by their actions, teasing them about their evaluations would have been pointless.

Amon, tears streaming down his face, shared the gold coins with the deadbeats.

“Hey, Amon. We’re short by three coins. Give me more.”

“...You’re just going to drink with it anyway.”

“If I say I’ll buy the drinks with my money, what’s it to you?”

“Hey, why are you secretly taking five coins from me?”

“...Sloth, you have plenty of money at home.”

“Plenty at home, not that I have a lot!”

A moment later Amon sat down with a face like a merchant who had been robbed by bandits.

He had been robbed, after all.

‘To lose 200 gold coins with my eyes wide open...’

Amon, trembling, tucked the now one-third-sized pouch into his chest.

'At least I still have 100 gold left, so it's a relief...'

It was at that moment.

"Senior Amon!"

"Ahh!"

Suddenly, Kai entered, and Amon panicked, clutching the pouch in his chest.

"T-This brat! Knock before you enter!"

"The... the door was open though."

"Still!"

"Ah... I'm sorry. I'll be more careful, senior."

Amon, glancing at the apologizing Kai, spoke.

"Did you come for your gold coins too?"

"Pardon? Ah, no."

"...Tch."

Amon sighed and spoke again.

"Well, there's been some... stuff going on, and the Ministry of Education is giving out gold coins as a reward."

Kai awkwardly smiled at those words.

"Stuff? What do you mean?"

"Just... stuff. Anyway, we're supposed to share it among the teachers, but it looks like it's only for the teachers on the list."

"R-Really?"

Amon clicked his tongue.

"There was a secret teacher evaluation, but you weren't around for that."

“...I see.”

During the exchange event, Kai had not yet been assigned as a teacher. That’s why he wasn’t on the evaluation list.

“Anyway, that’s how it is...”

Amon sighed deeply from the bottom of his heart and took out the pouch.

“Well, it feels a bit off not giving you anything, so...”

“...Huh?”

Amon, his hands trembling, opened the pouch. He pulled out some gold coins and handed them to Kai.

“Y-You can have some too.”

“...”

3 gold.

Kai stared intently at the gold coins placed in his palm.

At this reaction, Amon’s jaw trembled.

“Is... is it not enough?”

“...”

“Do you want more...?”

Amon, trying to be generous, took out another gold coin and placed it in Kai’s hand.

Even then, Kai remained unresponsive!

‘So this guy is also a money-obsessed maniac...’

In the end, Amon, with tears in his eyes, took out one more gold coin and handed it to Kai.

Only then did Kai, now gripping all 5 gold coins, smile broadly.

“I’ll gratefully accept it, senior.”

“...Right...”

“Then I’ll be off now... Ah!”

As Kai turned to leave, he briefly glanced back at Amon and smiled.

“I’m glad to see you’re feeling better. And that pocket watch, it suits you.”

With those words, Kai left the room.

Left alone, Amon stood still for a moment, tightly securing the pouch back into his chest, muttering to himself.

“Who’s acting all high and mighty when they didn’t even give me the pocket watch?”

Grumbling, Amon flopped onto his bed.

‘Anyway, I managed to keep the 95 gold safe. Adding the wages I’ve saved up, I should have about 100 gold in total.’

Thinking about the large sum of 100 gold he now had, Amon smirked.

‘Come to think of it, summer break is coming up soon, right?’

When he visited his fief before, he returned with just over 1 gold, but this time, he was going back with 100 times that amount.

“This is what you call a golden return.”