

Eight Uncles 1261

[Chapter 1261 Wise Old Man](#)

For the next few days, Lilly's spirit continued to travel southward and visited all the villages along the way.

She found that every home had its unique generational tradition.

Some families baked special pies for Christmas using homegrown berries and fruits. Some created lavish meals using produce from their farm.

For some other families, Christmas was a solemn affair. They would visit churches or pray at home, sometimes offering remembrances to their loved ones who were no longer with them.

Life seemed to slow down around Christmas when people returned to their roots. Traditions that seemed to have vanished would return to civilization.

The closer to Christmas, the more she felt "something" that she had never felt before.

There was bad aura in the underworld. While there was no spirit aura in the human realm, the generational heritage of the civilization could be considered a type of aura.

The underworld had its roots in the supernatural, and the King of Hell was part of it. As Lilly observed those traditions, she could feel an ancient power flowing through her.

"I didn't expect this power to return to me..."

Lilly hovered in mid-air and cupped her hands around a firework. The light shone through her transparent hands and illuminated her face.

Suddenly, she saw a ray of golden light in the distance. She narrowed her gaze.

"That's it."

She immediately flew in that direction.

The light came from a small monastery in the mountains.

The monastery comprised two small buildings made of bricks and shale. It was not as pretty or modern as the buildings in the villages.

The yard was kept clean, and behind it was a forest. Being in the mountains, the temperature around the area was colder than that of the villages.

Through the window, Lilly saw a monk in a thick robe sitting in front of a desk copying a scripture. There was a tranquil strength to his strokes.

Lilly felt true peace in her heart.

"Welcome, my young friend. Would you like to take a seat?"

The monk put his quill down and gazed gently at Lilly. He looked to be at least seventy years old.

Lilly was surprised. "You can see me?"

The old monk smiled. "If it's fated to be."

Lilly thought the answer was very cryptic, though she hovered over and sat down cross-legged next to the table.

The monk poured a cup of tea for her. Lilly asked, "Hey, Gramps, I saw a golden light from afar earlier. Was it a result of your cultivation?"

The old monk smiled again. "I wasn't cultivating."

Now that he was giving a straight answer, he was no different from a normal old man.

Lilly was confused. She was sure she saw the golden light earlier.

"Did the golden light happen naturally then?" Lilly asked.

The monk gazed at her profoundly but did not answer.

Lilly stared at the steaming cup of tea and thought for a long time before answering, "Was that the power of faith?"

She knew that faith could manifest itself. When Jessie's sister was made into a spirit drum, she had read about it.

The monk nodded. "That is also correct."

"Huh? What do you mean?" Lilly pouted.

The monk gazed at her with a smile. "Is it important to know the answer?"

Lilly was taken aback for a second. She said, "Of course, it's important! I used to take in a rookie ghost lord. She was made into a drum by a group of monks to tap into powers they can't reach..."

She told the monk about what happened to Jessie and her sister.

"If you guys can go to that extent in the search of the power of faith, it must be very important, right?"

The monk shook his head. "Are they real monks?"

Lilly was at a loss for a reply.

The monk poured away her tea which had turned cold and poured her a fresh cup.

"There are real monks, and there are fake monks. There are also monks who sacrifice their hearts in search of power and become demons. A person can be both real and fake. A fake person can reach enlightenment through a moment of epiphany."

"..."

Lilly understood some of it, but not everything. Without fully understanding the monk's statement, she dared not agree with it.

"Really? I don't agree with seeking divine forgiveness after killing. What happens to the victim then? Is it fair to them? You guys always tell sinners to repent. What gives you the right to forgive killers on their victims' behalf?" Lilly stubbornly clung to that point.

What she didn't know was that the conversation decided the result of the fight with her biggest enemy...

[Chapter 1262 Advancing to the Emperor Realm](#)

The old monk gazed at Lilly lovingly. He had never expected to discuss faith with a spirit, much less one who was only a little girl.

"The commandments say 'Thou shalt not murder,' but murder isn't literally about killing people. It also includes abusive actions and words. To achieve enlightenment is to rid oneself of such thoughts."

Lilly suddenly understood something.

As she had known before, The source of mortal agony comes from being unable to let go and being unwilling to see the truth. Only by letting go and opening one's mind could one achieve peace.

"I see! So that's what you mean, Gramps!" Lilly said.

The old monk smiled. "Many people claim to be searching for their faith, but they are only going around in circles, misled by their own obstinacy. They might practice the commandments, but they cannot tolerate a differing opinion. Some followers of the faith do it for the money, which itself is an act of greed. Even if someone might do good deeds without asking for anything in return, their blind obstinacy could become an obstacle. The road to enlightenment might just only be one thought away."

Lilly clutched her head and said nothing.

She thought that the old monk's words were very profound. Maybe the author didn't even know what they were writing about.

Lilly wagged her head. "I see, Gramps. I understand now. Thank you!"

The old monk chuckled. "Are you sure you understood everything?"

"Hmm... How can you tell if I haven't?"

They exchanged a knowing glance and smiled. They sat there for the rest of the night without exchanging a word. When Lilly's tea became cold, the old monk patiently replaced it with a fresh cup.

It was the coldest right before dawn. The leaves of the forest behind the monastery rustled. It was snowing.

Lilly was surprised. "Does it snow this far south?"

"Sometimes it does, but... it's particularly cold this year," the old monk said.

Lilly nodded and stood up. "Thank you for your tea, Gramps. I have to go now. We might not meet again, but it was nice knowing you!"

The old monk smiled and shook his head. "Who can say? We might meet again very soon."

"Huh?"

She did not understand, but it was time for her to go. It would be Christmas the next day, and she missed her grandmother.

The old monk saw her off at the door and watched her leave.

Lilly flew very far away. When she turned her head around, she could still see the golden light and the old monk standing beneath the eaves.

His face was blurry, but his silhouette became clearer than ever. It was like he was a guardian of his faith.

Lilly felt that the conversation with the old monk had untangled something in her mind. With her thoughts cleared, her level of cultivation rose tremendously.

The golden substance in her purple elixir field spun quickly, gathering the "spirit aura" found in the

Human Realm. It was unlike the spirit energy found in the underworld, but the two energies complemented each other.

The two energies swam like fishes in her elixir field, pushing her from a half step away from the Emperor Realm to the completion of the Early Emperor Realm.

She was half a step away from the Middle Emperor Realm.

Her aura drastically changed. It was more like Blake's aura.

I'm in the Emperor Realm now!

She did not expect to advance to the Emperor Realm in the Human Realm, especially when considering there was no spirit energy here. Earlier, Alban had to travel to the underworld to advance.

"Looks like anything can be an opportunity in cultivation!" Lilly clenched her fists and felt energy flowing in her veins. It was as though her palms held infinite power.

She wanted to find something to punch, but nothing was available.

Lilly turned her head around again. She was already very far away, but the golden light was still visible.

"I'm glad to have met Gramps today, but I don't think there is anyone else like him in this world," Lilly mumbled to herself.

With gratitude in her heart, she headed back to the Crawford residence.

...

The Crawford family residence was bustling. Other than Cloud, the other seven sons were back home.

Three generations of Crawfords were gathered under one roof, from Hugh and Bettany, to Anthony and the others, and finally Drake and Matthan.

Jean was floating on the second floor, watching the party downstairs. "They're all here!"

Unfortunately, she could not show herself without Lilly. If she did, her mother would say "You're back! Where's Lilly?" and "Did something happen to her?"

That would cause Bettany so much worry...

Lisa noticed Jean. She looked around and asked, "Where's Lilly?"

Jean put a finger to her lips, indicating to her to shut up.

Lisa's eyes focused on the finger in front of her, and she became cross-eyed.

"What are you doing?" Bettany asked.

"I... I was trying to see if I could cross my eyes..." Lisa stammered.

"Huh," Bettany said and walked away. She was tired of the other people asking her "Mom, where's Lilly?" "Mom, is Lilly home?" "Mom, when will Lilly be back?"

I want to know when Lilly will be back too...

It was Christmas Eve, and the sky was getting dark. Where could Lilly be?

[Chapter 1263 Was It a Coincidence?](#)

Lilly hurriedly returned to the Crawford residence.

Her body was already in the Human Realm, but for some reason, it was sealed in a certain place...

If she wanted to advance, she could not leave her body in the underworld while her spirit was in the Human Realm. A few days ago, she recalled her spirit and used the teleportation formation to go to the Crawford family residence.

It was the middle of the night when she arrived, and everyone was asleep, so she left the house. Later, she had a hunch she needed to astral project to complete the advancement, so she found somewhere to meditate.

In a neighborhood somewhere in Clodston, an old hovel stood defiantly in the blizzard. The snow had covered the roof tiles, and the brownish walls could barely be seen.

Next to the hovel was a tall old tree without any leaves. The branches were covered in a layer of snow.

A lamp was lit inside the hovel, as though the occupant was waiting for someone.

Lilly's spirit peeked into the window, and she was surprised to see Ivan sitting inside. Her body was on the bed, covered from head to toe by a thick quilt.

Ivan was reading a textbook. He absorbed knowledge like a sponge absorbed water.

"Ivan!" Lilly called out.

Ivan turned his head around and let out an imperceptible breath of relief. "You're back?"

He stood up from his chair. His extraordinary height made the room seem small.

"How do you know I'm here?" Lilly asked.

Ivan paused for a moment and smiled. "It was a coincidence."

He happened to notice something special about the hovel. When he went over, he noticed Lilly's body there, but her spirit was nowhere to be found.

Worried that something might happen to her, he occupied the room and guarded her. He also got someone to bring him his textbooks.

"Are you sure?" Lilly obviously didn't believe it.

Ivan wanted to poke her nose, but considering that they're grown up now, he thought he shouldn't touch a girl.

"Why are you here then? Aren't you afraid someone else might come here?" Ivan asked.

Lilly told him about her return. "I was in a hurry, and I knew that no one would come to this run-down hovel."

"How would you know?" Ivan was curious.

Lilly's smile diminished by a little. "When I got here, the old couple who lived here had just left."

The old couple passed away not too long ago, and their daughter had just returned to her husband's hometown for Christmas.

"I asked them for their permission, and they let me stay here for a few days."

Ivan nodded. "I see."

"Where have you been, Ivan? I haven't seen you for a long time." Suddenly, Lilly seemed surprised. "What Realm are you in now?"

Ivan did not hide it from her, though he was not too sure. "There seems to be new rules in the underworld. According to the definitions, I should be in the Hades Realm... But I'm not a king, so I can't tell if I fit the definition."

Lilly nodded. "You definitely are."

He seems to have completed the Hades Realm, but there's something else I can't tell...

Ivan didn't seem to know as well.

"We should go home!" Lilly looked at the sky outside worriedly. "My granny must be waiting for me."

Ivan also seemed surprised when he looked out of the window. "My mom should be waiting for me too."

Lilly took his hand and ran outside. "We should go!"

Ivan let her take his hand. Somehow, he had a strange feeling welling up within him.

He was not sure what it meant, but he was willing to let it grow inside him.

It seemed like he was not just an elder brother to Lilly...

"Lilly," he called out.

Lilly turned around. "Hm?"

Ivan was at a loss for a reply. He didn't know why he suddenly called her. Feeling a little awkward, he frantically looked around him to find an excuse.

He pointed behind him. "We forgot to switch off the lights."

"Oh! You're right. We shouldn't waste natural resources."

Lilly turned off the light in the room, and Ivan switched off the power mains. They left the hovel.

Outside the hovel was a narrow alley. The main road was beyond that, and there were two cars parked at the side of the road.

The first was from the Shaw family. Judging from the amount of snow on the roof, it must have been there for some time.

The other was the Maybach Lilly was familiar with. It had less snow on it.

"Lilly." The window rolled down, and Anthony's face was seen.

[Chapter 1264 Lilly Is Back](#)

"Uncle Anthony!" Lilly was pleasantly surprised. "Why are you here, Uncle Anthony?"

Anthony shot a glance at Ivan. "He contacted me."

Ivan knew he couldn't handle the situation alone, so he contacted Anthony as soon as he found her.

Anthony didn't know why Lilly didn't want to "sleep" in the Crawford family residence, but he didn't ask any questions.

He didn't want Bettany to worry, so he told her that he was going to his office every day. Instead, he went to the hovel to see if Lilly was awake. Even though Ivan said he would call him if she woke up, he wanted to see her for himself.

"Thank you, Ivan!" Lilly said. "I'll come and visit you soon!"

Ivan nodded. "Mm!"

Anthony was speechless. Can't you at least hesitate a little?

"Bye bye then!" Lilly stuck her head out of the window and waved at Ivan.

"Bye!" Ivan said.

Anthony nodded at him as a gesture of thanks, and he drove the car away.

The snowfall was getting heavier. Ivan stood there and watched the car leave. His shoulders were already dusted white with snow.

"Young Master, you should get in the car," the driver said.

"Mm," Ivan replied, and they left.

...

Lilly was anxious to go home. Soon, the car arrived at the family residence.

No one was surprised when they saw Anthony's car.

"Oh, it's Anthony."

"He's home already? Good for him."

"I'm going upstairs to do something."

Josh, Zachary, and Lisa were staring at Jean.

"Why are you looking at me like that? It's just Anthony," Jean said.

"Yeah, Dad is back," Josh said.

But Lilly still isn't home.

Zachary asked, "Aunt Jean, where did Lilly go?"

Lisa nodded vigorously. She also wanted to know the answer.

"I don't know either," Jean answered. "I'm still waiting for her, just like you all. Make sure you don't give me away. Mom will be more worried if you do."

She looked downstairs and saw Bettany sitting next to the window looking out into the blizzard. She was mumbling to herself, "The snow is so heavy outside. Will Jean and Lilly be able to return? Sigh... the sky is getting dark..."

Jean felt tears well up in her eyes. She wanted to tell her, "I'm right here, Mom!"

But she should be showing up with Lilly. If only either of them returned, Christmas would not be the same.

The car door closed, and the front door of the house opened. Anthony's coat was especially bulky today. In the dim twilight, it was hard to see what was strange.

He stepped into the house calmly. His briefcase was under his arm instead of holding it in his hand. There was a hint of mischief in his eyes.

Bettany shot a glance at Anthony, then turned her head back to look out of the window.

In the living room, Anthony opened his coat, and Lilly's head stuck out from inside.

"Tada! Surprise!"

Bettany's eyes opened wide. She stood up with delight. "Lilly!"

Lilly ran toward her. "I'm home, Granny!"

Bettany hugged her tightly and said, "Oh, you, why do you always come home so late? Are you hungry? We're all hungry because we're waiting for you!"

Lilly smiled. "You shouldn't have waited for me. It's already so late..."

Bettany shook her head. "Wait, where's your mom?"

Jean had already come downstairs and hid behind Anthony. When she heard that, she stuck her head out and said with a pout, "I'm right here! Not fair, Mom! You hugged Lilly before you hugged me!"

Bettany went over and hugged Jean too. "You're already a mother. You should at least act like one!"

Jean smiled, though she felt like crying. Her mother's hair was silvery-white, and there were more wrinkles on her face than she remembered. However, Bettany's hands were just as warm.

Now, it was time to properly celebrate Christmas.

Matthan was already crawling toward Lilly as soon as she showed herself. "Lillillilli!"

Josh and Hannah ran down the stairs with Zachary following behind. Drake was already in the living room, so he sauntered over and arrived next to Lilly first.

"Lilly! You're finally home!" Josh hugged Lilly tightly, feeling very relieved.

Hannah, the stronger of the two, picked Josh up and put him aside. It was her turn to hug Lilly. "I miss you so much!"

Josh stamped his foot angrily. Hannah was much taller than him, and she was stronger because of the Energy Elixir.

It was Matthan who clinched the final victory.

Drake brought Matthan over and said, "Lilly, Matthan wants huggies from you."

"Lilli... Li... Lilly!" Matthan cooed.

Lilly took him in her hands. Matthan flashed a victorious smile at his elder brothers and sisters.

[Chapter 1265 A Feast](#)

Edward and the others put away the work on their hands when they heard that Lilly was home.

"Lilly! I bought some new clothes for you! Come upstairs and try!" Edward said.

"Lilly! I saw a very fun toy on the way home. Do you wanna see..." Gilbert said.

"Lilly! I bought you a new phone, a new tablet, and a new computer! I've also installed my latest AI assistant in it. It'll be fun!" Max said.

"I don't know what to buy for you, but if you need it, I can buy you a private jet," Bryson said.

"I built a new house for you," Liam said.

Anthony didn't know what to give Lilly. Eventually, he decided that he would transfer a company to her name and give her all the profits.

Lisa handed Lilly a beautiful purple gem. "This is for you! I found it in the mountains."

Jonas grinned mischievously, "It's too easy to give you money or presents. I'm not like them. I'm giving you an aunt!"

"..." Everyone was speechless when they heard that.

Lilly clapped her hands in delight. "Wow, an aunt? Where?"

"We've registered our marriage, but I was waiting for you to come home before deciding on a date for our wedding reception. She's still in her family home now."

Now that Quinnie had achieved what she wanted in her career, it was time for her to focus on other personal achievements.

Lilly suddenly remembered about Grace and wondered how she was currently.

Madame Maya had been waiting for her for a long time.

Everyone crowded around Lilly and fawned over her. They totally forgot about dinner.

Bettany smiled and said, "That's enough. Why are you all surrounding Lilly? It's time to eat!"

She went into the kitchen to make preparations.

Zachary finally found the opportunity to talk to Lilly. He pulled her aside and reported on his "work."

"Ms. Berrycloth has already been discharged from the hospital, and she's doing fine now. The narrow-minded ghost is still stuck in the Taylor family residence. When I went to visit him yesterday, his deathly energy was growing."

He was growing mad with jealousy when he saw the Taylor family reunite over Christmas.

"He can stay there," Lilly said.

Josh said, "Joe has been sentenced to 12 years in prison. He doesn't seem to mind it though. He was still smiling on the day of the trial."

Lilly frowned.

They knew that Joe was another narrow-minded ghost. She wasn't expecting him to repent in 12 years. In fact, he might commit crimes as soon as he was released.

"We'll visit him after Christmas," Lilly said.

There was no reason for it. She just wanted to see him.

Josh nodded and agreed to it.

Meanwhile, the King of Styx helped Margaret and Bettany bring the dishes from the kitchen to the dining hall. "Dinner is ready!"

Lilly was very surprised. What the? Why is he here?

The King of Styx couldn't wait to eat. He sat down in front of the enormous spread and drooled.

Hugh patted Lilly's shoulder. "Let's eat."

Lilly hugged his arm and greeted him warmly. "Grandpa!"

On the other hand, no one entertained Blake and Jean. Jean smiled at Blake and said, "What can we do if our daughter is too popular?"

Blake smiled gently. This mortal life would last only several decades, a mere blink of an eye compared to his millennia of existence.

The King of Styx patted the chair next to him. At the same time, he and Lilly said, "Sit together with me, Grandpa!"

Lilly grimaced. "Hey, Uncle Styx! No fair!"

"Your grandpa is my grandpa. Same with your granny!" the King of Styx said triumphantly.

Edward was surprised. "Who's this guy?"

The King of Styx had been holed up in the kitchen with Margaret. Edward, on the other hand, had been busy with work and searching for Lilly. The two had never met before.

"He's my friend," Lilly said.

Bettany, Anthony, and the other brothers made sure that Lilly and Jean's plates were always full.

"That's enough! I can't finish it all!" Lilly said.

Bettany wanted to put some food on Lilly's plate too, but seeing that her plate was already full, she placed the food on the King of Styx's plate instead.

"You should eat some more, Tyx!"

The King of Styx was drowning in pure bliss. He had not enjoyed the warmth and hospitality of the Human Realm for a long time.

While the King of Styx devoured the food, Bettany made sure that his plate was never empty.

The King of Styx's stomach was bloated. As tears of joy flowed down his cheeks, he said, "Ah... that's the life!"

The Crawfords are so nice to me. I wish I could live here forever!

[Chapter 1266 Stuffed to the Brim](#)

Josh and Hannah had never thought someone could be a bigger eater than Lilly and Jean. They watched on in shock as the King of Styx devoured plate after plate.

Lilly watched him eat with a smile on her face. "Are you full yet? I hope you won't regret it later."

"Why would I?" the King of Styx said. "There's nothing more enjoyable than having a full stomach!"

Bettany brought a full cake to the table. "Anyone want dessert?"

The King of Styx's eyes sparkled. "Wow! Dessert!"

There's no dessert in the underworld!

The other people around the table were already full. They each took a small piece of cake so the matriarch of the family wouldn't be disappointed. The King of Styx, on the other hand, ate slice after slice. He didn't want to stop!

Bettany was delighted. Her family barely ate dessert, which limited her chances to flaunt her cooking skills.

With the King of Styx around, she could cook so much more!

"Are you done with the cake? Do you want some milk tea?" Bettany asked.

"Sure!" the King of Styx replied.

A while later, she asked again, "Are you feeling bloated? Do you want some yogurt?"

"Of course!"

"How about some ice cream to wash it down?"

"Ice cream! Yay!"

Later at night, Bettany asked again, "You've eaten a lot. Have some fruit to help with your digestion!"

"... Okay..."

Before Bettany went to bed, she said, "I made some caramel pudding for supper. This is yours!"

"..."

After everyone went to bed, the King of Styx was still pacing around the yard. He was too full to lie down.

As Lilly said, he was beginning to regret it...

He realized that Bettany was a culinary artist desperate for an outlet. If he hadn't been there, she might even feed the food to the dogs!

While having that thought, the King of Styx shot a glance at the wolfhound in the kennel. It seemed to be smirking at him.

In the Palace of Emperor Prosper in the underworld, Polly stood on Pablo's shoulder and complained loudly, "I'm not her favorite bird anymore! Why didn't she bring me home with her?"

Pablo was unperturbed. "She nearly forgot about her mother too."

"Waah! This isn't fair! Wait, she forgot about you too! She forgot about her master! I don't feel so bad anymore!"

Pablo tried very hard to keep cool. "I'm here to bring you there."

The people from the Crawford family treasured their time with Lilly together. He could watch them from upstairs and not disturb them.

"Hey, check it out! Tortoise is forgotten too! I wonder who's the sad little animal?" Polly said.

Pablo resisted the urge to throw the noisy bird at the wall.

Tortoise was still in the Palace. He nibbled on the reeds and ate little fish. When he was tired, he floated lazily along the clear stream.

It was a relaxing life.

Suddenly, he heard a familiar voice. "Oh hey there! Rookie Tortoise!"

"..."

Polly landed on Tortoise's back and bent over to look him in the eye. "Hey! Do you miss me? Don't you have anything more important to do? Let me tell you, I'm already instated as an avian soul collector, and I've been traveling independently on official business! How about you, Rookie?"

"..."

"Oh, there's the other Rookie too! I wonder how Bellflower is. She's probably still the same cat, but I'm more than just a bird now!"

"..."

Pablo picked Tortoise up and thought for a bit.

He's probably too focused on cultivating. Right, I should bring Mrs. Crawford some local produce.

Pablo went to the backyard. The free-range chickens raised hell, and the cod in the river splashed about...

"I should pick some mushrooms too."

"The soul retrieval herb is in season now. It should be delicious when sautéed."

"Oh? There's a big patch of terminal flowers. I should pluck some and make some mead."

After collecting the presents, Pablo went around the Palace to make sure that everything was in order.

He left the Palace with Polly chattering along the way, intending to reach the Crawford residence before Christmas.

...

Lilly leaned against the window and stared at the blizzard outside.

The room was warm. Josh and Hannah were talking about their experiences at school.

Lisa joined in the children's conversation. The uncles stayed away from the children's room, though they brought snacks from time to time.

Instead, they spent their time with Jean. They had so much to talk about.

Matthan was rolling on the bed. Occasionally, he would laugh and coo as though he understood what the older children were talking about.

Lilly glanced at the World Mirror occasionally.

Where is Master? When will he come back?

[Chapter 1267 Almost a Happy Reunion](#)

Outside, the blizzard was in full force. The snowflakes almost obscured Pablo's white robe.

He would be almost invisible while hovering in the snow, if not that he had a green bird on his shoulder.

Lilly's eyes widened in delight. "Master!"

Pablo came closer to the window. Other than Polly on his shoulder, there was also a kitten on his head, a black cat on the other shoulder, and a tortoise in his hand.

"Wow! Master, you're..."

Pablo said, annoyed, "We're here. Everyone get off!"

Polly flapped into the room while squawking, "This is the final stop! Everyone get off! F*ck! I'm freezing!"

Pablo said nothing, though he resisted the urge to make roast bird for the thousandth time.

A shadow flitted past the air.

Bellflower attack!

Before Polly could land on the radiator, she jumped in fright again. "Bellflower, you Rookie! Do you miss me that much?"

"..."

Esper found a soft cushion next to the window. He sat on it and closed his eyes.

No, I'm not here for the anchovies...

I've heard that the King of Hell has officially returned. Now that the year is almost over, I've got to report to my boss.

Lilly wanted to brush the snow off Pablo's robe, but she found that he was clean.

"It must have been a long journey, Master," Lilly said.

She could have brought Polly and Tortoise home, but Pablo had left her a message, saying that he would bring them home instead.

"It was okay," Pablo said while patting Lilly's head. "Are we waiting for anyone else?"

Lilly tried to think.

Grandpa and Granny are here. All the uncles, Aunt Lisa, Mommy, and the spirits in the jar of souls are here too...

All my elder brothers and sisters...

Bellflower, General, Bailey, Polly, Mr. Tortoise, and even Esper and King of Styx are here.

There's also Master and Daddy...

"I think everyone's here!" Lilly said.

Blake was passing by Lilly's room when he saw a kitten sitting in the corridor.

"Huh? This kitten looks familiar."

He walked past it.

Hey! What the? Did the two-legged beast forget about me? Meow!

Where are my anchovies? Don't you know you should bring children presents at Christmas?

"Meow! Meow!" Little Heartless pounced on Blake's foot and snarled at him.

Are you ditching me once I've outlived my usefulness? You scumbag!

Blake smiled. He raised his hand, and Little Heartless suddenly found itself in his hand.

What? I haven't seen him in a while, and his powers have already outgrown mine!

"Meow?"

Blake raised his eyebrows. "Are you here to visit too? Did you bring any presents?"

"..."

I'm just a kitten! Why do I need to bring anything? Where's your common sense? Huh?

Blake walked into the room and placed the kitten on Lilly's lap.

"Oh?" Lilly was surprised.

We have three cats at home now!

"Is it you, Little Heartless? You're so cute! Do you want an anchovy?"

Lilly remembered the little kitten. She had spent a can of anchovies on it.

Little Heartless' eyes sparkled. Even though it tried to look as though it said "I'm fine, thank you," it could not help but gulp greedily.

Lilly took a can of anchovies and fed it one.

Esper saw all that.

I'm not going to act cute just for an anchovy!

Bellflower was already hiding in her corner. She narrowed her eyes before slowly lying down and grooming her fur.

Pablo handed a bag of holding to Lilly. "Here's some local produce."

Lilly was surprised. She forgot to bring anything from the underworld. Even though she could teleport back there and get something, it was not as thoughtful as her master's gesture.

"Thank you, Master!"

Blake came back to the room with some snacks and took the bag of holding downstairs.

...

Ivan was frustrated. When he met Lilly yesterday, he totally forgot to give her the ring.

How could I have forgotten about it?

Never mind. When she visits me in two days, I can give it to her with the other things I've gathered over the past few years.

He frowned again when he remembered the mysterious figure who had tried to kill him.

Who could that be?

As long as he didn't know the identity of that person, he could not be at ease.

[Chapter 1268 Cloud Is Home](#)

"Merry Christmas!"

In the dining hall of the Crawford family residence, everyone raised their arms and clinked glasses. Even Matthan raised his feeding bottle and shouted, "Agagaga!"

Balke nearly choked on his champagne. He took his phone and snapped a few quick shots of Matthan holding his bottle happily and sucking on it.

Matthan seemed to have noticed something and turned his head away.

Blake smiled cryptically and said, "Why don't we take a family photo?"

There were two tables in the dining hall. The first one had all the Crawford family members sitting around it. The second was occupied by the spirits from the jar of souls. There was another "table" of animals outside.

The phone camera could not fit everyone.

Matthan stared at Blake, eager to hear what he had to say about it.

In the next moment, a drone hovered in front of them. Blake pointed at the drone and said, "Everyone, look at the camera!"

Click!

The drone transferred the photos to Blake's phone. There were eight photos in total. One of them included everyone in the dining hall.

Jessie and Tinkerbell were squeezed next to Lilly. The Harem spirit and the weakling spirits were floating in the air. Pablo was floating behind Lilly.

There was also the passionate spirit, the rich spirit, the crying spirit, and others. The photo was full of "people."

Blake saved that photo somewhere secure. He picked one of the better ones and sent it to the family chat group.

There was a brief moment of silence as everyone checked their phones.

Bettany was also looking at the photo on her phone. Everyone was there, except for Jean, who couldn't appear in the photo, and Cloud, who did not return home.

Jean leaned close to her and said, "Mom, I can't leave any trace of my existence in this realm now. You..."

Bettany interrupted her. "It's okay. I'm happy as long as I can see you."

She knew she could not ask for too much.

"Let's eat!" The dining hall was noisy once more.

"Too bad Cloud can't come home," Edward said. "Everyone else is here!"

Gilbert replied, "He told me he was involved in an emergency mission."

Bettany sighed. "It's pretty chaotic where he is now. I hope he can stay safe..."

Edward laughed heartily. "Don't worry, Mom! Don't forget that he's wearing Lilly's good luck bracelet and other protective charms! A cat has nine lives, but Cloud has more!"

Hugh said, "That's right. It's Christmas. You shouldn't overthink."

"Don't worry," Anthony said. "I've gotten a message from him. He says he'll be back after Christmas."

"Let's eat!" Bryson said.

Lilly did not say anything. Her gaze was fixed on the front door.

Suddenly, she said, "Uncle Cloud... will be back soon."

Everyone was surprised. They knew Lilly was not lying.

Bettany could not hide her excitement. She said, "Margaret, go and get him a plate!"

Margaret stood up. "Yes! I'll get it now!"

She was also very excited to see a full reunion of the family.

Everyone put their cutlery down and waited for Cloud's arrival.

Edward even started a bet. "I bet Cloud will be back in five minutes!"

Jonas said, "Five minutes? That's too fast! It means that he's already at the front gate. I say it'll take him

ten minutes."

There was no sign of anyone at the front gate yet.

Max chuckled and said, "Are you doubting Lilly's abilities? I say seven minutes!"

Bryson smiled and shook his head. "Six minutes."

Lisa suddenly said, "Three minutes."

"Three minutes? Mom, if Uncle Cloud will show up in three minutes, it means he's already at the front door!" Josh said. "If he really shows up in three minutes, I'll twist..."

Suddenly, Lilly stood up and ran outside. "I'll go and bring Uncle Cloud in!"

Josh paused for two seconds before continuing, "I'll do the twist..."

...

The blizzard on Christmas Eve night was heavier than two days before. The wind howled like a banshee.

Cloud trudged steadily along the road, carrying a small bag in his hand. That was all his belongings.

"I hope I can be in time for dinner..." he said to himself. "Sigh, I really miss Mom's cooking."

He walked alone in the snowy twilight. Soon, the warm light of Crawford Mansion came into view.

He could already hear the tinkling of cutlery and smell the delicious food.

"Too bad I have to return in a rush. I didn't manage to get anything for Lilly..." Cloud had to travel a long distance to return home. He didn't even have time to change his clothes.

Finally, he was at the front door. Through the window, he could see and hear the bustle within.

Cloud smiled in relief. He put his bag down and started to tidy his appearance.

His uniform was in a mess. He didn't want his parents to see him in this state.

He tidied himself as much as he could from head to toe...

[Chapter 1269 Sorry, Lilly](#)

Lilly opened the front door. The cold outside was a harsh contrast to the warmth within the house.

The blizzard grew heavier. It was hard to even walk now.

Tears welled up in Lilly's eyes. "Uncle Cloud..." she called out softly.

"Uncle Cloud, why are you hiding here? Are you planning to give all of us a surprise? Everyone.... Everyone's waiting for you."

As Lilly spoke, tears began to fall. They fell to the ground and made little holes in the snow.

Cloud was dressed in his military uniform, but it was covered in mud and blood.

He was trying his best to clean his wounded face, and he put his charred cap into the bag.

He wanted to look his best in front of his family...

Lilly remembered the young man who had eaten buffalo wings. Her uncle looked so mature in the military uniform, but he would not grow older anymore.

"Uncle Cloud!" Lilly was sobbing. As much as she tried, she could not stop her voice from shaking.

She hugged the frail man, but she dared not cry out loud. Instead, she kept on asking questions.

"Why are you so late, Uncle Cloud?"

"Was it cold on the way back, Uncle Cloud?"

"Are you hungry, Uncle Cloud?"

Cloud lowered his head dejectedly, at a loss for what to do. A long time later, he hugged Lilly with trembling hands.

"I'm sorry, Lilly. I didn't manage to bring you presents."

Lilly shook her head but said nothing. She allowed her tears to fall freely onto the snowy ground.

She was used to seeing separation, but this separation was her own.

Cloud sighed and tried to comfort Lilly. "Well, you know, I'm a soldier..."

A soldier's duty was to protect the country.

"After completing the undercover mission, I can return to the system. I'll have to rejoin the main team before coming home though," Cloud smiled dejectedly.

He didn't need to hide his identity anymore. He could meet his family and friends, and they could ask him for help whenever needed.

His next post would be in Clodston, not far away from home. His merits in battle ensured him a hopeful future.

"The country I was in was not very stable. For the past half a year, I was tasked to maintain the peace. A few days ago, I was making my last patrol before packing my bags and coming home for Christmas. I've already bought the flight ticket. I was thinking if I could catch Bryson's flight, but he flew home earlier than I did."

Cloud was smiling, but Lilly felt horrible.

"Why didn't you hide, Uncle Cloud? You could've dodged..." Lilly asked the question she already knew the answer to.

Cloud hugged her and patted her back. "This is my duty. No one expected the terrorists to attack. The embassy had to evacuate our countrymen. They want to go home for Christmas too."

"Where's the good luck bracelet I gave you?" Lilly asked.

"The charms you gave were very useful!" Cloud said excitedly. "If not for them, I wouldn't have been able to evacuate everyone successfully! You know, I was a hero back then! I charged into the terrorists' base like Rambo. You can't imagine how frightened they were. They fired a bullet at my head. That should've killed me, but I sprang back to life! They fired again, and... I stood up again! Bang! Bang! Bang! They thought they had won, but I stood up for a third time!"

Cloud was so proud of himself for what he had done. Lilly could not hold her tears back. He could have remained safe, but he chose to charge at the forefront.

He could have come home and reunited with his family. Hundreds of his countrymen returned, but he didn't.

That was his duty.

"Uncle Cloud, weren't you afraid?" Lilly hugged him tightly.

"Phew! Well, I was afraid, but I'm more afraid that your Granny might be sad," he said. "I was afraid of traveling home alone too. I didn't want to miss the occasion..."

He couldn't wait for his body to be transported back to Clodston. Christmas would have been over by then.

To arrive home by Christmas Eve, he crossed the ocean and many mountain ranges that separated

them, hoping that he was traveling in the right direction.

Finally, he was home.

Lilly could not hold back her sorrow anymore. She began to bawl.

Cloud frantically comforted her while pulling her away. "Keep it down! I want to spend Christmas with your Granny. Don't let them know... I know you're the best. You can help me, right?"

[Chapter 1270 Mom, I'm Home](#)

Lilly felt her heart ache.

She held back her tears and sobbed, "Mm. Let me help you clean up."

Cloud breathed a sigh of relief and smiled. "Well, this is my first time returning in uniform! You need to make sure I look my best, alright?"

Lilly nodded. "Mm."

She smoothed and cleaned the tattered clothes. Her hands went over a hole in his shirt, and it became as good as new.

Her fingers rubbed Cloud's face, erasing the wounds and scabs.

His fingers were charred. Lilly held his hands, restoring them to their original form.

Holding back her tears and forcing a smile, Lilly carefully groomed Cloud to look the best he could be.

"You look so handsome in that uniform, Uncle Cloud!" Lilly said.

Cloud looked at himself, then touched his face. He said proudly, "I'm the pride of the country! I'd better be handsome, right?"

Lilly broke out into a smile, though she could not control her tears.

She had been true to her feelings, laughing when she was happy and crying when she was sad. This was the first time she had to smile when she was sad.

Pablo was standing behind them, watching silently.

Lilly broke down when she saw him. "Master, I can't do this. This is too hard for me... I can't... I can't control my tears... Boo hoo... Please help me, Master..."

Lilly crouched on the ground and curled up in agony.

Cloud felt a twinge in his nose. "Lilly..."

Pablo felt very sorry for Lilly. He hugged her gently and shielded her from the falling snowflakes.

"Good girl," Pablo said while patting her back and covering her with golden light. "It'll be okay. A separation now ensures a better reunion."

Lilly's shoulders were shaking. Her cries could be heard from under Pablo's arm.

Pablo patiently covered her with golden light. "It's okay... It's okay..."

Bettany came out of the house. "Lilly? Are you there, Lilly?"

Lilly stood up. She still had streaks of tears on her cheeks, and her eyes were puffy. "What should I do?" she asked.

Cloud was also worried. "We should hide!"

Pablo flicked the loose sleeves of his robe. They swept past Lilly's face, and it returned to normal.

"You're okay now," Pablo said. "You two should go in. You don't want Granny to worry, do you?"

Lilly felt slightly better. Her master's comforting words calmed her down.

Cloud was not sure. "She won't be able to tell, right?"

He checked his boots and bag nervously, just to make sure he looked perfect.

"You look great, Uncle Cloud. You'll be fine!" Lilly said.

She took Cloud's hand, and they gave each other encouragement. They went up to the front door and flashed their biggest smile.

Bettany was at the front door earlier, but it was too cold, so she went back inside.

She opened the door once more and saw Lilly and Cloud. They were holding hands, and Cloud's back was slightly bent as though he wanted to do something sneaky.

Bettany remembered how Lilly and Jean were hiding in Anthony's coat. She laughed and said, "Oh, you naughty kids! I was wondering what took you so long! And you two, didn't you see them when you were standing at the door?"

Josh and Hannah were standing next to the front door. They went out to look for Lilly because she didn't

come back, but they saw her standing at the door.

"You're already grown up! Why are you still acting like a child?" Bettany said to Cloud. "When did you reach here? I wonder what you're doing outside. It's so cold, come in quickly!"

Bettany reached out and wanted to take Cloud's bag.

Josh ran over and took the bag from Cloud's hand. "Let me do it, Granny!"

Hannah said, "Come in, Uncle Cloud! Everyone's guessing how many minutes it takes for you to get home."

Cloud grinned. "Really? Who got it right then?"

He walked into the house and brushed off the snow on his shoulders.

He took off the jacket. That was a last-minute addition by Lilly.

Cloud's back was bent earlier because Lilly was putting on the jacket for him. She thought it would be suspicious if Cloud was only wearing his uniform in such cold weather.

Bettany opened the door right when the coat was put on, which gave Cloud and Lilly a big fright.

Edward was the first to speak. "Oh, Cloud is back! Oh man, I was wrong!"

Jonas looked at the time and grinned. "I'm right! It's seven minutes!"

Bryson groaned. "Aww, I was only a minute away."

Hugh inspected Cloud from head to toe. "You look great in those clothes! Come over here and eat!"

It was the first time everyone saw Cloud in his uniform. No one suspected anything.

Hannah opened her mouth wide. "You're so handsome, Uncle Cloud!"

Jean stood rooted on the ground, unable to believe what she saw. Her face was pale, not that it was a surprising thing for a spirit like her.

Anthony happened to see Jean's reaction. He had a bad feeling about things.

"What's wrong?" Anthony leaned close to Jean and asked.

Jean's heart wrenched and ached so much that she could not say a word.

Bettany, who was oblivious to what was going on, came over with a hot towel. "Why don't you sit down, Cloud? Why are you still standing there? I thought you said you'd only be home after Christmas. You should've told Anthony so he could pick you up at the airport!"