

Strongest 101

Chapter 101: Ignorance is Bliss [Part 1]

When William opened his eyes, he found himself staring at a sea of stars. He blinked once then twice as the gears inside his mind started to turn.

'I was in Master's room..., ' William thought as he tried to remember the sequence of events that happened before he lost consciousness. 'Master made me lie on the bed then she asked me to close my eyes. After that I felt something soft touch my lips and then... I found myself here.'

The young boy's thoughts didn't continue past that point because a familiar voice whispered in his ears.

"Glad to see you are finally awake," Celine whispered. "Although, it doesn't bother me much, can you put on some clothes first?"

"Huh?" William turned his head to look at his beautiful master.

Celine was wearing a skin-tight body suit that seemed to resemble Cat Woman's costume. The corner of Celine's lips was curled up into a teasing smile as she looked at William's lower half.

"How cute," Celine teased.

William lowered his head to look at what Celine was staring at. His body immediately curled up like a shrimp as he used his hands to cover the proud and mighty Little William who was standing up in its full glory.

"Calm down," Celine chuckled as she looked at the embarrassed boy in front of her. "We are inside your Sea of Consciousness. Just imagine yourself wearing clothes and the problem will be solved."

The boy immediately did as he was told and clothes did appear on his body. William sighed in relief as he felt the familiar shepherd's clothes that he had been wearing for a long time.

"Master, you said we are inside my Sea of Consciousness. How come you are here?" William inquired. This was not the first time he entered his own Sea of Consciousness because this place was where the Divinities hid themselves inside his body.

He was just surprised that Celine was here as well.

"Good question." Celine nodded her head. "The answer to your question, my dear disciple, is that I snuck inside your Sea of Consciousness. The reason? The reason is because this will be the special venue for the next phase of your training."

'System, can you hear me?' William whispered in his mind.

< Yes. >

'Will there be a problem if we train inside my Sea of Consciousness?'

< If the host's soul receives sufficient damage then this place might collapse, and you will not be able to wake up ever again. In the outside world, you will be in a coma for the rest of your life. >

William sucked in cold breath as he realized the grave danger he was in. Celine said that this would be the venue of their training. This meant that one mistake and he would become a vegetable for life.

The young boy lightly coughed as he looked at his Master with pleading eyes. "Master, can we switch locations? This place is not a suitable training area."

"No." Celine shook his head. "This is the perfect place for our training. We will be killing two birds with one stone if we do our training here."

"Master, do you know that I might die if we train here?"

"Yes. That's precisely why we're training here, my cute disciple."

William's face darkened when he realized that Celine was fully aware of the dangers that accompanied training inside his Sea of Consciousness.

What William didn't know was that even though the System said that he would go into a coma if his soul received sufficient damage inside this place, it was not as bad as he thought it would be. Only when his soul disintegrated into a million pieces will the "sufficient damage" clause apply.

Meaning, even if he was sliced into a hundred, even thousands of pieces, the injury to his soul would be very minimal.

Even Truck-kun, the number one perpetrator in sending people to the isekai worlds, could only temporarily damage William's soul after he crashed on him. Simply put, it would take an extremely powerful attack to damage a soul beyond repair.

"Don't worry. At most you will be unable to move your body for a few days," Celine assured him. "However, this training will be very beneficial to you."

"How can this training be beneficial to me, Master?" William inquired. "Can't we just do regular training?"

Celine sighed as she tucked her long, silky, purple hair behind her Elven ears. "Your grandfather told me that the reason behind why you want to get stronger is because you wanted to go to the Silvermoon Continent. You wanted to meet your mother, and find a way to save your father, correct?"

"Yes," William answered.

"Do you have a plan in mind on how to accomplish your goal?"

"Train until I become as strong as my father before I go and meet my mother."

"And how many years will that take?" Celine placed her hands behind her back as she waited for William's answer.

"Twenty years?"

"You're quite an optimist aren't you. What makes you think that the Elven Council will give you twenty years to grow?"

William noticed that Celine's words were laced with malice when she mentioned the Elven Council. He didn't understand why Celine was telling him that the Elven Council would not give him time to grow.

"Master, what do you mean?" William inquired. "Why would the Elven Council target me?"

"Do you really not know the answer, or are you just playing dumb?" Celine looked at William with contempt.

"Master, I don't really understand what you're talking about."

"Ignorance is really bliss."

Celine shook her head as if she was disappointed with William's answer.

"Enough." Celine raised her hand and a black spear that glinted with the power of darkness appeared in the air above her. "We came here to train and not to talk about these things. Now, draw your weapon. Let me see the extent of what you've learned in your training."

William looked at his Master with a serious expression as he raised his hand.

"Come forth, Stormcaller!"

A spear materialized above William. It was the family heirloom of the Ainsworth Family and the young boy grabbed it firmly in his hands. Tendrils of lightning snaked around the spear's body as its blade glowed with a purple light.

"Good stance," Celine praised. "Let's see if it has substance."

She took a step forward and disappeared from where she stood. A second later, she reappeared in front of William with her spear poised to strike.

Although William wasn't able to follow her movements, his perception had alerted him of the danger in front of him.

The two spears collided, but the one that was blown away was William's. Celine took another step forward and turned into a dark mist.

William felt danger from behind, so he immediately turned his body to parry Celine's attack from his rear.

"Where are you looking?" A teasing voice whispered in his ears.

Before the young boy could do anything, his head was grabbed and slammed into the ground. Celine didn't stop her attack and kept on slamming William's face to the ground until the boy's face was smashed to a pulp.

Chapter 102: Ignorance is Bliss [Part 2]

"Master, you're so brutal," William said as his face automatically healed itself, once Celine had stopped her attacks and given him a moment to recover.

"Isn't it fine?" Celine grinned as she twirled the spear in her hand. "Inside this place, even if you die a thousand times, you'll still be alive and kicking in the real world."

William narrowed his gaze as he took a fighting stance to resume their battle. He knew that talking with Celine was pointless because the other was hell bent to make him suffer. Since that was the case, he would do everything in his power to teach her a lesson as well.

"Master, I was holding back earlier," William stated in an arrogant manner. "This time, I won't hold back. I apologize in advance if I hurt you!"

The young boy channeled all of his strength inside his body and prepared to give Celine a good beating.

Five minutes later....

"Master, it hurts! Please stop! Forgive me!" William cried out like a pig being slaughtered as Celine continuously spanked his butt using the flat edge of the blade on her spear.

"You were acting so sure of yourself earlier, and now you're begging for forgiveness?" Celine sneered. "I wonder where that confidence of yours is coming from."

Earlier, William had unleashed his full power and fought with everything he had. Things were going well in the first few minutes, but the balance was broken when Celine executed an aggressive battlestyle that cut off William's limbs one after the other.

As the limbless boy fell on the ground, Celine kicked his body until his face was facing the floor. Seeing his defenseless state, Celine felt mischievous and began spanking William's bum with the spearhead's flat edge.

After having her fill, Celine stopped spanking the boy and allowed William to regrow his arms and legs.

"I have to admit that you've grown quite a bit in your absence these last two years," Celine said with praise. "Compared to that simpering ten-year-old boy that arrived on my doorstep, you've come a long way."

"Really, Master?" William asked with a smug expression on his face.

"Yes. But, it is still far from being able to beat the geniuses of the Elven Race. At most, you will only last a minute in a direct confrontation with one of them."

William frowned. He didn't want to believe that he wasn't a match for any of the geniuses of the Elven Race. With his current power, he was very confident that no one of the same age as him would be able to beat him in a one-on-one battle.

"You think a half-baked boy like you can fight against geniuses that have trained since they were young?" Celine asked in contempt "You think that having a crash course of a year in monk training, and seven months of Archer training, is enough for you to beat an Elven Prodigy? You're far too naive, boy.

"Elves inherit the blessing of the World Tree. When they reach the age of six, their physical abilities are already comparable to Silver Ranked fighters. Compared to the starting point of human children, the elves are much more superior."

William snorted, "If the elves were so strong, and superior then why did they have to ask for a mere human to help them to fight against the Demon Race? If they were so strong then why did they almost become slaves to the Demons? Master, your Elven Race is not as strong as you think it is."

William thought that Celine would be angered and lash out at him, so he was surprised when the latter only smiled and nodded her head.

"Yes," Celine replied. "Back then, the Elves had no choice but to lower their heads and dignity to ask others for help. Do you know the reason why?"

"I don't."

"Well then Little Will, allow me to tell you the reason why the Elven Race almost lost the war a year before you were born. The reason why they had to humble themselves during that time is because the World Tree was dying.

The proud and arrogant race had lost the blessing of the World Tree and their power had been greatly weakened. When the Demon Race got wind of this, they immediately launched their invasion to conquer the Silvermoon Continent while the elves were at their weakest."

William listened seriously to Celine's story because he wanted to know everything about the Silvermoon Continent. The place where his mother and father were currently staying.

"The funny thing about this whole event was that due to your father's sacrifice, the Dying World Tree became healthy again. I'm sure that the Elven Council didn't expect such a boon to happen when they invited your father to help them fight against the Demon Race.

"Naturally, they also didn't know your father was so good at conquering women that the Saint had fallen head over heels for him. Both were unexpected outcomes, but for the Elves, the world tree was more important than their Saint. There were already plans to replace your mother as the Guardian of the World Tree, but the tree rejected the Saint Candidates they presented.

Perhaps it was due to your father's lingering emotions, or perhaps the World Tree cares for his current Guardian. This was why, until this day, your Mother is still the Saint of the Elven Race despite the fact that she has given birth to a Half-Elf."

Celine sighed as she looked at the young boy in front of her. "After the World Tree recovered its vitality, the Elves of the Silvermoon Continent also recovered their strength and arrogance. William, you are the son of the Hero and the Saint who saved the Elven Race. However, many Ancient Families bear a grudge against your father for marrying their Saint."

Celine didn't continue because William understood her meaning. Since they couldn't do anything to his mother, they would shift their attention to him. This was why his beautiful Master told him that the Elven Council wouldn't give him time to grow up.

They were afraid that he would become just like his father. Someone with domineering strength that could threaten their existence.

Of course, the majority of elves treated William's father, Maxwell, as a hero and idolized him. The same could be said for his mother, Arwen. However, the elves who were greedy for power and position, hated them for their influence.

Even though the Aenarion Family was the current head of the council, there were still many elders who were dissatisfied with the current status quo.

"William, if you don't want to die, become stronger than your father," Celine said. "Surpass him and the Elven Race will have no choice but to listen to your demands. That is the way of this world. The strong will always have the last say in every matter. Pep talk is over, let's fight."

William was also not in the mood to talk after realizing that the Elven Council was a bunch of hypocrites. The only thing on his mind was to become strong. Strong enough to ensure that his fated reunion with his mother and father would not be a pipedream.

When William opened his eyes, he found himself alone on Celine's bed. The things that had happened inside his Sea of Consciousness were still fresh on his mind. The young boy sighed in his heart because his Master's training regimen was still as brutal as always.

He was about to get off the bed when he realized one important thing and that was... he couldn't move his body!

William had experienced a similar feeling when he was still in the Temple after clearing the Trial of Courage, so he didn't panic and handled the situation calmly.

'System, can you analyze my current condition?'

< There's no need to analyze the host's current condition. What you are experiencing right now is the Spiritual Backlash from your training within the Sea of Consciousness. >

'How long before I can move my body?'

< Two hours, forty minutes, and twenty one seconds. >

William sighed internally. Celine had already told him the purpose of his training. It was to develop his fighting style with his spear and to strengthen his soul against spiritual attacks. The beautiful elf reminded him that there were Spiritual Masters that could bypass the defenses of the body so they could just focus on attacking a person's soul.

Celine was training William to resist such attacks, and allow him a chance of survival if his Sea of Consciousness were invaded by spirits who wanted to corrupt his soul.

While the boy was thinking of ways to pass his time, the door of the room opened and Celine entered with a mischievous smile on her face.

She was carrying a few tools in her hand, and William could tell with a glance that his beautiful Master was up to no good.

Chapter 103: Master, I Miss You

"Um, Master, what are you doing?"

"Writing."

"Writing what exactly?"

"Make a wild guess," Celine said as she used a brush to write runic characters on William's arm.

The boy was currently in a state of paralysis and only his head could move. Perhaps, Celine had known this would happen, so she decided to take this opportunity to "practice" her runic calligraphy on a living, breathing, canvas.

After finishing the runic writing on William's arms, Celine proceeded to write on William's chest. The black rose tattoo in the center of the boy's chest served as the centerpiece of the beautiful elf's runic writing.

Celine's brush strokes sent a tingling sensation down William's spine. It was as if every stroke contained some kind of ancient power that was slowly being embedded inside his body. With every rune that finished, William could feel some vague changes inside him that he couldn't explain.

These changes were more on the spiritual side of things that made him feel unbalanced. After writing on his chest, Celine proceeded to write on his legs, until she reached the boy's feet.

This writing session ended after two hours and a half hours. Celine stood up and admired her masterpiece with a satisfied smile. William's body was covered with blue runic letters that were glowing slightly. After making sure that everything was in order, the beautiful elf placed her right hand over the rose tattoo on William's chest while softly saying a chant.

William was not familiar with the language that his Master was using, but for some reason it was making him feel drowsy. Soon, the boy dozed off as the runes on his body started to glow brightly.

"Absorption," Celine said with a serious expression.

All the glowing runes floated in the air for a few seconds before falling back onto William's body and disappearing under his skin.

Beads of sweat streamed down the sides of Celine's face as she finished one of the most complicated reinforcement spells that was taught to her by her own Master.

Oliver appeared inside the room with a worried expression as he stared at Celine who was still panting for breath.

"Mistress, are you alright?" Oliver asked. "Should I bring you a rejuvenation potion?"

"That sounds wonderful, Oliver," Celine replied. "I'd like to have one, please."

"Give me a moment." Oliver lifted his talon and drew a circle in the air.

A medium-sized bottle that contained a purple liquid appeared in the air. It slowly floated towards Celine, and the latter caught it with a shaky hand.

'The toll it took on my body surpassed my calculations,' Celine mused as she drank the potion in her hand.

The sweet invigorating liquid entered her lips and a soothing feeling washed over her body. It made her feel drowsy, so she decided to lay down on the bed beside the sleeping half-elf.

The pitiful William became Celine's hug pillow, as she, too, fell asleep due to exhaustion.

Oliver watched the Master and Disciple pair with gentle eyes.

'Little Will, you're so lucky that you chose my Mistress as your Master,' Oliver thought as he left the room. He calculated that the two would wake up at around lunch time so it was up to him to prepare the food for the two hungry people who would wake up in a few hours.

When William opened his eyes for the second time of the day, he found his face pressed against something soft like a marshmallow. It was also at that moment when a flowery fragrance entered his nose, which put him into a daze.

It didn't take long for him to realize his current situation and he didn't know if he should be happy or not with the unexpected development.

'At least Cup C,' William thought as the soft mounds pressed against his face.

Celine was currently using him as a hug pillow and her deep sleeper breaths tickled William's ears.

If the lady lying next to him was not his Master, William would no doubt appreciate his situation more. Unfortunately, it was his crazy Master, and William couldn't predict how she would react if she discovered that the young boy's face was currently resting on her proud peaks.

Before William could think of a way to escape his predicament, Celine's eyes opened without warning. She stared at William still half asleep before covering her lips to yawn.

"G-Good morning, Master," William greeted.

"Mmm, Good morning," Celine replied.

She then loosened her grip on the boy's body as she slowly propped herself from the bed. She raised her arms to do some stretching exercises, before she left the bed to go down to the dining room to eat.

William felt complicated as he watched the door of the room close. Half of him was disappointed that the softness disappeared, while the other half was sad because Celine treated him like a child and not a man.

'I'm so stupid,' William thought as he rubbed his face with both his hands. 'My body is still that of a twelve-year-old kid. Of course, Master will not think of me as a man with my current age.'

William's stomach chose that moment to remind the boy that it was hungry. The boy placed the stupid thoughts at the back of his mind and joined his Master for lunch.

"Will, what do you know about Aura?" Celine asked after she finished eating her lunch.

"Aura?" William frowned. "Sorry, Master. I don't know anything in regards to Aura."

"I see." Celine propped her beautiful face using the palm of her hands. "I had a feeling that Dwayne didn't have the time to add Aura training in your exercises due to the limited time frame. However, don't worry, I'll make sure that you learn how to use your aura as a substitute for your lack of Magic Power."

William tilted his head to the side as he looked at his Master. 'Is Master talking about those aura's that enveloped Super Sayanz in Dragonbone Z? If yes, that would be so freaking awesome!'

Celine didn't know what the young boy was thinking because she was preparing to explain what an aura was to her disciple.

"Will, an aura is the energy that surrounds a person's body," Celine started her explanation. "Sword Masters call their aura, Sword Aura. The Sword Aura allows their sword to become harder, sharper, and even allow itself to block magical attacks to a certain extent.

"Once a Sword Master has become proficient in the control of his aura, he then trains his Sword intent. The Sword Intent allows him to manipulate the Sword Aura to execute energy based attacks, and other feats that are impossible for those who have not yet awakened their Aura, like cutting a mountain in half."

(A/N: In short Sword Aura is super sayanz mode, but with weapons. Sword intent is Bank*i mode in bleach.)

Celine paused to allow William to digest her explanation.

"You can even say that what separates the rookies from the expert warriors is the ability to use Aura. It's like a form of graduation for them. From a swordsman, to a knight, to a templar. Knights can use Sword Aura to a certain extent, but it is only at the beginner level.

"Templars on the other hand are stronger and can perform powerful sword strikes that can cut reinforced steel in half like a hot knife cutting through butter."

Celine gave William an arrogant look before continuing her explanation. "The purpose of the runes I inscribed on your body earlier was to increase your sensitivity by a hundredfold. This will help you feel the flow of Aura in your body, and allow you to understand how to wield it."

William patted his shoulder then his hand. He couldn't feel the "increased sensitivity" that Celine was talking about.

Celine watched William's actions with an amused expression. "You need to say a special word that serves as the password to activate the increased sensitivity in your body. I will not tell you this word now, because I still haven't prepared the right environment for our training. It would be far too dangerous if you activated it at this point in time."

"Then, when will we start our Aura Training?" William inquired. His eyes were sparkling in anticipation because he wanted to experience what it was like to become a Super Sayanz.

"Tonight," Celine replied with a smile. "You are free to wander around for the time being, but be sure to return before sunset. You still need to cook dinner."

Celine stood up and walked towards the stairs leading to the basement. "I will prepare the venue for our training. Make sure not to disturb me unless it is important."

Yes. Celine needed to prepare the venue for their training. Learning how to form Auras would usually take two to three years, but she and William didn't have that much free time on their hands.

What she needed to do was use the special artifact that was given to her by her Master before she left the Northern Continent once her training had finished.

'Master, did you give me this artifact in preparation for this day?' Celine thought.

Her Master was a powerful sorceress who was also proficient in future sight. Although she didn't say anything about why she handed her prized artifact to Celine, the beautiful elf had a nagging feeling that her Master had peeked into her future.

'Master, I miss you,' Celine sighed as she held the golden pendant that was hanging on her neck. It was the gift that she received from her Master when she officially became her disciple. The beautiful elf wished that there would come a time when she would be able to see her beloved Master once again, before the Elven Prophecy came to pass.

Chapter 104: Aura Training [Part 1]

"Oliver, I'll leave the house in your hands."

"Worry not Mistress, I'll make sure that nothing interrupts your training with Little Will."

Celine nodded her head and proceeded to go downstairs. She had just made the finishing touches for her planned two-months training with her disciple, and only conversed with Oliver to give him some orders while she and William went into seclusion.

"Do you think that William will be able to endure it, Mistress?" Oliver inquired. "I still think it's too early for this."

"We're on the same page, Oliver," Celine paused her footsteps before nodding her head in agreement. "But, time waits for no one. The sooner Will finishes his training, the less worried I'll be when he leaves Lont."

The Parrot monkey sighed. Oliver knew that Celine was right. This was the only way to boost William's strength with the limited time they had. He just hoped that the boy would be able to endure the training that Celine had specially prepared for him.

William was currently in the living room. He was waiting for Celine to finish her conversation with Oliver. After hearing that they would go into seclusion for two months, the young boy felt anxious and excited at the same time.

Due to his uneasiness, he paced around the room in order to calm his nerves for the training that was about to come.

A few minutes later, he heard Celine's footsteps coming down from the stairway and immediately stopped his anxious pacing. He stared at his beautiful Master, while trying to keep a calm expression on his face.

"Are you ready?" Celine asked.

"Yes.," William replied. "We can start anytime, Master."

"Good." Celine nodded and beckoned for William to follow her.

The two entered the basement together and headed to a secret passage that William had never seen before. Celine didn't say anything as he led her one and only disciple to a small room that was devoid of anything.

It was just an enclosed space, yet William could feel energy fluctuations around him. Celine gave him a reassuring smile as she waved her hand.

In front of them, a silver door appeared out of nowhere. The beautiful elf casually opened it and motioned for William to enter.

The boy obeyed without asking any questions. William knew better than to question his Master about every little thing that she did.

Just beyond the door, a blue ocean and sky--that spanned for as far as the eye could see--surrounded William on all sides. He scanned his surroundings, but didn't feel anything unusual except for the fact that this reminded him of his Sea of Consciousness.

"Master, where are we?" William asked.

"We are currently inside a divine artifact called Eternity," Celine replied. "This is the place where we will be spending close to four years together."

"Huh? Master, what do you mean four years? Aren't we supposed to only stay in seclusion for two months?"

"Yes and No. In the outside world, we will only be spending two months in seclusion. However, inside this divine artifact a day is equivalent to only an hour on the outside world. Meaning, a single day outside is equivalent to twenty four days here."

Celine patted the boy's head, "In the span of three years and nine months, you must learn how to manifest and use your Aura. Do I make myself clear?"

"If I am unable to learn it?" William inquired.

Celine smiled sweetly. It reminded William of the days where he was tortured until he almost went crazy. The boy knew that he better do his best to learn Aura Control or else he was going to regret it.

"Come." Celine sat cross legged on the "ocean" and made a gesture for William to follow suit.

William understood her intention so he immediately sat cross legged, facing her. He had already prepared himself mentally, so he waited for his Master's order attentively.

"The password to raise your sensitivity is 'Exceed Break'," Celine explained. "Take note that after you activate the runes, your body's sensitivity will increase a hundredfold. If you want to cancel its effects, just say 'Exceed Off'. Do you understand?"

"Yes." William nodded.

"Very well, activate the seal," Celine ordered.

"Exceed Break." William muttered.

Just as soon as the words left his lips, the runes that had embedded themselves inside the boy's body glowed in unison. William immediately felt a drastic change in his senses as his mind was overwhelmed by the sensations that washed over his body.

"We will now proceed with the first phase of your training," Celine said via telepathy. Since William's sensitivity had now increased by a hundredfold, she was afraid that her voice might be strong enough to shatter his eardrum. "For now, focus to see if you can feel any form of energy in your body."

William closed his eyes and focused his attention on his body. It didn't take long before he could hear and feel the beating of his own heart. Soon, the thumping sound resounded in his ear like a steady rhythm.

As the boy listened to his heart, he felt that his consciousness was turning hazy. What he didn't know was that his consciousness was starting to merge with his body when Celine's voice reached his mind.

"Do not lose yourself and let your mind wander," Celine cautioned. "Focus and comprehend the flow of energy in your body. Let that guide you to better understand the vessel that houses your soul. Only then will you be able to feel the Aura that envelops your entire being."

William followed Celine's instructions to the best of his abilities, but aside from the steady rhythm of his heart, he couldn't perceive anything else. More like, his heart was overwhelming his other senses and prevented them from sensing anything else.

Celine looked at the young boy in front of her with a knowledgeable gaze. She had also undergone this training and fully understood what William was going through.

A week passed, within the divine artifact, Eternity, and yet only seven hours had passed in the outside world.

William was still sitting cross legged as he tried to feel any form of energy that surrounded his body. He had made very little progress within the past week. There was a time when he felt a strand of energy flowing over his arms, but it disappeared after William lost his concentration.

He had tried to grasp that same sensation again, but the feeling had eluded him for days. Finally on the eight day, he felt something at the tip of his fingertips.

The red-headed-boy channeled all of his concentration on that spot as beads of sweat formed on his forehead. William tried to grasp the elusive form that was struggling at the tip of his fingertips with every bit of willpower he had.

An hour passed, and the boy's body was already drenched in sweat. He did everything within his power, but still failed in the end.

William's body almost fell forward due to exhaustion, but Celine had been prepared to support his body using magic.

"E-Exceed Off," William muttered as he panted for breath. Sweat streamed down the side of his face like a river, as he clenched his fist in frustration.

"Let's take a break first," Celine said as she placed an orange potion in front of William. "Here, take this nourishing supplement."

William thanked Celine and slowly drank the potion. This potion was a nutritional potion that Owen had made for the two of them. Its purpose was to prevent the two of them from feeling hungry for a week, while still gaining sufficient nutrients to allow their body to function properly.

"Master, how long did it take you to feel the Aura in your body?" William inquired.

"Five days," Celine answered.

"Five days..." William felt depressed. It had already been more than a week and he could only barely feel the aura in his body. He finally realized that his Master was truly exceptional, among the Elven Race.

"Don't feel down." Seeing William's expression, Celine decided to encourage him. "The only reason why I was able to learn it that fast was because I was born a genius. For ordinary elves, it takes them at least a month or two before they succeed in understanding the flow of their Aura. But, I believe that you can learn it faster. Afterall, you are my disciple. "

"Master, is there another way?" William inquired. "If there is, even though it will be painful, I am willing to do it."

"Hoh? Are you sure about that?" Celine smirked. "Do you think you can handle it?"

"I don't know if I can handle it or not, but I won't know until I try."

"Very well. I'm also curious if you will be able to endure it as well."

Ten minutes later...

William's laughter resounded within the world of Eternity.

If others were to hear it, they would think that the one laughing was truly very happy. However, reality was different. William was currently laughing with tears trickling down his face, snot running down his nose, and saliva dripping at the corners of his mouth.

Clearly, Celine's alternative way to help William feel his aura made the boy completely lose his marbles.

Chapter 105: Aura Training [Part 2]

"That's it for now," Celine said as she stopped moving the feather in her hand.

William was not in the right state of mind because his thoughts were currently scattered. Celine's plan was simple. She would imitate the flow of Aura on a person's body by using a feather, so that William could feel its circulation.

However, since the boy's sensitivity was multiplied by a hundredfold, he wasn't able to stop himself from laughing out loud as the ticklish sensation overwhelmed his senses.

When William finally regained his bearings, he wiped his face clean from filth. He was feeling embarrassed of making a fool of himself in front of his beautiful Master. When all traces of his embarrassment were removed, he then faced his Master to complain.

"Master, this is a very dangerous thing to do," William said with a very serious expression. "The sensitivity is too much. I can still feel the lingering traces of the feather on my skin and it makes my heart tremble."

"Very well, I will use this as a means in the future to interrogate you. It seems very effective," Celine said in a teasing tone. "But joke aside, why don't you use that lingering feeling to feel the flow of aura?"

William paused before saying "Exceed Break" in order to feel his body. Like he said earlier, the traces of Celine's feather experiment were still gnawing on his skin. It made the boy realize that by using those lingering feelings, he was able to finally feel the elusive sensation that he had been grasping for a week.

The boy didn't waste anymore time and focused his concentration to feel the flow of energy passing through every part of his body. A few minutes later, William had entered a trance-like state.

Celine had a smile on her face because she could tell that William had finally grasped the flow of Aura in his body.

A year passed and the sound of weapons clashing echoed within William's Sea of Consciousness.

After the Half-Elf had learned to channel the aura in his body to his weapon, Celine decided to go to the next phase of their training. Although William could empower his weapon with his aura, it was only at a very basic level.

What Celine was currently trying to teach him was the way to manipulate the aura into a form that would suit his battle style.

Celine teleported in front of William and thrust her spear forward. The boy bent his neck to the side to allow the spear to pass by. He thought that it was enough to neutralize her attack, but the beautiful elf only smiled at him.

"Little Will, you're still too green," Celine teased as she pulled her weapon back.

The two parted a few meters away from each other as William looked at his Master with a serious expression. He felt that something was wrong, but he couldn't put his finger to it. Suddenly, his vision tilted to the side as his head slid off his neck.

A few minutes later, William stared at his Master in disbelief. The spear in Celine's hand had turned into a deathscythe, and was the main culprit why his head was cut off earlier.

"You can also use your Aura to change the form of your weapon at will," Celine explained. "What you saw was only a simple application of Aura Intent. As long as you master Aura and Aura Intent, you will be able to fight even when you find yourself without any weapons."

Celine tucked the hair blocking her face behind the back of her ear as she continued her explanation, "It's a shame that Dwayne wasn't able to show you how he manipulates his aura. That bald monk has one of the scariest Martial Intent's that I have seen in the Southern Continent."

"Third Master?" William frowned. "What kind of Martial Intent does the Third Master have?"

Celine raised an eyebrow. "Well, I guess I can allow you to call him 'Third Master' since he taught you quite well in the year that the two of you were together. As for what kind of Martial Intent he has, you should ask him this question yourself."

"How about you, Master?" William inquired. "What kind of Martial Intent do you have?"

"Do you want to see it?" Celine grinned. "I can show it to you, but it will be a very, very, veeeeeeeeery painful experience. Are you sure you still want to see it?"

"Forget that I asked, Master."

"Good choice."

After that short intermission, both of them clashed once more.

William was trying to find a way to use his Aura so that he could at least not be at a disadvantage. Celine was also kind enough to teach him how to form a defensive barrier using his aura against magical attacks.

However, William's aura could only withstand First Circle Magic attacks. If someone were to use a fireball against him, his Aura Shield would immediately be destroyed and the Half-Elf would be burned to a crisp.

Two years after William and Celine entered the Divine Artifact Eternity...

Stormcaller flew in the air and engaged Celine in close combat. As Celine was trying to fend off the lightning imbued spear, several whistling sounds reached her ear.

The beautiful elf kicked Stormcaller aside and twirled her spear behind her in order to deflect the arrows that William had shot at her from her rear.

A mischievous smile appeared on Celine's face as she took a step forward towards the Half-Elf who was about to shoot another arrow in her direction.

William's perception had warned him about Celine's arrival, so he immediately released the arrow before jumping backwards.

Celine reappeared just in time to bend her head to the side to allow the arrow to pass harmlessly at the side of her neck. The next second she was already behind William, and delivered a powerful kick on the boy's back without any shred of mercy.

Sounds of bones breaking were heard as Celine broke the boy's spine in half. The Half-Elf's body skidded across the ground for a few meters before coming to a complete halt.

A few minutes later, William stood up from the ground with a pained expression. He had suffered countless times over the past two years, but there was not a single instance where he had managed to land even a scratch on his Master's body.

Even so, he was quite happy with his improvement. The Aura Intent that he had developed was to coat his weapon with his aura and turn it to a living weapon that could autonomously attack his enemies.

William had the option to control this weapon with his will, or let it attack automatically. This gave the boy an increase in his offensive power by using his bow to fire long-range attacks, while his enemy was trying to deal with his spear weapon.

Due to his aura being at the initial stage, William was only able to control one weapon at a time. He could also only control this weapon up to 300-meter radius away from him.

"Shall we take a break, or do you want to continue?" Celine asked.

"Let's take a short break, Master," William pleaded while trying to straighten his aching back. Although they were fighting using their souls, they could still feel pain. The ironic part was that since it was a soul battle, the pain was multiplied by two.

Due to the constant beatings he received, William's spiritual resistance had also increased dramatically. This was another hidden trump card that his Master had prepared for him in case that he ever found himself fighting against a Spirit Master.

"Master, right now, am I able to fight against those Elven Prodigies you were talking about?" William asked.

"With your current abilities, you can perhaps last ten minutes," Celine answered without batting an eye. "Consider it an achievement if you can last for more than twelve minutes against an Elven Prodigy."

William scratched his head in disappointment as he sat opposite of his Master. Deep down, he was really itching to fight against one of these so-called Elven prodigies and see if his Master was only making fun of him or not.

Still, he was happy that he was able to train using a divine artifact. If he were to train in the outside world for two years, he would be left in the dust by those who had been trained with vast resources at an early age.

Of course, if he hadn't lost his powers, and his Ring of Conquest was still working like it used to, William knew that there was no genius that he couldn't beat.

In the games that he had played, William usually beat every boss because of the massive level difference. Even if the boss was resistant to fire, he would still be able to kill it with fire attacks due to being over leveled.

It was a strategy that some gamers used in order to beat down an opponent that was stronger than them.

Unfortunately for William, his magic power and dungeon was out of commission. Even so, for the red-headed boy, it was a blessing in disguise. If he hadn't lost his magic power and his ability to gain massive experience in the dungeon, he wouldn't have had the opportunity to train his martial skills.

If William were given a chance to return to the past, he would have done the same thing all over again. For he knew that at the end of the day, without a good foundation, he was just like a tall building that was built using cheap materials.

A building that could collapse anytime without any warnings whatsoever.

Chapter 106: Aura Training [Part 3]

William and Celine had been inside the Divine Artifact for three years and two months.

The Half-Elf had spent the first two years awakening his Aura and forming his own Aura intent. After he managed to enfuse his aura on his spear, Celine had focused on honing his ability to keep his aura in battle for as long as possible.

Celine was amused at William's resourcefulness and even praised him for being able to accomplish such a feat.

After two years of Aura training, William finally focused on his spearmanship training.

"The spear's primary attack is the thrust," Celine explained as she thrust her spear straight at William's face, stopping two inches away from his nose. "The spear's main advantage is its long reach. If you were to use it to slash at people then you're better off using a sword. Remember, thrust first, slash later."

"Thrust first, slash later," William repeated as he nodded his head in acknowledgement.

"When you aim your spear at your enemy, aim it at their face. Not their chest, not their stomach, not their legs, but their face," Celine continued her explanation. "The reason? It allows you less openings, and your spear point would act as a deterrent. Basically, you're telling them that you'll hit them before they hit you."

Celine then showed William how to properly hold the spear. Her right hand was holding the rear-end of the spear, while her left hand firmly held the middle of the handle.

"The basic attack of the spear is the short thrust." Celine demonstrated a short thrust for William to see. "When you pull back the spear, do not lower the spear head because it creates an opening. It must remain pointing at your opponent's face at all times."

She repeated the move a few more times and asked William to do his own short spear thrusts.

"I've noticed that, when you use your spear, you make wide slashes which is not really the way to properly use it. In close quarters, the short thrust will be your friend. All you need to do is match it with good footwork and your opponent will definitely get a headache when they fight against you."

"The next thing you need to learn is the long range thrust. When you extend your thrust, your right hand needs to move up to underneath your armpit. Same rules apply, when you pull your spear back, it should still be pointing at your enemy's face. Remember, the spear is made to thrust, not to slash."

"Your primary objective should be to poke your target to death and not use wide swings that leave your body open for counter-attacks. Even in mounted combat, you will still use the thrust more than the slash."

William raised his hand to ask a question. "Master, then when do we slash our opponents?"

"Good question," Celine smiled. "Usually, we slash when our thrust is deflected. When the thrust is deflected upwards, we need to recover our stance and that is why we slash downwards. Of course, we can also initiate a slashing attack if we want to, but there are two things that you have to keep in mind when you do a slash."

The first thing you need to remember is that when you slash, your slash shouldn't go past the center of your body. What does that mean? It meant that your spear blade should never point downwards. You mustn't slash your spear all the way to the ground, because that is not how spears are used. Those who do that are amateurs."

She then showed William how a slash was made. After that she showed him a combination of slashes and thrusts in rapid succession. It was a very deadly combination, if used effectively, because the possibility of poking your enemy's eye out using that combination attack was very high.

The beautiful elf then resumed a fighting stance and showed William another option. "Of course, there are other alternatives that you can do when your thrust is deflected. The blunt end of your spear is not just for how. It is also used to block and counter-attack when your thrust is deflected.

"The key here is hand position and control. When your thrust is deflected, you can move your hand and position the spear to either block an attack, or hit your opponent's body part such as their joints, knees, or hips, to catch them off balance."

Celine demonstrated the block and counter-attacks that he could use using the bottom end of the spear in order to regain the fighting stance and continue fighting.

After showing William how to block effectively using the spear, the two once again engaged in a sparring match which helped William increase his proficiency with his spear mastery and, of course, gain experience points at the same time.

In the past, William thought that he could only level up his Job Classes by killing monsters in the dungeon. He didn't know that constant repetition also gave enough experience to level up the Job Class as long as it was done properly.

When William showed Celine the Monkey Staff Technique that Dwayne had imparted to him the Dark Sorceress laughed and said that it could be used as an effective means of attack if William's defenses were breached.

Basically, what Celine was saying is "Just let go of your spear and switch to your monk class and pummel your opponent with punches until he doesn't recognize East from West".

William scratched his head because he couldn't refute Celine's comment.

Then William's repetition training began. Short thrusts, long thrusts, short and long thrust combinations, and slash and thrust combinations.

Celine also paid extra attention to William's footwork. The Spearman Job Class has the battle art called the "Relentless Dragon Spear Art".

William was quite fascinated with this Spear Art because, unlike the Prince of Thunder's "Lightning God War Art" that focused on killing strikes, the Relentless Dragon Spear Art focused on close combat spear techniques and Cavalier Spear Techniques.

It was a spear art that was Commonly used by Dragoons and Templars in the Central Continent. The young boy's main weapon was the wooden staff, so learning this war art was a good option for him.

He would only use the Lightning God War Art as killing blows because most of them were "One Shot" techniques.

William spent his remaining time inside the Divine Artifact Eternity, perfecting his spear art until his Spearman Job Class reached its Max Level. Celine also made sure that he didn't slack off in the rest of his training.

Their routine was simple.

Spear training during the day, and Dark Magic Resistance training during the night. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call it Hellish Training by normal standards.

These days continued and William spent each day in pain and suffering.

Then, the day that William had been waiting for finally arrived. Celine finally gave him the nod of approval to end their "almost" four years of training.

If they were to add all the years he had spent inside Eternity then the red-headed boy would already be sixteen years of age.

However, no changes could be seen in his face or body. Celine was the same and she was still as young and beautiful as the day she had stepped inside the basement of her house.

"Master, thank you for everything," William gave Celine a very respectful bow.

"It is my duty as your master to supervise your training," Celine replied with a calm expression. "Go and stay with your family for a few days, because your next instructor will be arriving shortly."

"Eh? I have more training to do?" William blinked in confusion. "How come?"

Celine cupped the boy's face as she looked at him with a serious expression. "I don't know if your grandfather is right or wrong about his decision to ask that man to become your instructor. However, I do think that you need his teaching in order to survive in this world."

The beautiful elf lightly pinches William's cheeks before letting go. "I just hope that you will still retain some of your innocence when his lessons are done. Although I want you to become strong and powerful, I don't want you to become cold and indifferent. I still prefer this stupid version of you."

William massaged his cheeks as he looked up to his Master with a frown. "Master, I'm not stupid."

"It's just a figure of speech," Celine snorted. "Go. Spend some time with your family because you will be leaving Lont soon."

William was still half in doubt, but he still nodded his head in acknowledgement.

Celine and Oliver watched the boy's retreating figure through the window and sighed.

"Mistress, I like this version of William. If possible, I don't want him to experience such an ordeal," Oliver said.

"Me, too," Celine replied. "But change is the only permanent thing in this world. Let's just wait for his return. We can think of a way to help after he finishes his next lesson."

Oliver closed his eyes and sighed one more time. "Tough times don't last. Tough people do."

Celine had already done her best for William, it was now time to pass the torch to others. However, the one to whom the torch had been passed on was someone who thrived in the darkness.

In a place where darkness reigned supreme, a burning torch was no different from a small candle who's light would be snuffed out by the swaying of the wind.

"P-Please, have mercy! I won't do it again!" a middle-aged man begged as he looked at the man approaching him with dread. "What do you want? Money? Women? Authority? I can give it to you! Just spare my life! I beg you!"

The man wearing a hood walked towards the middle-aged man with silent footsteps. Due to the hood covering his face, no one could tell if he was handsome or not. The man in question didn't care for such trivialities. The only thing he needed to do was carry out his work, as ordered by his Liege.

"Please, I beg yo-- ahhhh!"

The man wasn't able to finish his sentence, for the hooded man pierced his chest with a short sword in one swift motion.

The middle-aged man died with his eyes wide open and staring at the starry skies. For a brief moment, before his death, his eyes showed fear, and regret before they clouded over as his life left his body.

"I find no joy in this, but there is no other way," the hooded man said. "Requiescat In Pace,"

(A/N: Rest in Peace)

The hooded man walked away, disappearing in the darkness of the night. Having finished his task, it was now time for him to return to Lont, where his new mission was waiting for him.

Chapter 107: Bell of Anthanasia

It was the second day after William had finished his training with Celine. He had just finished his daily martial arts routine and was waiting for the sun to rise from the East.

'I wonder what Mama is doing right now,' William thought as he took off his shirt and started to wipe his body with a towel.

He hadn't seen Ella for the past two years and his Grandpa only told him that she was busy training along with the rest of his herd.

After he finished drying himself off, William sat on the hill as the first rays of sunlight peeked from behind the hill to the East. Watching the sunrise, and sunset, had become a habit in this lifetime. It reminded him of the days back on Earth when he had missed many beautiful opportunities because of his illness.

While gazing at the sunrise, he heard the familiar sound of receiving a notification from the system.

< Ding! >

< You've received mail from the God Shop! >

"Mail?" William muttered as he opened his inbox from his God Shop. This was the very first time he had received mail from the system and he was very curious about its contents. He read the mail and was surprised when he saw that there was an attachment included in it.

To our beloved Patron!

The God of Shepherd is currently celebrating his 3021'st Birthday. Due to this, his Excellency David, had decided to send gifts to his close friends and acquaintances.

As the number one provider of God Tier Artifacts since Time Immemorial, the God Shop was tasked to send the God's gifts free of charge!

Enclosed within this mail is the Artifact "Bell of Athanasia", courtesy of the God of Shepherd. It is a special artifact that is said to give happiness to the one who wears it.

P.S

All goods delivered by the God Shop are in perfect condition. We will not accept Claims and Refunds for any damaged or defective goods. We don't handle that sh*t!

Did you like our services? Please leave us a review on our website!. We will automatically delete 3 stars reviews and below. Anyone who dares to leave bad reviews will be cursed with not being able to raise their PPs ever again!

Your's Truly,

God Shop Manager

Serving you since Time Immemorial~

"Bell of Anthanasia?" William summoned the bell from the God Shop and used his appraisal skill to check its information.

< Bell of Anthanasia >

This bell used to belong to Amaltheia, who was sometimes called the Tender Goddess. She left the bell in the care of the God of Shepherds when she rose to the starry skies to become a constellation.

-- Grants +10 Enhancement Bonus to all stats

-- Nourishes the wearer's body to always keep it healthy.

-- Grants immunity to Poison

-- Enhances the effect of all nurturing skills

-- Grants ???? Form

-- ??????

William read the information and agreed that it was a very good artifact. However, there were some question marks included in the information and he had no idea what it meant.

'System, is there something wrong with my appraisal skill?'

< To answer the host's question, the level of the Appraisal skill you currently possess is unable to translate the information of the artifact completely. This is a very normal thing, especially for sacred or divine artifacts that belonged to deities and Gods.>

'I see...' William nodded his head in understanding. 'I'm sure that Sir David would not do something detrimental to me. Ah! I forgot, I need to greet him with a happy birthday as well.'

William replied to the mail of the Manager of the God Shop and respectfully asked him to pass a message to the God of Shepherds. William thanked David in his letter and greeted him with a Happy Birthday. He also apologized and promised to make an offering the next time he went to a temple as thanks for David's generosity.

After sending his reply, he once again looked at the bell in his hand. From all angles, it looked like an ordinary silver bell with no special features. If not for the information he got from the Appraisal Skill, William would think that he was pranked by the God Shop.

"Meeeeeeeh!"

A familiar greeting reverberated in the air and William hurriedly stood and looked at the direction where the call came from. There, he saw Ella running towards him in haste.

William grinned and ran towards his Mama and the two were finally reunited after two years of separation.

"Mama, I missed you."

"Meeeeh!"

"How have you been?"

"Meeeeh."

The two chatted for a long time as they asked each other what they had been doing for the past two years that they were not together. Ella told him that she and the other goats trained with Marcus and Thunder in the Northern part of the Hellan Kingdom.

She added that there were also many Angorian War Ibexes in the place where they trained.

William listened to Ella's story and frowned when he heard that they were treated as outsiders in the beginning. She even complained that they were attacked a couple of times by the Leader of the Herd of the Ibexes who demanded that they submit to him.

Naturally, none of the goats agreed to its demands because they already belonged to William's herd. That was where the problem started and they were continuously harassed during their training. Not only by the goats, but the Tribes who lived in that region as well.

Of course, Ella and the other goats tried to fight back, but they were severely outnumbered. There were only fourteen of them, and their enemies numbered in the thousands. How could they possibly win?

Fortunately, Marcus was with them and Ella told the red-headed boy that the Senior Shepherd of Lont had a long talk with the Chief of the Tribe.

After their talk, none of the War Ibexes and the members of the tribe harassed them ever again. This allowed the goats to train in the harsh environment of the Northern Region where blizzards and hailstorms happened on a regular basis.

In turn, William told Ella his training with Owen, Trent, Dwayne, and Celine. Naturally, he downplayed the harshness of the training in order to not make Ella upset. The two talked for a long time until it was almost lunch time.

"Mama, I have something for you."

"Meeeeeh?"

"This is a divine artifact and I want you to have it, Mama." William presented the silver bell to Ella and rang it a few times.

"Meeeeeeh." Ella bleated softly when she saw the bell. Her instinct was telling her that it was a very precious object and she felt touched that William was planning to give it to her.

The bell was attached to a silver collar that automatically adjusted its size to accommodate its wearer. William lovingly adjusted the collar on Ella's neck and secured it in place.

"Mama, do you feel any discomfort?"

Ella shook her head and licked William's cheeks in reply.

"I need to go back to Master's house to cook her lunch. How about you, Mama?"

"Meeeeeeh."

"Alright, let's meet later this afternoon." William nodded.

Ella told him that she would go and look after the other members of William's herd who were currently grazing in the valley near Lont. She was the only one who returned to the town because she wanted to see how William was doing.

William gave Ella one last hug before he went to Celine's house. Ella, on the other hand, looked at William's retreating back with gentle eyes.

She bleated softly to say her thank you, not to William, but to David who had made her remember the things that had happened in the distant past. A past, when the Gods and mortals worked hand in hand, to build a paradise that she thought would last till the end of time.

Somewhere in the Temple of the Gods...

"3021'st birthday?" Lily snorted. "What a load of crap. Can't you just be honest and say that you wanted to give him a gift? Why do things in a roundabout manner?"

The Loli Goddess was complaining because David had "tricked" William in believing that it was his birthday. Unfortunately, William had also forgotten that there were no birthday celebrants that sent gifts to other people during their birthdays.

Usually, the ones that would be receiving gifts were the birthday celebrants and not the other way around!

"Lily, you are a new generation goddess. Don't you understand the concept of paying it forward?" David asked.

"Hmp! Paying it forward? Do you really think that I'm a gullible child?" Lily answered in disdain. "I know you're up to something. An old schemer like you doesn't do things without a reason."

David played with his beard and grinned. "You think too much, Lily. It was just a gift."

"So you say, but I still smell something fishy." Lily narrowed her eyes.

David chuckled and walked away from the Loli Goddess in order to escape her interrogation. Truth be told, the God of Shepherds was only keeping the promise he made to his old friend, Amaltheia.

A promise that he had made thousands of years ago, when the universe was still young, and mankind was just starting to take its first steps towards the unknown.

Chapter 108: Those Who Reside In The Darkness [Part 1]

A hooded man walked through the countryside until he arrived at a valley overlooking the town of Lont.

The sun was just about to set, and the sky was dyed in an orange hue. The man paused to admire the setting sun for a full-minute before continuing his journey.

As he neared Lont, the Ourobro sensed his presence, but it turned a blind eye to the approaching man. He had already seen him countless times before, and he remembered his scent well. This hooded man would leave Lont for long periods of time, but whenever he returned, he would carry with him a strong scent of blood

Ezio gave the Golden Ape a brief nod before melding into the shadows. He made his way to the Ainsworth Residence like a silent spectre, disturbing no one in his wake.

When he reached the living room, he heard the giggle of a baby. Ezio smiled despite himself because his Lord would always return to being a doting grandparent whenever he was around his granddaughter.

It was the same for Matthew and William, but he could tell that James would spoil Eve rotten as she grew up. He offered a silent prayer to the fools who would dare to court the young lady when she reached adulthood.

Ezio was sure that if Modred didn't kill them, James certainly would.

He found his Lord, writing a letter inside his room. Like always, Ezio would wait until James was finished with his task. He was not in a hurry and decided to meditate for the time being. A few minutes later, James finally finished his letter and called out to him.

"How did it go?" James inquired.

"The right hand of the minister will no longer bother us," Ezio reported. "If the minister is not a fool then he will know what to do."

"Well done." James nodded his head in approval. "Rest for two days before you start your new assignment. I'm sure that you already know what it is, yes?"

Ezio nodded his head. "If that is your will, My Lord."

"Aren't you going to ask me why?"

"No. I believe in the Lord's judgement."

James tapped the armchair with a finger as he gazed at the hooded man who was kneeling in front of him.

"Show him the filth of humanity," James ordered. "But, do not tell him what to do. Let him make his own decisions. Whether he does, or does not, is all up to him."

"I hear and obey," Ezio replied.

"You may go now."

"By your will."

After leaving the Ainsworth Residence, Ezio made his way towards the one and only tavern in Lont, the Sleeping Forest.

He removed his hood before walking inside the tavern. Ezio was now off-duty, so there was no need for him to follow the strict creed that he had imposed upon himself.

As always, he walked to the farthest stool at the bar and waited for the bartender to take his order.

"Will you be having the usual?" The bartender of the Sleeping Forest, Ryan, asked as he wiped the glass cup in his hands.

"Yes," Ezio replied without even looking at him.

Ryan nodded and took out a few bottles from the cabinet. A few seconds later, he was expertly mixing a cocktail. This was a special blend that was not served to the other customers in the tavern. The reason? None of them were strong enough to finish the drink.

Only a handful of people in Lont appreciated this drink and Ezio was one of them.

Ryan placed the cup in front of Ezio with a wink before returning to his station. Ezio muttered a word of thanks before taking a sip from the glass.

The brown-haired man closed his eyes as he savored the burning sensation that spread inside his mouth, down his throat, and into his body.

He wasn't able to stop the soft sigh of pleasure from escaping his lips as he bathed in the afterglow of his drink.

Ezio stayed inside the tavern for an hour before walking out into the night. Like always, he strolled around the town of Lont without any destination in mind.

For some reason, he found himself walking towards the South of Lont. It was a place he rarely visited, for he had no reason to go there. However, for some reason, something was pulling him to go in that direction.

It was then when he saw him. A young boy was lying on a stack of hay while looking at the stars in the sky. Beside him was an Angorian Goat whose head was resting on his chest.

Ezio recognized him right away, because very few kids in Lont treated a goat in this manner. In his eyes, the boy was like a burning candle light in the darkness. A fragile light that could go out at any moment if the wind were to blow in its direction.

Although he didn't question his Lord's order, Ezio wondered what would happen if the boy's light were to suddenly disappear and be replaced by darkness. Would he still be the same carefree boy that laughed happily? The same boy that sang songs as he led his goats towards the valley to graze?

Would he still look at the world with those clear, green eyes that shone like emeralds? Or would their radiance fade and be clouded by a haze as he lost his faith in humanity?

Ezio wanted to know. He was dying to know.

'One month,' Ezio thought. 'I will know the answer after a month.'

The brown-haired man retraced his steps and wandered through the night. His Lord ordered him to rest, and that is what he was going to do.

Two days later...

William stood inside the conference room with a serious expression plastered on his face. James had told him yesterday that his instructor had already arrived in Lont, and he was to go to the conference at midnight the next day to meet him.

William's "new" instructor was currently standing in the corner of the room, dressed in black and wearing a hood. He was giving off the "Assassin Vibe", and it was making the young boy feel very uncomfortable.

"Will, I would like to introduce you to your new instructor, Ezio," James said as he made a gesture to the man standing at the corner of the room. "Ezio, you already know who William is, I hope the two of you get along from now on."

"Nice to meet you, Sir Ezio," William said with a smile.

"Likewise," Ezio replied.

James patted William's shoulder with a serious expression. "You will accompany Ezio as he completes his missions outside of Lont. You are free to act however you please, but you are not allowed to interfere with his work. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes." William nodded.

"Ezio, look after my grandson," James ordered. "You already know what he's like. I'm sure that you're going to suffer a few headaches, but be more tolerant of him."

"As you command, My Lord." Ezio gave James a respectful bow before turning towards William. "Let's go, William. Time for you to start your training."

"Yes, Sir Ezio," William replied.

The two left the residence under the cover of darkness. William had already said his goodbyes to his Master, his Mama Ella, his Uncle Mordred, Aunt Anna, Aunt Helen, and his cute cousin, Eve.

The two had just left the town of Lont when Ezio initiated a conversation.

"You have already trained under several masters and I can tell that your overall fighting ability has reached the initial stages of Gold Rank," Ezio said as he continued to walk. "Class D Beasts pose no threat to you and--to a certain extent--you will be able to handle normal Class C Beasts on your own."

Ezio paused for a while before continuing his explanation. "However, the greatest threat to you right now are humans, not monsters. Although I was supposed to be your instructor, I will not teach you anything unless you have fully committed yourself to take that next step.

"Until then, you will just observe on the sidelines. You are free to do anything you want as long as you don't get in the way of my mission. Do you understand?"

"Yes," William replied. The boy had a vague idea what his new instructor was hinting at and it was already making his stomach churn. He hoped beyond hope that he was only overthinking things.

Unfortunately for William, that small hope in his heart disappeared completely as his world was dyed red.

Chapter 109: Those Who Reside In The Darkness [Part 2]

The thick scent of fear, despair, helplessness, and pain, permeated the air as William looked at his blood-stained hands. Everything around him had fallen into chaos and fires ravaged every tent as far as the eyes could see.

The crying of several infants could be heard nearby, as their mothers did their best to assure them that everything was going to be alright.

Shouts filled with anger, curses, and heartbreak...

Laughter filled with ridicule and contempt...

All of these merged together to create a ballad that had brought the red-headed boy to his knees. Overwhelmed with light-headedness and nausea, William tried to wipe away the blood that had stained his hands, but instead of removing them, he only spread them further.

"Gwaaark!"

The young boy wasn't able to hold it back any longer as the smell of blood, piss, sweat, and excrement assaulted him from all sides.

He vomited until he could vomit no more as tears streamed down his face.

Roars, shouts, explosions, and weapons clashing against each other resounded throughout the encampment where the nomads of different tribes had gathered.

William panted as he saw several men, carrying weapons, move in his direction. He wiped away the filth on his lips and forced himself to stand up. The young boy firmly held Stormcaller in his hands and took a step forward.

The crying of the babies grew louder as their mothers shivered in fright. William stood in front of them with his weapon raised high. His legs were shaking due to exhaustion and discomfort, but he couldn't back down. He refused to back down!

Alas, there were times when doing one's best was not enough. He had already gone above and beyond his limits in trying to keep this place safe. The red-headed boy had already reached the end of his rope.

He could barely stand, but stand he did. For who else would do it in his place? None. That was why he needed to make his stand.

William's small body was sent flying before finally skidding on the ground a few meters away from the women and children. He was a spent candle and there was no way for him to fend off the group of men, who had arrived at the make-shift shelter where the women and children of the tribe hid.

Stormcaller crackled a few meters away from the fallen boy as tendrils of lightning hissed around its body. It was as if it was urging, pleading, for William to stand and protect everyone behind him.

As much as the boy wanted to hear its call, he could no longer move his body.

One of the men walked up to William, and stomped on his legs without mercy. The resounding sound of bones breaking and the young boy's pained cry echoed in the night.

Laughing at his suffering, the man stomped on his arms, breaking them as well.

"That's enough. Don't kill him," one of the men said. "He's a Half-Elf, we can sell him for a high price."

The group of men laughed as they looked at William and the people who were trembling behind him. Amidst the crying of infants, William's blurred vision wandered at a tree in the distance. There he saw a man wearing a hood as his robes fluttered in the wind.

The hooded man walked towards the group of men with even steps, and yet, no footsteps could be heard.

When someone finally noticed him, he was already only a meter away from the man who broke William's arms and legs.

And on that day, William finally saw with his own eyes, and finally understood, that the world outside the boundaries of Lont was a place filled with misery and strife.

Where the strong bullied the weak and the evil tyrants ended the lives of innocent people as if they were merely cutting grass.

Before William's consciousness descended into darkness, he heard the hooded man say something in his direction.

"Requiescat In Pace."

The blood from the group of men sprayed into the air like fountains, and fell on the young boy's body like rain.

The only saving grace was that William had already fainted and was unaware of what was happening in his surroundings.

The hooded man looked down on the pitiful boy lying on the ground, with his limbs bent in unnatural angles and tears dyed with blood staining his handsome face. Even though he was unconscious, his tears never stopped falling.

Perhaps, William wept for the lives that were lost, or perhaps he wept for his own loss. Whatever the reason, one thing was clear.

When morning came, the young boy who had left Lont more than a month ago would never be the same again.

"Compared to William, Eve is such a handful," Anna said as she softly patted the sleeping baby's back while looking at the flowers in the garden. "When do you think he'll be coming back, Father?"

James looked at his sleeping granddaughter with a smile on his face. However, when Anna mentioned William's name, the smile stiffened and was replaced with a troubled expression.

"It has been six months since he left Lont," James replied. "I'm sure that he's already on his way back home."

Anna pouted, "Father, just where did you order William to go? I don't want Eve to grow up without spending time with her Big Brother."

The red-headed boy firmly insisted that he be called Big Brother by Eve instead of cousin. Anna agreed on his request with a laugh because she felt that William's reaction was quite funny.

She was not aware that James had sent the poor boy to a mission that would cause him to become...

Suddenly, James raised his head to look in the direction of the Northern Gate of Lont because he had received a hidden message from Ezio. He hurriedly took his leave from the garden and headed North.

When he arrived at the gate, he saw two hooded people. One tall, one small, and both wearing hooded robes.

James had recognized both of them right away. The Lord of Lont had a calm expression on his face as he waited for the two people to arrive in front of him.

"I have returned, My Lord." Ezio placed his hand over his chest in greeting.

"Welcome back." James briefly nodded his head before turning at the young boy whose face he couldn't see. "Welcome back, William."

The boy only gave a brief nod in acknowledgement and did nothing else. William simply stood there as his robes swayed in the wind.

James sighed internally as he looked at his beloved grandson. He could immediately tell that the boy was not in the mood for emotional reunions.

"Both of you must be tired from your journey," James said. "Let's go back to the residence. I'll ask Helen to prepare something good for the two of you--."

"I'm not going."

James frowned as he gazed upon the hooded boy standing in front of him.

"I'm not going to the residence," William stated. "I'm going to Master's house."

William didn't wait for James' reply and walked past him.

The old man wasn't angered by William's actions. No. He couldn't possibly get angry because deep inside he was feeling very guilty. James could only look at his grandson's retreating back as he walked towards the South of Lont where Celine's residence was located.

Sighing for the second time, he motioned for Ezio to follow him back to the residence. He wanted to hear his detailed report on what his Grandson had experienced during his half-year absence from Lont.

Chapter 110: Why Is Human Life So Fragile?

"How many?" James asked.

"A hundred," Ezio answered.

"Only a hundred?"

"Yes."

James closed his eyes as his fingers tapped the armchair. He was thinking on what to do next, for he knew that he couldn't allow William to stay in his current state. The longer he stayed in that condition, the harder it would be for him to break free from its hold.

"Thank you and sorry for troubling you," James said as he looked at his loyal subordinate. "Can you tell me everything that happened in detail?"

"Yes." Ezio nodded.

The man took off his hood and began to narrate everything that happened since he left Lont with William. He told James the places they visited, the people they met, and the things that happened in between.

The old man listened with a serious expression as if he was afraid that he would miss a single word of Ezio's story.

While this was happening, William had already arrived at Celine's house, but instead of meeting with his Master, he went to the goat pen. Once inside, he closed all of its windows, and barred the entrance.

The young boy went to the corner where the hay was stacked in a neat row and laid on top of it. Soon, he closed his eyes to sleep. His body would twitch from time to time and words would sometimes escape his lips.

He was reliving the nightmares that he had experienced over the last six months in his dream. This was not the first time this had happened, for he had experienced this countless times during their journey.

A few hours later, he woke up from his slumber. His stomach was growling and it was now time to eat.

The boy was just about to take out the fruits he picked on their way back to Lont from his storage ring when the door of the goat pen swung open.

Light flooded the dark environment and the boy had to cover his eyes due to the sudden brightness.

"Stupid disciple, why didn't you come and greet me first?" A sweet and silky voice reached his ears.

William looked at the beautiful woman who was walking towards him. If this was in the past, he might have already backed away in fear, but the current him only looked at Celine with an apathetic gaze.

"Disciple greets Master," William said with a brief nod. "I have returned."

"That's it?" Celine placed her hands on her waist. "No souvenirs? Or gifts?"

"There was no opportunity to find any gifts suitable for the Master," William answered. "Disciple will do better next time."

Celine clicked her tongue in irritation. She wasn't liking the current William and it was pissing her off.

"Go to the house and cook me an early dinner," Celine ordered. "Make sure to put your heart into it."

"Okay." William nodded as he stood up from the haystack.

He didn't question why his Master wanted dinner at three in the afternoon, nor did he have any intention of asking.

The boy simply followed Celine back to the house and headed straight towards the kitchen.

Oliver, who was seated on his perch, observed the young boy as he prepared the food for Celine. William had left Lont for a little over six months and, when he had returned, he had become like this.

The Parrot Monkey had figured that this was bound to happen. However, seeing the mischievous William turn into an emotionless brat still ruffled his feathers.

An hour later, Celine sat at the dining table facing William. The corner of her lips were twitching as she tried to maintain a smile on her beautiful face.

"William, what are these?" Celine asked.

"Master, this is a vegetable and fruit salad," William answered.

"You know I like to eat meat, right?"

"Yes."

"Then why didn't you prepare any meat dishes?" Celine inquired. "Although salad is good, this only serves as a side dish for the main dish."

"I don't like the smell of meat," William replied as he casually filled his plate with salad.

He was taking the "eat if you want and don't eat if you don't want" stance which made Celine frown.

The old William would never disobey nor argue with her when it came to her requests, especially food. The red-headed boy would even do his best to impress Celine with his cooking in order to be praised by her.

However, this boy in front of her didn't care whether she wanted to eat or not, which was giving her a headache.

The beautiful elf grudgingly ate the dishes that William had prepared for her. Although they tasted good, she was someone who liked to eat meat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. She was cursing James internally for doing this to her disciple.

Celine was regretting the fact that she had agreed to the old man's suggestion to have William accompany Ezio on some of his missions.

'Perhaps we rushed things too much.' Celine sighed as she looked at the boy who had already finished eating.

"William, come to my room tonight," Celine said as she placed down the fork in her hand. "Make sure to bathe properly, do you understand?"

"Yes," William replied. "Master, if you don't need me for anything I will be returning to the goat pen."

"Go. But, remember that you have an appointment with me tonight."

After giving Celine a brief nod, William left the house and returned to the goat pen. Celine and Oliver glanced at each other and shook their heads at the same time.

"So, this is what it means to not cry over spilt milk." Oliver rolled his eyes. "Such an apt saying, don't you think, Mistress?"

"Oliver."

"Yes?"

"Cook me some meat dishes."

"... As you wish, Mistress."

Three hours after sunset, William knocked on Celine's bedroom door. He was wearing a plain robe used for sleeping and his body had a subtle fragrance of soap.

"Come in."

"Yes." William stepped inside his Master's room.

Celine gave the boy a brief glance before beckoning him to come to the bed.

William obeyed and laid beside his Master. He then closed his eyes to sleep.

For some reason, the beautiful Elf felt a slight disappointment in her heart because the boy didn't even bat an eye while looking at her in her nightdress. Just a few months ago, William's face would turn beet red whenever he saw Celine in her night wear.

Now, he was acting as if he was an adult and Celine was just a little girl who had no redeeming features whatsoever.

Celine pushed aside these mundane thoughts to the back of her mind as she pressed her forehead over William's.

"Synchronization."

Celine almost didn't recognize William's Sea of Consciousness because it was very different from the one she saw six months ago. Last time, William's sea of consciousness was filled with stars that glittered brightly in the sky.

The ocean underneath their feet would reflect these stars and create a world filled with dazzling colors.

Now, there was only one color in William's world and that was red.

Red clouds hung in the sky, and the ocean under her feet had a deep crimson color. Countless weapons were embedded in the ocean's surface, with their handles pointed towards the heavens in defiance.

Swords, spears, axes, daggers, and several weapons both exotic and unique could be seen everywhere. In the center of it all stood a small figure wearing a hood.

Blood droplets fell from his blood-stained hands which made small ripples beside his feet.

Celine frowned when she saw this scene, but her feet didn't stop moving. She walked up to the boy who was staring in the distance, with his hood covering his face.

"Master, why is human life so fragile?" William asked without turning his head. "Why do the innocent always have to be the ones to suffer? If showing goodwill to other people is repaid with a stab in the back then what is the point of kindness?"

William finally turned his head to look at the beautiful woman who had tortured him countless times in the past.

"I think it would be best if everyone just stopped being nice to each other," William said softly. "That way, you wouldn't feel betrayed if someone were to put a collar on your neck and sell you as a slave."

Celine took a step forward then gently held the back of William's head. She then pulled him close to her chest, giving him a tight hug.

William felt his Master's warmth and softness, as well as the familiar fragrance that was coming from her body. However, it didn't have the same meaning as it did in the past. Nothing mattered to him anymore.

He even missed Celine's torturous lessons. At least, during those times, he could scream and cry out because of the pain. Now, all the tears in his eyes had dried out. He no longer had tears to shed, he no longer cared. For him, the life he had now had lost its meaning.