

## Strongest 171

### Chapter 171: Corrupted Dungeon Cores [Part 1]

Growls, roars, and shouts reverberated throughout the battlefield as both sides clashed against each other. Due to the presence of the Diabolical Hell Ape, a powerful pressure had descended upon the Dungeon Creatures which made their movements and performance decrease significantly.

William and Ella cut through the sea of monsters like a hot knife through butter. The Spire, and the Long-Horned-Enchanted Deer that flanked William's sides, bulldozed everything in their path.

Due to the vast difference in strength, Xolotl was mercilessly pummeled by the Diabolical Hell Ape. Although it was a Mythical Beast, the Xolotl was clearly not a match to the Giant Ape that was immune to fire.

As a creature of the underworld, its resistance to Miasma was very high. Even if it was surrounded by corrupted monsters, it moved unhindered and turned the lower-tiered monsters around it into ashes.

The other rules of the forest under its command were all Class B Beasts. They were more than enough to fight off the hordes of monsters coming their way. Psoglav, wielded a bastard sword in its hand as it sliced one monster after another.

It was as if it was venting out its frustration on the low-tiered beast for being forced to participate in a battle that was due to its carelessness.

While the hordes of Corrupted Dungeon Monsters, and the Allied forces collided, the true Powerhouses were duking it out on both the land and air.Â

Xolotl relied on its lightning bolts and speed to deal with the Giant Ape, because it knew that it was no match against it in close combat. What it didn't know was that the Giant Ape's Serpent Tail was an expert in medium-ranged combat as well.

It would spray acid and poison that was strong enough to melt boulders, from time to time to cut off the Xolotl's path of retreat, and allow the Diabolical Hell Ape to deliver a nasty blow that would send it flying.

Since the magicians couldn't fire their spells towards the ground for fear of friendly fire, they focused their attention on the aerial monsters that hovered above their heads. Spells of different kinds flew in the air which illuminated their surroundings like trails made by fireworks.

The Winged Serpent wanted to help the Xolotl deal with the Diabolical Hell Ape, but an annoying Parrot Monkey blocked its path. After their initial clash in the air, the Winged Serpent knew that it was no match against the weird-looking-creature that had the head of a monkey and the body of a parrot.

It's pitiful shrieks resounded across the sky as Oliver toyed with it to its heart's content.

'He... Help us.'

"Sa... Save us.'

William could sense that the voices calling out to him were gradually weakening. He had a feeling that the time the voices stopped calling out to him, something sinister would take place inside the dungeon.

"Spire, I'll leave the clearing of the battlefield to you!" William shouted. "I'm heading inside the dungeon."

Spire eyed him for a brief moment before nodding its majestic head. 'We will help to create a path for you. Be careful, Young William.'

The Diabolical Hell Ape heard their conversation and the Serpent Tail immediately spat several fireballs the size of a car into the sea of monsters. The fireballs turned everything it hit into ashes, paving a road for the boy and his mama goat to traverse unchallenged.

Twenty Long-Horned-Enchanted Deer took the lead and formed an arrow formation with William at its center. They used the path that the Diabolical Hell Ape had created and ran in the direction of the dungeon.

Spire ordered the remaining deer under its command to stay on the frontline of the battlefield. The Eternal Guardian had a special cleansing ability that allowed it to purify the Miasma in the bodies of the defenders.

With its help, the humans were able to continue fighting without having to retreat to cure the miasma poisoning.

Two minutes later...

"Thank you, this is as far as you can take me." William thanked the deer who had accompanied him.  
"Please, go back and help Spire protect the students."

'Are you sure you can do it alone, Little Will?' Oliver's voice sounded inside his head. 'Do you need me to follow you?'

Although Oliver was currently toying with the Winged Serpent, it would be very easy for him to subdue it if need be. The reason he came to Dawsbury was to ensure William's safety. A mere Winged Serpent was not as important as his Mistress' future husband candidate.

'It will be fine, Second Master,' William replied. 'I am never alone.'

'Ah, that is true,' Oliver commented. 'You are never alone. Very well, I'll play here for a while longer. Just call me if anything happens.'

'Understood.'

'Goodluck with whatever you plan to do.'

After reassuring Oliver, William and Ella entered the entrance of the dungeon. William was expecting to fight his way through a horde of monsters, but the dungeon was practically empty. Before William could even do anything, a gate suddenly appeared in front of him.

It opened very slowly and the voices he had heard earlier urged him to enter.

Since his purpose for coming was to find out who was calling out to him, William entered the gate while raising his guard. The moment the shepherd passed through it, the gate disappeared completely leaving nothing behind.

In a wide and spacious land, where dark clouds covered the sky, William stared at two black orbs, the size of a car's wheel, floating in front of him.

'Y-You're finally here.'

'P-Please, help us.'

'Save us.'

William approached the two black orbs with caution. The Miasma that the two orbs were releasing looked so sinister, that the red-headed boy didn't know if it was a good idea to get closer.

Suddenly, the dark cloud of Miasma transformed into a giant two headed dog with a serpentine tail. The two-headed dog bared its fangs at the intruders on its territory, however, it didn't make any moves to attack William. It stayed in its position and shielded the two black orbs behind its back.

William narrowed his eyes as he used his appraisal skill to read the information of the monster in front of them.

< Orthus >

-- Dog of Twilight

-- Corrupted Guardian

-- Threat Level: B (Mid)

-- Cannot be added to the Herd

-- A two-headed dog that guards the castles of the Abyss Rulers in the underworld. Wields the power of Darkness and specializes in mobility. For a short period in time, it can split itself into two giant dogs with one head each. The serpentine tail on its back contains a powerful paralyzing poison that can paralyze a human for hours.

Although the Orthus was a Class B, middle-tier monster, William felt that it was very different from the other Class B monsters that he had fought against. Psoglav was a Class B monster, but the presence that it exuded was more powerful than the Orthus in front of William.

Still, William didn't dare to underestimate his opponent and decided to go all out to defeat it.

"Let's go, everyone," William raised his spear and shouted. "Gate Open!"

A portal appeared behind the boy and a herd of Angorian War Ibexes stepped into the dungeon room.

Chrono, Aslan, and the others looked at the monster dog in front of them with sparkling eyes. They were sick and tired of getting bullied by James, and the other powerful experts in Lont, during their training lessons.

It had been so long since William had called for them, so they endured the beatings of these powerful fighters as they honed their fighting techniques to the peak.

The corner of William's lips twitched when the goats that answered his summons began to discuss with each other.

Aslan: "Meeeeeeh?" (Can we bully that dog?)

Chronos: "Meeeee!" (Let's bully it!)

Aslan: "Meeeh! (I agree!)"

All the goats: ""Meeeeeh!"" (Let's go!)"

They didn't even wait for William's command and charged at the two headed dog as a group. It was like a dozen school kids were flocking towards a little puppy that had been presented to them by a teacher.

The Orthus roared mightily and faced off against the Angorian War Ibexes... at least, that was its original plan.

However, it had underestimated how fast and how strong the War Ibexes were. The dog yelped in pain as several horns collided with its body that sent it flying to the air. As it was falling, it noticed a single War Ibex waiting for it where it would land.

The War Ibex had a mischievous look in its eyes as it turned around and lifted its hind legs to... kick it!

The poor dog became a volleyball ball that got passed around by the War Ibexes that were venting out their frustration. In a desperate attempt to fight back, Orthux split its body into two.

Unfortunately, its actions only made the goats more excited as they, too, split into two teams. Aslan's and Chrono's teams took one dog each and resumed their volleyball session.

William didn't know whether he should laugh or cry at the pitiful guardian dog that was being bullied by the goats he had raised since they were kids.

(A/N: Fun fact. A young goat is also called a kid.)

Since the immediate threat was already being taken care of, William approached the two black orbs and checked their condition with his Appraisal Skill.

< Corrupted Dungeon Core >

-- A dungeon core that was corrupted by Miasma

-- Corruption Progress: 95%

'System, how do we resolve this issue?' William inquired.

< To answer the host's question, there is only one way to handle a corrupted dungeon core and that is to destroy it. However, even if the host did nothing, these two cores will shatter automatically once the miasma has corrupted it completely... >

#### Chapter 172: Corrupted Dungeon Cores [Part 2]

William frowned when he heard the system's explanation. He didn't come here to destroy anything. His reason for coming inside the dungeon was to save whoever had been calling to him and, from what he could gather, the ones calling for his help were these two dungeon cores who were almost completely corrupted by darkness.

'H-Help.'

'S-Save.'

The voices were getting weaker like the light of a candle that was about to be snuffed out. William had no intention of destroying the two cores as he asked the system for a way to save them.

< According to the data that I have gathered in this world, there were several attempts in the past to save corrupted dungeon cores. However, none of them succeeded. Also, those who tried to purify them received the backlash of the miasma that had been absorbed by the cores and perished. Up to this date, no one had succeeded in purifying corrupted dungeon cores. >

"Is there really no other way to save these two dungeon cores?" William muttered in frustration.

As if waiting for that cue, two black portals appeared in the sky above the dungeon cores. The Xolotl and the Winged Serpent fell from the portals and crashed into the dungeon floor, making it tremble.

The two Mythical Beasts tried to move their bodies, but they were too injured to move. As the portals were about to close, Oliver, the Parrot Monkey, flew down from the sky. It looked at the Orthus who was being toyed with by the War Ibexes then at the two corrupted dungeon cores, before it finally turned to William.

Oliver looked at the young boy with an amused expression on his face before he gracefully landed on William's shoulder.

"So, this is the reason why you came here alone," Oliver said. "Are you thinking of saving these twin cores?"

"Second Master, why are you here?" William inquired. "Why are the two Mythical Beasts here? What is happening outside?"

"I just arrived and you're already bombarding me with questions?" Oliver snorted. "You don't have to worry about what is happening outside. That overgrown ape, along with the deer, are cleaning the mobs. The peanut galler-- I mean the humans are also helping with the clean up."

"About these two beasts?"

"They opened a portal in order to escape. I followed behind them to see where they were going. Luckily, they decided to return to the dungeon cores, so I am now here with you."

William glanced at the two Mythical Beasts who seemed to have regained a bit of their reasoning. They were looking at him with pleading eyes. It was very obvious that they wanted William to save the twin cores who were the hearts and souls of the dungeon.

"Well then, let's get back to the topic. Do you plan to save these twin cores?" Oliver inquired. "Twin cores are actually very rare, you know. A dungeon being formed with twin cores is a one in two-hundred-thousand chance. Meaning, in every two hundred thousand dungeons, only one with twin cores will be formed."



"I want to save them, but I've been told that it is impossible."

"Yes, it is impossible if you try to save them as cores. Why don't you just absorb them? It will be a boon to your power if you absorb the power of a dungeon core. You know, there are even people who specifically conquer dungeons in order to harness the power of the dungeon cores. They are called Dungeon Conquerors."

Oliver wanted to say more, but he felt that he would be overstepping his bounds if he tried to mention William's father, Maxwell. The person who single-handedly fended off the Demon Invasion towards the Silvermoon Continent. The one and only Dungeon Conqueror on the Southern Continent.

When the two mythical beasts heard the word "absorb" they growled at the Parrot Monkey, but the latter paid them no mind.

"A Parrot Monkey doesn't lose sleep over the opinion of sheep," Oliver snorted. "So what if Little Will wanted to absorb these twin cores? What can the two of you do about it?"

The two Guardian Beasts tried to stand, but they were too injured and too weak to do anything. The goats who were playing with the Orthus weren't paying attention to the discussion. The only thing in their mind was to bully their new toy, before they returned to Lont and get bullied themselves.

"Second Master, is there really no other way?"

"Why are you so keen on saving these twin cores? Is there something you're not telling me?"

William nodded his head. "These two cores had been asking me to save them since the Dungeon Outbreak started."

"Oh?" Oliver looked at the two cores with interest. "Such a thing happened? Interesting."

< Host, the corruption has progressed to 97%. According to my estimate, it will take less than ten minutes before these two cores are fully corrupted. >

"Second Master..."

"There is a way, but... the way you are going to save them is different from what you have in mind. You see, Will, once their bodies are corrupted there is no turning back for them. This is why you should never bother trying to save the cores as they are.

"However... if you were to save the souls of these twin cores then it is very possible to do that. Even so, there is a chance that you will be corrupted by the miasma. Are you sure you want to do this?"

William looked at the twin cores then looked down on the ground. "I want to save them, but I don't want to get corrupted. Gramps, and the rest of my family, will be sad if that were to happen to me."

"Um? Why didn't you add Mistress to the list of people who will be sad if you get corrupted? Hello? It was the Mistress that sent me here to help you," Oliver nagged. 'Well, she didn't say it explicitly, but I'm sure that this was what she wanted me to do.'

"Of course, Master will be sad too that's why, Second Master, you need to think of a way that I can save the dungeon cores without becoming corrupted in the process."

"Hah~ why are all of you Ainsworths so greedy? It's either you play it big or not at all. Geez, fine there is a way, but it will be very painful. Are you sure you still want to do it?"

Oliver felt that it was a pity that William didn't want to absorb the cores to boost his powers, but since he had become fond of the boy, he was willing to turn a blind eye and let him have his way.

"I won't get corrupted?"

"You won't."

"Then let's do it!"

"Fine, but you have to change your uh... what was that again? Job Class?" Oliver tilted his head to the side. "Anyways, whatever you call it, you need to change it to Prince of Darkness. That is the only way for you to resist the Miasma Corruption."

< Host, the Prince of Darkness Job Class is currently disabled. It can't be used at this point in time because you didn't meet the necessary requirements to open this Prestige Class in the first place. Last time, it was forcefully activated due to the Collar of Wisteria. >

'What are the necessary requirements for it?'

< The host must surrender to the darkness first and allow your soul to be corrupted by the God of Darkness. >

#### Chapter 173: Corrupted Dungeon Cores [Part 3]

'Are you serious?!' William couldn't believe what the system had told him.

The job class that he had used in the battle against the Cyclops could only be unlocked if his soul was corrupted by the god of Darkness.

< Host, the Job Class Prince and Princess of Darkness is a Prestige Class that belongs to the devout follower of the God of Darkness. To be honest, it is impossible for you to unlock it. It was only possible because you used the Collar of Wisteria as a medium to sacrifice five years of your magic power to use the Job Class for a short period of time. >

'How can this be?' William was starting to feel helpless. 'What am I supposed to do?'

Oliver noticed the change in William's expression and frowned. "What are you dilly dallying for? Have you switched that Job Class or whatever to Prince of Darkness? Hurry, we don't have much time."

"S-Second Master, the Prince of Darkness is not available," William replied. "I can't use it."

"Is that so?" Oliver knew that William wouldn't lie to him at this crucial moment so he had no choice but to believe him. "Okay, just switch to the Dark Mage. I just hope that your soul will be able to endure the corruption and the pain. Don't worry, I will assist you. With the two of us together, it will work... probably."

< Host, the cores' corruption has progressed to 98% >

William took two deep breaths in order to calm himself. He knew that he was taking a big risk in attempting what he was about to do, but he had to do it. Something inside him was compelling him to do it.

What William didn't know was that, deep within his sea of consciousness, the chess piece of the King started to vibrate. The time for it to awaken was still not at hand, but it had sensed William's desire and decided to lend its strength.

Issei, who was napping in the Temple of the Ten-Thousand Gods, felt his divinity start to move and immediately investigated the cause. The only person whom he had given his divinity to was William. Since the chess piece was moving, it meant that his sworn brother had encountered something very troublesome.

'It's still too early,' Issei frowned as he observed William's projection from inside his palace. 'Still, nothing ventured, nothing gained. The greater the challenge, the greater the gains. Goodluck, little brother.'

After changing his job class to the Dark Mage, William prepared himself to touch the two cores with his hands at the same time.

"Listen to me, whatever happens do not lose yourself," Oliver said with a serious expression as he hovered above William's head. "The moment you touch those two cores, the miasma will slam on your sea of consciousness like a tidal wave. You must resist, and keep your consciousness at all costs. If you fail then your body will be corrupted by miasma. Are you sure you're not going to change your mind?"

"No." William shook his head. "I am ready."

"Good." Oliver nodded and spread his wings wide. "Let's start."

William gritted his teeth and touched both cores at the same time. Immediately, the miasma traveled through his hands and up to his arms, instantly turning it black. William felt something slam into the core of his very being as his soul shuddered from the impact.

This was the second time he'd felt something like this. The first time was when the truck appeared in the cycle of reincarnation and sent him flying to be born in this world. The impact had been so strong that it damaged William's soul. It caused him to be unable to regain consciousness for more than a month after he was born.

Fortunately, due to the incident with Truck-kun, William's soul had been strengthened after it had recovered. It was further strengthened by Celine's Hell Training inside his Sea of Consciousness.

Although he wanted to faint from the pain, Oliver's encouragement and his Mama Ella's bleating had reached his ears.

He endured the corruption of the Miasma as his body was slowly being stained black. Some time later, a patch of bright light, the size of a gold coin, appeared in the center of the two dungeon cores. Oliver hurriedly used his powers to pull the souls of the twin cores out from the bodies that were on the verge of collapse.

It was a painstaking process as Oliver divided his attention between supplying William some of his strength and extracting the souls from the two cores.

The Two Guardian Beast knew that this was the turning point, so they channeled the remaining power in their bodies into William. They were also doing their best to help the person who decided to save their masters from complete destruction.

The goats had stopped playing with the Orthus, because the Guardian Beast had also regained some of its sanity. It joined its seniors in helping William resist the corruption as its way of atonement.

Right now, William's whole body had been stained black. Even his hair and eyes hadn't escaped the miasma's corruption.

Although it was very painful, the years he had spent being trained by Celine and Oliver ironically helped him endure the torturous ordeal he was currently experiencing.

Inside his sea of consciousness, William's soul floated above blue waters that were also slowly being stained with the black miasma. In time, the sea had turned completely black. Suddenly a single strand of darkness, as thin as a thread, rose up from the corrupted waters and pierced William's chest.

It wormed its way inside William's soul and successfully infiltrated his core. After that single strand had been absorbed, more strands flew into the air and attempted to pierce William's chest once again. However, a powerful divinity blocked them.Â

The chess piece hovered above William's body and shielded his soul from further harm. It had waited for that single strand of darkness to pierce William's chest before it made its move.Â

The young boy was not able to resist the single strand of darkness that attacked him because he had already lost consciousness at that point in time. The chess piece could have prevented the incident from happening, but it chose to wait.

It had waited for that opportunity because it believed that its host would need that power in the future. It also understood that William was not strong enough to consume more than one strand, so it didn't allow him to absorb more.

An hour passed, as Oliver almost crashed to the ground due to exhaustion. The two souls of the dungeon cores floated above William's body and danced like little children.

The Guardians looked at this scene in happiness as their bodies slowly disappeared into particles of light. They had completed their duty and it was now time for them to disappear from the world. Once the Dungeon Cores had been destroyed, the dungeon monsters that they had birthed would also cease to exist.

The only proof that the Guardian Beasts had existed were the two Centennial-Grade Cores, and one High-Grade Core that laid on the ground, waiting for their new owner to pick them up.

Two hours later...

William felt something wet hitting the side of his face. He tried to open his eyes, but they refused to obey his commands. Using all the willpower that he could muster, he forced his eyes open, only to find Ella licking the side of his face in an attempt to wake him up.

"Meeeeeeeh."

William wanted to reply, but just opening his eyes was already a monumental task for him. He stared at his Mama to tell her that he was fine, so she wouldn't have to worry about him. Ella understood what he wanted to convey to her and nodded her head in acknowledgement.

"Oh, you're finally awake?" Oliver's monkey head suddenly appeared in his vision. "Well, it seems that your soul has received significant damage. I'm guessing that right now you are unable to move your body. But, don't worry. It will only take two to three days at most before you regain control of your body. If you can understand my words, blink twice."

William blinked twice to show Oliver that he had understood him.

The Parrot Monkey nodded its head and continued to talk to William. "I still need to discuss a few things with you, but that will have to wait until you get better. I just wanted to tell you that we succeeded. Don't think about anything. Don't worry about anything. Just rest. That is all you need to do. Leave the rest to me and your Mama Ella."

"Meeeeeeh." Ella bleated in agreement.

William blinked twice before closing his eyes. He was really at his limit and sleep pulled him into her embrace.

When Ella and Oliver heard William's deep breathing, both of them sighed in relief. The other goats had already returned to Lont and only the two of them remained inside the dungeon protecting William.

Soon, the sounds of running footsteps could be heard in the distance.

"Meeeeeh."

"I know, Miss Ella. For now, I'll hide inside William's shadow and guard him from there."

"Meeeeeh."

Oliver's body sank into William's shadow using his Shadow Bind ability. He knew that William would be unable to protect himself at this crucial time, so he decided to become his bodyguard just in case there were malicious people around that would attempt to harm him.

A minute after Oliver merged with William's shadow, Est, Ian, Isaac, Kenneth, Wendy, along with Grent, Andy, and a Cleric, appeared in the dungeon room. When they saw William lying on the ground, Wendy immediately panicked and ran to his side in a hurry.

She was about to lift William's body off the ground when Est hurriedly stopped her.

"Don't move his body!" Est shouted. "He might be injured somewhere. Let the Cleric have a look at him first."

Wendy nodded her head, but she didn't move away from William's body. Instead, she held his hand and looked at the Half-Elf's pale face with an anxious expression.

Est and Ian didn't say anything about Wendy's actions because they too were worried about William's condition. They waited patiently for the cleric to run a diagnostic spell on William's body so they could see his current situation.

"How is he?" Grent asked.

"He's suffered from minor internal injuries and is seriously weakened," the Cleric replied. "While his life isn't in immediate danger, he will need a few rejuvenation potions, an elixir, and plenty of rest to fully recover."



Greent and Andy sighed in relief as they exchanged a glance with each other. Although the rejuvenation potions and elixir cost a lot, the academy would shoulder the expenses. It was a small price to pay for the sacrifices that the boy had made in order to ensure that no life was lost during this mission to subjugate the Dungeon of Roaring Quarters.

#### Chapter 174: A Mission That Takes Precedence

"Are you feeling thirsty, Will?"

Will blinked twice.

"Here you go," Wendy said as she gently assisted William to drink a glass of water.

After his thirst was quenched, the young lady carefully supported his head and laid it back on the soft pillow.

The corner of Est's and Ian's lips started to twitch when they saw this scene, but they didn't do anything about it. They just cursed William for being shameless in using his current condition to take advantage of Wendy's kindness.

"How about I give you a foot massage?" Ian asked. "They say that it helps the body recover faster because the foot is connected to many internal organs of the body."

Ian didn't wait for William's approval and started to knead the Half-Elf's foot with a smile on his face.

"Does it feel good?" Ian inquired. "It does? Then I'm going to continue."

If William had been able to speak then he would have already hurled a long string of expletives at Ian for applying so much pressure to his foot that it felt that it was tearing apart. If he could have moved his foot then he would have already kicked the snot-nosed-pansy and sent him flying out of the window.

Since he couldn't move, and couldn't speak, William could only curse his mortal enemy while shedding tears of pain and sadness. Wendy, who saw this scene, felt that something was off, but Ian merely told her that William was only shedding tears of joy because his massage was so good.

Est couldn't bear to see William hurting so much, so he cleared his throat and made eye contact with Ian to not bully the defenseless boy.

Ian clicked his tongue as he reluctantly eased the pressure that he was applying to William's foot. He then gave the red-headed-boy a proper massage which made the latter feel so good that he fell asleep.

It was at that moment when the door of the room opened and Kenneth came in carrying a bucket of warm water.

"He's still asleep?" Kenneth asked as he carried the bucket near William's bed. "Well, I guess it won't make a difference whether he is asleep or awake."

Kenneth then proceeded to unbutton William's Pajamas. Seeing his actions, Wendy immediately blushed and asked the delicate looking silver-haired-boy what he was planning to do.

"What am I about to do?" Kenneth looked at Wendy with a mischievous smile. "Of course, I plan to help clean William's body by washing it. He's the type that likes to bathe everyday. Do you want to do it in my place?"

"N-No!" Wendy stuttered. "I-I'm just asking."

"I see." Kenneth nodded but the smile on his face didn't disappear. "What a shame."

After taking William's shirt off, Kenneth started to clean his body using a wet hand towel then drying it immediately using another towel. His movements were so precise, that those who were watching him felt that Kenneth was used to doing such things."

Feeling their gazes on him, Kenneth decided to talk as he cleaned William's upper body.

"Two years ago, my brother fell ill and suffered a similar condition to William," Kenneth began his explanation. "He was unable to move, so it was up to me to help him eat, drink, and clean his body. Seeing William like this reminded me of home, so I decided to help him clean his body since he likes taking baths everyday.

"Still, my little brother's body can't compare to William's. Seeing this strong and lean body, I am feeling envious."

William was a martial expert, so his body was very fit. If you added the aesthetics of a Half-Elf then you would get a good looking guy with a very attractive physique. After cleaning the upper part of William's body, Kenneth was about to remove the sleeping boy's pants when Wendy immediately retreated to the corner of the room.

Seeing her reaction, Kenneth gave an understanding smile as he lowered William's pants. Est, and Ian turned around to look at Wendy who was sneakily peaking through the gaps in her fingers.

After noticing that Est and Ian were looking at her, Wendy immediately closed the gap in her fingers and turned around to face the wall.

It took Kenneth less than five minutes to clean William's lower body. He then went to the shepherd's closet to pick out a new set of clothes for him to wear.

When the red-headed-boy was properly clothed. Kenneth left the room to handle the daily affairs of the Martial Class along with Priscilla. Before they went to fight against the Dungeon Outbreak, William appointed Kenneth to be the Secretary of the First Year Martial Division.

Since their Head Prefect was not around, it fell to the officers to ensure that the rest of the students were behaving properly.

The Second, Third, and Fourth Years still hadn't returned from their missions. The Dungeon Outbreaks that were happening in other places in the Hellan Kingdom were getting more and more intense, causing the Hellan Army to feel more of the pressure.

Because of this, the King was forced to send messengers all across the kingdom, hiring mercenaries and other armed groups to help resist the Dungeon Outbreak.

This was also why the First Year's success created a big impact on the defenders of the other towns. They didn't expect that the outbreak in Dawsbury would be settled in less than a day.

Of course, this was due to William calling for reinforcements to assist them in battle. If not for Spire and his herd, the Diabolical Hell Ape, and William's mysterious "Second Master", the outbreak of the Roaring Quarters wouldn't have been that easy to subjugate.

At the Forsaken Catacombs, where the Third Years of the Hellan Royal Academy were stationed, an intense battle was currently taking place.

Carter fired several Empowered Fireballs at the Skeletal Legionnaire that was rampaging across the battlefield. The skeletal monster, that was over two-meters in height, was carrying a giant war axe, which it brandished left and right to reap the lives of the soldiers who were trying to fend it off.

"Thank you, Professor!" one of the soldiers shouted as the Skeletal Legionnaire burst into flames.

"We are not out of the woods yet! Focus on your surroundings!" Carter ordered as he fired a few more fireballs at the Skeletal Army that was slowly advancing towards them.

The professor was very irritated because the sudden Dungeon Outbreaks forced him to put his plan on hold for an indefinite period of time. Because of the sudden incident, he hadn't had time to make more "candies" to strengthen his hold on the talented students of the Third Year Magic Division Class.

Of course, that was only half of the reason why Carter was feeling irritated. His superior had also tasked him to investigate the reason for these Dungeon Outbreaks that were happening in the Hellan Kingdom. The reason for this was because a similar thing had happened in the Demon Continent four months ago.

Carter's superior believed that this was done by an unknown group, or organization, that was hiding in the shadows. Without knowing this group's motive, or to whom their loyalty was given, the Higher Demon thought that it would be quite dangerous to leave them at large.

The Demon Race had suffered big losses during the "Dungeon Outbreaks" that had happened in their territory. They feared that the perpetrators were only conducting "further tests" in the human lands, before they returned to the Northern Continent and used the higher-ranked dungeons to start another Dungeon Outbreak.

If that were to happen then a calamity would befall their race. This was something that they couldn't allow to happen! Since this mission took precedence, Carter had no choice but to obey and get to the bottom of this incident.

'Just what are they after?' Carter thought as he continued his onslaught on the battlefield. 'Are they anti-humans or anti-demons? How big is their organization?'

Carter knew that the answers to his question would not be answered soon. So he focused his attention on pushing back the Skeletal Army and joined the experts when they proceeded to head towards the Dungeon Core.

Perhaps he would find the answers he was looking for after he had seen the source of the problem with his own eyes.

"Oh... this is quite interesting," James chuckled as he read Ezio's report. "William managed to accomplish something amazing. As expected of my grandson!"

James was all smiles as he read the report in his hand. His smile didn't last for long as he read the current situation on Matthew's end on the battlefield. His grandson Matthew, and his fiancée, Leah, had gone missing while carrying out a mission inside the Lair of the Ancient Queen, which was located within the Duchy of Aberdeen.

According to Ezio's report, Leah had suffered a serious injury when she tried to save Matthew from the attack of a Lamia Queen. Leah then used a special ability that made both of them disappear from the clutches of Lamia Queen that was hell-bent on ending their lives.

This was witnessed by one of the survivors who managed to escape from the dungeon. He immediately reported the mission's failure to the officers defending the front line, and this piece of information found its way into Ezio's hands.

James knew that now was not the time to brag about William's accomplishment and immediately held a conference in Lont.

He decided to bring an Elite Team to Aberdeen and help rescue his grandson inside the dungeon. For James, every member of the Ainsworth Family was precious. There were only a handful of them in the world, and losing even one of them would be a tragedy.

After a discussion with his subordinates, it was decided that James, Mordred, John, and Jekyll would provide reinforcements for Matthew in Aberdeen. This group of four would be able to travel faster by riding on the Giant Hawk, Blitz, who was John's animal companion.

The rest of the experts would stay in Lont to handle unforeseen events, like the Dark-Scaled-Crocodile incident that almost destroyed their hometown. As always, Owen had been assigned to be the temporary leader of Lont while Mordred was away.

This was the best course of action that James could make after taking everything into consideration.

#### Chapter 175: Filled To The Brim With Love [R-18]

"Leah, you don't have to force yourself, you just recovered from your injury," Matthew tried to persuade his lover to stay in their hiding place until she was fully recovered.

"No." Leah shook her head. "If I stay here, I'll go crazy worrying about you."

They were currently hiding inside a cave within the Lair of the Ancient Queen. They were part of the group that was tasked to break the Dungeon Core and end the threat of the Monster Outbreak.

The dungeon had 50 Floors, and their team of a hundred people managed to reach the 40th floor before they were stopped by a monster army that seemed to have waited for their arrival.

Three Class S Corrupted Lamia Queens, along with a horde of Class C Lamias, ambushed their group from different directions. The battle was intense, but they managed to defeat two of the three Lamia Queens while fighting with everything they had.

During the battle, several soldiers were charmed by the Lamia Queens and turned against their compatriots. Matthew was one of the few men who managed to resist the Charm Spell. However, the Lamia Queen used that opportunity to close the gap and deliver a powerful tail attack that sent Matthew slamming into the wall of the dungeon.

The Lamia Queen threw its poison dagger as a finishing blow to end Matthew's life, but Leah blocked it using her body. Because of this, she was seriously injured and poisoned at the same time. If not for her Affinity with Water Magic, she might have died along with Matthew in that fight.

In that moment of desperation, she used her Water Teleport Ability to bring herself, and Matthew, to a random place in the dungeon with a body of water.

Fortunately, they landed at the base of a waterfall that had a hidden cave behind its falling waters. The unique location allowed them to hide themselves without worrying about the monster's pursuit. Leah managed to purify the poison in her body using her Water Magic, but it had weakened her greatly.

Even so, she still used her healing magic to tend to Matthew's injuries, which almost made her collapse completely. She only closed her eyes to rest when Matthew finally regained the color in his face.

A few hours passed before Matthew awoke from his sleep. When he saw Leah's pale expression, he immediately used the potions he had exchanged points for in the academy to nurse her back to health.

A day later, Leah woke up and the two embraced each other for a long time. They were thankful that both of them were still alive and in each other's arms.

Matthew became silent as he hugged his fiancée. He lovingly kissed her forehead and Leah could feel the love he had for her. Both of them knew that they couldn't stay in the cave forever. Matthew volunteered to scout their surroundings and find out whether it was possible to escape from the dungeon.

However, Leah didn't want him to go alone, and insisted that he take her along with him.

"Matthew, don't leave me here," Leah pleaded as she hugged the man she loved. "If you do, I'll make you regret it."

"I won't," Matthew whispered. "If this is really what you want then I'll agree, but I have a condition."

"I agree."

"I haven't said anything yet."

"Whatever it is, I agree." Leah softly patted Matthew's back as she closed her eyes to lean on his chest. "I don't want to lose you."

Matthew hugged her tighter because he, too, didn't want to lose her. "Leah, after this is all over, let's get married."

Instead of answering Matthew's proposal, Leah held both sides of his face and kissed him passionately on the lips. Her sudden action ignited Matthew's feelings for her and soon, both of them were lost in their love for each other.

Leah laid within the makeshift bed that they had made inside the cave and looked up at Matthew with teary eyes.

"Are you sure about this?" Matthew asked.

"Yes," Leah answered. "I don't know what the future holds for the two of us, but right now, all I want is to be one with you."

Matthew lowered his face to kiss his beloved and wiped the tears from her eyes.

"I love you, Leah."



"I love you, too, Matt."

Matthew kissed his lover one more time before removing the academy uniform that hid her beautiful body. He stared at the white, thin pieces of fabric that covered Leah's womanly assets and removed them one after the other.

Although the cave was a little dark, Matthew had learned the spell Dark Vision because he often accompanied William for nighttime strolls in the countryside. He had also applied the Dark Vision to Leah, so both of them could see in the darkness of the cave.

Matthew fell into a daze as he looked at his lover's beautiful body. Leah giggled on their makeshift bed and allowed him to look at her entirety.

"You're beautiful, Leah," Matthew said with genuine sincerity as he lowered his head to kiss those enticing peaks that stood proud in front of him. He kissed her left breast as his hand groped the other.

Leah's breast fit perfectly in the palm of his hand and he was surprised at how soft it was. Soon, the cave was filled with muffled moans as Leah did her best to hold back her voice.

Matthew only stopped fondling her body when his lover begged that she couldn't hold it any longer. He kissed Leah's lips one more time, before he lowered his hip to complete their union.

The moment Matthew claimed her maidenhood, a soft gasp of pain and pleasure escaped Leah's lips. Matthew didn't rush and gently brought his lover to the throes of pleasure. With every thrust of his hips, Leah could feel herself opening up to him.

Soon, both of them reached the peak together.

Matthew shuddered as he released his essence deep inside her. Staining her with his color and marking her as his woman.

He filled her up to the brim with his love.

Leah, on the other hand, felt like she was melting. It was as if she was being conquered, which brought shivers down her spine. The pleasure it brought her was so intense that for a brief moment, her world turned completely white.

When she regained her vision, Matthew was panting while hugging her body close to his chest. She shuddered in delight at the thought of doing it all over again.

As if hearing her thoughts, Matthew kissed her lips passionately and once again moved his hips to bring her to the heights of pleasure.

Within that dark cave, Matthew and Leah made love to each other as if there was no tomorrow. When they finally stopped, Leah laid her head on Matthew's chest and fell asleep due to exhaustion.

Matthew enclosed his beloved in a protective embrace, before he, too, closed his eyes to sleep.

Meanwhile, in Celine's house...

The beautiful dark sorceress was looking at her crystal ball with a calm expression. She was observing the Dungeon Outbreaks that were happening in the Hellan Kingdom through the eyes of her familiars.

It wasn't the first time that Celine had spied on the affairs of the Hellan Kingdom, so she was quite knowledgeable with the location of the important cities that the king had given special attention to.

She could see the vast hordes of monsters that were trying to make their way through the city, but were being stopped by the stubborn defenders who held their ground like their lives depended on it.

Celine knew that her Potion of Miasma was not enough to corrupt a Dungeon Core completely, so she assumed that the organization had used a powerful medium to increase its potency.

"So this was their plan all along," Celine muttered. As a Dark Sorceress, she was aware that aside from the monsters, a hidden threat was currently creeping into the lands of the Hellan Kingdom.

"Tenth Circle Spell," Celine said with confidence. "Is this a type of revenge on the Hellan Kingdom for banning the use of Dark Magic? Looks like my acquaintances are more ambitious than I originally thought they were."

Celine wanted to laugh out loud, but she pushed down that urge using her amazing self control.

"Perhaps this is also a blessing in disguise... this kind of spell can't be erased by Clerics or any users of Holy Magic." The corner of Celine's lips curled up into a sneer. "The only ones who can break this curse are Dark Magicians. When the King realizes what is going on, it will already be too late."

Celine was impressed by the amount of planning that the organization had made for their operation. The Dungeon Outbreak was only a cover-up to serve as a distraction, while the real danger was slowly spreading like a swarm of ants that was marching across the land.

What Celine and the organization didn't know was that a certain Shepherd, who was currently sound asleep, would make the castle that they had painstakingly built up in the sky, shatter into a thousand pieces.

#### Chapter 176: New Members Of The Family [Part 1]

Two days had passed since William and the rest of the First Year Students returned to the academy. The red-headed-boy was now able to move his body, but he was still not back to his peak condition. It was also at that moment when news of Matthew's and Leah's disappearance reached his ears.

Initially, his first thought was to go to Aberdeen and join the rescue mission to find them. However, he knew that with his current condition, he would only become a hindrance instead of a help if he chose to go.

"Are you worried about Matthew and Leah?" Oliver asked. He was currently hiding in William's shadow in order to protect him until he fully recovered from his injury.

"Yes," William answered. "I wish I could go to Aberdeen and look for them."

"You don't have to worry about that. I received a message from Mistress that your Grandpa and a few of the veterans of Lont had gone to Aberdeen to look for Matthew and Leah."

"Really? That's good."

William sighed in relief knowing that his Gramps had gone to save his Big Brother and Big Sister. He was sure that James wouldn't stop until he found the two teenagers inside the dungeon.

The red-headed boy was currently inside his dormitory room and no one, aside from the officers and Wendy, were allowed to visit him. Right now, Kenneth was with Priscilla and doing his duty as Secretary of the Solaris Dormitory.

This gave Oliver the opportunity to talk to William and discuss important matters.

"Will, there is something that I need to tell you," Oliver said with a serious expression. "I was planning to wait for a day more, but these two kids are getting anxious."

As if waiting for Oliver to mention the two of them, the twin souls flew out of William's shadow and hovered in front of his eyes. They twinkled like two stars, one yellow, one red.

"I'm glad that the two of you are safe." William smiled as he gazed at the two souls in front of him.

The two souls bounced up and down as a mysterious melody reached William's ears. William could vaguely understand that they were trying to talk to him, but he couldn't understand their language.

Fortunately, Oliver came to the rescue and translated their message for William.

"These two kids want you to help them revive their loyal Guardians," Oliver translated as he too, flew out of William's shadow. "Do you remember those three beasts in the dungeon core room? These two want them to be reborn."

William blinked when he finally understood what the two souls wanted to do. He had completely forgotten about the Mythical Beasts because back then, he had lost consciousness while trying to resist the corruption. There was simply no opportunity for William to worry about others in that crucial period.

"You said revive." William gave Oliver an inquiring gaze. "Did the guardians die?"

"Yes." Oliver nodded. "Just like how these two kids lost their outer core, the guardians also lost their physical bodies. However, the twins used their remaining power to bind the souls of their guardians to their Beast Cores."

Oliver waved his wing and three, black, High-Grade Cores floated in the air in front of William. "Although the two succeeded in binding the Guardians' soul to their beast cores, this is only a temporary stop gap. [I]n two more days, the souls will completely dissipate from the cores and they will be lost forever."

William sighed as he looked at the three floating cores. If he absorbed them, he might have gained an incredible amount of experience points. But, seeing the two bouncing souls in front of him, he no longer had the heart to carry out his plan.

"How can I help?" William asked. He didn't want to waste any more time because there was a possibility that a visitor would come knocking on his door. Since time was limited, it would be best to cut to the chase and get it over with.

"We need to perform a ritual in which these three Beast Cores will be used as catalysts in order to revive the Guardians," Oliver explained. "They will no longer have memories of their past life, and would simply be 'reborn' as new beings that are no longer tied to a dungeon. Naturally, they will be bound to you. Just think of it as acquiring three pets to raise for free."

"Three pets to raise for free?" William felt slightly complicated. It was not as if he wasn't interested in raising the three beasts. He had already seen them and their capabilities, however, he didn't know if he was ready for such a responsibility.

Unfortunately, the two souls were busy nuzzling his cheeks as if they were trying to butter him up to help with the revival ritual. In the end, William agreed and Oliver began to write a magic circle in the center of the room in order to start the ritual.

When he was done, Oliver placed the three beast cores at the center of the Magic Circle.

"I need a pint of your blood in order to make this work," Oliver stated. "Is that fine with you?"

"Only my blood?" William inquired. "Nothing else?"

"Just your blood. In short, these creatures will be born with your blood running through their veins." Oliver smirked. "I guess calling them pets is inappropriate. They're more like your first born kids? Congratulations! You are now a father of triplets."

"Hahaha, very funny."

"Mistress always tells me that I have a good sense of humor."

Oliver gave William a serious glance as he conjured a shadow dagger in the air. "Well then, are you ready?"

William took a deep breath before nodding his head. As soon as Oliver deemed him ready, the shadow dagger flew and stabbed him in the arm. The young boy's blood gushed out like a fountain.

Surprisingly his blood didn't fall on the magic circle. Instead, it was magically siphoned to the three Beast Cores as the Magic Circle started to glow brightly.

Oliver chanted in the background and spoke in a language that William didn't understand. As the lights of the circle grew brighter, William could feel a growing connection with the Beast Cores that were starting to vibrate.

Suddenly, a blinding flash of light erupted from the center of the runic formation. The young boy was forced to close and shield his eyes until the light receded.

"It is done." Oliver's proud words reached his ears.

When William opened his eyes to look at the result of the ritual, he found three creatures looking up at him from beside his feet.

One of them was a golden snake. It was only a meter long and its golden reptilian eyes looked at William as if it was looking at its daddy. Suddenly, it crawled up William's leg, until it reached his neck where it happily coiled itself.

The baby golden snake flicked its tongue against William's cheeks as if giving him a kiss.

Before William could do anything about the baby snake that was looped around his neck, two barks sounded near his feet.

A puppy with black fur and blue stripes that resembled lightning bolts, pressed its small paws on William's right foot and barked. It resembled a baby Husky and looked very cute and adorable. It was half as big as William's arm.

William always thought that huskies were half dog and half wolf creatures. Of course, this was his only assumption. According to the magazine he had read back on Earth, Huskies were entirely different from wolves, and were of different species. Even so, some people believed that somewhere along the line, the two species mingled and thus the Husky was born.

Another bark caught William's attention and the boy immediately looked towards his left foot. There, another puppy stood and looked up at him with its tongue sticking out of its mouth. It was a bit smaller than the baby husky and looked very similar to a Boston Terrier.

The Terrier's fur was a combination of white and dark-golden fur. It felt so smooth to the touch that William wasn't able to stop himself from brushing its back with his hand.

The Shepherd felt like his heart was melting because of how cute they were. He patted the heads of the two puppies which made their tails wag like there was no tomorrow.

Ella watched this scene with a gentle gaze. Somehow, William's second mother felt that their small herd had grown a little bigger.

## Chapter 177: New Members Of The Family [Part 2]

"From now on, your name will be Dia," William said as he kissed the golden snake that was coiled around his neck.

"Hissss."

"I'm glad you liked it."

"Hissss."

"Woof!"

"Ruff!"

The two puppies tried to get William's attention by calling out to him.

Currently, the red-headed boy was lying on the bed, while his three little guardians lay beside him. Dia was still coiled around William's neck, like a second slave collar that wouldn't go away.

Dia just received her name from William and was very happy about it. She nuzzled William's cheeks to show that she really liked the name he gave her.

However, the two puppies didn't want to lose out so they whined, while pressing on William's chest like two spoiled children. They wanted their Master to give them names as well.

William chuckled as he patted the two puppies' heads and coaxed them to be patient.



"Okay, I've decided." William grinned as he tickled the baby Husky's chin. "From now on, your name will be Thor."

"Woof!" Thor barked before he started licking William's cheeks. Its body glowed briefly as the lightning bolt pattern on its fur crackled with electricity.

Seeing that his brother and sister had been given names, the little Terrier whined to catch William's attention.

"Don't worry, I'm also thinking of a good name for you," William coaxed the puppy that was throwing a tantrum.

William looked at the adorable Terrier and a playful smile appeared on his face. "Your name will be Ragnar."

"Ruff!" Ragnar joined Thor in licking William's cheeks which made the shepherd giggle.

'I think I understand what being a parent feels like by looking at these three kids,' William thought.

Although he had raised the goats with love and care, the feeling that the three newly born guardians gave him was different. He could sense a very close connection to them. A connection forged by blood that made him feel like he had indeed become a father of three.

After the three had settled down, William introduced them to his Mama Ella.

"Dia, Thor, Ragnar, this is Ella. She's my Mama so that makes her your Grandma," William said.

"Hissss?"

"Woof?"

"Ruff?"

The three guardians looked at Ella with innocent gazes. The Angorian goat looked back at them and bleated.

"Meeeeeeeh."

"Hissss!"

"Woof!"

"Ruff!"

Ella walked closer and licked Thor's cheeks. After that she licked Ragnar's cheeks and finally, nuzzled Dia's head.

Dia uncoiled herself from William's neck and transferred herself onto Ella's neck.

"Hissss."

"Meeeeeh."

The new "Grandma and Granddaughter" pair chatted with each other, while the two puppies jumped off the bed and acted like spoiled children who wanted to catch their grandparent's attention.

"Meeeeeh."

"Hissss!"

"Woof!"

"Ruff!"

Ella played with the kids for a short while before laying beside William's bed.

Oliver had returned to William's shadow as he observed this family scene with an amused expression.

'I guess I need to find another souvenir for Mistress,' Oliver thought as he looked at the golden snake who seemed to be enjoying her quality time with her new grandmother. Originally, he planned to take Dia back to Celine, but since the little guardian was born from William's blood, he thought that it was inappropriate to separate the two of them.

"Ah. I almost forgot. You'll need to form a contract with Dia and make her your animal companion," Oliver said in a serious tone. "Thor and Ragnar are fine since you have already added them to your herd, but Dia is different. She is a snake and you can't add her to your herd no matter how hard you try."

"Why must I make her my animal companion?" William inquired.

"Why are you wearing that collar on your neck?" Oliver asked back.

It was then that William understood Oliver's meaning. The collar on his neck was protecting him from being targeted by those who were thinking of making him a slave.

Dia was a mythical creature.

Although she was still young, it didn't change the fact that she would grow up to be a Winged Serpent in the future. Slavery was not exclusive to humans and other humanoids. Exotic creatures were also being sold in the Black Market and Dia would certainly be a very nice addition to those who had the hobby of collecting rare and exotic creatures that were hard to find in the continent.

"What kind of contract should I make?" William asked. "I'm not familiar with how contracts are made."

"An equal contract," Oliver replied. "This contract gives both parties equal standing. There is no Master and Servant relationship. This is the ideal choice for you and Dia... unless you are a scum who wants to treat Dia as a slave."

"How could I possibly do that?" William snorted. "Dia, come here for a second."

"Hissss?" Dia stopped playing with her brothers and looked up at William in confusion.

"Come. I need to form a contract with you, so you won't get targeted by bad people."

"Hissss?"

Although she was still confused, Dia slithered and climbed up to William's bed. She then crawled up his body then looped around the shepherd's neck like a good girl.Â

Since William was devoid of magic power, Oliver was the one that facilitated the equal contract between the red-headed boy and the golden snake. Two blue magic circles the size of a basketball ball hovered between William and Dia.

Afterwards, Oliver pricked their bodies using the shadow dagger he conjured to get a drop of their blood.

As the blood entered the magic circles he created, it changed its color and became golden. The two magic circles merged with each other and shot out two beams of golden light that shot towards William's and Dia's bodies.

When the light receded, Oliver returned to William's shadow and announced that the equal contract had succeeded.

With this, another layer of protection had been given to Dia to prevent her from being enslaved by others. As for Thor and Ragnar? They didn't need it because the moment they became part of William's herd, it was similar to having a binding contract.

When William looked at the two puppies, he was surprised to see that both of them were already asleep. They were lying on Ella's tummy and slept peacefully. William could understand that feeling of comfort because he had done the same thing for almost his entire life.

Seeing that her two brothers were sleeping beside their Grandma, Dia decided to join them. She uncoiled herself from William's neck and slithered towards Ella. The golden snake then coiled herself up like a rattlesnake beside her brothers and slept.

William and Ella exchanged a glance. The young boy smiled, and Ella's expression was gentle. Both of them were reminiscing about the days when William was still a baby.

Suddenly, a knock was heard on the door. William stood up from the bed and personally opened it to see who it was.

"Good morning," Est greeted. "You've recovered sooner than expected."

"Good morning," William returned the greeting as he opened the door wide and stepped aside to let his guests come inside the dormitory room. As always, Est had Ian and Isaac accompanying him. However, this time, it was not only the three of them.

Wendy tagged along and she was carrying a picnic basket in her hand.

"I thought that you still might not have recovered and decided to bring you lunch," Wendy said in embarrassment.

William smiled. "Although I can walk and move my body, that doesn't necessarily mean that I can travel far. It's good that you brought me some lunch. I'm feeling very hungry. Thank you, Wendy."

"You're welcome." Wendy gave William a sweet smile as she entered the room.

It didn't take long for the new arrivals to notice the three new creatures inside William's room.

William introduced them as his Guardian Beasts which made Est, Ian, Isaac, and Wendy look at him in a weird manner.

"It's complicated," William scratched his head. Oliver had warned him that he shouldn't tell anyone where Dia, Thor, and Ragnar came from because it might invite unnecessary trouble.

Seeing the shepherd's troubled face, the guests decided not to make it difficult for him.

Wendy's eyes widened as she looked at the three sleeping babies. All of them looked so cute and adorable that it melted her heart.

However, the one that caught most of her attention was the baby Husky, Thor.

If not for the fact that Thor was sleeping peacefully, she would have begged William to let her hug the puppy. The red-headed boy looked at her infatuated gaze and sighed. It was very easy for him to read Wendy's intentions because she was a very straightforward person.

"You can play with him when he wakes up," William said while scratching his cheek. "He's just a newborn so he might get tired easily."

"I'm okay with that!" Wendy replied hurriedly as if she was afraid that William would take back his word.

After getting William's permission, Wendy happily brought out the food that she had taken from the Magic Division Kitchen.

Oliver, who was observing the guests from inside William's shadow, shook his head helplessly.

'This boy really knows how to attract the bees,' Oliver thought. With just a glance, he could tell that the girl named Wendy had feelings for William. As for Est, and Ian, who was looking at the shepherd in a disgruntled manner, Oliver pretended that he didn't see anything.

The Parrot Monkey was not someone who liked to divulge the secrets of others. He believed that since he had this kind of ability, he should also be more responsible when using it.

'It doesn't matter how many girls fall for your charms,' Oliver mused as he closed his eyes to rest. He had already labeled William as the Prince of Darkness. Since that was the case, he only had to wait for a few more years for the prophecy to be fulfilled.

#### Chapter 178: Turning The Dungeon Upside Down

The next day, William was feeling better so he decided to join the morning training.

Even though he had been resting since he had been brought back to the academy, the students of the Martial Class didn't slack off in their training. The Dungeon Outbreak made them realize that they were still not strong enough to handle every situation using their own power.

Because of this, they paid extra attention to their daily training which made Grent, Andy, and the rest of the instructors in the Martial Division, very happy.

"Are you sure you're fit to join us?" Priscilla asked. "You don't have to force yourself, Sir William."

"Sir William?" William turned his head to look at his Vice-Prefect. It was the first time Priscilla called him Sir William. Usually, she just referred to him as Head Prefect.

Priscilla nodded her head. "We have all come to an agreement that the Head Prefect will be referred to as Sir William from now on. Please, don't reject it, Sir William."

(A/N: Usually, Sir is a term used to address Knights in the Hellan Kingdom.)

William scanned the faces of the First Years. They were all nodding their heads in agreement. Since that was what they decided, the red-headed boy decided to just go with the flow and smiled.

"Today, I have an important announcement to make," William said as he faced the First Years who were listening to him attentively. "I will introduce all of you to my new family members."

The students had already noticed the three little creatures that were accompanying William. Even so, they didn't say anything and stared at them with curiosity.

"This beautiful golden snake over here is Dia, she is a girl so she's shy around people," William introduced the snake that was looped around his neck as usual. "This puppy on my left is Thor and the one on my right is Ragnar. Aren't they cool looking?"

Thor and Ragnar both raised their chins in an arrogant manner. The way they acted was very similar to William when he was feeling narcissistic. Perhaps, they had inherited his traits due to the fact that his blood was flowing inside their bodies.

"From now on, they will be joining our Martial Division," William stated. "I hope that all of you will get along with them. Now, let us begin our training!"

Like always, William and the students started their training with stretching exercises. Afterward, they started to run towards the Flag that was fluttering in the distance. The Shepherd knew that he had just recovered so strenuous exercises were bad for him.

Because of this, he chose to ride Ella's back and oversee the training. Thor and Ragnar, on the other hand, ran alongside Ella and seemed to enjoy the morning activity. At first, William was quite worried that the puppies wouldn't be able to keep up, but he had underestimated them too much.

Even though they were still young, Thor and Ragnar were Mythical Beasts. Just like baby dragons, they were on a level higher compared to creatures newly born to the mortal realm.

The two puppies ran alongside Ella with their little legs as their tongues lolled at the side of their mouths. Dia of course, stayed on William's neck as she watched everything around her with curiosity.

After arriving at their destination, the Martial students divided themselves into ten teams and started to do their combat exercises. William's plan was to train capable commanders who would lead a team under their wing.



This way, they would be able to mobilize as independent teams that would handle specialized roles.

Take Dave as an example. He was the officer in charge of the logistics of the entire Martial Division. Naturally, his team would focus on managing the supplies of their "small army".

Priscilla's team was a scouting team, while Spencer's and Drake's teams would serve as the vanguard of the Martial Division.

The other teams also had "temporary captains" who would either be promoted to commanders or assistant commanders in the future.

Greent and Andy were also there, like usual, to oversee the training. The combat training they were focusing on was all about how to utilize their strengths and fight as a team instead of an individual.

The Dungeon Outbreak had taught them that there was strength in numbers. Even Spencer and Drake who had the "Soloist" mentality had started to change their perspective. This was what William wanted to see. The reason? He was quite lazy deep inside and just wanted to pass the responsibility to other people!

When the morning training ended, everyone returned to the dormitory to take a break and prepare for their lessons for the day.

"Second Master, is there any news about Big Brother and Big Sister?" William inquired. Although he looked calm, William was actually feeling very worried about them. It had been three days since he got the news that they went missing and he was quite anxious about their current situation.

"There's still no news." Oliver answered. "Don't worry. Matthew and Leah are stronger than you. Also, your grandfather has arrived at the dungeon. It will only be a matter of time before he saves them."

"I hope that you are right, Second Master." William sighed as he looked outside the window of his room. "I hope that you are right."

The sound of monster shrieks echoed along the dungeon walls as Matthew and Leah fought side by side. Contrary to his scholarly image, Matthew was in fact a Battlemage that specialized in hand to hand combat, while wielding the power of fire.

Leah, on the other hand, was a summoner who had made a contract with a powerful Water Spirit. The weapon she wielded was an elemental whip that her father secretly gifted to her on her sixteenth birthday. It moved around as if it had a life of its own, slicing off the body parts of the monsters that it came in contact with in half.

After the battle ended, the bodies of the Lamias turned into particles of light, leaving black beast cores behind. Leah gathered these beast cores with the thought of purifying them after they had escaped from the dungeon.

A day in the outside world was equivalent to two days inside the Lair of the Ancient Queen. It had been six days since Matthew and Leah were trapped inside the dungeon, and they were having a hard time ascending to the upper floors where the exit of the dungeon was located.

Since the Dungeon was currently in the midst of a Dungeon Outbreak, the spawn rate of the monsters had increased tenfold. Matthew and Leah had to fight against the groups of monsters that they met along the way, which made their advance a very slow process.

Also, after each battle they would have to immediately leave the vicinity so that they wouldn't attract other groups of monsters. This left both of them exhausted.

"Let's find a place to rest for the time being," Leah suggested. "We can time our escape for when the monsters inside the dungeon decide to raid the surface."

"Okay," Matthew nodded his head in agreement. He was nearing his limit and it would be a good idea if they found a safe place to rest to recover their strength.

It took them a while to find a good location, and the two immediately drank the potions they had prepared before they went to the Duchy of Aberdeen to fight against the Dungeon Outbreak.

Both of them knew how dire their situation was, but neither of them felt that escaping the dungeon was impossible.

The two hugged each other while paying attention to their surroundings as they meditated. It was then that they heard a rumbling noise not far from their location. What followed next was an earth shaking roar that made both teenagers open their eyes in surprise.

The dungeon floor shook as cries of alarm--that came from over a hundred dungeon monsters--reverberated in the air. And then... everything became quiet.

It was so quiet that they could hear the sound of footsteps coming towards their location. Matthew and Leah exchanged a glance as they readied themselves to engage in combat.

It was then when a familiar old man appeared in front of them with a wide grin on his face.

"Am I disturbing the two of you?" James asked with a mischievous expression. "Matthew, you're doing well. Just do it a bit more and give me a great grandchild as soon as possible."

Leah's face flushed when she heard her Grandpa James' words. Matthew on the other hand gave his grandpa the "You got it Gramps" look which made the old man's grin widen.

Mordred also had a smile on his face as he looked at the pair of lovebirds. Seeing his son holding Leah in a protective embrace reminded him of the days when he was still courting Anna to be his wife.

John just leaned against the dungeon wall, while Jekyll was flossing his teeth. It seemed that he had eaten a lot of monsters along the way and the dentist felt that this was a good opportunity to do some maintenance.

"Are you here to save us, Grandpa James?" Leah asked. Her face was still beet red, but she wasn't the type to shy away from people whom she recognized as family. She had long regarded the Ainsworth Family as her own family.

"That's the plan," James answered. "However, the King has made an interesting decree and I think that it is worth it to work my old bone a little bit longer."

"Gramps, don't tell me..." Matthew looked at his Grandpa with excitement.

James chuckled as he extended his hand to help the two teenagers to stand. "Do you want to tag along? Me and the boys are planning to turn this dungeon upside down."

Matthew and Leah exchanged a glance and smiled. They were quite curious about how James was planning to subjugate the dungeon with just the six of them.

On that same day, the dungeon outbreak on the Duchy of Aberdeen ended which surprised the King and the army that was stationed outside the dungeon. James swaggered out of the dungeon exit with a haughty look as Matthew, Leah, and the experts of Lont walked behind him.

"Tell the King that James of Lont had subjugated the dungeon," James announced in a booming voice. "I will be waiting in anticipation for the rewards that he promised."

He left along with Matthew and Leah with the intention of heading towards the academy. They were planning to pick up William and bring him back to Lont for a few days to participate in Matthew's and Leah's wedding ceremony.

#### Chapter 179: Kenneth's Secret [Part 1]

Wendy's laughter resounded in the Martial Division premises as she played tag with Thor. The dog happily ran after her, while the latter did her best to prevent the puppy from catching up to her.

After the kids woke up from their sleep, during Est's and Wendy's visit, William introduced them to his friends. Wendy had become smitten with Thor the moment she laid her eyes on him. Because of this, she did her best to get in his good graces. Much to William's surprise, Thor seemed to really like Wendy as well, so the two of them hit it off right off the bat.

Because of this, Wendy had decided to visit William wherever she had free time, so she could play with Thor.

William chuckled as he threw a frisbee for Ragnar. The afternoon classes had just ended, so the red-headed boy decided to play with the kids. Wendy arrived just in time to join them and decided to play with Thor.

William was about to throw the frisbee again when he saw someone enter the gates out of the corner of his eye. A look of shock appeared on his face when he saw the familiar faces that entered the premises of the Martial Division.

"Big Brother! Big Sister!" William laughed as he ran towards Matthew and Leah who were standing beside his grandpa.

"I'm glad both of you are safe." William hugged both of them together, and the two hugged him back.

"We're back, William," Matthew said as he patted William's head.

"Sorry for making you worry." Leah patted William's back.

James on the other hand was busy looking at Wendy. With just a glance, he could tell that the girl had feelings for William. He was laughing internally because his purpose for coming was to drag William to attend Matthew's and Leah's wedding ceremony.

What he didn't expect was to find a future "daughter-in-law" candidate the moment he visited William in the academy.

He didn't waste any time and approached the girl with a smile that would put all toothpaste models to shame.

"Hello, young lady. I am William's grandfather, James," James introduced himself with an award winning smile that would make all the single ladies call him daddy. "Feel free to call me Grandpa."

"H-Hello, Grandpa James," Wendy stuttered as she looked at the handsome gray-haired man that was oozing with charisma in front of her.

"Are you William's friend?"

"Yes."

"Are you interested in becoming his fiance?"

"E-Excuse me?"

"You see, William might be mischievous, but he is really a good boy." James was like an experienced salesman who was about to scam a little girl to buy the wares he was selling. "I call the shots when it comes to who William is going to marry, so if you are interested, how about we set a date to meet your parents? That way, we can discuss when and where the marriage will take pla-- Oi, don't push me!"

William pushed James aside and immediately stood between him and Wendy. "What are you babbling about, old man?! Wendy, don't listen to gramps. He is getting old and getting cynical. Usually, we tie him up with a rope back at home, so he doesn't bite people. Don't believe whatever nonsense he is saying!"

"O-Okay." Wendy nodded her head. She then gave William's grandpa a curious look.

James felt her gaze and winked back at her.

William saw this and snorted at his annoying grandpa.

"Why are you being so overprotective? Relax, I'm already old and have no intention of stealing your girlfriend." James teased.

"I-I'm not Will's girlfriend," Wendy answered timidly behind William's back. "I'm just his friend."

"It's fine, we can discuss this matter later," James' eyes glinted in delight when he heard the young lady call his grandson "Will" instead of William. Of course, he didn't make any further moves on Wendy because it would just incite William to contradict him.

"If you're not busy, come back with us to Lont for a few days," James said as he stood in front of the red-headed boy who was looking at him with vigilance.

"Um? Why? Is something going to happen to Lont?" William inquired. He knew that his Grandpa wouldn't invite him to go back to his hometown without a good reason.

James smirked and patted William's shoulder. "Matthew and Leah are getting married. You should come with us to witness their wedding ceremony."

William's jaw slackened as he looked at Matthew and Leah with a shocked expression. "The two of you are getting married?"

"Yes." Matthew grinned.

Leah held Matthew's arm and winked at William. "We are."

"Congratulations!" William smiled and gave Matthew a thumbs up. "Now we are truly going to be one big happy family."

"Worry about yourself," Matthew replied. He could see that his Grandpa had set his eyes on the pretty girl beside William and understood that his cousin was going to have a headache for the next few days.

"So, are you going to come back with us? Or must I carry you kicking and screaming?" James asked with a grin.

"If it's just a few days, I think I can go," William replied after careful consideration. "I'll discuss this first with Instructor Grent and Instructor Andy."

"Okay, you do that," James nodded his head. "Meanwhile, I'll have a talk with this pretty lady here."

"Yeah, no." William grabbed Wendy's hand and pulled her away. "Mama, make sure that Gramps doesn't follow us."

"Meeeeeeeh." Emma bleated and gave James the "Don't even think about it glare".

The old man sighed and patted the Angorian's goat's head. "It seems that you've forgotten who raised you when you were still just a kid."

"Meeeeeeeh."

"Tell me more about that young lady."

Ella lowered her head and poked James with her horns. Clearly, she had no intention of sharing any information with the annoying old man.

"Your grandpa sure is interesting," Wendy said once the two of them were out of earshot. "He reminds me of my own grandfather back home."

"Believe me when I say that my Grandpa is ten times worse than yours," William snorted.

Dia, who was coiled around his neck, was resting her head on William's head. Thor walked beside Wendy, while Ragnar walked beside William.

"Listen, Wendy." William looked at her with a serious expression. "My gramps has a bad habit of playing matchmaker. I already told you about the incident with my Ex-Fiance Rebecca. Believe me when I say that he has already locked you in his sight and will do his best to convince you to become my girlfriend. When he does that, give him a firm rejection so that he will back off. Do you understand what I'm saying?"



Wendy nodded her head. She agreed with William on the surface, but the boy didn't know what she truly thought deep inside. Seeing her reaction, the red-headed boy thought that he had successfully gotten his message across and stopped holding her hand.

Soon, the two arrived at the Staff Room where several of the instructors stayed when they were not teaching their classes. William went inside alone, while Wendy watched over Thor and Ragnar.

At this exact moment, inside William's dormitory room...

Kenneth was holding a round mirror in his hand. The mirror was made from an unknown crystal, and the frames at its side were inscribed with runemarks that were quite similar to the runes found on William's slave collar.

The silver-gray-haired boy muttered an incantation and the mirror glowed in response. Soon, an image of an elf with silver-gray-hair and blue eyes appeared on its surface.

"I am here to report about my target's current circumstance," Kenneth said.

"Very well." the elf nodded. "I am going to record your report so I may pass it along to the elders, and the Patriarch of the clan. You can start your report now."

#### Chapter 180: Kenneth's Secret [Part 2]

"Yesterday, I personally examined his body and didn't find any traces of magic whatsoever," Kenneth began his report. "Aside from that, there is no sign that he had awoken any kind of Spiritual Powers. Even so, I still can't gauge how strong he is."

"You can't gauge how strong he is?" the Elf interrupted Kenneth's report. "How can you not gauge his strength? Aren't you always with him?"

"Yes." Kenneth nodded. "I am always around him. When I used the clan's artifact to measure his strength, the results said that he was a Class D individual."

"Only Class D?" The Elf frowned. "Isn't that a bit too weak? Then again, he's a Half Elf. I guess this is to be expected of a filthy half breed."

(A/N: Filthy Mudblood much?)

Kenneth tasted something sour in his mouth when the Elf referred to William as a filthy half breed using a contemptuous tone. Even so, he took hold of his emotions and put on a calm expression.

"So, why did you say that you couldn't gauge his powers?"

"It's because the feats that he has accomplished don't match his power level."

Kenneth started to narrate everything that he had gathered about William. From the battle against Psoglav until the end of the Dungeon Outbreak. The Elf listened patiently until Kenneth finished his tale.

"Isn't it very obvious?" the Elf asked in contempt. "Or must I spell it out to you so that you can understand? The boy's strength is only subpar and his real strength relies on that goat he calls Ella. If you leave the goat out of the equation, he is just an ordinary half breed that won't be able to achieve anything, even if he trained for years."

Kenneth wanted to refute the Elf's words, but the latter didn't give him an opportunity to do that.

"Based on your report I can tell that the hybrid only relies on external forces to increase his battle prowess. Such a person doesn't amount to much when fighting alone. Continue your monitoring and report any changes that you see," the Elf ordered. "Remember, your purpose for going to the Southern Continent is to see whether he is the one rumored about in the Prophecy."

"The clan has already dispatched others like you to different places in the Central Continent where rumors of strong individuals that had a hint of dark magic could be found. We need to find the Prince of Darkness and bring him to the Silvermoon Continent before he awakens his power. This is the order from the Patriarch of our Clan. It still annoys me that we have to waste our resources to monitor a shepherd in the Southern Continent."

"He is not an ordinary Shepherd," Kenneth said through gritted teeth. "Don't forget whose son he is."

The elf quieted down after hearing Kenneth's words. He also knew William's identity and that was the reason why Kenneth was sent to personally monitor him in the academy. The son of the Saintess and the Dungeon Conqueror was an existence that shouldn't go unchecked.

"Just carry out your mission and report as soon as you find anything worth reporting," the Elf ordered before the transmission was cut.

"You still haven't changed, Father." Kenneth firmly gripped the mirror in his hand as he clenched his teeth in anger. When Kenneth heard that William was one of the candidates that was named by the Patriarch, he immediately volunteered to be the one to monitor him.

He had long heard about the Half-Elf that was born from the union of the Saintess and the Hero of the Elves. Kenneth wanted to see what kind of person William was. He didn't care if William was the Prince of Darkness or not.

What he cared about was Lady Arwen, his teacher, who resided in the Holy City of Nytfe Aethel. Before he left the Silvermoon Continent, he promised her that he would watch over William and keep him safe.

Arwen only giggled when she heard his promise. He still remembered her parting words on the day he was about to ride the ship bound to the Southern Continent.

"My son is a wolf in sheep's clothing," Arwen said with a smug look on her face. "Go and meet him. Perhaps, you will learn a thing or two by staying by his side. May the Blessings of the World Tree always shine upon you. Take care of yourself and let's meet again a few years from now."

Kenneth returned the round mirror to his storage ring as he remembered his teacher's smiling face. Arwen and William had similar enough smiles that Kenneth sometimes found himself in a daze when the Half-Elf smiled at him.

'I hope that you're not the Prince of Darkness, William.' Kenneth sighed in his heart. 'Because if you are, all the elves in the Silvermoon continent will do everything in their power to catch you. I don't want to see that happen.'

Kenneth walked towards the window as he gazed upon the East. Dark clouds loomed in the distance, as if to mark the coming of a storm.

Oliver, who was hiding inside William's shadow, was not aware that the letter he had sent back to his Master had been intercepted by the Rayleigh Clan who specialized in intelligence gathering and the making of prophecies.

It was for this very reason that William had become a priority candidate on their list. If the Parrot Monkey had known that his arbitrary action years ago had set many things in motion in the Silvermoon Continent, he would definitely kick himself out of anger because of his stupidity.

Not only did he endanger William's life, he had also unintentionally broken the peaceful life that Celine had sought for during the years of her enslavement.

After William got the instructor's permission to take a few days leave from the academy, he hurriedly returned to his dormitory room only to find Kenneth staring outside the window.

"I am about to return to my hometown for a few days to participate in a wedding ceremony. Would you like to come with me?" William asked.

"No." Kenneth shook his head. "I will just wait for your return. There are still many things I need to do because our 'Sir William' doesn't want to do his duties."

William coughed lightly because he was guilty as charged. "Well then, please, do your best Mr. Secretary. Your Sir William is very unreliable. Go ahead and look for suitable candidates that can join our ranks."

Kenneth gave him a side-long glance and snorted. "Go and return as soon as you can."

"Okay." William smirked and patted Kenneth's shoulder before leaving the room.

In truth, Kenneth wanted to go with him, but he couldn't afford to meet Celine at this point in time. The elves of the Silvermoon continent had been keeping a close eye on two important individuals and they were none other than Celeste and Celine.

The twins that were mentioned in the grand prophecy of the Silvermoon Continent. Although Celeste was most likely the bride stated in the prophecy, none of the elves dared to make their move on her in the small chance that they were wrong in their assumption.

Because if they made a mistake, there was a chance that their entire race would be wiped out from the face of the world.