

EARTHS G MAGUS 101

101 Brawl

"Come on brother Emery! Do not lose against that big buffoon!" Glita once again cheered Emery, making the huge man chase him harder.

Emery landed a few paces away while taking in more of the crisp air to at least get some of his energy back. He wanted to counter or block it with the swords but as he felt the heavy weight behind the wind splitting two-handed attacks from Cavvi, Emery decided to dodge instead at the narrowest margins in order to conserve his strength.

The spectators let out various expressions, some even closed their eyes, while the attacks barely missed Emery.

"Cavvi! Are you trying to kill him!" Morgana shouted.

Emery noticed Cavvi's expression turned even uglier and once more rushed with a great heavy slash. This time Emery's leg failed to abide his will so he raised both swords to at least protect himself. The axe fell down on him and broke one of them as it continued downward and managed to cut his left shoulder and throw him on the ground.

Emery laid on the ground with his left shoulder bleeding. And as he expected, it wasn't a deep cut because he felt that Cavvi purposefully pulled back the axe at the last second.

"I won," said Cavvi, and again he shouted out his victory to the crowds?"I won!!". He turned to Emery and added, "Outsider, your skills in battle are admirable. Last night, I noticed you did not kill anyone. Although some of my brothers fell because of you I do not hold you in contempt. Hence, I deem you worthy of our trust and welcome you in our ranks as an Akavi Warrior."

Cavvi then turned around with his arms high in the air. The crowd roared in delight.

Morgana moved to try and help Emery but before she could do anything, Emery was already back on his feet and said, "Wait... I haven't given up yet."

Gasps of awe resounded from the crowd as Emery held his bleeding left shoulder. He could still move and this meant he hadn't reached his limit yet. Somehow, he felt like grinning, there was a fine line between determination and stupidity. Which of was he, it was up for other people to decide.

He raised his right sword and said, "We cannot disappoint the spectators just yet, come on my bald friend, let us continue."

"Hahaha! You're really a terrific warrior worthy of respect. Alright, take this!" shouted Cavvi as he delivered another huge swing coming from the side.

Emery held the sword with both hands and shouted as he used all his strength to shove away the axe.

A fierce explosive clank filled the surrounding as the sword met the axe, stopping an inch away from both warriors. This proved Emery was at least as strong as Cavvi with his current physical prowess for the battle power.

"Urrgg! Git owf me!" Cavvi screamed muffled but Emery already started punching the akavi warrior.

Then, Emery noticed the black markings on Cavvi's body started glowing. Suddenly, Cavvi was able to grab hold of Emery's fist and threw him across the crowd of people.

Cavvi finally uses the power of his bloodline and both his speed and strength increases. With Emery's current condition, there's no way Emery could match him

"What are you doing Cavvi!" shouted Morgana as she stepped forward but the chief stopped her making any movements.

Cavvi ran at a great speed but when he reached Emery, Emery shouted at the top of his lungs, sending a wave of air with him as the eye, and used his bloodline power and transformed into half-man, half-beast.

[Fey bloodline activated]

As much as Emery hates to break his word for not using his bloodline transformation, he hates to lose even more, and seeing his opponent use his bloodline power, Emery doesn't feel the need to not use his. Emery then slowly started to change his form and this is the first time the villagers see Emery's form, a male fey wolf form.

"Go get him brother Emery!" scream Geita

First, Emery disappeared from Cavvi's sight. Cavvi darted his eyes around, trying to follow Emery's speed.

Even though Emery had used his bloodline power, he still refused to use any spell. So, Emery decided to use his greatest advantage while he was in this form, speed.

Emery ran in circles with Cavvi as his focal point. Dust from the ground was starting to rise and he darted forward to punch Cavvi. Cavvi, however, caught it, rendering his punch ineffective. Still, Emery did the same action.

Every time he threw a punch, Cavvi was able to catch it, luckily, Emery was able to pull back his punches, not allowing to grab hold of him.

"Stop running and fight me!," challenged Cavvi.

Emery stopped his tracks as he stared at Cavvi. He then raised his arms and got ready for a brawl.

Cavvi rushed at Emery and exchanged punches, some were dodged, some were blocked. However, because Emery had a greater reaction time in this form, all of Cavvi's punches didn't come close to Emery.

After dodging about a dozen blow, Emery started fighting back. He landed a hit on Cavvi's stomach, which made the warrior curl in pain, only to be met with Emery's knee already waiting. He then sent a flurry of punches, which Cavvi blocked by turtling his whole body. With each and every punch Emery threw, he could feel the defenses of Cavvi were slowly weakening, so Emery pulled back and gathered all his strength into one last punch.

Emery once again screamed and landed his punch, which slipped through the narrow opening of Cavvi's guard. Cavvi flew a couple of paces away, barely breathing. At this moment though, Emery was also spent, he could no longer feel his body as he fell down.

Even though he had fallen as well, no one else dared to step forward.

After a few moments of no movements coming from both warriors, Cavvi's body rustled as he rose from the ground. He walked up to Emery, and offered a hand to Emery who was awake the whole time. Cavvi smiled and said, "Welcome, brother."

Emery reached out for Cavvi's hand and got pulled up. Once they were both standing, the crowd erupted with roars and cheers.

Back in the large tent where Emery had eaten breakfast with the five sisters, he was being attended by Tyra who was taking care of his wound on the left shoulder.

Glita was sitting by the table, her head on top of it and said, "Brother Emery, you do realize why he was fighting you, right?"

"Yeah, I know I'm still an outsider, so I understand that trust is yet to be gained," answered Emery.

"You don't have to worry about that, the High Priestess's will is absolute, if she says your one of us, then you are," replied Glita. "The real reason for that fight is because of sister Morgana."

"What do you mean?" asked Emery.

"The strongest male gets to mate with the strongest female," interjected Tyra while cleaning his wound. The twins who were sitting beside Glita nodded in agreement. Morgana though was silently watching the crackling fire by the oven as if she hadn't heard anything.

"It's no secret that Cavvi is fond of sister Morgana. The trial was just an excuse to prove himself he's stronger than you, so he could be again worthy for her. Actually, Chief Brennus talked about preparing the wedding, but I've heard that you defeated sister Morgana last night, and since Cavvi had never defeated her, that places you as the strongest, therefore, you have the right to mate with sister Morgana then," explained Glita.

Emery was speechless as he turned his gaze to Morgana staring at the fire. He didn't know what to say or even wanted to continue the conversation. So after having his wound cleaned and eating dinner in deep thought in this tent, he got up and excused himself back to his tent to rest.

Once he noticed that only the noise of the campfire could be heard, he got out of his tent and was once again mesmerized by the varying colored glow of the fauna.

The moon was shining brightly even though its light barely touched the soil of the Forbidden Forest, he could still see his surroundings and proceeded to quietly head east to where that mighty rock formation was.

102 Mark on Stone

As he stared at the moonlit hill, the gentle humming of insects hiding around gave Emery a sense of soothing feeling, an ambiance that calmed his spirit. He became transfixed, gazing at the mighty rocks, but that lasted only for a moment when the black dragon's voice resounded.

The dragon inside him said, "Whoever picked this location, they knew what to look for. Unfortunately, this formation was done poorly and it's broken."

Emery asked, "So, do I have to find another location again? I don't think I have enough time."

"You don't have to do that. This is suitable enough. I'll be able to stay here once you're at the Magus Academy. It'll be better for me to stay here than go with you. My presence will only draw unwanted attention. Still, with this condition it will take a long time before the spatial space for Khaos can be open again," answered Killgragah, disappointed.

"Okay, I understand. Is there anything I can do?" asked Emery.

"Nothing significant at the moment because your realm is too low and moreover, you have no understanding about the path of formations. However, there'll be something that you can do once you're back in the human Magus Academy," said Killgragah.

"What is it then that you need me to do?" asked Emery.

Emery's consciousness was sucked back into the dark illusion room where Killgragah, in the form of the faceless man, had always appeared.

He walked up to Killgragah and the faceless man said, "First, you'll need to learn formations, even at its basic level. Only then you'll be able to do something about this rock formation. The second is this."

Killgragah then stretched his palm and showed it to Emery. At first, Emery thought Killgragah was messing with him again since he couldn't see anything. But when he took a closer look, there was indeed a piece of a pitch-black rock lying on white palm. And as he squinted his eyes, the pitch-black rock, which looked like a small egg, appeared to have something glowing inside it like millions to billions of small dots that sparkled, similar to how stars in the night sky twinkled.

Indeed the first one would be easy to get, if he couldn't get inside the institute of formation, then he could probably get it through the Golden City, since it would be something basic anyway.

As for the second one, he had to be discreet in finding information about it. Maybe there was a library or something similar to the Magus Academy once he returned. Regardless, the bottomline had been stated. He had to do this both if he would like to use the benefits of Khaos once more. He was pretty sure he would have a hard time in keeping up with the other acolytes in the Magus Academy, so Emery needed this power of Khaos.

"If I am unable to find the item is there no other way?" asked Emery.

"There is another way," answered Killgragah.

Emery sighed. This black dragon really liked to withhold information at the last moment. He asked, "What is it?"

"Bring your lovely granny and kill her in this spot, so I can get back the power of Khaos she had stolen from me," said Killgragah with a tone of hatred.

Hearing Granny's name, Emery suddenly remembered what Granny had done and within a second, a blaze of fury rose inside him. Indeed he recalled Killgragah talking about how Granny had also stolen a part of the Khaos' power back in the spatial space. And as he thought about it eliminating her, he wouldn't have any qualms killing her, after what she did to Mistshire and Lanzo's family, and probably to other villages she had sacrificed to get back her youth preceding Mistshire, it would be for the best, he thought, to end Granny once and for all.

"Do you understand everything I have asked you, kid?" asked the faceless man.

Emery nodded.

"Good, I am not expecting you to return with both of the things I have asked, especially the second task after you have finished your time in that human magus academy. So, don't come back unless you have both. I want to enjoy some peace and quiet," said Killgragah.

The dark illusion room faded and Emery slightly shook once he was back in the real world.

"Let us proceed with the thing I need you to do in this place of power, so I can stay here for the meantime. I'll need you to bleed and mark the stone in the center in accordance to my instructions," said Killgragah.

Emery walked up the hill, to the very center where there was another slab of stone, lying on its back. As Emery's dagger hasn't been returned since confiscated by the guard when he entered the village, Emery found a small sharp stone and when he was about to slit his palm, he asked, "This won't hurt the people in the forest, will it?"

"No," Killgragah said sternly.

"How can I believe you?" asked Emery with doubt.

"You... Puny human! The words of a supreme being such as I is not like the loose lips of you lower beings! If you won't do it willingly, I shall force you if I have to!" Killgragah roared inside Emery's head.

"Yes, okay. Please don't get angry o' supreme being. I'll do as you ask," Emery replied. In fact, deep in Emery's mind, he somewhat trusted the dragon. He just wanted to ensure the villagers whom he shared his bloodline with wouldn't be hurt or affected by this at all. Nevertheless, he had given his word to this dragon and as a man raised by an honorable person, he had to keep it.

Emery slit his palm and ran it across the rough surface of the bluish-gray stone. He followed Killgragah's instruction of making sharp looking letters or symbols that appeared to be a bit like claw marks. And once he was done, a moment later, Emery screamed as he felt his scarred chest burning and out came a black wisp, similar to the one he had seen coming out of the elf's corpse in Elder's Respite, and entered the slab of stone. He suddenly became weak and his consciousness started to fade as he fell back on the ground.

Emery was still barely aware of his surroundings but nothing seemed to be happening for everything was silent. Only the buzzing of the insects around reverberated in the air, making Emery wonder if it had

worked or not, but his question was answered when the ground he was lying on weakly shook, the birds from the trees downhill exited their homes and suddenly the stones lit as bright as day and the tremors became stronger.

Emery became blinded by the light, prompting him to close his eyes and finally fell unconscious. When he opened his eyes, he saw that it was still evening but when he got up the markings, which looked like scratch marks, he had drawn on the stone was no longer there.

He lifted himself using the stone slab as a support and tried calling for Killgragah in his head. But the dragon didn't answer him. Once again, he attempted to contact the dragon even by shouting out loud with his actual voice, still there was no response.

He then leaned on the stone slab, waiting for the dragon to answer. After sighing, Emery figured Killgragah had indeed disappeared and was resting in the stones. He got up, deciding not to waste anymore time in waiting, and proceeded to walk back to the village.

As he went down the hill however, Morgana, and Chief Brennus, appeared behind the treeline.

Chief Brennus moved forward with his walking staff and said in a serious tone, "The High Priestess is wanting to see you, now."

103 The Origin

"Almost all of it," Chief Brennus answered.

Morgana quickly added, "The High Priestess had asked us to watch and follow you."

Emery's brows furrowed wondering if he had made a mistake or had done something grave that possibly affected the whole village. If it was, he swore he'd get back at Killgragah because these people were the closest thing he had for a family.

The three walked in silence after that inquiry for the whole trip.

When they reached the guards at the entrance of the cave, Emery noticed the guards were eyeing him, making him feel a bit more uneasy. Still, the guards only bowed and they entered the tunnel without issues before finally arriving at the foot of the tree where the Lady of the Lake, dressed in leaves, was waiting.

Morgana and Chief Brennus knelt, and so did he.

The reason why Emery kneeled this time wasn't because of fear, rather, due to respect for what the High Priestess had done for him, as well as reverence for she was his great aunt from his mother's side.

Nimue walked closer to them and said in a gentle manner, "Thank you for bringing Emery here, Chief Brennus; Morgana. You may leave."

Morgana and Chief Brennus bowed once more and left in silence.

Emery got on his feet, glanced at the woman before him and at the giant bear with greenish spikes and roots on its back sitting in peace beside the tree called Gaia. He waited for her to speak, but she didn't

do anything afterward and kept her eyes closed, which further made his beating heart race faster. He started fidgeting, and so, to break the uneasy silence, Emery spoke.

"May I know why I have been summoned, High Priestess?" he asked.

Only then did she open her eyes. She casted the green light spell that hovered around him and said, "My apologies. I was talking to Gaia and had to confirm that the thing inside of you has indeed disappeared. Finally, we can talk more."

Emery tried to inquire how he had been found out when Artio, the Guardian of Gaia, suddenly rustled from its position and started making its way with its four paws toward him. He took a step back but Nimue asked him to be at ease by saying, "You're safe here, don't worry. We won't hurt you."

He took another step back when Nimue said, "Please, stay still. Gaia has something to show you through Her guardian, Artio."

The bear stopped an inch away from Emery's face and he felt its hot and damp breath. The bear opened its jaws and blew at Emery, prompting him to close his eyes. When he opened it, however, he found that he was in an entirely different place.

The white light then thumped and the nine lights slowly made their way toward it as if they were being pulled. The red light was the first merge with the white light below, making it bigger. Then the blue, the yellow, the green... It grew bigger and bigger and when the ninth light, the black light, merged with the white light, a shiver ran up his spine and his heart began to race as he watched the enormous ten different colored lights mixed together become smaller and disappear.

The void became Emery's companion when a sudden explosion roared with such force that made him think his whole existence had just been erased!

He crossed his arms, hoping to block it. He thought he had just been wiped out, but that wasn't the case. Emery could still feel his arms, his body, his feet and moving according to his will. Carefully, he opened his eyes and saw thousands of smaller lights floating aimlessly in a black canvass of emptiness, scattered all everywhere.

He watched as some of them entered various types of planets, but there was one in particular, a green light that flew right through him, which caught his attention. Emery felt a vague connection to this light and followed it until it stopped.

Emery's full attention became stuck to it as he observed the green wisp enter a blue planet with green patches. As soon as it entered the planet, Emery's vision zoomed in to a small fledgling of a plant, until it grew and grew, becoming a large tree that looked just like the one in the cave.

After that, the illusion ended. He stared blankly at the towering tree in front of him, feeling like he had witnessed a birth of something. Emery tried to speak but no words came out his throat. He tried again but it was only after the humongous bear, Artio, Guardian of Gaia, returned to its spot beside the tree, his voice found its way out his throat.

He asked the first thing that came to his mind on what he had just seen with a shaking voice. "I-I-Is this the story of Gaia?"

Nimue nodded.

"The green wisp, was that Gaia? Was the thing, the black wisp, inside of me also the same? Did it also have the power to affect a planet?" asked Emery.

"I don't have the answer to that, I'm afraid," said Nimue, she turned to the tree behind her and added, "only Gaia has the answer to that."

Emery fell into silence.

"Gaia asked me to show you this, but what it entails is something that even I do not have the answer for. What is clear, however, is that Gaia has allowed whatever was inside—the black wisp to stay there. As for the rest of what has been shown to you, it's something that you'll have to figure out on your own," the High Priestess said all of a sudden.

"I see..." These were the only words Emery could say at the moment as his mind wandered into deep thought again.

"There is one more thing that I need to talk to you about. I understand that your mind is preoccupied with the vision but please place it in the back of your mind at the moment for the thing I'm about to discuss is a personal between us," said Nimue. She beckoned the confused Emery to follow her closer to the tree and showed him a familiar item lying on the stone table in front of them. It was the jet-black knife. The one that he had surrendered to the guards for safety reasons last night before he entered this cave.

"I think we both know the owner of this dagger," she said. The High Priestess handed over the black knife and added, "She is my sister, her name is Maeve."

Then Priestess Nimue recounted an incident that happened more than a hundred years ago when she was chosen to be the high priestess. An argument sparked between her and her sister Maeve which caused the forest barrier door to open so that this forest became one with the outside world.

"You see Emery, my sister and I have our differences, but ever since I received the blessing from Gaia she never dared to harm the forest, but now it appears that my sister has gained strange power from the thing inside of you. And this made me worried," said Nimue.

Emery suddenly realized that he was the cause of the problem. When Granny took some of the Khaos power she turned young and it appeared that was what troubled the priestess.

"I am sorry High Priestess, I'll see to it and I'll be responsible for the mistake I made," said Emery.

The high priestess shook her head and said, "I'm sorry I had to ask you this since it's my responsibility to take care of my sister, but you see, I'm unable to leave the shrine of Gaia. I am just hoping that you will be careful when you next see her"

"I understand, High Priestess," said Emery.

This was one more reason to find and solve this problem as soon as he could. His list of things to do just keep on getting longer and longer. And finding Granny just bumped into the top things he needed to take care of.

"Emery, come visit me every night, I hope to teach you more about Gaia, I am sure it will help you to understand more about the spirit energy and increase your cultivation in the element," said Nimue.

"I am very much grateful for any advice you can give," Emery said with a bow. This was the only thing he could respond to right now. He then left the cave with a mind full of thoughts. From the things Killgragah had asked, the vision Gaia had shown him to the newly acquired knowledge that Granny—Maeve being his relative. As he laid down on his wooden bed, staring at the ceiling made out of hide above him, he couldn't get his mind off these thoughts. There was, however, one thing that he knew for sure. And that was to get stronger as fast as he could and use his time wisely before he gets recalled to the Magus Academy in three weeks.

104 Scouring the Woods

Since Killgragah stayed at the place of power where the stone was, training at the spatial space was not an option until he accomplished what the black dragon had asked. And although Nimue, the High Priestess had mentioned she would teach him about Gaia and cultivating the elements, he felt that wouldn't be enough to achieve everything he had on his to-do list.

Finally, his mind wandered to the Magus Academy, he remembered that on his last day, the acolytes who were on the top rankings, particularly the ones on top, received a great amount of contribution points. As far as he knew, contribution points could be exchanged with a multitude of things at Golden City. So, in order to match those acolytes who were in the top one hundred last time, he needed to rake in as many contribution points as he could and exchange them into something that would empower himself.

Emery's eyes fell on the dimming plant hugging the trunk of a tree that had a house on its branches. Remembering this one was one of the reasons he came here, he went ahead and picked up a basket, strapped it on his back and picked the plant.

He spent the next couple of days exploring the Forbidden Forest with Morgana who still didn't talk much as she followed in silence and gathered a large variety of plants that resonated with his plant element affinity. Emery picked up multiple types of mushrooms, flowers, roots, and even some wild fruits and vegetables he had found lying on random spots of the forest.

The more he explored the forest, the more he found appreciation for its hidden beauty and hidden floras and faunas. Every day he discovered new stuff and found comfort in the abundant presence of the plant and trees. He climbed the highest trees, swam through the river, explored the hills and caves and even trekked through the swamp. He found thousands of different species of plants in the wilds.

[Universal Flora Level 1 - activated - analyzing flora...]

[Analyzation complete]

[Insignificant for the database]

Although most of what he had found with Morgana had no value after analyzing it, he still found himself learning about these different kinds of wonders.

[Analyzation complete]

[Unidentified medicinal herb]

[Unknown properties]

[Register to database for one contribution point?]

A few times during the last two weeks, he went out with the Fey wolves to hunt, to bond and to improve his innate skill named Wild Hunt. During those hunts, Emery found it interesting that there were indeed unique types of animals living in this forest, which was one of the probable reasons how rumors of monsters roaming the forest came into being.

He hadn't seen anything like the vine monster back in Elder's Respite though. Mostly, they were differently colored animals and according to the girls, some of the animals, like the silver furred rabbit seemed to increase their strength. However they were extremely rare and they would usually track one for days or, in worse cases, weeks before they could get a glimpse of it. So, even though Emery wanted to see one of that silver furred rabbit, unfortunately, more time was needed to even find one. Because of this as well, he wondered if there was a spell in the Magus Academy where they could study animals similar to the Fragmentation spell Aeon had sold him.

After two week of scouring the woods, it was time for him to start focusing on increasing his points. For each unidentified herb analysis Emery received one contribution point, and for the rank two he received ten contribution points. So far, he accumulated 170 points from all the plants in Mistshire and also 120 points from the apothecary store in Lionarch City. Adding the plants here, the total contribution points he had now was 530 points.

Of course all he had done was analysis, not fragmentation. Extracting the essences was more lucrative than simply analyzing these plants and herbs.

Emery closed himself inside his 'druid house' for a whole day and started extracting hundreds of plants one by one.

[Fragmentation]

[One essences found]

[Unidentified herb rank 1 data received. You are awarded 10 contribution points]

[Fragmentation]

[Two essences found]

[Unidentified herb rank 2 data received. You are awarded 100 contribution points]

After using fragmentation for the hundredth time, Emery laid down on his bed full of sweat. This was the first time he had felt like this, so he guessed there was a limit in using spells. Nevertheless, this was worth it. He grinned in great satisfaction as he checked his total contribution points.

[Total contribution points: 2115]

Remembering how Klea had received 1,000 contribution points for being part of top 100 acolytes, he now had twice of Klea's, which he would be using for the upcoming year of Magus Academy.

He then got up, categorized, and stored each of the plants neatly. He wanted to start experimenting with them, but there were just too many of them at the moment and he thought it would take weeks to really find new useful recipes. So, he decided to just focus on improving the quality of his most useful recipes, the cleansing potion, and the strength paste.

[Strength paste]

[Once applied to the parts of a human body, it could stimulate the muscles in the part it was applied to, increasing muscle strength twice of its normal capability. Be advised, the increase is temporary and cannot be used repeatedly because it would damage the muscles.]

[Cleansing potion]

[Drinks that can remove harmful bacteria and toxins in the body.]

With enough blue powder material to experiment on and with the help of [the universal flora knowledge], finally Emery able to increase both recipes into their maximum potency.

105 Nature's Blessing

In contrast to his expectations though, the High Priestess's teachings were not about understanding the plant element itself, rather, how to communicate his plant spirit with the Gaia. Night after night, only after two weeks was he able to connect with Gaia, and when that happened, he felt one with nature, he saw the seeds sprouting into life, the life force of the tree, the wonderful nature etc. and this caused his plant spirit within his spirit core of darkness to increase tremendously until he finally received a huge breakthrough with the plant elements.

[Spirit force has increased]

[Congratulations! You have mastered the peak stage foundation of the plant element]

His understanding of the plant element had reached peak stage. Just a few more increases of spirit force and spend more time cultivating the other two elements, he would eventually reach rank six acolyte.

[Emery Ambrose]

[16-year-old]

[Plant Spirit - Peak Stage]

[Water Spirit - High Stage]

[Earth Spirit - High Stage]

[Battle power 27 (19)]

[Spirit force 90 (52)]

[Spirit Core of Darkness - foundation]

[Fey Bloodline - stage 1]

[Acolyte Rank 5]

"I believe that congratulations is in order. I can feel that you have passed a threshold in your understanding of the plant element," said the High Priestess to him with a great smile.

"Yes, I have. Thank you, High Priestess for your guidance." said Emery with a bow.

She shook her head and said, "No, I didn't do much. It's the will of Gaia and your talent has made you reach this point. In fact, I have never seen someone else, including my late-sisters, who can absorb the elements as fast as you. Even Vivian didn't have much talent. I'm pretty sure that in a dozen or so years, you'll be more powerful than me."

"Your words are too kind, High Priestess," answered Emery with an awkward smile. Inside him though, he was undecided if he would be proud or not. In this place, he probably was the most talented, but there was Thrax, Julian and Klea in the south and Chumo in the east, who all had a higher spirit aptitude than him. Also, in the Magus Academy, he was the only one who had spirit aptitude B while the rest had A. Somehow, inside him, he wished he could be more.

Thinking of the academy, he then tried to ask if she knew the existence of the Magus Academy.

[Restriction spell activated. You are not allowed to say any information about the academy who isn't part of it]

As his mind wandered, Nimue, the High Priestess said, "I hope you don't fall and keep your usage of our ancestor's legacy for the purposes of good will, Emery. Your case is truly curious, making me a bit worried."

"What are you worried about?" asked Emery, slightly tilting his head.

"It's about the nature of our ancestor's blood. Remember I mentioned that males aren't able to live past fifteen years of age?"

Emery nodded.

"That's because our ancestor's blood is savage in nature. The males are unable to fully handle the power of our blood, hence, they are weak at birth. And once they turn fifteen, those who have the pureblood of our ancestors start to become mad like wild beasts. So... we had to..."

She didn't finish her sentence; she looked in pain. He somewhat understood what she meant, after all, he had felt an uncontrollable urge whenever he transformed, especially when his life was in danger.

"High Priestess, what about the ones with the black tatoos in their bodies, like Cavvi and Chief Brennus? They are past fifteen years of age. Can you teach me how to control it like they did?"

"That is a different matter, although they were still family by blood, their power came from Gaia, they were not actually born with the gift like you. The last few hundred years only the female born with the gift is able to control it, and eventually with the help of Gaia they will not need to dwell on the bloodline to control the spirit," Nimue explained.

"Right now, Your case is the first one in our history. So, I am unsure how to approach your situation. However, I am sure that Gaia will give you Her blessing once you are ready. At the moment, here is what I can do for you. Watch carefully and learn." Nimue then began to cast a spell and her mouth emitted

like a very gentle song. Emery felt his mind calm as if he was floating in the sky. The injuries he also had in touching some poisonous plants glowed green as a surge of warm but firm power surged inside him.

Then a notification popped in his head and it said:

[New skill acquired]

[Nature's Blessing - rank 3 plant spell]

[Soothes the mind and slowly cures external wounds over time.]

A healing spell would always be useful for him and his friends. Truly, he was grateful with the gift and the guidance. Then, Emery left the cave and retired for the day. He planned to spend more time finding more plants in the forest, if he could, when a new notification suddenly arrived.

[Seven days until recall to the Magus Academy]

After reading this, Emery changed his mind about staying longer in the forest and decided he would go out the next day after he had said goodbye to the others. He still had a few things to arrange and check before he left for the Magus Academy and be gone for at least three months.

106 Market Stall

The next day arrived, first he went to the Lady of the Lake and before he could say more reasonings, she already accepted his decision. But when it came to the villagers, it was expected they were not fond of a person going outside the forest. Particularly by the members of the Akavi Warriors. He couldn't blame them because they were the ones who were dealing with the occasional skirmishes or wanderers getting lost in the forest. Not to mention, the last time a person had left this forest — Maeve — it brought them suffering which continued to this day.

However, when the High Priestess intervened by saying they didn't have authority to keep him here, those who were against him leaving backed down. Next thing happened, the village gave him a send away party by the evening.

After attending the send away party in the evening, Emery exited his tent the next day only to be surprised that the Fey sisters decided they would join his little adventure.

This would turn into a problem for him. Well, he couldn't even explain about the Magus Academy, there was no way they could join him there. No matter how many times he rejected them, however, the sisters didn't budge until he finally decided to say yes under a condition. There could only be one person who could accompany him.

As if this was what the girls were waiting for, the four grinned as they pointed at Morgana. Surprisingly, she agreed.

By this point, Emery was seriously considering sneaking like a thief right now. But of course, he wouldn't do that. Still, he needed a good reason to make Morgana go back home before he gets recalled.

Emery had already grabbed his equipment and some of the finished cleansing potion as well as the muscle paste. He then left the village and went toward the direction of where he had entered the forest with the Quintin Expedition group with Morgana.

What Emery planned to do first was to get information and be up to date as well as the general state of events of Venta, Lioness Kingdom and its surroundings. He had been trapped in the spatial space with Killgragah for half a year as well as spent a few weeks in Evernight Forest, so his knowledge of the news about the kingdom in general was as good as dust. He was hoping to hear as well if there was anything regarding the Crimson Fang Marauders and see if there were any strange rumors about mysterious disappearances. He wasn't particularly thrilled to hear any news about the latter though.

Exiting the Evernight or Forbidden Forest, he followed the path heading toward Venta, the closest town, where Luna Quintin, daughter of a powerful merchant-lord resided. If anyone had information, it would surely be a person who had a lot of money because they would surely have a wide range of networks with different kinds of people.

After about two to three hours of walking, Emery finally reached Venta with Morgana walking beside him. As he had expected, the town bustled with lots of trade carts and the streets were filled with lots of people and merchants trying to sell their goods.

As he walked on the streets of Venta, making his way through the busy crowd, his gaze fell on Morgana who was lagging behind because she was staring at all the little things the merchants were selling. Only then he realized that Morgana hadn't been outside of the forest before. This was probably the reason why the girls were so adamant in joining him.

He walked back to Morgana whose eyes were still glued to the merchant stall that was selling accessories. Emery noticed that she was staring with beaming eyes at a hairband of sorts. He then grinned and said, "Excuse me, can I get one of these?"

"Sure, young lad. This is a perfect gift for your girl there," said the merchant, handing out the hairband with a great smile.

Emery laughed while placing a bronze coin at the stall. He received the hairband and said, "She's a companion."

He then gave it to Morgana who immediately put it on. The dark shiny hair band made her messy red hair fall down beautifully. It must have been his imagination because he thought he saw her cheeks became as red as her hair before turning away. Well, no matter, since she was here anyway, he thought it would be a good souvenir once she returned to the forest.

"Let's go, follow me. There's something else I want you to try," said Emery to Morgana who immediately walked behind him with her blank expression that occasionally beamed whenever they passed at something that she probably hadn't seen before.

Emery led her to another market stall that was exuding the wonderful aroma of freshly baked pig's pie as well as roasted glazed skewers. He walked up the stall and said to the attendant, "Two please. Here you go, Morgana try it while it's hot."

This was the first time Emery would be eating this. The one that he had bought a couple of weeks ago had not been consumed because of the events that transpired the moment he bought one. But the wait was worth it, the hard looking pie was actually so soft that it almost felt apart the moment he took his first bite. He could clearly taste the pig's rich flavor as well as other ingredients which for the life of him couldn't figure out.

He had just finished his first bite but when he turned to ask what Morgana thought of it, hers was already finished and she grabbed another one without paying.

Emery was speechless and the attendant was giving Morgana a stern look. He quickly reached for another coin and handed it to the attendant. He said awkwardly, "Please excuse my companion here. She's a bit wrong in the head."

It was Morgana's turn to look at him with fierce eyes. She said, "Hey, what did you say? I feel like you were making fun of me..."

Emery twitched his brows, she said 'feel like', which implied she didn't understand him. He then asked, "What do you mean? I was paying for the meal."

Morgana gave him a sharper look and said, "It doesn't feel like it. When you were talking to that man, you said it in a language that I don't understand..."

Falling into thought, Emery believed that the symbol on his hand, translated his speech without him knowing it to whomever he had an intent of speaking with. He confirmed this with the attendant too and said the same thing as Morgana. Well, no matter, go ahead and finish the pig's pie.

After having a fulfilling snack, Emery dragged Morgana and proceeded to head straight to the Quintin's Estate. When Emery arrived in front of the gate, Asur was nearby and they both recognized each other.

"Master Merlin, you are back. Lady Luna will surely be happy to see you," said Asur, the dark-skinned scout. "You, announce to Lady Luna that Master Merlin has returned."

The guards in front of the gate actually also recognized Emery as they gave him a respectful bow. They asked him to wait and after a few minutes, the door of the mansion slammed open and Luna Quintin appeared and welcomed him.

"Merlin! I'm so glad you're alive!"

The last time he had seen Luna, she had her curled blonde hair not tied to anything, but this time it was beautifully braided, giving her a whole different impression aside from being a business lady. She approached Emery with a huge smile and warmly welcomed him inside the estate but then her eyes fell on Morgana, who once again looked at things with blank expression. Luna probably recognized Morgana as being one of the forest people but nevertheless, Luna still invited her with him.

Luna led Emery and Morgana to enter a room that had a long table with silver cups, wonderfully embroidered rag, marbled floors, silver candelabra, amongst other things, which made the room look luxurious. Emery couldn't but notice Luna still eyeing Morgana — who had her eyes wide open gawking at things she seemed to have never seen before — from time to time, scanning Morgana's face.

Luna sat on the head set first and when the two followed after her, she opened her mouth and said, "She's the girl who can transform into a big wolf, isn't she?"

107 Friend

Emery remembered Luna had stood quite a distance away from that night and when she and Kastan had walked closer to speak with the chief, Morgana's face was ruffled with her red hair and was covered

with a mantle. He found it surprising that she was able to recognize her, truly Luna was a business woman who had sharp eyes. He said, "She won't harm anyone, please be at ease."

"If you say so, Merlin" responded Luna almost flatly. "Well, let us eat."

Immediately after that, people walked inside the dining room and their table was filled with lots of food, which seemed to thoroughly please Morgana. It looked like before Luna had gone to meet them, she had ordered the kitchen to prepare quick meals to serve for her guests.

Luna mentioned, "Please enjoy the food."

Morgana was served food and indulged herself despite eating two pieces of pig's pie from earlier. This girl... maybe it was because of her Fey blood (being able to transform into a big wolf) that allowed her to have such a big appetite.

Emery watched Morgana stuff herself, and he couldn't help but sigh inwardly because most of what Morgana had on her plate were meat dishes, almost exclusively not touching the vegetables. Luna also watched with great curiosity but turned her attention to Emery, occasionally glancing at Morgana, and asked, "I am glad to see you're safe, Merlin. Wait, your arm! How come it has returned?"

"Thank you for the concern, Miss Luna. Were you able to get some of the guards safely and with no issues?" said Emery.

Luna caught on his unwillingness to talk about his arm and said, "Yes... it is unfortunate though that some of them didn't make it. But those who are still alive, including me and my brother, are eternally grateful. We are indebted to you."

She then clapped and a female entered the room, pushing a cart with bags. Luna said, "Please accept these bags of coins as tokens of my appreciation."

The bags shone with gold coins inside. Luna's assistant mentioned there were a total of one hundred gold coins, which equated to ten thousand silver coins. Truly the Quintin Family was rich to be able to reward this kind of money. This was more than enough to acquire a huge plot of land, a house in the city and or even start an enterprise. However, these weren't important for him at the moment. He still had a lot of money from the tournament and Luna's initial down payment, moreover he was slightly concerned that if he accepted this, the requests he was about to make would be harder to achieve.

"Thank you, Lady Luna, but I have no need of them," respectfully said Emery.

Luna appeared a bit taken aback but she regained composure within the next second and replied, "Master Merlin, the Quintins do not break their promises. Please take it else, I will feel offended."

Luna appeared confused. She asked, "What do you have in mind?"

Looking at her, he smiled and said, "I want us to be friends. What do you think?"

Luna suddenly burst out laughing. "Sorry, sorry. I didn't mean to... we have gone through life and death already, and because of you we're still alive. I already considered you as my friend at that time."

"Oh..." Emery said, scratching his head. "Then, instead of Master Merlin, can you call me Merlin only?"

"Okay, in return call me by name only too," said Luna. Morgana's noisy eating entered their ears, making Luna look at her briefly. She turned her attention back to Emery and said, "That being said, however, the question pertaining to handing out the reward still remains. That still applies even if I consider you as my friend. Do you have other things you want? Keep in mind that since you're my friend, your trouble is my trouble, so if you need help, I'll assist you as far as I can with my power."

It was Emery's turn to feel grateful at this time. So far, this woman had only shown goodwill to him and he could actually determine she was being truthful. Emery answered, "Okay, then I do in fact need help in finding people. I'm looking for a person named Padraig, the leader of a marauder group called Crimson Fang, and another person named Maeve. If there's any news about people looking like they have been... sucked dried... she might be involved."

Luna leaned back on her and thought for a moment. "Crimson Fang... marauder group... I believe I have heard of that group before. They might be the ones ransacking some of the Lioness's Kingdom as well as Belgaie Kingdom, but I need to confirm that with Kastan once he returns after doing my bidding in a few days. As for the second person and the symptoms you mentioned... I'll ask my contacts. I might take some time though."

"It's fine, Luna. If it is all possible, I'd like to ask if you can keep tracking them. I'll be leaving for a couple of months. Hopefully, I'll have news when I return," answered Emery.

Luna frowned. "Leaving so soon? Why don't you stay at least for a few more days here? I'm sure you don't have lodging yet, do you? Of course, you and Morgana are welcome as our guest."

Emery considered it for a moment. Luna would surely have a great web of connection with other people, after all, she was the daughter of a merchant-lord. If he also stayed here, he could learn more about her as well as get at least up to date with the situation of Lioness as well as other kingdoms. He didn't have much to do anyway; asking for information was his primary reason for leaving the forest. And he shouldn't go back to the forest before he gets recalled to the academy.

In the end, Emery nodded and said, "Yes, we would be honored to be your guest."

"Excellent!" said Luna as she finally started eating the dishes served before them.

They were almost done with their meal when the door slammed open and Silas barged in while shouting, "Sister!"

108 History

Emery, Morgana and Luna stopped what they were doing as all eyes were on Silas. Luna said, "Silas, what's the matter?"

"It's father! He's—"

Luna's chair moaned as she stood up. She turned to Emery and said, "I am sorry that I must excuse myself, Merlin. Please, make yourself at home."

She turned away and with hurried steps, Luna followed Silas whose eyes were slightly reddish. Once they were away, Emery tried to know what was happening through the servant waiting on them but

refused to answer since they weren't allowed to divulge information. After finishing their meal, they were then escorted to a smaller house right next to the Quintin's mansion.

The servant mentioned to Emery and Morgana that they had this little house all to themselves. It was a guest's house. Emery no longer knew if he should be surprised or not at the wealth of the Quintin Family. He recalled that in his late-father's estate, they only had one guest room, but for the Quintins to even have a house dedicated for guests, in which that could rival a noble's house, it really made him wonder how deep their coffers went.

They were given a tour by the servant Luna had tasked to assist them. This little house had a living room with dark wood flooring, multiple candelabras, intricately designed table in the middle, which also had a wonderfully embroidered rug beneath it. They were then shown the two bedrooms, which both had a large bed and a bedside table.

Emery placed his stuff in the bedroom but then Morgana also did the same in his room. He said, "You can use the other room."

Morgana shook her head. "I don't trust these people. The High Priestess tasked me to protect you, so it's better if we're resting in the same room. Don't worry, I'll sleep in the corner and I won't bother you."

Emery knew how stubborn Morgana could be. So, in the end, he just let out a sigh but told her she should be sleeping on the bed and he would sleep on the floor. As a man who had aspired to be a knight, his conscience didn't allow him to sleep in comfort while Morgana on the floor.

After they had finished placing down their stuff, the servant of the little house announced that Lady Luna had arrived. Emery and Morgana then made their way to the living room and sat on the well-designed chairs. Luna didn't appear to have her usual ambiance as she also sat.

On that afternoon, Luna told Emery about her father's worsening condition. She also began explaining the history between the Venta and the Forbidden Forest.

That was the situation until a hundred years ago, a new generation of adventurers tried to enter the forest and their tales became different from their predecessors. They came back to Venta with tales of many mysterious beasts, which couldn't be found anywhere else outside. In particular, one of the adventurers talked about an injured animal he had caught that looked like a rabbit but was very shiny, like silver. When he consumed it, he found out that his illness that had been bothering him for years became cured and he became stronger.

News of the silver furred rabbit spread and other people started entering the forest in search of the silver furred rabbit. But that was also the time they began to find a very mysterious tribe inhabiting the place.

"Ever since then, more tall tales about the forest came into being and some of them became inconsistent. I remember reading that there was a short time period where the indigenous people, who the people called the Chrutin, were in a peaceful relationship with Venta. However, when their savageness and rumors of how they could become beasts were, our friendship with them failed," said Luna, turning her gaze to Morgana, she added, "Well, we have a living proof here of the shapeshifting beast."

Luna then continued telling about an important event that had happened twenty years ago where the Lioness Kingdom, along with other kingdoms, attempted to eradicate the forest of its people as well as its monsters. They had sent a great army but when the dust had settled, the rest who had survived returned in failure. Since then, the kingdoms in Briton named the forest people's land as the Forbidden Forest.

"Despite the forest being forbidden now, there are still people from Venta who have managed to capture the silver furred rabbits, although this is only known by other merchant families, and sold only through the black market. In fact, last year we managed to procure one portion of it and my father's condition did get better. However, it was only a temporary solution and his disease came back. Hence, the expedition by my brother."

While Emery translated this story bit by bit to Morgana, Morgana could connect it with the history of the Felanolion residents.

The story that happened was quite accurate with the history of Maeve opening the forest barrier and attacks from outside residents that made the Akavi warriors formed. But regarding the details of why the war took place, maybe only the royal rulers knew about it. Emery also thinks that the high priestess should know something about it as well. Emery thought he would ask about this matter the next time he met with her.

Emery realized that Luna had been eyeing Morgana for a while now. He asked, "What is it Luna?"

"Merlin, can you ask her if there is any way we can get a silver furred rabbit?"

109 Medicine

"The silver furred rabbit is a sacred beast of our tribe. It belongs to us; it is not supposed to be in the hands of outsiders," said Emery to Luna, translating Morgana's words. Of course, he didn't mention the latter.

Luna fell silent for a moment then looked at Emery said, "What about you, Merlin? Can you help? You are a wizard, aren't you? You manage to get your hand back!"

Emery shook his head and said, "It wasn't me who cured my hand. And it's something I can't tell you. However, can you show me your father? Let me see what I can do."

Luna's eyes beamed as she led Emery back to her mansion into her father's room with Morgana following closely behind. Emery never thought of himself as a physician or a healer, he knew some knowledge of medicine through his exploration of alchemy and his observation whenever granny heals a patient. But knowing about potions and actually healing a sick person are two different things. He would need the skill to know what kind of sickness the person had before giving any treatment, and Emery has very little knowledge about that. Nevertheless, Emery thought he really should see if there's anything he can do to help.

As the three of them entered the room, the rough coughing man was the first thing that came into their senses and Luna hurried her steps, picked up a pot, and gave it to her father with the assistance of Silas, who had been sitting on the bedside.

After giving the contents of the pot, the father fell back on the bed, slightly trembling coupled with mumbling. Emery drew closer and when he looked at him, Luna's father seemed older than the age she had mentioned to him. His face was full of wrinkles, dried lips, gray hair, body as thin as bones, and sweated profusely. The servant, also waiting in the room, picked up a rag, and wiped off the old man's sweat on the chest and face.

Silas got up to Emery and suddenly bowed almost at a right angle. He said, keeping his bowing position steady, "Master Merlin! Please forgive my previous audacity. I beg of you, help my father!"

Emery felt a pang of pain in his heart as his gaze switched from Silas to Luna and finally their father. He knew completely well how it felt watching someone you love suffering but you could do nothing. He then patted Silas's shoulder without saying anything and walked up to their father.

He checked the pulse; it was weak but it was there. He then turned to Luna, giving a gesture to the servant to leave. She complied and once the servant had left. The first thing he needed to do is to calm the patient as well as everyone.

Luna was about to say something but got stopped as Emery spoke first, "The spell I just used only has a calming effect."

Emery's eyes fell on the pot container sitting on the bedside. He went to it, gave it a sniff before asking, "Is this the medication the physician has given?"

Luna nodded. "This was given by a well known Lioness physician."

Emery then used his fragmentation spell.

[Fragmentation]

[4 essences found]

[Pain reliever] [High fever elixir] [Body strengthener]

So far, they were all essences that could enhance a person with a weak body. That was good. However, when the fourth essence appeared, it shook him.

[Weakening toxin]

[A poison that although harmless in a small dosage, continuous consumption of it would slowly damage the consumer]

Emery frowned finding out there was something harmful inside the medicine pot. However, this was somewhat a good discovery. Now that he knew the cause, he asked Morgana to bring his bag from the guest's room, and when she returned, he quickly confirmed the information:

[Cleansing Potion]

[Removes harmful bacteria and toxins in the body]

This was exactly what he needed. Emery lifted the cleansing potion and said, "Give this to your father. This should help—"

The father once again burst out coughing. It looked like the Nature's Blessing spell only calmed people momentarily but since the spell description said wounds, the toxins, and whatever bacteria was, weren't gone.

After the father stopped coughing, Luna gave the cleansing potion to her father and at once, her father became calm again, stopped coughing, and was breathing in a rhythmic manner as if he was sleeping like a log.

Luna exclaimed, "Merlin! Look, it's working!"

Emery didn't say anything for his mind was filled with the contents of the so-called 'medication'. "Please observe him for a few more days. It's too early to tell."

"Still, this is the first time in years we have seen him sleeping soundly. Thank you," said Luna. Her brother also bowed.

Emery then picked up the medicine pot and said, "Sorry Silas, but can you give me Luna a moment?"

Silas looked at her sister before nodding and leaving the room.

Now there were only Luna's father, Morgana, Luna, and him. He said, "Luna, can you tell me where are you receiving this medicine from?"

"The physician goes here every month and brews it," answered Luna. Her brows then frowned, looking like she had picked up something. "Why?"

Emery carefully said, "Don't give your father this medication anymore. I'll give you a new one and I'll write down the instructions. This medication has flaws in it. Whether it was on purpose or not, I do not know."

"What are you trying to say," said Luna, trying to keep herself calm.

"The reason why your father is becoming more ill, is this," Emery said while pointing to the pot of medicine, "again, I don't know if this was done on purpose or not, but I think you should check."

Luna was silent.

"As long as your father does not take this brew or anyone from your household. This shouldn't happen again. If you happen to have the list of ingredients the physician makes, I may try to find which specific ingredient is causing it. So, I can advise you to stay away from it," said Emery.

Luna simply nodded.

After that, Luna got up and once again gave appreciation to Emery. Morgana and Emery then went back to the guest house that had been prepared for them and rested for the day.

The Next day, Emery spent his time buying herbs he hadn't seen before from the markets and various shops in Venta. During one of his shut-in sessions, he managed to find the herb which had the toxin. It was a plant called Nightshade. Now that Emery knows the plant, with his analyze skill he is now fully convinced that his cleansing potion should be enough to cure the toxin on Luna's father's body. But still,

Emery made a new brew, similar to the one her father had been taking. All he had done to that was remove the nightshade plant. Now, this new brew can be used whenever his sickness occurs again.

Emery fell into contemplation as he stared at the nightshade plant. It was half-a-fortune that the cause of sickness was due to toxin, hence he had managed to help Luna's father. If it had been something else, he wasn't sure he would have been able to help. In light of this, he decided to learn something related to medicine once he returned to the academy in order to expand his current skill sets.

He continued shutting himself in, learning more about potion making, using his fragmentation, and analyze spells from all the herbs he had bought in the market. When he finished with all the herb he gathered, Emery again feel satisfied with the contribution point he has received"

[Contribution point : 2510]

There were only three days left before he got recalled. However, he was still nowhere convincing Morgana from leaving and going back to the forest. It looked like she had become fond of staying in the city and following him around, although she kept on insisting she was only doing this because of an order from the High Priestess.

This morning, however, a servant of the Quintin's arrived at the guest's house and mentioned that knights from the Lioness Kingdom had arrived and Lady Luna was asking for Emery's presence to attend as well.

He got out of the guest house and arrived in the grand hall of the Quintin Mansion. In front of Luna, Kastan, and Emery, were people wearing silver-plated armor with a red cape that was held in place by a crest of a lion.

110 Lioness Knigh

Emery arrived in the grand hall of the Quintins' Mansion and stood on the opposite side of Kastan, Luna in the middle, while the knights wearing several red robes held by a standing golden lion crest stood in front.

There were five of them and once Emery got himself settled; Luna gave him a nod, waved her arm to Emery and said, "Honorable knights of the Lioness Kingdom. Let me introduce my friend, Merlin, the wizard."

Emery gave a bow but once he had raised his head, he received a slight shock after seeing who they were meeting.

Luna smiled and said in her elegant voice, "Merlin, let me introduce to you Sir Bagdemagus. He is—"

Emery blurted out unconsciously. "Knight of the Anvil, one of the three Guardians of the Lioness Kingdom...," realizing he had spoken out of turn, he quickly added, "My apologies, Luna."

Luna didn't mind and simply said, "No need for apologies. The tales of Sir Bagdemagus are tall and wide, which speaks of his magnificent achievements and wonderful personality."

"Ahh, you flatter me, Lady Luna," said Bagdemagus, humbly. "Merlin, the Wizard, I am pleased to make you my acquaintance. Can't say I wasn't surprised to know that the wizard is young."

The old knight stared at Morgana and asked "And this is?"

"My companion, Morgana," said Emery.

"Ahh I see, pleasure to meet you then," greeted the old knight with a smile but Morgana didn't say anything.

Emery waited for a moment but looked like none of the knights recognized him or cared much about the identity of the girl beside him.

The Knight of the Anvil, the old knight's title came from the awe-inspiring tenacity this man had when holding the battleline. Tales of him inspiring his hundred men to hold against five hundred enemy soldiers and coming out of top spoke of his effective leadership in commanding people, also making him a hero in the Lioness Kingdom, and even despite his bones being old, his might in the battlefield was still to be feared.

In fact, the name Sir Bagdemagus, held a certain significance in Emery's memory. This man was also one of the reasons why Emery wanted to be a knight. His late father used to tell him stories of how he became an esquire for this knight along with Yvain, the Knight of the Lion. And whenever his late father talked about this man, Emery remembered how beaming his father's face was all the time.

"...news about the Crimson Fang," said Luna.

"Crimson Fang?" Emery repeated unconsciously.

"Yes, this band of marauders has to be annihilated. They have raided several settlements already and even dare to attack noble's estate..." Sir Bagdemagus vehemently said but his voice weakened at the last part of his sentence.

"The kingdom's forces are spread too thin at the moment but when I heard Kastan searching information for these marauders, we talked to him and it felt like the goddess of fortune had finally blessed us."

"What can a simple merchant do compared to the force of the kingdom?" asked Luna, playing innocent.

"Lady Luna, I am sure you have heard about the recent draft. Lord Fantumar has levied thousands of peasants and is preparing them on the far west along with hundreds of knights. Because of this, a great disparity in the patrols had occurred and many garrisons were left half-empty in many of the kingdom's settlements, causing crime to be at an all time high, even higher than the yearly tributes. The desperate peasants then joined the Crimson Fang under the leadership of Padraig. According to my scouts, the damned criminals dared make a ruined fort as their base!"

"Do you have an estimate of how many there are? And where's the location?" quickly asked Emery.

"At least... a hundred men, about half of them, I think, were peasants turned into marauders due to desperation...?The ruined fort is a day's journey from here," answered Sir Bagdemagus. He then looked at Luna and said, "Will you help the kingdom in its time of need, Lady Luna?"

Luna seemed to think for a moment before turning to Emery and saying, "What are your thoughts, Merlin?"

He had put off this goal for too long now. If he didn't take this opportunity, Emery wasn't sure when the next opportunity would rise, and whatever evidence from the perpetrator of his family's demise would probably be cold by the time of his return. He smiled underneath his scarf and said, "I'll join Sir Bagdemagus' party."

Luna nodded. "I understand." She looked at the old knight and added, "Sir Bagdemagus, this means that the Quintin Family will also join in your upcoming operation in eliminating the scourge of us merchants. We are also suffering from them attacking merchant carts on the road, wanting to pass through here. Unfortunately I can only lend a few of our guards at the moment, however, I'll put in a request for mercenaries to be hired as well as Kastan. He is reliable and can lead the mercenaries."

"Haha! Great! Truly, I appreciate whatever men you can lend me, Lady Luna," shouted the old knight in joy. He then placed his hand on his crest and bowed, the rest of the knights with him followed suit.

After some discussion, Sir Bagdemagus decided they would be executing the attack on the Crimson Fang marauders in two days. For Emery, that would mean he would have one day left before the recall spell initiated. Emery thought he'd been blessed for such a coincidence; finally he would be getting closer to the perpetrator of his family's demise.

When the meeting finished and the old knight left, Luna walked close to Emery and said, "Merlin, I hope I was able to help you with your request. I have an inkling of why you are wanting to know about these marauders, but since you don't want to talk about it, I understand..."

"Thank you, Luna," Emery said. He then noticed Luna's a bit distressed. "Are you okay? What's the matter?"

"I..." Luna at first looked reluctant to share but then she leaned closer to him and said, "It's about the toxin. After interrogating some people involved with the medicine pot, they dropped the name of a powerful noble from the Lioness Kingdom, but testimony is usually not enough. I need evidence."

"What? Tell me, who is it?" Emery had thought of a name.

"Lord Fantumar but don't tell anyone I've told you this! I've heard that his influence in the Lioness Kingdom is second to none aside that of King Richard. And because of that, terrible rumors are starting to come abound. But then again, there is no evidence. Anyway, enough of that," she pulled back herself and added, "Merlin, I'm hoping for your safety in the upcoming battle. Please be careful. Kastan, you as well."

"I will Luna," said Emery. "Yes, Lady Luna," answered Kastan.