

SPELLCRAFT 401

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Chapter 401: A Strange Sight

I looked at the Elf Queen with sincerity and honesty locked in my eyes.

What churned in my heart was a question I needed answers to so desperately.

"What happened to your sister, Emilia?"

Aurora looked slightly stunned for a moment, staring at me with a bit of puzzlement.

"A-ah, I read about her in Lewis Griffith's Memoirs, so I was curious. It seems he had some regrets about her. I also... want to know how she ended. Perhaps as a form of closure..."

I wasn't sure if Aurora bought that, but, I certainly hoped she did.

While I had said a bunch of bullshit as excuses, it was true that I wanted to know what became of Emilia.

Even though I never saw her ever since that day, I did hear of her. Still, it wasn't anything definite.

The one thing I learned, though, was that the visit of my comrades that very day... was all because of her.

The information on Arcanas that they supposedly deciphered was all done by her.

She was the one who orchestrated the whole plan of having my friends lift me from my slump.

I owed everything to her. So, if only I could see her one more time and—

"Emilia is dead. She died about a hundred years ago."

"... Uh...?"

Something within me broke.

"H-how...?"

"What do you mean, how? We Elves aren't immortal, you know? Our time comes eventually. Even I... will probably not live for another century."

I smiled, quickly switching gears before my sadness could be deciphered.

"Surely you jest, my Queen. You are still in optimal condition."

"Huhu. Is that so? We shall see, then."

Elves knew their time more than others. Aurora was most likely right.

"H-how was her final moments? What was it like?"

I knew it was severely rude and intrusive to ask something like that about the Elf Queen's dead sister, but, I couldn't help myself at this point.

"Huu... come with me." Aurora stood from where she sat.

I followed her lead instantly, and we walked out of the room.

Once again, we began walking through the corridors.

"I'll tell you what you want to know once we get to our destination."

"I-I see. Where exactly are we going?"

Surely it couldn't be Emilia's dead body, right?

Royal Elves were buried with the Sacred Tree after death—and their bodies would dissipate afterward.

Was there an exception for my wife?

"I told you I have a favor I need to ask of you. No, it's more like a task. We're heading there."

"Oh. I see..." I muttered, realizing it probably had nothing to do with my concerns about Emilia.

We stepped out into the courtyard and I felt the sun hit my face and body.

"We're heading over there." Aurora pointed in the direction of a huge building at the corner of the massive Palace Grounds.

It looked like a residential building, but something about it seemed off.

"Are we going to visit someone?" I asked.

"Yeah. Something like that." Even though I had been asking so many questions that would seem rude, Aurora didn't have a tinge of annoyance as she answered.

We walked slowly and steadily until we got to the entrance of the building.

Elf Guards were stationed around the luxurious building—something akin to a mini Palace—and I could sense layers of Magic enchantments flowing within and around the structure.

Whatever was inside this place must have been highly valuable!

"We're going in," Aurora told the Guards, and they nodded instantly.

Parting from the door and bowing respectfully, they allowed us entry.

Even though I only stole a few glances at them, I could tell that all the guards stationed here... were strong!

'They're on the same level as the Professors of Ainzlark.'

Not only that, but their pieces of equipment and Spirit Weapons were of top quality as well.

That proved these weren't mere guards. Even Royal forces weren't usually this powerful.

'They must belong to a special unit. As I thought, there's something special about this place...'

We entered the door and found ourselves in a corridor.

It was dimly illuminated, but the room was more expansive than I thought—probably thanks to Magic.

"I would like you to observe first, as I tell you what you want to know. Then, I'll explain the nature of my request to you."

It sounded fair enough, but Aurora's tone contained some emotion.

I slightly felt uneasy as we walked down the corridor. There were a few doors to our left and right, but we kept moving onward.

Aurora murmured something like "She should be in the workshop at this time...", so I surmised that was where we were heading to.

I could see an expanse covered in a glass-like structure at the end of the hallway.

Within it seemed like a vast workshop of some kind.

Machinery that would be alien to the Elf Kingdom were openly displayed here, and I could also notice some activity within the glass-protected room.

"All sound is blocked from going on and coming out, so you won't hear anything going on inside, but... this much should be enough for you to see..."

Her murmur contained slight hesitation, but I could sense her resolve.

Aurora and I finally arrived directly in front of the glass construct that stretched for a long distance—like castle walls that barricaded the interior of a compound.

The color was transparent, so the covering didn't prevent us from seeing what went on beyond it.

'This stuff is enchanted with several layers of Magic, though...' My thoughts trailed in observation.

And so, I looked in shock and awe—wondering how devices of such caliber would be allowed in Elven territory.

Magic Tech was something Elves avoided, yet this room was abundant with it.

But, just as I was still basking in my puzzlement, I noticed a lone figure amid the pieces of technology around.

This single being was the only living person in the room—though I could see some Automatons moving about.

'Who is that?'

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Chapter 402: Unbelievable Truth

As this figure moved to a particular area, working seriously on a project, a flying Automaton followed behind--hovering at shoulder-length.

The Automaton was no bigger than the head of a child, but I could see the intricacy it possessed.

Still, perhaps it was because the figure was too immersed in their work--I couldn't get a good look at them.

The only thing I could see was the long lab coat they wore, and the long, peculiar hair they had.

'Black and white...? Interesting color.'

Was it a Royal? Perhaps a cross-breed? No. Even if Royals took in non-Royals as their spouses, their offspring would still have white hair.

Elf mothers could control such factors while the children were still in their wombs.

Then, why was this one an exception?

Fortunately, just as I began asking internal questions, the person finally turned--as though looking for something--and that was when I saw her face.

My brain nearly shit down, and only a single person came to mind.

"E-Emilia--?!"

My voice was uncharacteristically loud, but that only expressed the number of emotions bursting from within.

"E--Emilia? Is that really you? Emi--I thought she was... didn't you say she was--?!" I reached out, trying to reach the girl as she frantically searched for something.

"Calm yourself, Jared. I wouldn't touch that glass wall if I were you."

Once she said this, I retracted my hand--though hesitantly.

"She can't hear you no matter how loud you shout, so there's no point to that as well..." The Queen added.

Still, I couldn't let go of how fast my heart was thumping.

The girl before me was definitely Emilia. Her black and white hair made her look slightly different, but there was no way I could forget the way the love of my life looked like.

Her eyes were--

'--Uh? That's strange... one of them is blue...'

Emilia's eyes were violet, but the Elf I was looking at had only one eye of that color. Her black and white hair was also different.

Still, even with those slight differences, it was definitely her... right?

"That isn't Emilia, Jared Leonard. It's... her daughter."

'Eh...?!'

Emilia had a daughter? My heart felt heavy all of a sudden, but I fought to retain my composure.

"That is... surprising..."

"Yeah. I'm sure Lewis never mentioned that in his Memoirs, did he?"

Well, I didn't. That was because I had no idea!

"You asked me about how Emilia died, but... you should have been more curious about how she lived."

I didn't know what to say as a response.

"Did you know that she was actually the one meant to be Queen? But... for the sake of an Alliance with the humans, she threw it away so the Elves would join forces with your kind."

'What?!' I had no idea what Aurora was talking about.

Was this the deal she made with her mother?

"Emilia, my sister, came to me after my mother had rejected the humans' offer for an Alliance. She told me to help her in exchange for the throne."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

"I was young and naive then, and I also wanted to be the Queen, so I agreed after she convinced me for some time..." Aurora seemed quite pained at this point.

"Our mother wasn't able to resist our joint front, and so she had a private Audience with my sister."

My heart thumped with every word Aurora uttered.

"I don't know what other secret deal she made with my mother, but that was how we were able to form an Alliance all those centuries ago."

I clutched my heart in pain. Just how much did Emilia throw away for our sake--for my sake?

"I guess that's probably why I never got along with Lewis Griffith. We eventually got close at some point, when I sought someone to confide in, but... I couldn't completely forgive him for the choice my sister made."

According to Aurora, Emilia was superior to her but decided to let everything slide out of consideration.

It made me realize just how much I didn't know about my wife.

"Ah, I digressed a bit, didn't I? As for how she lived after parting with Lewis Griffith, she was mostly buried in research when she returned--studying the mysterious existence of Arcanas."

That must have been what she gave my comrades back then. Everything slowly began to make sense.

"After a while, she finally stopped locking herself up. Though she often avoided showing her face in public, she still interacted well with me and my brother."

Zerius was Aurora's older brother, but Emilia's younger sibling.

She introduced him to me, and I got a little close to him at some point--especially during the war.

"Maybe it was because we were naive on the matter, she wasn't reserved when she played with us."

"I don't understand. Naive on what matter?"

Aurora's face stiffened once I asked.

"Her pale face, slightly tired-looking smile, and easygoing nature... they were symptoms of pregnancy."

'Uh...? What? Wait... hold on...!' Now I was even more confused.

If I remembered correctly, she was indeed showing those signs back when we were still together.

'Does that mean--?!' My eyes bulged as I returned my gaze to the Emilia lookalike.

"That's right. My sister was pregnant... with Lewis Griffith's child."

"What would you do if I get pregnant?"

"Hm? Why do you ask? Well..."

Back then, we had just moved into our brand new home.

The war was over, and we were happy.

I hadn't really given much thought to having a child yet. After all, I wanted to enjoy my time with Emilia well.

Besides, having another person around would be a bother--a distraction to my work.

"... I'm not sure." Was my response to that question.

"Hm? I see. A shame then. Well, when you're sure of your answer, let me know!"

Months later, I began noticing her pale face. But, that was already after the whole incident with Karlia.

At that point, I still wasn't sure about her question.

Perhaps that was why she never told me...

As the bombshell landed, my whole world came crashing down and was reconstructed in an instant.

'... My child?!'

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Chapter 403: The Half Elf [Pt 1]

Elves could control many things during pregnancy.

That was one of the reasons why women were superior to the men in their society.

Various factors pertaining to the child were decided by the mother. However, that wasn't all.

The length of pregnancy was also something they controlled.

"Over a hundred years. Emilia carried that child for over a hundred years."

I was still recoiling from one shocking discovery when I heard of another.

"What? That's possible...?"

"Yeah, but not for everyone. It's probably because Emilia was very powerful and skilled at Mana that she was able to pull it off..."

I was even more amazed. Holding a child—my child—in for so very long...

"... Why?"

I couldn't comprehend it.

"She most likely didn't want to burden Lewis. Their relationship soured over the course of time. But, that wasn't the only reason..."

At this point, Aurora stopped looking at me and stared at the Elf girl who had already found what she was looking for—a Magic Gem that shone bright blue.

Upon finding it, she returned to her work.

Something about her made my heart beat fast. Not only because she looked exactly like her mother, but because I realized... she was my child.

But, something was strange. I felt uneasy somewhat anytime I looked at her. It was as though there was something about her that was slightly off—different from the others.

"It seems you've noticed it already," Aurora said with a sad tone.

I didn't fully understand what she meant, and the barrier between me and the girl interfered a lot with my sensory abilities.

But, even with the little I could notice, I realized something terribly wrong.

"What's going on with her? Her body isn't normal. It's almost as if—"

"—She has Miasma Poisoning... right?"

My eyes widened, realizing my hunch was correct.

Aurora flashed me an impressed look, though the sadness on her face clouded it.

"I'm surprised you were able to notice it without me having to tell you."

I was all the more surprised. Miasma Poisoning for an Elf was a terrible thing. Though the effects didn't seem to be fatal, I could tell that the poison had spread throughout her body.

"It's the second reason why my sister had that child in her womb for so long. She was incubating it, trying her hardest to contain the Miasma within her."

"Miasma? I don't understand..."

Aurora sighed, probably not knowing where to start. Unfortunately, the answer dawned on me before she even answered.

"Lewis had a special constitution. It allowed his body to strongly reject Mana. It was caused by his overexposure to Miasma when he explored the Demon World."

'My genes got passed on to her, causing the special constitution of my body to be inherited!'

However, unlike me who was Inept, my daughter had Mana.

The Miasma in her body fought with the Mana within, causing a dissonance. How was such a child even born? How did she survive for so long?

"Emilia found a way to isolate the Miasma in her child's genes, using a hundred years to cultivate a stronger Mana essence to overcome the Miasma within her."

Aurora further explained that the Mana shell made by Emilia served as a prison to hold in the recessive tendencies of my Miasma-inclined genes.

As a result, when our child was born, she didn't have to deal with the clashing effects of both Mana and Miasma.

That was how she was able to live for four centuries without incident... or so I had hoped.

"My sister died early most likely because she used the Mana meant to sustain her life force to help the child in her womb. Unfortunately, a few decades after her death, the dormant Miasma gene within the girl started manifesting."

As a result, she was slowly getting Miasma poisoning.

Aurora and many skilled Elves had tried controlling it, trying to replicate what Emilia did, but it was too late.

Even if they could prolong the girl's life and mitigate its effects, it was inevitable that the poison would catch up with her soon enough.

"At this rate, she'll die in a few years..." Aurora winced as she spoke those words.

It must have pained her that her niece would die before she did, but the hard facts were difficult to escape from.

Even I, when confronted with that news, was devastated.

I hardly knew the Elf, but the mere thought that I would lose her soon after just meeting her nearly shattered me in my core.

"No... that can't happen!"

Aurora stared at me with surprise, most likely shocked that I shared her sentiment. She didn't understand that this was simply the selfish desire of a father to save his child.

"It's a shame that there's nothing to be done. It's impossible for Mana and Miasma to coexist—especially for an Elf."

Aurora wasn't wrong. It truly was impossible.

"That's why I let her do as she pleased. That girl, she has a strong interest in technology and Magic Research. I suppose she takes after her father that way..."

I nearly burst into tears as I was filled with both pride and sadness.

"Yeah. Yeah, she does."

The Elf had the appearance of Emilia, but the vigor she showed as she worked on the project was definitely a reflection of me.

This truly was my child!

"She has developed quite a number of innovations that have even surprised me. Though, because of her condition, I can't allow her to interact with many Elves, my children and I still enjoy her company."

Aurora was truly a lovely woman.

Freya indeed mentioned that she had an eccentric cousin who was into weird stuff. To think she was referring to my kid.

"Does she know? About her condition... about everything?"

Aurora nodded at my question.

"We never kept any secret from her. She knows about her origins—the true identity of her father... and her identity as a Half-Elf."

According to Aurora, she had never been bothered by her identity because she was always surrounded by the loving warmth of family.

Besides, Emilia only died a hundred years ago, so she had lots of good memories with her mother.

Still, there was a void that the Elves could not fill. That brought us to the favor Aurora wanted to ask of me.

"Please, Jared Leonard... can you become friends with that child?"

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Chapter 404: The Half Elf [Pt 2]

She was loved all her life.

Her mother never left her, and her family always supported her.

As a result, the Half-Elf got all the warmth she needed for a normal childhood.

However, it still wasn't enough.

As she grew older, the curiosity she inherited from her father drove her in search of something deeper—beyond what she knew.

"Humans! I want to know more about humans!"

Apparently, the stories she had heard from her mother weren't enough for her.

The books available in the Elf Kingdom were also limited.

After consuming all she could about the Race a part of her was from, the girl was filled with more curiosity.

Unfortunately, it was never sated.

To compensate, she was allowed to explore what no Elf ever could—Magic Innovations and Technology!

According to the words of the child;

"Whenever I make something, it makes me feel closer to the humans... and my father."

No one could deny her that right.

As a result, she was able to delve into the wonders of Magic Technology and Theories.

Thanks to the long life she lived—about four centuries—she was able to develop so many things despite having almost no precedent.

Crazy as it seemed, it was clear that this was a monster on par with the Great Sage himself.

This was the second coming of Lewis Griffith.

Once they realized this, the Elves realized one simple truth.

She was more human than Elf.

"Please, Jared Leonard... can you become friends with that child?"

I shouldn't have been surprised to hear those words, but my heart trembled in shock.

"She doesn't have long to live, so I want her to be able to fulfill her long-held wish..."

I sensed urgency in Aurora's tone—a genuine feeling of care that couldn't simply be expressed with words alone.

"If she makes a human friend before her death, then... I am certain she would be able to sleep forever, with no regrets. After meeting you, Jared, I feel you will be the best candidate for that."

Sadness. Pure sadness could be seen all over Aurora's eyes.

"You bear an uncanny resemblance to that man, after all..."

Everything that happened thus far—in relation to the newly made Elf Alliance—was thanks to my efforts.

She must have seen my past self in the current Jared Leonard.

The fact that I had Lewis Griffith's Memoirs was also something that would help the girl know more about her father.

In essence, I was the optimal choice for the dying girl.

"Sure... I can do that." I smiled, looking at the Elf Queen.

Her face loosened up a little once I said this, but there was still a great amount of pain left written on her face.

"But, are you sure this is what you really want?"

"W-what do you mean?"

"You want me to befriend her in her last moments, so she can die peacefully. Is that what you truly desire...?"

"Y-yes, that's what I—"

"Stop with the bullshit!" My voice was raised at the most powerful entity in the Elf Kingdom, but why didn't I feel any fear?

Aurora was in a vulnerable state—too overcome with emotion that she couldn't even get angry about such a thing at this point.

"Is that what you truly want? That she spends a few years with a human, and after finally discovering her half heritage, she simply does without exploring it further?"

I knew it was difficult, but I had to get the Queen to admit what she truly desired. It was the same as what I wanted.

For her, it was going to be hard to say the words. She must have tried all she could, Al to no avail.

The long-lost hope that had been abandoned... I wanted it to reignite.

"O-of course not! I want her to live! I so badly want her to live a long, fulfilling life. But, that's not possible. She can't. T-that's why I—"

"Aurora... what have I often told you about saying such words?"

"...?!" The Elf Queen looked at my face with puzzlement.

"What did I tell you concerning that concept? Tell me?"

Even if she was dead shocked by my words, the old Aurora I knew, and the new Aurora standing before me couldn't resist the response I drilled into them.

"N-nothing is impossible with Magic. But, how did you...?"

"It's just something else I saw in his Memoirs, and it's a personal philosophy I stick by."

I could see a faint light of hope showing in her eyes.

That was more than enough for me.

"Then, do not despair. Rather, ask me for what is truly hidden in your heart, Queen Aurora Vindiel. What do you truly desire?"

My smile was bright and confident, and I dared her to hope once more.

"I... want..."

'Yes, Aurora. Tell me what you want! What we both want!'

"I want my niece to live! I want her to live a long, fulfilling life. I want to die before her, and I desire that she achieves all she has set out to do. To reach the pinnacle of Magic. To see the very depths of Magic. I want her to achieve them all!"

Emotion and desperation filled her voice. The light of hope shone brighter than ever.

"Excellent!" My lips parted, revealing my broadened sets of teeth.

"I wish the same!"

I returned my gaze to the Half-Elf girl as she diligently kept working on her project.

"What's her name?"

"O-Oh, it's Lemi."

'Gotten from both the LE in my first name and the EMI in Emilia's, eh?' I smiled in nostalgia.

My wife always had the best ideas when it came to such things.

"Then, let's make both of our wishes come true."

Drawing closer to the Elf Queen until I could reach her shoulders with my arms, I gave her the brightest look of confidence I could muster.

"I will save Lemi, no matter what!"

It was my duty as both the husband of her mother, as well as her father.

'You did your best, Emilia... but I'm here now!'

As her father, and her potential friend, I would do everything in my power to save my daughter.

'Failure isn't an option!'

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Chapter 405: A New Friend? [Pt 1]

Lemi gave a huff as she neared the completion of her work.

It was an Automaton unlike any other she had ever created.

It looked strangely humanoid—other than its metallic complexion and robotic look—it was more akin to the Race she had always been curious of.

"I'll call it Charlie, maybe?" She murmured, looking at its exposed chest.

Embedded at its center—and connected with tons of wires—was the gem she had temporarily misplaced.

It served as the Automaton's power source and would energize the circuits so it could function properly.

"Hmm, just a bit more in the design department... and I'll add some more functions as well..."

Her goal was to make the perfect Human Automaton. That meant she had to ensure every single function, expression, reaction, and action of the Automaton was well synced.

If it couldn't pass for a regular person, then there was no point in it.

'Artificial intelligence is quite a chore...' The Half-Elf sighed to herself, her black and white hair swaying as she drooped her head.

The hair had a straight line that separated both monochromes, and it looked quite strange how distinct they were.

The same applied to the violet and blue eyes she had on the left and right side of her face respectively.

'Mom says I take after dad with the air and eyes, but...'

It wasn't like there was a picture of him she could use as a reference.

"Haaa... this sucks." She looked at the unfinished Automaton.

In her 400 Years of life, Lemi had created many things, but most of them couldn't be perfected

It wasn't because she wasn't brilliant, or because she got lazy mid-way, but the simple fact was that she was all alone.

There was a limit to what a single person could accomplish.

Besides, materials concerning theories and mechanics were very limited in the Elf Kingdom, so she couldn't exactly prove her theories beyond what she already knew.

It was frustrating, but Lemi had reached a deadlock in many things.

It wouldn't be long until the same happened to the current project in front of her.

'Damn... if only there was a human specimen I could observe—or someone who could serve as my assistant...'

Unfortunately, none of the Elves were interested in that sort of thing—not even her cousins.

They did their best to help, but it was mostly out of fun and not commitment.

Lemi couldn't blame them, though.

Just as they weren't into her stuff, she too wasn't interested in a majority of the Elven culture.

That was probably why she was still unmarried despite being over 400 years old.

'Isn't there someone? Anyone?' The Half-Elf was desperate now.

Still, she knew her wishes were made in futility.

How many times had she gone down this trail of thought? Lemi lost count.

She learned the hard way that such thoughts were useless. After all...

'... Someone like that won't simply appear out of nowhere.'

>CREAK<

The door to her Workshop opened, and two individuals entered the vast room.

One was someone she recognized quite well—her Aunt. Seeing the woman always brought her great joy.

"Auro—" Before she could complete her statement, Lemi's sharp eyes wholly spotted the other individual behind her.

His blond hair and charming features drew her notice. However, what was more important was the weird feature that made him different from every other person she had seen this far.

"Ears... your ears..." Her whisper was strained, and her heart was racing faster than it ever did before.

Lemi felt like she was hyperventilating when she was overly excited, but this was even beyond that.

"Lemi, calm yourself. I brought him here from the Eastern Kingdom. He's a—"

Before Aurora's rushed introduction was completed, the Half-Elf raced to meet the human with immeasurable speed—according to her.

>WHOOOOOSSSHHHH!<

In an instant, she was right in front of the guy—who was most likely not older than 16 Years by human standards.

Compared to an oldie like Lemi, he was no more than a child.

"Humaaaaaaaannnnn!!!" She shrieked, circling him like a hungry predator observing her prey.

Even though she was older—by far—no one who had the privilege to observe the situation could ever think so.

While the human boy gave a relaxed look and smiled, Lemi was busy lost in her assessment of the fine specimen who had indeed fallen from the sky.

Her prayers were finally answered—also according to the slightly delusional Half-Elf.

"Control yourself, Lemi. At least let me finish my introductions." The Elf Queen sighed, looking at Lemi's rushed behavior with a shamed sigh.

The older Elf was most likely mortified by her niece's childish and mannerless actions.

"A-ah, forgive me..." Lemi had enough common sense to see she that was overdoing it.

But, that was only after she was stripping the human and touching his bare chest.

'A-ah, maybe I went a bit too far...' And so, upon realizing the error of her ways, the predator stepped away from her prey.

"Sigh, this child..." Once again, Queen Aurora looked mortified.

The gentleman in the room didn't seem to mind, though.

It was either because he was a simple perverted who had been enjoying how the Half-Elf massaged his chest... or he simply thought it wasn't a big deal.

One glance at the rubbery smile plastered on his face would tell anyone that it was the former.

"This is Jared Leonard, a delegate from the Eastern Kingdom. And, yes, he's a human."

That was the most important part of the introduction, so the Queen indeed saved the best for last.

"For real? For real? You finally brought one for me! A Human! Finally!"

The human looked charmed by how she jumped with glee. Clearly, he too was happy about the new life that awaited him with her.

"How long have I waited for this moment!" Lemi rushed to the human once more, observing his features with her eyes.

He was an optimal male—perfect for her uses.

"So, I can keep him, yeah?" She looked at Aurora, her aunt for permission.

She had gone through the trouble of granting her long-held wish. It was only courtesy that Lemi act like the good niece she was.

"Erm, no... it's not really what you think..." Aurora hesitated once the question was raised.

Even the gentleman had a raised eyebrow.

'Hm? Weird... what's going on here?'

Didn't her Aunt explain to the human already?

"But, I told you how much I wanted a human specimen. Why else would you bring him here?"

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Chapter 406: A New Friend? [Pt 2]

An awkward silence hung in the air.

Apparently, there was a misunderstanding between the Half-Elf and the Queen--the human was simply caught in the middle of it.

Lemi and Aurora stared at each other, both having contrasting views on the current situation.

"Isn't he supposed to be my Specimen?"

The face of the Queen instantly went pale, and for a second, she glanced in the direction of the human boy.

"A-ah, I thought you could use a friend that was--"

"That wasn't the deal. I want a specimen, an experimental subject. That's why he's here, right? You!" Lemi shifted her gaze to the already shocked human.

His expression had transformed from joy to something a bit more... horrified.

"You're mine now, okay? You will do as I say, as a loyal pet. Finally, after so long, I finally have one--a human pet..."

That's right, contrary to her innocent and charming demeanor, this Half-Elf had a dark side.

Her sadistic tendencies had been honed and left unbridled ever since she was younger.

Thanks to Lemi's mother, as well as everyone around, spoiling the heck out of her, the Half-Elf truly developed something known as a superiority complex.

All her requests were answered without question. She could obtain whatever she desired.

Unfortunately, there was one single exception.

"Human... I finally have a human!"

Sure, Lemi felt a connection to the Human Race. That was probably why she wanted one so badly.

But, it wasn't to keep as a friend.

If something was rare and difficult to get, wasn't it common sense that she would make it into a loyal pet that would stay by her side forever?

That was the mentality of the Half-Elf.

And now that she was able to obtain a fairly young human, after so many years of wanting, Lemon felt a strong sense of fulfillment and joy.

"Haaa. I think I'll name him Charlie." Her delusions manifested some more.

A look of disbelief spread on the human boy's face. He had been looking at her with quite an unsavory expression for some time now.

That wasn't the appropriate expression a Pet was supposed to make before his master.

'I'll have to correct that!'

Ignoring her Aunt, Lemi dashed in the direction of the human and brought her face close to his with as much ferocity as she could.

Her eyes were burning with uncontrollable desire, but the defiant attitude of the boy before Lemi made her uneasy.

As a result, the Half-Elf uttered the perfect word to correct that behavior.

"... Sit!"

For a moment, there was absolute decorum.

The commanding voice of the Half-Elf was enough to drive the mood into a heavy atmosphere.

Tension pervaded everywhere.

Lemi had read several books on raising pets, and even one in particular about how humans controlled theirs.

Surely, he would understand if she used the method. That was the rationale behind her one-worded command.

Unfortunately, the human didn't understand it. Was he perhaps deaf? No, it didn't appear so.

'Then, maybe he needs to hear another command? This is quite the disobedient one!'

Even though her Aunt was saying some words in complaint and reproof, Lemi closed her ears to avoid listening.

She always had her way, and this time was no different.

"I said you should--"

Before she could complete her words, something hard came crashing upon her head.

>KOP!<

If it hadn't been for the soft cushion her hair provided for the fist that landed on top of her, Lemi would have been sent to the ground--or so she concluded.

That was the only way the immense pain that shot through her head would make sense.

"Owww...." The Half-Elf backed away from the violent Human Pet and nearly cried.

This would be the first time in her life that she had been hit like that.

It was no exaggeration.

"Ow. Ow. Ow." The stinging pain in her head didn't subside.

Her cheeks were flushed with anger, and she instantly glared at the blond human who dared to raise his hands against his master.

"You dare--"

>KOP!<

Another knock came crashing down.

Once more, Lemi felt like she would faint. Her head rang in many ways, and she stumbled backward.

How and why was she being treated like this so suddenly?

Was her taming technique not up to par? No, that wasn't the problem. It was this human!

It was the defiant person she had an issue.

"Don't you--!"

>KOP!<

This final knock was what completely broke the girl, causing her to sharply turn to her Aunt for help.

"Aurora, he's hitting me!" Now near tears, the Half-Elf sniffed while attempting to garner the attention and pity of her loving aunty.

This human was more violent than she bargained for, but if her Aunt intervened, then--

"You brought it upon yourself. Why didn't you listen to me?"

"E-eh...?" Lemi was beyond shocked.

Her Aunt had never refused her--especially when she used the puppy-dog eyes she was currently wielding.

Utilizing the power of her cuteness and the principles of psychology, Lemi was able to get away with anything.

The proof of her power was the very fact that she had a workshop and was granted the liberty to develop technology despite the strong position Elves had against such things.

Yes, she was special!

Anything she wanted was granted to her.

Unfortunately, it seemed like that special privilege had suddenly been revoked.

"A-Aunt...?"

"I'm sorry for her rude behavior, Jared. She isn't usually like this... sort of."

Instead of reproving the human, her Aunt was speaking so respectfully to him.

Aurora was the Queen who possessed absolute power in the Elf Kingdom.

Lemi had been able to leverage that fact to milk lots of goodies from her.

To think there would be a person this woman would apologize to... The Half-Elf was petrified with shock.

Once more, she glanced in the direction of her potential pet.

He was smiling now.

The kind of smile that seemed dangerous. At this point, it seemed their positions were switched.

He was now the predator... and she was prey!

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Chapter 407: A New Friend? [Pt 3]

'What the hell...?'

That was my reaction after seeing the true colors of the Half-Elf known as Lemi.

I had initially thought she would take after her mother—or me—thanks to her genes, but I was so wrong.

Her rotten personality resembled none of us!

To begin with, her warped mindset was very worrying.

When I looked at Aurora for an explanation, she sharply glanced away—most likely in guilt. It was at that point that I realized something.

'They've spoiled this girl too much!'

I wasn't against being considerate to a child based on the unfortunate incidents surrounding her birth and her identity, but... these people overdid it!

"Emilia and Aurora, just how did you guys raise this girl?"

I wasn't surprised that Derius and the other Royals went along with the whole thing. After all, if those two decided on something, the rest would have no choice but to obey.

'Damn, this has gone too far!' I looked at the Half-Elf throwing the tantrum.

She was nothing like I imagined her to be. Not in the slightest.

'It's weird watching someone with Emilia's face acting like this...'

My wife was someone with an upright and composed demeanor—at least most of the time.

The bratty attitude shown by my daughter just ruined the honored memory I had of Emilia.

But, that was only the beginning.

Even though I had thought she yearned to be closer to the Human side of her origins, it turned out she only saw her distant relatives as nothing more than pets.

That was probably the second most bothersome fact about the Half-Elf called Lemi.

Her attitude was even worse than that of regular Elves.

'My own daughter...' I nearly broke down in tears.

Still, the most shocking aspect I found out about the 400-Year-Old lady who still acted like a spoiled child was the despairing state of her capabilities.

In simple terms, Lemi was weak.

She had a Special Grade Mana More, but it was hardly developed.

Her body's constitution was hardly built as well, and it was clear that she had been pampered all her life.

'Does she even know how to use Magic?' I began to grow worried.

Now that I took a good look around me, almost everything she had built was either in an incomplete state, or was terribly inefficient.

They looked like no more than toys with flaws.

'The fuck...?'

Just what was this girl doing for 400 Years?

"What are you looking at, jerk?" Lemi, my infuriating daughter shot a glare at me.

The moment I raised my fist slightly, she fled behind Aurora

"Eek!"

Why did I even bother?

I once again stared at the Elf Queen, but she uncomfortably looked away.

'That's right! Your conscience should prick you for deceiving me.'

During our emotional conversation back then, I had already gotten my expectations raised, but this was so disappointing.

Sure, Elves didn't know much about Magic Technology, so they all probably revered Lemi as a genius or something.

But, these were simply toys and scraps, compared to the real stuff.

Well, other than the Automaton that hovered above her, most of the stuff around were in pretty weird shapes and odd conditions.

'You call this the next Lewis Griffith?' My heart sank.

As much as I loved seeing the product of my love with Emilia, this child was just too weird.

'She has so much potential, but...'

"Then, I'll leave her in your care, Jared." Aurora gave a strained smile, interrupting my thought.

From her movement, I could tell that she was trying to wiggle her way out of this one. Also, when did she start calling me by just my first name?

"Please, your Majesty..." I gave a broad smile.

As expected of the perceptive Queen, she read my intentions instantly.

"... Stay for a bit, why don't you? Don't you want to watch?"

"Watch? You mean... you're going to do it now?"

"Of course. Might as well get this over with." I sighed, moving toward the frightened Lemi.

"S-stay away from me, you rogue!"

"Relax, Lemi. He's here to help you."

I sighed, not ceasing in my steady approach.

"H-help, what do you mean?"

"He is Jared Leonard... a powerful Magic User from the Eastern Kingdom—and a diplomatic Envoy sent to the Elves. Surely, you've been informed of this."

"A-ah, he's the one Freya won't shut up about. So what? It has nothing to do with me, right?"

"He says he can cure you."

Once Aurora said this, the Half-Elf halted her flippant demeanor and stared at me with surprise.

For the first time since we met, Lemi mirrored Emilia. My hardened heart melted instantly.

"You... you can?"

"Yes. Now, Lemi, I'll ask you... do you want to be cured or not?"

I was already in front of her, and since the Half-Elf was shorter than me, I looked down on her as she faced up.

Her differently colored eyes looked oddly fitting for her. And, they shone with a form of childish hope.

"I-I do..." Her voice trailed.

All forms of childishness vanished and a darkened expression took over.

"You believe I can do it?"

"I don't believe you, but Aurora wouldn't bring this up if she didn't believe in your capabilities. Freya also ran her mouth about you yesterday, so you must be pretty good."

'I guess she isn't a total idiot, after all.' I smiled.

"How will you do it?" Her question was direct, and the sincere look on her face was beginning to clear the initial doubts I was having about her.

"It's not very difficult. Your condition isn't the first I've seen like this."

"What?" Even Aurora joined in surprise.

They must have thought Lemi's case was special, and that there was no one alive who could live with Miasma and Mana in their system.

Usually, they would be right.

"Yes. Your case is indeed special. There's only one other person besides you who has a condition similar to yours."

Lemi's eyes widened even more as she stared at me. It wasn't because she figured out the truth—just simple curiosity.

"Who's that?"

My grin broadened more, and I began to like the girl more as she asked questions.

'That's more like it!'

With that, I released a portion of the energy within me, revealing it to both Aurora and Lemi.

"It's none other than me."

Both Elf and Half Elf gasped in shock, completely surprised by the faint glow of Mana and Miasma on my body.

"So you see, Lemi..." I said, drawing closer to the flustered Half-Elf.

"... I'm just like you."

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Chapter 408: Perfect Balance

"Just like... me...?"

Lemi was dumbstruck by my statement—or at least she appeared to be.

More than just my words, but the fact that I was emitting both Mana and Miasma from my body—yet appeared completely unfazed by it—made both Elves look at me in wonder.

"H-how is that possible?"

"It shouldn't be possible, right? Right?"

Ignorance was a terrible foe.

While it could be bliss at certain moments, there was no doubt that it robbed many of the right kind of perspective to achieve certain goals.

That was why I lived by the philosophy that nothing was impossible—at least when it came to Magic.

It gave me the right kind of mindset.

'Just because it hasn't been discovered yet doesn't mean it doesn't exist!' That was the kind of perspective that brought me this far.

It was such a shame that many didn't share the same line of thought as me.

"Well, it is. This right here is the perfected form of your condition, Lemi."

That's right! Her current situation was by no means an affliction.

It was a gift.

If I cultured it well, it would turn into an indispensable platform for growth.

'I'm also curious about the results...'

Now drawing closer, only leaving barely an inch between us, I stared straight into Lemi's eyes with a grin.

"So... do you want it? What I have?"

I could feel the feeling of superiority within her dissipate.

Her composure began wearing off one after the other, and then she sensibly gave in to the only hope before her.

"Y-yeah... I do. I want it."

'Good girl!' My grin grew broader.

I turned to Aurora, who simply watched in stunned silence.

"We'll begin the process now. It's best if you wait behind the glass."

The concerned Elf Queen looked hesitant to leave her precious niece with a human who was about to begin who knows what.

"W-will it be dangerous...?" Her concerns rang out.

"Yes. It will. But... I promise that I won't hurt her."

It was pretty obvious that the spoilt girl didn't take to pain well. Her fragile body had barely undergone any training, and it was also degenerating as a result of the Miasma Poisoning.

I had to be careful if I wanted to pull things off successfully.

"Okay then. I'll trust you."

"Please do."

As Aurora began moving toward the door, I looked at Lemi—who was fidgeting uncomfortably.

"Don't worry..." I smiled, rubbing her black and white hair with my hand.

It felt weird doing this to a 400 Year Old Elf who was my daughter—but was technically older than me.

She didn't seem to mind, though.

'The spoilt girl must be used to being pampered.'

"... I'll be gentle."

Mana and Miasma

Contrasting forces that are never meant to be combined.

As they are opposite forms of energy, they repel each other and cause adverse effects on the body.

This imbalance is known as Poisoning—whether of Mana or Miasma.

However, just as it is possible for Mana to be corrupted by Miasma—as Demons usually do—it is also possible to overwhelming Miasma with Mana.

None is superior to the other, and they are simply two sides of a coin—in this case, it would energy.

However, a loophole exists.

And that is balance.

In the situation where there is an even distribution of Mana and Miasma, down to the perfect decimal, there will be no resistance.

In fact, both energies will simply cause another reaction—Anti-magic.

But, rightly apportioning both energies is very difficult.

If one's core isn't capable of producing the two at equal quality and quantity—using the same wavelength—then an imbalance will occur.

That is why... when dealing with these two energy sources, it's always good to first understand them.

Then, control the flow to generate a Core that contains both Energies with complete balance.

And then, once the Fused Core is made, just as with regular Mana Cores, it is possible to release both essences to generate its power.

It sounds quite complex in theory, but the principle isn't very hard.

Once the balance is achieved, the next step is as natural as possible.

Then, for the challenge before me... only one solution presents itself.

'I must achieve perfect balance!'

"A-ahhh..." Lemi let out a soft moan as I placed my hands on her bare back.

She must have felt the foreign energy of mine that penetrated her body and was now permeating it.

Even though I needed direct contact with her skin to freely achieve what I desired, there was no need for her to undress.

My palms simply burned through the clothing she wore and touched her from behind—leaving everything else she wore intact.

"A-ahhh.. ahhh..." More sounds came from her lips.

I remained silent, focusing on the task at hand.

Distractions were unnecessary at this juncture.

Forcefully resonating with the girl allowed me to gain access to her body, causing me to feel the strong Miasma that had deeply rooted itself into the corners of her being.

Her Mana Core was already shrouded with negative energy, and I could tell that the imbalance was severe.

'Okay, let's begin...'

What surrounded me was a big black space of Miasma.

Particles of Mana around—like stars—were fading away thanks to being corroded by the darkness.

And, the biggest light of all—Lemi's Mana Core—was barely hanging on.

'For a girl whose insides have been devastated this extensively... how can she be so energetic?'

Lemi must have been feeling immense discomfort and pains, yet she endured it.

'She's stronger than I gave her credit for...' I sighed, feeling a bit bad for knocking her so mercilessly.

To be fair, I was holding back, but still...

'Jared, focus!' My senses returned to the surrounding darkness and lights.

'Huuu... first things first!'

Now using my Miasma, I attracted the surrounding negative energy to myself.

They responded instantly—thanks to the influence of Spellcraft.

Upon attracting every ounce of the Miasma particles, I was able to free the dim lights from being corrupted by the Miasma.

With that, the rogue Miasma that was killing Lemi was now contained.

It wouldn't have been possible without my ability to use Miasma, but, the solution was that simple.

However, this was only a start.

Even though the Miasma could be dispelled or absorbed by me if I desired it, I had a better idea.

'Consider this a gift from me, Lemi.' I grinned, looking at her Special Grade Mana Core.

It was brimming brighter than ever.

'Time for phase two!'

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Chapter 409: Immense Potential

A Special Grade Mana Core stood at the very peak of all Mana Cores.

Unfortunately, it wasn't for everyone.

Only special individuals born with a special affinity for Mana could have it—and if was from birth.

Life was unfair like that.

While some were born as Inepts, possessing not a single fragment of Mana—others had the ultimate Magic Cheat.

Individuals with Special Grade Mana Cores were meant to be unparalleled in Magic—achieving exploits at an early age.

Yet... there existed one right in front of me that was hardly developed.

'Just what were you doing for 400 years, Lemi?' I nearly sighed in exasperation.

Even among Elves, Special Grade Mana Cores were rare, so Lemi was immensely blessed with talent.

Her potential was immense.

Yet, she had hardly cultivated it.

'Haaa... this girl...'

Still, because it was a Special Grade Mana Core, it had been able to survive against the Miasma surrounding it for so long.

Weaker Mana Cores would have been destroyed a while ago.

I was happy that this was the case, considering the next phase could only be possible if Lemi had a very sturdy Mana Core.

Sure, it was possible for me to build it up to a satisfactory level myself, but since it was already at this level, there was no longer any reason to do so.

'Let us begin, shall we?'

I began pouring the Miasma that was concentrated in me into the multicolored Mana Core.

The immense glow was strong enough to push the wave of Miasma away, but I had no intention of losing out.

>VWUUUUSSSHHH!!!<

Activating my Miasma Cores, I increased the potency of negative energy, finally overcoming the barrier that shrouded the Mana Core.

And then—

>WHUUUUUMMMMM!!!<

—It seeped into the Special Grade Mana Core.

"Gaahhhhhh!!!"

Lemi's scream rang out, but I ignored it.

'Bear with it. It only hurts when it's your first time...' With that in mind, I inserted more of the black stuff deeper into her.

Ignoring her screams, I kept at it, meeting less and less resistance as I furthered.

'I suppose it's also advantageous for me that her Mana Core hasn't really developed...'

Considering the fact that it would be harder to corrupt her Mana Core with Miasma if that was the case.

Thanks to the vulnerable state of Lemi's internal cluster of energy, my work was easier.

'Let's go faster now!'

It took longer than I thought for the colliding energies to stabilize.

Perhaps it was because I was operating on someone else's Mana Core and not my own. Either way, even with the slight obstructions here and there, I finally did it.

'Huu... at long last!' I smiled, staring at the transformed Core in front of me.

No longer could it be referred to as a Mana Core.

An equal half of it was already shrouded in darkness, and the second part was brimming with multiple colored lights.

A perfectly Fused Core!

I had succeeded in containing Lemi's Miasma, and making it an integral portion of her being.

'With this, you'll be able to grow even stronger.'

Mana.

Miasma.

Magic.

Anti-Magic.

Lemi now had access to these—and most likely lots more.

'This is my gift to you. I'm sorry it came late...'

And with that, I canceled the Resonance.

"Haa... haaa..."

"Haa... haaa..."

Both Lemi and I were short on breath.

It was an intense session that sapped quite the energy from me—and her.

"How was it?" I asked her amid my heavy breaths.

Sweat poured out of both our bodies, and I could tell that she felt a greater deal of the pressure.

It was her first time, after all.

"I... I feel better." She smiled, turning to meet my gaze.

Her smile was genuine, and a spark was in her eyes.

The pain from having her body constantly corrupted was now gone. Instead, a brand new refreshed sensation must have been coursing through her.

"It feels hot and weird here... kind of..." Lemi touched her stomach, where her Fused Core was located.

"... But, it also feels kind of good."

It would take some getting used to for Lemi to fully understand and control both elements. But, I had no doubt about her capabilities.

After all... she was my daughter!

"The energy you feel is now a part of you, Lemi. You'll be able to get even stronger now." I patted her shoulder and rose to my feet.

Once I did that, my hand pulled her up as well.

"LEMIIIIII!!!"

As expected, the doting Elf Queen burst through the doors and went straight for her niece.

"Are you okay? Does it still hurt? He wasn't too hard on you was he? Are you in pain? Feeling better now? You look so exhausted! Won't you rest?"

'What am I, chopped liver?' I thought to myself, feeling relegated despite my hard work.

'I understand Aurora's worry and care, though. Lemi was the treasure that Emilia left behind, so I can respect that...'

That was the reason why I specifically requested that she stayed beyond the glass walls.

That way, she couldn't hear the intensity of Lemi's screams. Even though she could see the girl in obvious anguish, not having to hear the sound helped in relieving her worry and fear.

Besides, now that it was all over, they could all laugh about it.

"T-thank you so much, Jared Leonard! I don't know how I can ever repay you." It was only after she had completely ensured the wellbeing of her niece that Aurora shifted her focus to me.

"Allies help each other out. I only hope that after this war is over, we continue to keep the agreement and remain Allies... for the good of everyone."

The Treaty specifically implied that either party could choose to dissolve the Alliance after the war with the Demons was over, but I would prefer it if that didn't happen.

A joint front was profitable in many ways—not just in defeating our current enemies.

I hoped she would see that.

"I understand, Jared. You have proved not only your worth, but also that of your whole race. I understand now that it would be foolishness to dispel our Alliance with your Race." Aurora smiled.

Lemi also lowered her head and murmured a sorry excuse of thanks.

This whole incident hadn't been in my plans, but things ended up working better than expected.

'I thought after seeing me work my miracle with Original Magic—as well as stopping the looming two-pronged incoming Demon attack, Aurora would be fully convinced to remain Allies with the Eastern Kingdom.

'But, looks like that's not necessary.'

I already had her trust.

At this point, it was simply a matter of taking care of the rest on merit.

'First, we'll repair the damage done to the Elf Kingdom. Then... we face off against Zenkiel's plan.'

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Chapter 410: Converged Attention

"It's a lovely day, isn't it?"

The Queen was seated on her throne, surrounded by the Royal Elves.

This time, Lemi was also among the participants. Her gaze never shifted from me, making me slightly uncomfortable.

'Well, it's not had to receive the attention of your daughter...'

Even though all my lifetimes combined still didn't quite measure up to her age.

In any case, all the Eastern Kingdom delegates—I included—were bowing before the Queen as she spoke.

"Please, rise. It's a joyful occasion, no?"

We all did as instructed upon hearing Aurora's voice. As expected, she sounded quite thrilled.

"Our devastated lands will be repaired, and our people will be restored to us. That was the promise, right, Jared Leonard?"

My allies all shot me a shocked look, most definitely caught by surprise that I said something so preposterous.

Serah Crimson's gaze was especially fierce. I gulped, feeling the intensity of multiple gazes on me.

"Of course, your Majesty. Everyone, it is indeed a happy day." I made sure to return the gazes I was receiving with my confident smile.

"You should all just sit back and enjoy the show."

Aurora nodded and her smile broadened. There no longer remained an ounce of hesitation in her eyes.

After seeing that I was a man of my word—with Lemi being living proof right there—she was more interested in how I would be performing the next task.

And she wasn't the only one too.

The Royal Elves were all looking expectant. As expected, they must have heard of how I solved Lemi's condition.

'Well, it's not all bad. Raising my prestige with every Race is also one of my goals...'

"Now then, shall we head out?"

The Elf Kingdom's Eastern Border—in the time I spent away from here, it still looked devastated.

Of course, this didn't surprise me, since I had Automatons constantly watching the area.

Their survey was to ensure they spotted enemy forces—if any showed up—and also to observe the Elves that remained there.

And so, with my return to the place, it was almost as though I never left.

"It's even worse than I imagined..." Aurora murmured, laying eyes on the devastating sight for the first time.

Not only did I teleport her with me, but also every member of the Royal Family, as well as my team members, came with me.

Apparently, they all wanted to see my Magic in action.

'Isn't it a bit reckless for every Royal to ditch the Capital?' My thoughts trailed as I smiled softly.

Well, it wasn't as though the Demons would suddenly launch an offensive there. Plus, my Automatons would alert me if that occurred, and I could instantly teleport back.

Ultimately, their presence wouldn't be missed.

"Jared, I'm expecting quite a show." Serah Crimson said, smiling sharply at me.

I still had no idea what Neron told her about me, but it seemed her expectations from me were always soaring through the roof.

'Don't compare me to Neron!' I wanted to scream out, but I simply answered positively instead.

"I still can't believe you cured Lemi... just what can't you do?" It was Freya's turn to speak.

To be frank, I wanted to avoid her after realizing her feelings for me. But, as long as she remained an integral member of the Elf Society, encounters like this was unavoidable.

"I can't do many things..." A wry smile formed on my face.

Sure, I had accomplished many feats that would be deemed impossible. However, there were even greater heights that I wanted to reach.

Especially after knowing people like Neron and Serah existed, it was only fair that I kept striving for more.

Currently, we were all on the outskirts of the Border, away from the rubble and destruction.

Even the Elf General I met previously—Clara—welcomed us warmly.

All her soldiers stationed around gathered and bowed in the presence of Royalty.

Queen Aurora behaved in a manner befitting her status and soon explained what would be happening.

Many stared at me with disbelief, but it was hard to refute the Queen's words.

That was why their doubts also morphed into expectations.

All eyes were literally on me.

"I did a total survey of the area. The damage is extensive, covering over 80 percent of the city. Residential districts have turned to Ribble, production areas as well. Only the military base is still standing since it's located on the outskirts." Clara gave a detailed report, showing how she hadn't been slacking off during her time here.

"We've also double-checked the city's records and observed the area. While we were unable to see any corpses, it's estimated that at least three thousand Elves died here."

The Eastern Border had a population of a little over seven thousand.

The number Clara estimated was close to half of the total denizens. It was indeed a huge loss.

If not for Freya's control of the situation—and how they barricaded the Demon Beasts despite having no experience fighting them—many more casualties would have occurred.

Of course, I knew all of this. After all...

"Thanks for the report, Clara. I appreciate it."

Rising from the ground, I floated using Magic. My body levitated to the destroyed town. I watched the rubbles and vestiges of an Elf civilization.

It was a pitiful sight, but I wasn't moved.

'This was all expected...'

Both my allies—the Elves and Humans—had no idea about this, but... I already knew things would go down this route.

I had spotted the Demon Beasts before they invaded the Elf Kingdom.

At that point, I was able to decipher the strategy being used by Zenkiel.

But, I intentionally didn't stop them.

Rather, I summoned a good number of my Automatons to observe the situation and act accordingly.

Then, I made my way to the Eastern Kingdom.

Truth be told, the reason I also delayed in helping the Elves—spending time with friends and families rather than coming to their aid early—was for the actualization of this moment.

It may have seemed cruel, but it was the most effective route to achieving true loyalty among the Elves.

I simply used the enemy's assault as an opportunity, and it had finally come.

'All that's left now is to give everyone a good show.'