

## Strongest 191

Chapter 191: A Senior Dares To Bully Children?

"Understood, but how far can we go when we take action?" Damian inquired. "He is the head of the noble faction in the South. Little Will might get in trouble if we pester him too much."

"That's right, Boss," Gideon commented. "That old man is pettier than yo-- I mean, less handsome and domineering than you. Things might get out of hand if we ruffle his feathers."

James snorted. He and the old man from the South had been butting heads since the former king was still in power. They were once best friends, but immediately turned hostile after they had both fallen in love with the same lady.

Naturally, the one who married the girl was James, and his once best friend vowed that he would make things difficult for him and his entire bloodline.

James wasn't afraid of his threats because he knew that his long time friend wouldn't really dare to take William's life. Many years had passed since they last saw each other and James hoped that the man's anger had already simmered down.

Even so, that didn't mean that the old bastard would miss the opportunity to catch the little Ainsworth who came walking into his territory.

"I changed my mind," James said with a serious expression. "If that old bat makes a move then let him do it. You two are to watch from the shadows and only rescue William if things get out of hand."

""By your will.""

The two men disappeared from the room and faint chuckles could be heard in the air. Clearly, the two were going to enjoy the mission that James had given them. It had been a while since they had left Lont and they were itching to cause some trouble at their destination.

'Maybe this is a good opportunity to teach William a thing or two about the division of power in the Kingdom,' James thought. 'Also, I'm very curious. Just what kind of hospitality is he planning to give my grandson?'

James looked towards the South with a smile. Although he didn't want to admit it, he was very curious to know how the Sword Saint of the Hellan Kingdom would deal with his grandson who was currently messing around inside his domain.

Drake whistled as he checked the contents of the storage rings that were taken from the bandit leader of the camp that they had just raided. This was the fourth day since their arrival in the Southern Region and, so far, they had already dispatched four Bandit Groups.

"If I only knew that raiding bandit camps was this profitable, I might have done it sooner," Drake said as he handed the storage ring to William.

Spencer snorted and gave Drake a sneer, "You make it sound like raiding bandit camps is easy. I'd like to see you try and do it on your own."

"How about we make a bet on who will kill the most bandits in the next raid?"

"You're on."

The two rivals glared at each other while William waited for the inventory list that Dave had made after checking the treasures that they had found in the bandit camp. The second camp they had raided was bigger than the first and held a hundred bandits.

The rankings of the bandits were quite low, and their main fighting force consisted of Ten silver ranks and one Gold Rank. The rest were only copper ranks, which allowed the Angorian War Sovereign to overpower them due to William's and Priscilla's long range barrage.

After killing the main fighting force, the rest was easy.

Dave and the others still had pale faces, but they had managed to defeat a bandit each. William and the officers dealt with the survivors and made sure that none escaped.

After an hour of checking the inventory, Dave finally gave his report to William.

"With this, we will be able to buy the necessary equipment for the rest of our members, Sir William," Dave said. Although his expression still looked pale, there was a hint of admiration that could be seen in his features.

William nodded his head as he looked towards the South. He had already sent a few of his subordinates to the nearest town, to report to the local soldiers about the subjugation of the bandit camp. They were just waiting for the students to return so they could find a place to rest for the night.

Priscilla, who was seated on top of a tree, whistled--which signaled that some unknown individuals were approaching their location.

William raised his hand and he, along with the members of his Knight Order, dispersed and hid in the trees to wait in ambush.

A few minutes later, a Gryphon, pulling a carriage, landed a few meters away from the bandit camp. The carriage had a luxurious design and the emblem that was painted on its door was that of a red greatsword.

William frowned because he was not familiar with the different insignias in the kingdom. However, his officer, Drake, recognized the emblem very well. It was the symbol of the noble that ruled the Southern Faction, the Sword of Caliburn.

The coachman respectfully opened the carriage door and bowed his head.Â

A man with gray hair walked out of the carriage. He was wearing a black warrior tunic, and stood straight like a sword. William assumed that the man was close to his grandfather's age due to his gray hair and eyes.

This realization made his expression change to a serious one as he ordered the system to change his Job Class to Cavalier. If worst comes to worst, he would use his ultimate trump card in order to help his subordinates escape.

Ella stood beside him with a calm expression. The goat knew that the opponent in front of them was very powerful. His very presence was enough to make the members of William's Knight Order have trouble breathing.

"Get out," the man ordered. "Or do you want me to cut down the trees where you hide?"

William made a hand gesture to his members to keep hiding, while he stepped forward to face the newcomer. Naturally, Ella followed by his side. She couldn't possibly leave William to fight off against this formidable opponent alone.

Dia, who had coiled herself on William's neck, was paying close attention to the man's profile, while Ragnar walked beside Ella. The two mythical beasts were aware that they could do nothing against the opponent in front of them, but they had no intention of leaving William's and Ella's side either.

William understood what they were thinking, so he allowed the two to accompany him as he faced off against the man in front of them.

The man and the boy stood twenty meters away from each other. The man appraised William and the boy did the same.

A few minutes passed in silence before the man took the initiative to start the conversation.

"What's your name?" The man asked.

"My name? I am none other than Spencer Armstrong," William answered with arrogance. "The fourth son of the Duke of Armstrong. How about you, what's your name?"

Spencer, who was hiding behind a tree, cursed William internally for being shameless.

'Of all the names he could have used, why settle for my name?' Spencer fumed. 'He could have used Drake's instead!'

The cool looking boy was very tempted to come out of his hiding place and kick William with all his might. However, his reasoning prevented him from doing so. Although he felt aggrieved because of William's shameless act, he still didn't dare to move from his hiding spot.

"What a cheeky brat," the man commented. "Since when did the Duke of the Armstrong family have a red-haired Half-Elf as his son?"

"What can I do? I was born a Half-Elf with red hair."

"... You are as obnoxious as your grandfather."

Ezio, who was hiding from the shadows, observed this scene with a calm expression. He had already received James' order through the use of a special means. Because of this, he didn't have any intention of saving William from his predicament.

The nobles of the Kingdom had strict laws that they followed. Among them was not to intervene with the battles of the young generation. Anyone who would "openly" break this rule would suffer the combined oppression of all the noble houses.

Since Mordred had officially become a Marquess, this meant that the rule also applied to all the members of the Ainsworth Family. Also, although William's Knight Order hadn't been publicly revealed, the King had already recognized its legitimacy. No noble would want to mess with the head of a Knight Order.

Of course, there were some people who were exceptions to this rule, and the Sword Saint was one of them.

The man then released his killing intent which made Conrad, Dave, and the others kneel on the ground panting for breath.

Kenneth, Priscilla, Spencer and Drake grit their teeth in an effort to endure the powerful killing intent, but their resistance only lasted for a brief moment, before they too, collapsed on the ground due to the overwhelming pressure.

Dia hissed, and Ragnar growled. The two mythical beasts were doing their best to resist as well, but their bestial instincts were telling them that the man in front of them was the personification of Death.

William tapped the ground in front of him with his staff and the pressure raining down on him was dispersed. He had a carefree smile on his face as he looked at the man in front of him.

"A senior dares to bully children?" William sneered. "Such an honorable thing to do."

The killing intent that the man was releasing might be strong, but who was William? He was someone who had endured the worst torture under Celine and faced killing intent training from Ezio.

The man's act might fool others, but it was not enough to fool him. He already knew that whoever the person in front of him might be, he was only there to intimidate them. If he really wanted to attack them, he would not bother with words and simply do the deed without much fuss.

Chapter 192: I Will Not Allow Others To Use Me As A Stepping Stone

"A senior dares to bully children?" William sneered. "Such an honorable thing to do."

The man ignored William's taunt and simply uttered an order.

"Cid, come."

"Yes. Master."

A handsome young boy who seemed to be around sixteen years old, with short platinum blonde hair, emerged from the carriage. Behind him, a lady who seemed to be of the same age followed suit.

She also had platinum blonde hair which made William assume that the two of them were siblings.

The young teenager bowed to the man as he waited for his Master's order.

"Defeat him," the man ordered. "If you manage to do that, I will give you a reward."

"This disciple will obey your order, Master," Cid replied and faced William with a serious expression. He unsheathed his sword from its sheath and held it firmly on one hand.

"My name is Cid El Caliburn," Cid announced. "As per my Master's order, I will defeat you."

"I'm your daddy, and I'm here to spank you because of your stupidity," William replied as he lightly tapped Dia's head. "Dia, go with your Grandma Ella for now. You, too, Ragnar. Mama, I'll leave the kids in your care."

"Meeeeeeh."

The serpent and the puppy reluctantly left William's side and went with Ella as she left the battlefield.

William closed his eyes and breathed deeply. He could tell that the young boy who was about to fight him was strong. In fact, he was the strongest boy that William was about to face in his life. Kingsley couldn't even compare to the boy's presence, and William knew that he had to fight seriously if he hoped to win against his opponent.

'This might be one of the True Prodigies of the Hellan Kingdom,' William opened his eyes and focused on his opponent. 'I've always wanted to try fighting one of those Elven Prodigies that Master was so proud about. I'm guessing this man's level is similar to theirs.'

William twirled the staff in his hand once before taking the stance of the Relentless Dragon War Art.

'System, change my Subclass to Spearman.'

< Changing Subclass has been successful! >

While William was preparing for the fight, Cid looked at him in contempt.

"I announced my name in order to declare my intention of fighting you seriously," Cid said. "Aren't you going to do the same?"

"Sure. I'll tell you my name," William said as he firmly gripped the wooden staff in his hand. "After you beat me that is."

"Arrogant."

"The word is handsome. Get your facts straight, fool."

As if waiting for that cue, both boys charged at each other.

William thrust his wooden staff forward, while his opponent nimbly deflected it. The swordsman was about to go for a body strike, but the other end of William's staff struck towards his side, which forced him to take a step back.

The red-headed boy didn't miss the opportunity and took a step forward to deliver a barrage of short and long thrusts at the slippery boy who dodged his attacks with practiced movements.

After dodging a few times, the young swordsman regained his footing and delivered a combination of sword strikes that forced William to a defensive position. However, thanks to his Parry Skill, the critical strikes were deflected which allowed him to counter attack a few times.

Kenneth and the others watched this exchange with serious expressions. They had never seen William fight seriously before, aside from the time he fought against Priscilla. Kenneth watched his roommates' movements with discerning eyes.



He was gauging William's combat level through this battle in order to better understand how strong he was.

It had only been two minutes since the two boys clashed, but their exchange had already surpassed a hundred strikes each. This proved how intense their battle was. However, experts could tell with a glance that the one who had a disadvantage in this battle was William.

The two fighters separated and locked eyes with each other.

"You're not half bad," Cid said with a composed smile.

"You're very bad," William commented. "The grandma in my hometown who does the laundry is stronger than you."

The smile on Cid's face disappeared as he glared at the boy who dared to mock him. What he didn't know was that William was not mocking him, but praising him. The grandma the red-headed boy was referring to was one of the hidden experts of Lont. It was only natural that Cid was weaker compared to her.

"I will now get serious," Cid stated as he changed his fighting stance. "Playtime is over."

"Go ahead. I don't plan on getting serious anytime soon," William replied. "You're too weak."

Cid narrowed his eyes as he took a step forward. The sword in his hand glowed bloody red as he infused it with his Sword Aura.

"Rend my foes, Lazarus!" Cid roared as he slashed the space in front of him twice.

William couldn't see anything, but he could tell that two powerful attacks were headed in his direction. The red-headed boy was about to dodge, but he suddenly realized that Dave was hiding at the tree behind him.

If he dodged now, the attack would hit Dave and it might give the chubby boy serious injury.

'It can't be helped,' William thought as he channeled his Aura in his wooden staff. 'Lightning God War Art, Twelfth Form, Gungnir!'

William threw his wooden staff towards Cid. However, instead of flying towards the swordsman, the staff swerved mid-flight and collided with something invisible. Two loud claps reverberated in the air as the wooden staff returned to William's hand.

The man observing the battle raised an eyebrow. He was a Sword Saint and he saw how William imbued the spear with his Aura. However, what he didn't understand was how the staff was able to neutralize Cid's attack.Â

Even Cid, who had executed one of the secret arts of his Master's Sword Technique, was surprised by the outcome. Even a steel sword would be cut in half if it faced his attack head-on. However, what truly shocked him was the fact that his attack was blocked by a wooden staff, and it wasn't even damaged!

Unfortunately, William wasn't planning to give him time to recover from the shock. The shepherd used his movement technique to close the gap and delivered a powerful thrust.

Cid nimbly dodged to the side to evade the attack. However, for some unknown reason, the end of the staff still hit him squarely on his chest, sending him flying a few meters away.

'He's wearing some kind of armor underneath his clothes.' William clicked his tongue as he prepared for another strike. He was still currently using the Lightning God War Art and Gungnir's specialty was its ability to "Always hit its target".

Each of the moves under the Lightning God War Art lasted for a minute. William wouldn't be able to use the same move again because it had a cooldown of twenty four hours. The only saving grace was that William could still use the other "Forms" in his repertoire like the killing blow "Gae Bolg" and the piercing strike "Longinus".

For this one minute, all of William's attacks would never miss as long as he was holding a staff, spear, or polearm weapon.

Cid immediately fell on the defensive as he did his best to block all of William's thrusts. After trying to dodge a few times and getting hit a few times as well, the swordsman felt that something was wrong.

However, no matter how hard he thought, he couldn't come up with a solution and decided to just go on the defensive for the time being.

"Enough!" Cid shouted as he unleashed his Sword Aura to its limit. He was getting annoyed that the red-headed boy was able to get the upper hand in their exchange. With a single slash, he managed to push William twenty meters away from where he stood.

The red-headed boy was unharmed and simply used the momentum of the blow to skid on the ground.

Cid looked at his opponent and removed the bracelet on his wrists. He was no longer treating this fight as a game. He couldn't afford to lose face in front of his Master and his older sister.

William smirked as he watched this scene. 'This battle will end in the next clash.'

He already knew that Cid was strong, but he noticed a very crucial flaw as he exchanged blows with his opponent.

'This old fox. He is only using me as a stepping stone to hone his disciple,' William sneered internally. 'Since that is the case, I will play along. I also don't want to waste my time on this farce.'

William unsummoned his staff and took a barehanded stance. The red-headed boy's presence changed as the air around his body seemed to fluctuate.

< Changing Subclass to Monk Successful! >

A brief flash of admiration appeared in the Sword Saint's eyes as he looked at the grandson of the man he hated the most in the Southern Continent.

Yes. Aramis already knew of William's true identity. How could he possibly not? The boy had been in his territory for four days and the Saint had been paying close attention to his movements ever since he subjugated the first bandit group in his domain.

He wanted to see just what kind of child William was, so he decided to bring his disciple to have a duel with his nemesis' grandson. Since he couldn't bring himself to lower his dignity to fight a kid, he ordered his disciple to beat him in his place.

Amaris didn't expect that William was strong enough to push his disciple to become serious. However, he already knew who the victor of this duel would be after the first clash.

'This will be a good lesson for you,' Aramis thought as he waited for the final exchange between the two prodigies of the young generation. 'This is the difference between someone who knows how to fight, and someone who is fighting with his life on the line.'

The Sword Saint closed his eyes. 'As expected of your grandchild, Erza.'

"Exceed Break," William muttered as he bent his wrist in order to execute the strongest attack in the Monk Skill Tree, the Overwhelming Strike.

After removing the bracelets on his wrists, Cid's speed and power grew threefold. William on the other hand stood his ground and initiated the crane stance.

It was an attack that William could only use once a day, and it was the strongest attack amongst all of his Job Classes.

Two shouts pierced the air as William and Cid exchanged the final blow that would end their battle.

William activated the Exceed Break in order to raise his sensitivity a hundredfold. This meant that every little thing that was within hundred meters around him would be perceived by his senses.

And then, it happened.

A loud clap, accompanied by the sound of something breaking reverberated in the surroundings. Cid's body slammed against a tree a hundred meters away before falling on the ground with a dull thud.

Blood dyed the ground red as blood flowed from William's left arm and broken right hand. Even so, that didn't stop the boy from raising his right hand in the air to announce his victory.

"I do not wish for Dominion, but I will not allow others to use me as a stepping stone," William announced as his body fell backwards due to his injuries.

William didn't want to lose again.

He'd had enough of losing.

That's why, he didn't back down even though the odds were against him. He utilized everything in his arsenal to show the Sword Saint that he wasn't a stepping stone that his disciple could trod over.

Instead, he would be the mountain that Cid, and the other so-called geniuses in the Southern Continent, had to overcome. He would be the peak that they would never hope to reach during their entire lifetimes.

Chapter 193: The Sword Saint's Condition

William felt something wet licking the side of his cheek.

When he opened his eyes, he saw Ragnar slathering his cheeks with his slobber. The little puppy was so focused on his action, that he didn't notice that William had finally woken up.

The red-headed boy didn't move right away. Instead, he checked his current condition. His left arm had been stabbed by a sword during the battle, but he could tell that it was now properly healed.

The same could be said of his broken hand, which he used to send Cid flying. Due to the unknown armor the boy was wearing, William's fist, which was already as hard as diamonds due to his Monk Skill, still received damage from the blow.

Fortunately, he had covered it with his aura. If he didn't then the damage would have been more severe. Seeing that both of his injuries were healed, the red-headed boy finally breathed a sigh of relief.

He then noticed a blinking light on his status page that meant that some notifications had appeared during his sleep. Out of curiosity, William opened it to see what it was.

< Ding! >

< Hidden Quest has been cleared! >

< Defeat the Disciple of the Sword Saint >

< Reward: 1000 God Points >

'Nice,' William thought as he read the unexpected reward he received from the system. 'Having more God Points is always a good thing.'

William then grabbed the cute puppy with both hands and raised him up in the air.

"You naughty boy, how dare you cover your Papa with saliva?" William asked as he playfully tickled the puppy's chest. He had already noticed that he was in an unfamiliar room the moment he woke up, but since he wasn't chained or anything, it meant that he and his subordinates were safe for the time being.

Ragnar whined and howled pitifully as he wiggled his legs to escape from William's hold. While the two were having their family bonding time, the door opened. Kenneth, along with Priscilla, entered the room.

"Sir, it's good to see that you are awake," Priscilla said as she walked towards William's bed.

"Where are we?" William inquired while still playing with Ragnar.

"We are currently inside the residence of the Duke of Caliburn," Kenneth replied. "Everyone is, also, here. You don't need to worry because we are being treated as guests."

"Mmm." William hummed as he placed Ragnar on his stomach. He then patted the puppy's head to make it behave while he summoned a handkerchief to wipe his cheek free from puppy slobber.

"How long was I unconscious?" William asked.

"It is currently eight in the morning," Priscilla answered. "You fought off the Saint's Disciple yesterday."

"I see." William continued to lie on the bed because it was very soft and comfortable. They had been camping outside for the past few days, and he had briefly forgotten what it was like to sleep on a luxurious bed.

"You said I fought off the Sword Saint's Disciple, so the man standing back then was the Sword Saint?" William inquired.

"Yes," Priscilla answered.

A short period of silence permeated the room before William looked at Kenneth and Priscilla with a serious expression.

"... Are we in trouble? I mean, I did beat the crap out of his disciple yesterday."

"Don't worry. Like I said, we are being treated as guests. We are not confined or anything and were given freedom to wander around his estate."

Kenneth sat beside the bed and stared at William with his clear blue eyes, "Will, you are stronger than I thought."

William grinned. "Right? Are you now happy that you followed the right person?"

Kenneth smirked, but didn't answer William's question. He was quite satisfied that the Sword Saint had ordered his best Clerics to heal William's injuries. The silver-gray-haired boy had heard rumors that Aramis was a cold and vicious killer. However, so far, he didn't see any evidence that their current host was the same person he'd heard about in the rumors.

William was about to ask another question when a knock was heard on the door.

The three people inside the room exchanged a glance before Priscilla volunteered to open the door to see who it was.

A young lady with platinum blonde hair entered the room while glaring at William.

"The Master is calling for you," the blonde girl said. "Come with me."

From her tone, one could tell that it wasn't a request, but an order. William lifted Ragnar off his chest as he propped himself up off the bed. He then gently placed the puppy on the floor before facing the girl that was looking at him with restrained anger.

"Please give me a minute, I'll just change my clothes to make myself look more presentable," William replied.

He didn't wait for the girl's reply and started to strip his upper clothes. The girl snorted and left the room, along with Kenneth and Priscilla.

William picked a set of noble clothes that his Aunt Helen had prepared for him before he left Lont. Since his family was a noble household, he must act like one in order to not give people a bad impression.

Exactly a minute later, William left the room and was escorted alone by the girl who seemed keen on taking a bite of his body.

After a series of twists and turns, the two arrived in front of an ornate golden door. With a glance, William could tell that this was an important room within the Duke's household.



"Master, we have arrived," The girl announced in a respectful tone.

"Enter," a cold and firm voice answered from within the room.

The door swung open, allowing the two children to enter unimpeded.

"Allow me to introduce myself," the man said while sitting on a red throne carved with runic symbols. "I am Aramis Bran Caliburn, and the person I hate the most in this world is your grandfather, James Von Ainsworth."

William was prepared to introduce himself but stopped short after hearing Aramis' introduction. Seeing his awkward expression, Aramis merely gestured for him to take a seat.

The red-headed boy nodded his head and sat down while staring at the person who had a grudge on his Grandpa, James.

"Tell me, what are you doing in my domain?" Aramis questioned. "If you tell me that you only came here to subjugate bandits, I will not believe it."

"We didn't just come here to subjugate bandits, we also came here to take their treasures," William answered. He deemed that, since the other party already had a grudge on his grandpa, whatever he said, or did, wouldn't change his situation.

So, instead of cowering in fear or acting servile, he decided to just face the Sword Saint fearlessly and pray that his Grandpa would come to save him if he ever got bullied.

"Is that all?" Aramis inquired. "You just came here to subjugate bandits, take their treasures, and leave? Is that it?"

"Actually, we also came here because, within the Hellan Kingdom, the Southern Regions are the home of Hippogriffs," William replied. "Me and my subordinates are planning to take a few before going back to the Hellan Royal Academy."

"Hippogriffs? You came all this way to tame hippogriffs?"

"Yes."

"Why?" Aramis frowned. "I didn't receive any notice from the academy that their students would be entering my domain to tame Hippogriffs."

William decided to come clean and tell the Sword Saint the truth. As a master of his rank, Aramis could easily tell the truth from lies. "That's because I didn't notify the academy of our actions," William replied. "The excuse I gave the Dean was that we would only do survival training for a month until the classes resumed."

Aramis pondered for a while as he digested William's words. As one of the top officials of the Kingdom, he had already been informed that the boy in front of him was the current captain of the new Knight Order called the "Angorian War Sovereign".

Just as the name suggested, it was an order that was being formed in preparation for the possible war between the four powers of the Southern Continent.

The Hellan Kingdom in the West, the Anaesha Dynasty in the North, Zelan Dynasty in the South, and the Kingdom of Freesia in the Far East.

These were the four powers that made up the entirety of the Southern Continent.

Unfortunately, two of those major powers, the Anaesha and Zelan dynasties were planning to invade them. Aramis had already contacted his spies within the two dynasties to investigate their movements and possible routes for their invasion.

As the Sword Saint of the Hellan Kingdom, he was the strongest deterrent against such an invasion. For the two rulers to initiate this move only meant one thing.

They found strong backing. The Sword Saint had a few hypotheses and one of them was the interference of the Elven Council of the Silvermoon Continent.

Aramis was very suspicious of the elves because they had tried to subtly expand their influence on the human territories on both the Central and the Southern Continent. This movement started after they regained the blessings of their World Tree.

Aside from that first theory, there was another theory and this one held more credibility than the first.

An unknown organization was trying to throw the Southern Continent into chaos while waiting to reap the benefits. Thanks to James' letter, the King had been informed of an organization that was linked to the Dungeon Outbreaks that had recently happened within the Hellan Kingdom.

Although they had no evidence that the same group was behind the Beast Tide, they had a nagging feeling that they were connected. Also, the timing of the "possible" invasion after the military might of the Hellan Kingdom was exhausted, was too good to be true.

It was as if they were mere puppets that were being controlled to perform a play for entertainment. Although Aramis hated James, he could still set aside their differences when facing a threat from outside their borders.

"Fine, I permit you to tame Hipogriffs in my domain. But, there is a condition," Aramis said in an aloof manner.

"What is your condition, Your Excellency?" William asked.

"You are going to take my disciples Cid, and his sister, Aerith, with you," Aramis replied. "This is non-negotiable. Either you take them with you or you can scam from my domain."

Aramis had a feeling that his two disciples could learn a thing or two if they stayed by William's side for a short period of time.

He had raised them as warriors in a greenhouse and they lacked real battle experience. Seeing how William faced his disciple who was stronger than him, Aramis remembered his first love, Erza, as she fearlessly charged into the battlefield, despite the fact that she was up against foes who were stronger than her.

Aramis hoped that some of that bravery would rub off onto his disciples as they journeyed with the red-headed boy, who reminded him strongly of the woman whom he had wished to become his bride many years ago.

#### Chapter 194: Big Game Hunters

"Very well. I agree to this condition." William nodded his head. "However, I also have a condition."

"Oh?" Aramis raised an eyebrow. This was the first time someone had given a counter-offer to his demands. He glanced at the boy's hair color and once again remembered the first love of his life. After taking control of his thoughts, he made a gesture for William to speak.

"If your two disciples get in my way, I will kick them out of our group," William stated. "This is also non-negotiable."

The corner of Aramis' lips raised slightly, so that it was almost unnoticeable to those who didn't know his character.

Aerith didn't notice these changes because she was busy glaring at William from beside her Master.

"How dare you demand a condition from our Master?" Aerith reprimanded. "Don't you know who he is?"

"I know who he is," William answered with a refreshing smile. "But, do you know who I am?"

"Just a country bumpkin that could be found anywhere." Aerith snorted. "You think you are in a position to negotiate with my Master? If not for his order, I would not even bother to come with your smelly group."

"Well, you don't need to join us if you don't want to." William shrugged and returned his attention to the Sword Saint seated on the red throne. "This is what I'm talking about, Your Excellency. I'm afraid that your disciples will only create a ruckus along the way, hindering us from completing our mission."

Aramis lightly tapped his armchair which immediately made Aerith hold back the words that she was planning to say. The blonde girl hatefully glared at William, while the latter completely ignored her.

"Very well. I agree to your condition," Aramis stated. "Aerith, you'd better not get in their way. This is part of your training. Do I make myself clear?"

The blonde girl clenched her fists and reluctantly nodded her head. Although she didn't really want to go with William's group, her Master's order was absolute.

Aramis then waved his hand and told William to leave. He still had things he needed to do and seeing William only made his heart ache because he constantly reminded him of his beloved Erza.

A day after William's meeting with the Sword Saint, a group of carriages traveled to the Southern Tip of the Hellan Kingdom where a vast expanse of forest could be seen. The citizens of the Southern Region called this forest the "Whimsical Forest" .

It was a place where the majority of Beasts in the Southern Region could be found. Some of the creatures were rare and some were very rare. This was also why William chose to go South instead of going West.

The Forbidden Land of the West was the Strathmore Forest, and it was not the ideal place to stay and look for Hipogriffs.

William had asked for a local guide to accompany them to the forest. Fortunately, one of the coachmen working for the Duke used to be an adventurer and had traveled to the Whimsical Forest countless times in the past.

Their travel had been smooth and the Duke generously allowed them to take seven carriages and two wagons for their journey. These carriages were pulled by horses, instead of Gryphons, but William was fine with the arrangement.

After five days of travel, they finally arrived at their destination.

"We will set up camp here outside the forest," their guide, a middle-aged man that went by the name Henry, said with a smile. "Unless you kids want to become 'Beast Chow' then go ahead and set your camp inside. However, I will be staying here."

"We will follow your advice, Mr. Henry," William replied.

"Good. I have explored the forest many times in the past and I've witnessed Wendigos raid camps during the night. Not a fun experience, and I don't recommend it."

"Wendigos?" Spencer asked with a curious expression. "This forest has Wendigos?"

"Yep." Henry answered. "Less than a hundred, but that was years ago. Perhaps their numbers have increased since my last visit."

William had only heard about Wendigos from the Bestiary Lessons inside the Hellan Royal Academy. They were Class C creatures that reeked of death and decay. They liked to feast on human flesh and, on some occasions, possess humans and control their bodies to kill and eat their loved ones.

After finishing the dark deed of eating their family members, that person would then transform into a Wendigo, thus multiplying the numbers of these abominations.

After hearing the story about the Wendigo, some of the members of William's Knight Order felt their stomachs churn in disgust. The image of them cannibalizing their loved ones made them feel very uncomfortable.

"Don't worry, they don't attack large groups of people." Henry assured them. "At most, they will challenge a party of five, but no higher than that. They might be strong, but they're not stupid creatures."

William looked at the forest for a full-minute before relaying his orders.

"We will set up camp here today and hunt for Hipogriffs tomorrow. We will also set up a night-watch and rotate in groups of six.

The current number of members of William's Knight Order allowed his six officers to have six members under their command. These made the chain of command easier, and allowed William to just sit back and let the others do their duties without needing to bother him.

His role was to simply lead them, while his captains managed the other duties.

The next day, Henry guided them to a meadow within the forest where the Hipogriffs used to stay during his years of adventuring. Hipogriffs, by nature, were omnivores. They ate grass and meat, depending on which was more abundant.

The group had just arrived at the meadow when an ear piercing screech caught their attention. Four towering beasts arrived at the meadow and began to attack the Hipogriffs that were grazing peacefully in the grasslands.

"A Gryphon Hunting Party," Henry's face immediately became serious. "They are hunting Hipogriffs!"

Gryphons and Hipogriffs may look the same, but there were distinct differences between the two.

Gryphons were magical beasts that had the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. They were also three times bigger than Hipogriffs, which made them the stronger between the two.

Hipogriffs were also magical beasts that had the front legs, wings, and head of an eagle and the body, hind legs and tail of a horse.

The two groups fought each other with several hipogriffs fighting against a single Gryphon. The one leading the defense was a Hippogriff that was twice as large as an ordinary one and had a golden luster on its beak, talons, and wings.

It was easy to tell that he was the Alpha of the herd. The Alpha led his subordinates to defend their territory, and a great battle was waged in the skies.

Loud shrieks shattered the peace of the meadow as blood rained down from the sky. One of the Gryphons successfully tore off the wing of one of the defending Hipogriffs and the latter fell towards the ground.

The girls within the group covered their eyes because they didn't dare look at the outcome of the magical beast who was falling to its death.

However, those who were watching the battle had shocked expressions on their faces when they saw William, along with Ella, charge to where the Hippogriff was falling.

"Come forth! Psoglav!" William roared.

A portal appeared behind the boy and a demonic beast that had a humanoid body with horse legs, and a dog's head appeared with a roar.

"Don't forget your promise, Shepherd!" Psoglav said as he summoned his Doppelganger. The two demonic dogs summoned a pair of spectral hands, and simultaneously used dark whips to create a net to catch the falling Hippogriff.

"Yes, you can have one of those Gryphons as food," William replied in a calm manner.

He had made a deal with the Demonic Dog before they left the academy because William didn't have any magic power. In order to capture Class C Beasts, he needed the help of a stronger beast which left him with few other options.

Just like he had done with Spire, William did an equal contract with Psoglav along with several conditions attached.

Basically, the Demonic Dog agreed to help William capture the Hipogriffs in return for Beast Cores and High-Grade meat from magical beasts. Aside from helping William capture beasts, he wouldn't do anything else.



The Hippogriff was safely caught by the dark net and William immediately used the power of his Shepherd Job Class to tame it. There was no taming skill within the Job Class, but William was able to communicate with Herd Type Creatures, and invite them to join his herd.

The Magical Beast was seriously injured and its wings were torn off. Although it was hurting, it was still thinking properly. Even so, it didn't resist William's invitation to join his herd because it felt that this was its only path to survival.

After successfully adding the Hippogriff to his ranks, he immediately sprinkled a High-Grade potion on its injuries. He then let it drink another potion in order to help with its recovery.

William didn't care if the beast he tamed was currently wingless. What mattered to him was that it was currently part of his herd and under his protection.

Psoglav and its Doppelganger were still creating darkwhips to serve as nets to catch more Hippogriffs falling from the sky. Although they had the advantage of numbers, they were class C creatures at most. Gryphons were Class B creatures and one of their natural predators.

Only the golden winged hippogriff was able to face off against them because it was also a Class B creature.

As more injured Hippogriffs fell from the sky, William's herd grew by the minute. Ella was paying close attention to the battle as well. Two of the gryphons suffered moderate injuries due to the Hippogriffs's teamwork.

The Alpha of the Hippogriff group fought off against one of the Gryphons alone, while the rest dealt with the others.

After adding Fifteen more hippogriffs to his herd, William thought that it was already enough and joined the battle.

Several whistling sounds pierced the air as William shot arrows at one of the injured Gryphons. He made sure to time his shots in order to not hurt any of the Hippogriffs that were fighting their mortal enemies with their beaks, and talons.

The Gryphons shrieked in anger when they noticed that an insect was getting in the way of their hunt. The one he was shooting at flapped its mighty wings and shrugged off the Hipogriffs that were ganging up on it.

"Psoglav!" William shouted as he nocked the adamantium arrow on his bow. He aimed at the approaching Gryphon and waited for the perfect timing.

The Gryphon dove down to swat the annoying insect, but four dark whips grabbed its legs mid-flight.

"Now!" Psoglav roared. "Make sure to hit it, boy. This Gryphon is going to be my lunch!"

Instead of answering, William released the string and the arrow flew straight and true. It pierced through the Gryphon's chest, giving it a serious injury.

The mighty creature shrieked in pain before crashing towards the ground, creating a dust cloud.

Psoglav hurriedly ran towards the dying Gryphon and formed a bastard sword made of dark energy. As one of the rulers of the forest, it was an opportunistic Beast that would use everything to its advantage. It wouldn't allow the Gryphon to regain its footing and fly away from its grasp.

Psoglav stabbed the sword into the back of the Gryphon's head, ending its life in the process. He made sure to hit its weak spot, so that its Dark Blade would penetrate without any form of resistance.

A shriek resounded in the sky as another Gryphon dove down. It locked its eyes on Psoglav with the intention to kill.

The demonic dog only sneered. It was about to attack the Gryphon when he received a telepathic message from William.

'Boy, your appetite is big,' Psoglav commented. 'I like it!'

William had promised Conrad and Dave that he would hunt for a special mount for them. Dave wanted to have a Gryphon Mount, and it just so happened that there were three live Gryphons around. With such a powerful beast like Psoglav to assist them, William was not afraid of capturing one.

What he was afraid of was that there weren't enough Gryphons to serve as their mounts!

#### Chapter 195: William's Demonic Business Partner

Cid and Aerith, who were ordered to accompany William, both had serious expressions on their faces. They had watched how William had killed a Gryphon with the help of the Demonic Beast that resembled a humanoid dog creature.

Kenneth, Priscilla, and the others were shocked at the sudden development, but hurriedly went to assist William in fighting off against the remaining Gryphons.

"Priscilla, you can injure them but don't give them any lethal injuries," William ordered. "We're going to capture these Gryphons!"

Priscilla wanted to ask a lot of questions, but she still resolutely followed William's orders. Since she was the only other proficient archer within their group, she immediately fired a few arrows in the air in order to injure the enraged Gryphon that was sweeping down on them.

Psoglav's and the Gryphon's ranks might be similar, but there was one major difference between the two of them. Although the Gryphon's physical strength was stronger than the Demonic Dog, Psoglav was smarter than it.

As a monster who loved to eat humans, Psoglav was an expert in the strategy of how to corner his prey and go for the kill. Although he couldn't win in a direct confrontation, he could always use the hit and run tactics!

"Void Arrow!" Psoglav, his doppelganger and the two pairs of spectral hands shot the Gryphon who had dove down from the air. Being a magical creature, its resistance against spells was also high. However, Dark Magic was different from the elemental classes. It didn't focus on elemental damage, but curses instead.

Wisp of black smoke oozed out of the Gryphon's eyes as it roared in fury. It swiped its claws blindly in an attempt to kill the bastardly dog that had killed its comrade.

William who was watching from the side was busy dipping his arrows in a cylinder that was filled with the venom of the Amphisbaena. Since he wanted to capture the magical beast, neutralizing its resistance was his top priority.

After coating ten arrows with the Amphisbaena's venom, the shepherd took aim and shot the rampaging Gryphon in the air.

After the tenth arrow embedded itself on the body of the Gryphon, its movements started to become dull. Psoglav chuckled as it used its dark whips to forcefully bring the magical beast to the ground.

After securely tying the Gryphon with its Dark Whip, it eyed the remaining two Gryphons in the air.

Seeing that two of their comrades had been killed and captured, the two remaining beasts decided to retreat.Â

The Hippogriffs screeched triumphantly to announce their victories before shifting their attention to William and his group.

Priscilla was about to nock another arrow in her bow when William ordered her to stop.

"Don't do anything that will provoke them," William ordered. "Everyone, stay still!"

Originally, there were thirty Hippogriffs who tried to fight the four Gryphons in order to protect their territory. However, sixteen of them had fallen in battle. Although they were seriously injured during the battle, none of them died because they were saved by William and Psoglav.

The Alpha of the Hippogriffs landed a few meters away from William and screeched in anger.

"That's right." William nodded. "I came here to capture some of your kind."

The Alpha screeched once again and spread its golden wings in an attempt to intimidate William.

"So, do you want them back?" William inquired. "I don't particularly mind, but can you take care of them?"

The Alpha briefly glanced at its comrades that had lost their wings, and limbs, during the battle against the Gryphons. As the leader of the herd, although it sympathized with its comrades, it had no use for individuals that lost their value.

Such was life in the Whimsical Forest. Although the Alpha might be too harsh on its own kin, this was a rule that everyone in the jungle abided by.

The Alpha was silent for a few seconds before glaring at William.

'You can have them,' the Alpha said through telepathy. 'Now get out of my sight! I will not allow you to decrease our numbers any further! There are other groups within this forest. Go capture their members if you dare, but if you touch one more member of my herd, I will fight you to the death!'

The Alpha gave a mighty screech before flapping its wings to fly to the air. The rest of the Hippogriffs gave their ex-comrades a side-long glance before following their leader.

The abandoned Hippogriffs hung their heads in sadness, but this was a natural occurrence within the forest. If not for William adding them to his herd, they would have just been waiting for their deaths because their Alpha had abandoned them.

Psoglav wasn't paying attention to William's discussion with the Hippogriff because it was busy digging through the Gryphon's body to find its Beast Core. The Beast cores were usually located at the head of Magical Beasts. If it's not there then it would be found close to its heart.

As a Demonic Beast, Psoglav had already determined the Beast Core's location and focused his attention in that area. After digging through the Gryphon's chest with its claws, it found the core that it was looking for.

Psoglav dug out a light-purple crystal the size of a bowling ball. It chuckled evilly for a while before opening its mouth to chomp on it. The crystal emitted crispy, crackling sounds that were similar to the sounds of potato chips being consumed.

The Demonic Dog chewed on the core with a satisfied expression, which made Cid and Aerith stare at it with caution.

After finishing its meal, Psoglav looked at the body of the Gryphon and salivated. It couldn't possibly eat it right here, because there was a chance that stronger creatures would come and disturb him. He was now faced with a dilemma and wondering how to best solve this problem.

"Here, take this," William said as he tossed a storage ring to the Demonic Dog. "We're going back to the camp for the time being. How about you?"

Psoglav caught the storage ring and gave William a grin. It had heard about these artifacts before, but never had the opportunity to use them.

"I'll return to my own Forest," Psoglav replied as he stored the dead Gryphon inside the storage ring. "Just call me when you're planning to catch your mounts. As long as you keep your promise, we can continue our business transaction."

William nodded his head. Just as Psoglav said, their cooperation was just a business transaction. As long as he supplied Psoglav the cores he wanted, the Demonic Beast would help him capture mounts for his Knight Order.

The red-headed boy was able to summon Psoglav because they made an "Equal contract". This allowed the Demonic Dog to become a temporary member of William's herd, just like Spire. With the help of the "King's Divinity" that was inside his soul, he would be able to summon them to wherever he was.

This ability was called "King's Legion". Right now, William was only able to use a quarter of the King's chess piece's divinity because he still hadn't met the requirements to activate it fully. Even so, it was still quite helpful because he could summon the members of his herd, anytime, anywhere.

A portal appeared in front of Psoglav, and the latter entered it while giving William a grin. William's group watched all of this with dumbfounded expressions.

"J-Just who are you?" Aerith asked. "How are you able to command an intelligent Demonic Beast?"

"Just a shepherd," William replied before facing the Hippogriffs who were still feeling down. "Moping around will not change anything. Since you are now under my her- protection, I will do my best to heal your injuries and allow all of you to fly in the skies once again."

When the Hipogriffs heard that they could once again fly in the sky, all of them looked at William with hope. The latter nodded his head in acknowledgement.

"I will keep my promise. For now, all of you will be part of my organization. Do you all understand?" William inquired.

All the Hipogriffs made screeches of acknowledgement as they stood. Those who had lost their limbs, remained lying on the ground, but their gazes were burning with life and determination.

William smiled before looking at the paralyzed Gryphon that was lying a few meters away from them.

The only creatures that he could tame were Herd Type creatures, and the Gryphon was not one of them. While he was deep in thought, he heard two chuckles not far from their location.

"Young Master, William. Do you plan to have this Gryphon as your mount?" A sturdy man that had a smug expression plastered on his face asked, as he swaggered towards the fallen Gryphon.

"Don't worry, we came here because your Grandpa was worried about you," another man who was slightly shorter than the sturdy man appeared without warning. "Ezio, come out and tell the Young Master that we are Commander's subordinates."

No reply came from the forest, but William scratched his head in understanding. Ezio had told him using very special means that the two men that appeared in front of him were indeed his Grandpa's subordinates and could be trusted.

"May I know both of your names, respected gentlemen?" William asked.

"Respected gentlemen?" the sturdy man asked. "Gideon, is the Young Master talking about us?"

"Of course," Gideon answered. "Damian, I think you are forgetting something. Only respectable gentleman can follow Commander around."

Damian suddenly had the "now that I think about it, you're right" expression and grinned at William.

"Indeed, both of us are respectable gentlemen," Damian stated. "My name is Damian, and this is my partner, Gideon."

"How do you do, Young Master?" Gideon replied with a smile.

William smiled back as he appraised the two newcomers. Because of his training, he could roughly gauge their strength based on their body language. Ezio had taught him how to read people while he accompanied him on his missions.

"I want this Gryphon to become the mount of my officer," William said. "Can you help me?"

"Of course," Damian replied. "This is a very easy thing to do for a Beastmaster like me. Now, who is the lucky guy who is going to have a Gryphon as his mount?"

Damian scanned the group of kids that were accompanying his Young Master. He briefly glanced at the disciples of the Sword Saint before returning his gaze to William.

"Dave, step forward," William ordered.



"Sir!" Dave stepped forward. Excitement was written all over his face.

As a commoner, he had seen Gryphons pull the carriage of the nobles and had dreamed of owning one in the past. Now that his dream was about to become a reality, he wasn't able to stop himself from praising William to the high heavens.

'Looks like I chose the right person to follow,' Dave thought as he looked at the red-headed boy who had become his idol. 'I'm going to hug his thigh and never let go! Perhaps, I will be able to soar to greater heights if I stay by his side.'

His thoughts were shared by the rest of the members of the Angorian War Sovereign. All of them were looking at William as if he was a genie that was about to make all of their wishes come true.

#### Chapter 196: The Crusader Of The Sky

"Alright, now put a drop of your blood on his head," Damian ordered.

The Gryphon was paralyzed and couldn't move, but its eyes glared at Dave who was attempting to tame it.

Since he didn't have an ounce of magical power, it was quite impossible for him to form a contract with a beast on its own. Fortunately, Damian was a competent Beastmaster and acted as a bridge to make the Gryphon submit to Dave.

The boy poked his fingertip with a dagger until blood flowed from it. He then smeared it on the forehead of the Gryphon while Damian worked the contractual magic to bind the Gryphon under Dave's control.

"Now it's a battle," Damian said. "You need to make him approve of you through a battle of wills. Gryphons are prideful creatures and don't like to become someone's mount. Even those that pull the carriages of nobles had to be won over before they agreed to work for anyone."

Dave grimaced because he could feel the Gryphon's fierce resistance. In the end, the connection broke because the Gryphon was able to overpower Dave's will.

The chubby boy almost collapsed on the ground because he received a strong backlash from the contractual ceremony. It was a good thing that William was standing beside him and hurriedly supported his body.

"I-I can't do it. It's too strong," Dave said as he panted for breath.

The Gryphon had a smug expression on its face as he looked at the chubby boy. Deep down, it was sneering at him for trying to bite off more than he could chew.

"Don't worry." William patted his shoulder. "I promised to help you get a Gryphon, and I will keep my promise. Someone bring me a spear!"

One of the students hurriedly took out a spear from his storage ring in order to get into William's good graces. He felt envious of Dave's lucky break and he hoped that he would get the same treatment if he showed his loyalty to William.

"Sir, here is a spear bought with two thousand gold coins," the young noble said with a smile. "I hope that it can be of good use to you."

"Mmm. This spear has a good quality," William replied. "Thanks. Because you acted swiftly, I will allow you to be the first to choose which Hippogriff you want to be your mount after they are fully healed."

"Thank you, Commander!" the young noble bowed and backed away with satisfaction.

William pointed the tip of the spear to the eye of the Gryphon. The latter looked back in defiance and gave William the "Go ahead and kill me! I'd rather die than become a human's mount!" glare.

"You have two options," William announced. "Submit and become Dave's partner or suffer!"

The Gryphon uttered a screech in defiance. It would rather die than submit!

"Good. Let's see how strong your resolve is." William grinned evilly as he walked towards the rear of the beast.

The red-headed boy twirled the spear until the blunt end of the spear was facing the Gryphon's bum.

"Requiescat in Pace!" William shouted as he thrust the spear towards the Gryphon's b\*tthole without mercy!

A loud shriek filled with pain and shock reverberated in the Whimsical Forest. The beasts who heard it unconsciously shielded their rear because they somehow felt that it was the appropriate thing to do.

"You dare to reject a knight of my order? Who gave you the courage?" William roared as he thrust the spear for the second time. "You think I'll let you die? I have plenty of healing potions here! We can do this all day. Let's see how long you last!"

The Gryphon's pitiful shrieks echoed in the Whimsical Forest for a good fifteen minutes before it stopped completely.

Damian's and Gideon's hands were shielding their bums and their expressions were filled with fear.

"Godd\*mn it! He is really the commander's grandson!" Damian gasped.

Gideon nodded his head in agreement. "Both of them are shameless bastards who will do anything to get their way."

The girls of the Order had long ago averted their gaze. Even Priscilla wasn't able to stomach William's approach to taming Magical Beasts.

The young noble who had given William the spear couldn't stop his lips from twitching. If he only knew that his two-thousand gold spear would be used in this manner, he would have given William a cheaper one instead!

"I'll ask you again," William grinned as he faced the pitiful Gryphon. "Are you going to submit? Or must I continue?"

The Gryphon hurriedly nodded like a chicken pecking rice. It threw away its dignity and submitted to William's will.

The Hippogriffs, on the other hand, were all shivering. All of them were thinking of the same thing.

'If I had rejected his offer to be tamed, would I have ended up receiving the same treatment?'

The magical beasts felt that they had saved themselves the trouble of getting hurt by agreeing to be part of William's herd. If not, they might have suffered the same fate as their mortal enemy.

Damian did the contractual ceremony once again, and this time, the Gryphon didn't resist. It was even giving Dave the "hurry and just get it over with! I don't want that crazy bastard to peg me again!" eye signal.

After the contract was established, Dave and the Gryphon felt a strong connection to each other. This was the bond that was shared between the Beast Companions and their Masters.

William patted Dave's shoulder and gave the Gryphon the antidote to overcome the paralysis. After the magical beast was able to stand up again, the red-headed boy then walked towards the noble that gave him the spear.

"I'm returning it," William said. "Thank you very much."

The young noble looked at the "dirtied" spear in his Commander's hand and almost cried a river. He knew that he wouldn't be able to wield that spear again due to the scene he'd just witnessed. His mental trauma would not allow him to be able to accept holding such a weapon in his hands.

"Y-You can have it, Commander," the young noble replied bitterly. "Consider it as a gift from your subordinate."

William looked at the young noble and felt that the boy was a very good person. Because of this, he decided to give him a reward at a later time.

"Very well, since you feel that way then I will keep this spear as a token of your friendship." William nodded and stored the weapon inside his ring.

"Let's return to the camp," William ordered. "We will continue our exploration tomorrow."

""Yes Sir!""

Cid, Aerith, and Henry looked at William with complicated expressions. Just like Cid and Aerith, Henry was there to observe William's actions. He would then report these happenings to the Sword Saint as per the latter's order.

The Sword Saint was very curious about William's potential, so he allowed him to hunt freely inside his domain. Also, he deemed that it would be best to equip the new Knight Order with mounts so that they would be able to perform well in the war that was estimated to happen in just a few short months.

"Ahhh!"

Dave fell off the Gryphon's back for the umpteenth time as the latter walked towards the encampment.

William suggested that Dave get used to riding his new mount as part of his training. However, since he was a commoner by birth, he wasn't able to get the opportunity to ride domestic animals like horses and the likes.

The Gryphon looked at his new partner in disdain as if telling him "you can't even sit on my back properly and you wanted me to become your mount? What an idiot!".

William grinned when he saw Dave's pitiful expression. He then ordered the rest of the group to continue walking to the camp while he had a private talk with Dave.

Damian and Gideon also stayed behind. Their orders were clear and they were to observe their Young Master and make sure he didn't get into trouble.

When the other members of his group were no longer around, William walked towards the dejected Dave.

"Dave, do you want to be able to ride your partner without falling down?" William asked.

"Yes," Dave replied. "Sir, can you help me do that?"

"Well, it's not like I can't help you, but I don't know if it will work. Are you willing to give it a try?"

"I trust Sir William. I am willing to try anything as long as I can be a proper knight!"

William's expression suddenly became serious. "Damian, Gideon, make sure that no one will be able to spy on me. What I am about to do is confidential. Make sure that no one will witness it."

"Very well, Young Master." Damian agreed.

"Alright." Gideon nodded.

Both of them disappeared from where they stood as they created a protective perimeter around William. Ezio, who was hiding in the shadows, also extended his help and made sure that no one would be able to interfere with whatever William was about to do.

"Dave, before we start, you are going to sign another contract," William said as he presented a scroll in his hand. "You are not allowed to tell anyone anything about what you are going to witness today. That includes you, Mr. Gryphon."

The Gryphon hurriedly nodded its head in understanding. It already knew how unreasonable William could be, and it didn't want to experience it a second time.

"Okay, I need both of your blood," William ordered.

Both the boy and the Gryphon obeyed without question and allowed William to get some of their blood. After the scroll glowed and the contract was completed, the red-headed boy took out a spear from his storage ring.

This spear was not the common spear that was used in battle. Instead, it was a jousting lance used by mounted cavaliers.

The main body of the lance had a silvery blue color with runic patterns and looked utterly majestic. Its handle was golden in color and had several runic patterns inscribed on its body.

William held the lance upwards using both of his hands. The Half-Elf was wearing the clothing of a nobleman and with the lance in his hand, he looked like a noble who held a lot of authority in his hands.

"Kneel," William ordered.

Dave had an understanding look on his face, and kneeled with his left knee like a proper knight and bowed his head.

William lowered the lance and lightly tapped Dave's left shoulder.

"In the name of the God of all Trades, Gavin, and the Goddess of Knights, Astrid, I give you the right to bear arms and the power to mete justice," William said with a righteous countenance. "May you protect the innocent and use your strength to uphold the honor of your Sovereign and people."

The lance glowed once as if empowering William's words.

Dave saw a string of words appear inside his mind and said them out loud.

"I, Dave Cornwell, hereby solemnly obey as a Knight of the Angorian War Sovereign."

William smiled and lightly tapped Dave's right shoulder before raising his lance once more towards the sky.

"Rise, my Knight, and uphold the oath that you have made today," William stated. "May your courage, and bravery, illuminate the world for eternity."

Rhongomyriad, the lance that illuminates the world, showered Dave with a golden brilliance. The King chess piece within William's Sea of Consciousness glowed thrice before returning to its normal state.

A series of words appeared in William's status page which caught him completely by surprise.

< First Knight of the Angorian War Sovereign has been registered >

< Name: Dave Cornwell >

< Bestowing Knight Title....>

< Appropriate Title Found! >

< Dave Cornwell: The Crusader of the Sky >

Chapter 197: Can We Talk In Private?

William thought that Dave's title was really cool as he stared at the young boy in front of him who seemed different from before.



Dave could feel a certain strength inside his body that he couldn't explain. However, this time around, he felt that he could ride the Gryphon without falling off its back.

The chubby boy raised his hand and the Gryphon unconsciously lowered its body to allow him to mount. Dave then confidently sat on its back as if he had done it countless times before. After seating securely in place, he then patted the back of his partner as if telling him to stand.

When the Gryphon rose to its feet, it felt that his rider was very different from the one who mounted him a few minutes ago. It was as if the one riding him right now was a completely different person.

William's jaw almost dropped when he saw another change on his status screen.

Name: Dave Cornwell

Race: Human

Health Points: 10,000 / 10,000

Mana: 3,000 / 3,000

Prestige Job Class: Crusader of the Sky (Lvl 1)

< Strength: 30 (+10) >

< Agility: 25 (+10) >

< Vitality: 40 (+10) >

< Intelligence: 20 (+10)>

< Dexterity: 40 (+10) >

Skills:

Duel Ex

Union of Man and Beast

Tactician

Tornado Descent

Shield Boomerang

Grand Cross

Title: Storm Rider

< Storm Rider >

-- During a storm all stats increase by 100%

-- Aerial Mobility increase by 200%

-- Can use Heaven's Fury once a day

"Fck! What kind of BS is this?!" William cursed out loud. He almost dropped Rhongomyniad from his hands as he read Dave's Status Page. "Why is he so OP?!"

Dave and the Gryphon were both startled by William's shout and looked at their Commander with anxious faces.

After his initial outburst, William immediately calmed down and returned the Legendary Spear inside his storage ring. He then looked at Dave with a dazzling smile that would put all scammers to shame.

"You're good," William said as he lightly patted Dave's leg. He then patted the Gryphon who trembled under his touch. "You're also good."

The newly appointed Crusader and his mount felt the hairs on the back of their necks stand on end. For some reason, they felt that they were about to be served on a silver platter and William was going to eat them.

"Dave, from now on, I expect good things from you," William said with a serious expression. "Do not tarnish the honor of the Angorian War Sovereign. Do I make myself clear?"

"Y-Yes! I swear that I will not let you down, Commander." Dave stuttered.

The Gryphon shrieked to support his partner's words. It was afraid that if it didn't say anything, William would find an excuse to torture it.

"Good, let's go," William ordered as he mounted Ella's back.

Dave and the Gryphon glanced at each other as they walked behind Ella's back. After walking for a while, the chubby boy and the magical beast both realized that Dave was no longer in danger of falling from the Gryphon's back.

It was as if they were joined together!

What he didn't know was that after acquiring the Prestige Class "Crusader of the Sky" he automatically acquired the skill Union of Man and Beast. This was a special skill of the Cavalier Job Class which allowed the rider and his mount to become a single unit when they were together.

Even if the Gryphon were to perform complicated aerial maneuvers, Dave wouldn't fall off its back even if he wasn't sitting on a specialized saddle.

When the two arrived at the camp, both of them were met with curious gazes. The other members of the Angorian War Sovereign felt that Dave had changed somehow, but they couldn't put their finger on it.

What impressed them the most was that the chubby boy was riding on top of the Gryphon as if he had done it for many years. There was also a sense of confidence that was oozing from Dave's body which made the others look at him in a different light.

"What happened to you?" Conrad asked the chubby boy after he dismounted from the Gryphon. "What did you do with the Commander?"

Dave gave Conrad a refreshing smile before answering his question. "Sorry, but the commander ordered me not to say anything. But..."

"But?" Conrad waited for Dave to continue his words.

"But, I hope the day will come when you will become part of Sir William's strength," Dave said with a serious expression. "I look forward to that day."

After saying those words, Dave walked past Conrad and headed towards William. He stood a few meters away from him like a trusted retainer.

Everyone was a little confused when they noticed this sudden change in Dave's mannerism. Usually, he would stick around Conrad. However, this time around, they could tell that he had switched his allegiance to William and seemed very satisfied with it.

William didn't say anything, and ordered everyone to rest while he checked on the conditions of the Hipogriffs. After close inspection, he realized that four of them had lost a limb or two and had to be supported by their comrades using ropes, tied to their bodies.

Those that had suffered serious injuries had been given High-Grade Potions that William had acquired from their Bandit Raids. He didn't bat an eye and used them on the injured creatures which made the new members of his herd very grateful.

The total number of mounts they gained from this expedition was sixteen.

William had six officers and thirty-six subordinates. He planned to have all of them get a mount of their own, which meant that he had to return to the Whimsical Forest and find a new herd of Hippogriffs.

While he was deep in his thoughts, he heard two sets of footsteps approaching from behind his back. He didn't turn his head and simply waited for his two guests to speak their mind.

"Can we talk in private?" Cid asked.

"Okay," William replied. He turned his head to look at the disciples of the Sword Saint with a calm expression. "Follow me."

Cid and Aerith nodded as they followed William. The three people walked towards a small brook that was a hundred meters away from their encampment. William didn't know why the two wanted to talk to him, but he was willing to hear them out for the sake of the Sword Saint's Generosity.

After arriving at their destination, Cid cleared his throat and spoke his mind.

"What you did earlier was admirable. However, you shouldn't mingle with Demonic Beasts who specialize in Dark Magic," Cid said with a serious expression. "I don't know why that Demonic Dog is helping you, but if others find out that you are collaborating with such a creature, your reputation will get a black stain."

William nodded his head. He already expected this situation after forming a contract with Psoglav. If it was only the members of his Knight Order, he could probably force them to keep their mouths shut. Unfortunately, there were outsiders present in the area, so this outcome was understandable.

"Also, you should hide that slave collar on your neck," Cid stated. "You are a noble and a noble wearing a slave collar is taboo. Although slavery runs rampant in the Hellan Kingdom, the King himself dislike such practices."

William snorted. "The king might feel that way, but the nobles don't. Almost all of the nobles own slaves of their own. The collar on my neck is my way of telling them that even nobles can be enslaved. If it can happen to me, what makes them think that it couldn't happen to them?"

The red-headed boy also wanted to point out that their honorable master was keeping slaves inside his residence. He just didn't mention it to prevent conflicts between him and the Sword Saint's disciples.

"Even so, you mustn't openly show it to the public like it's a priceless accessory," Aerith insisted. "Looking at you makes me feel uncomfortable."

William grinned evilly as he looked at Aerith from head to toe. "Indeed. You should feel uncomfortable. A beauty like you would sell for a high price if you ever fell into the hands of slave traders."

A resounding slap echoed in the air as Aerith looked at her hand in surprise.

"I-I'm sorry, I didn't mean to," Aerith stuttered.

"Don't worry, I've suffered worse," William replied.

A red handprint slowly materialized on the Half-Elf's handsome cheek. It was the mark left by Aerith's unconscious action after hearing William's words.

"Is there anything else that the two of you need to say to me?" William inquired. "If not then I will return to the camp. There are still a few things that I need to do as the leader of this expedition."

Cid stared hard at William for a quarter of a minute before shaking his head. Aerith looked apologetic and lowered her head in guilt.

William nodded his head in understanding and walked past the two teenagers who were older than him. But as he was passing Aerith, the shepherd lightly patted her shoulder before leaving her with some parting words.

"I am, also, not a fan of slavery and one of my goals is to fully eradicate it from the Southern Continent."

The two disciples of the Sword Saint watched William's retreating back as he returned to the encampment.

"What a peculiar boy," Cid said as his gaze sharpened like swords. "What do you think, Big Sister?"

Deep down, Cid was reluctant to admit that William had won their duel. But facts showed that even if he was the stronger between the two, the boy's tenacity and unwavering determination overpowered his skill with the sword.

"I think he needs to be re-educated in the proper etiquette of noble families," Aerith replied. Her expression was dyed red due to embarrassment from her earlier outburst. "He is indeed weaker than you, but for some reason, I feel that even if you two had a rematch, the outcome would still be the same."

Cid sighed as a bitter smile appeared on his face when he heard his sister's words. He didn't agree nor disagree with her opinion, but his silence was enough to tell her that he also felt the same way.

This was the first time that the two of them had met someone as mysterious as William. On the surface, he acted in a carefree manner. Just like a sword during peacetime.

However, during times of emergencies, his attitude changed completely. Like a fully drawn blade with exquisite sharpness, he was able to cut down the obstacles blocking his way.

The two finally understood the real reason why their Master had sent them to observe William. He wanted them to learn that not all battles were honorable. In a fight of life and death, honor and dignity were merely beautiful decorations.

"Someday, I will win against him," Cid muttered softly.

Aerith who was by her brother's side nodded her head. She, too, wanted her brother to be hailed as the strongest in the Southern Continent, just like their Master. However, as she looked at the small retreating back in the distance, she felt that the hurdle that her brother was about to face was a mountain that towered above the mortal realm. A mountain whose peak could never be conquered.

#### Chapter 198: Bastian Of The Chiron Tribe

The next day, Henry took William and half of his subordinates to the Whimsical Forest to look for Hipogriffs once again.

Dave was tasked with guarding their encampment, along with the six people in his team. The injured hipogriffs they had captured the day before were in their encampment and someone had to guard them to ensure that they were not attacked by wandering beasts.

Since the Gryphon was there to act as a deterrent, William could leave their encampment with peace of mind.

"Oh. I see! Thank you very much!" William said.

The deer in front of him bleated softly as it ran towards the depths of the forest.

"The territory of the second group of Hipogriffs is a mile away in that direction," William stated as he pointed Northeast. "Let's go."

Aerith walked beside William with a curious expression. "Did you just talk to a deer?"

"Mmm." William hummed his reply as he continued to walk.

"How did you learn their language?"



"It's a shepherd's trade secret."

Aerith frowned as she continued to trail behind William. "Do all shepherds know how to talk to their animals?"

"To a certain extent, yes," William replied. "It takes patience and years of herding to learn the skill."

"Can you teach me? I've always wanted to communicate with animals."

"It would be best if you learn from a druid. I can only talk to beasts that belong to the herd."

William couldn't possibly tell Aerith that his ability to talk to animals was inherited from his Elven bloodline. Just like his mother was able to talk to Skyla, William was only able to communicate with beasts that belonged to the herd.

Ironically, cranes also belonged to the herd category. This was why the red-headed boy was able to communicate with Skyla properly.

While walking in the direction of the Hippogriff's territory, a small Wren landed on William's shoulder and began chirping. Dia looked at the small bird and hesitated. She didn't know if she should eat it or not.

"Don't eat her," William said softly to Dia. He then glanced at the small bird and started to communicate with it.

Because William replied using chirping sounds, the wren on his shoulder chirped more excitedly.

Five minutes later, the bird flew away leaving William with a troubled expression. After pondering for a while, he signaled for everyone to stop.

"Don't make any sounds, I will check something first," William ordered as he climbed to the top of a tree.

When he reached the highest branch, he narrowed his eyes and stared in the direction of the North. Several birds could be seen fleeing in different directions as the trees swayed in the distance.

The Wren had told him that a group led by a "very strong" beast was headed in the direction they were going. When William asked the little bird descriptions about the creature, it only said that it was big and had wings.

The thing that worried William more was that the bird told him that it was not alone. There were at least three of them.

As William focused his attention to the North, the beast that his little friend had warned him about finally appeared in his vision.

"Wyverns...," William muttered as he saw three Wyverns rise from the tree tops carrying wild boars in their claws.

The biggest among the three Wyverns screeched and flew towards the North. The other two Wyverns followed behind their leader as they continued their hunt.

< Wyvern >

-- Pseudo-Dragon

-- Threat Level: A (High)

-- Cannot be added to the Herd

-- It is said that Wyverns descended from the bloodline of Dragons.

-- Has very high Aerial Maneuverability and boasts incredible fighting prowess.

-- Their tails have a poison stinger that is capable of inflicting poison strong enough to kill a human in minutes.

-- Wyverns are able to use Breath Attacks similar to Dragons. However, the damage of this energy attack is weaker compared to pure blood dragons.

-- This creature has the ability to further evolve and become a variety of stronger monsters. Some of their evolutions include Blood Wyverns, Storm Wyverns, Frost Wyverns, Fire Wyverns, and several other species depending on their location.

-- All Evolved Wyverns are of Centennial Rank and must be treated with great caution.

'Fortunately they found the boars before they found the Hipogriffs,' William thought as he watched the majestic creatures fly away. 'Now I understand why Conrad wanted a Wyvern as his mount.'

When Conrad told William that he wanted a Wyvern as his mount, his first reaction was to give the older boy the middle finger.

Conrad also understood that he was asking for too much, but he was the type of person that liked to aim high for whatever thing he wanted in life. William had already told him that he didn't have the ability to capture a Wyvern at this point in time, but if ever an opportunity arose, he promised that he would do his best to cater to Conrad's choice of mount.

Although William was tempted to ask Ezio, Damian, and Gideon for help, he decided to not move forward with this plan. If possible, he wanted to capture the Wyvern using his own ability and the manpower under his disposal.

'I'm sure Psoglav would immediately run tail if he was summoned to fight against a Wyvern.' William chuckled at the thought of seeing the Demonic Dog running away in fear after it was summoned in front of a Wyvern's gaping jaw.

After the short interlude, William and the rest of his group went deeper inside the Mythical Forest. They saw various creatures eyeing them from a distance, but none of them made any move to attack each other.

Although Humans often wandered inside the forest, most of them were strong individuals. This was why the Beasts merely observed the shepherd's group and made no attempt to hunt them down.

After an hour of walking, they finally arrived at a meadow with a steadily flowing brook. The meadow was quite big and William estimated that it was at least a mile long. Several beasts like deer, moose, and wild bison grazed peacefully in the distance.

Not far from their location were the magical creatures that William and his group sought after. It was none other than a herd of Hippogriffs.

Compared to the one that they had first met, the members of this group numbered more than a hundred. The Alpha of the group stood in the middle and eyed William's group with a calm gaze.

Before William could even walk towards the Alpha Hippogriff to talk, a rumbling sound was heard not far from them.

From the depths of the forest, a platoon of centaurs carrying pikes and bows charged in William's direction. The half-man, half-horse creatures stopped twenty meters away from the humans and eyed them with vigilance.

< Centaur >

-- Humanoid Creatures

-- Threat Level: C (Mid)

-- Can be added to the herd.

-- Success Rate: 20%

-- A centaur has the body of a horse topped by a humanoid torso, head, and arms. Most of them avoid conflict but fight fiercely when forced to do so.

-- They are experts in melee and ranged combat.

-- Their preferred weapons are spears, pikes, and bows.

-- Some of them are born with the ability to wield magic but these are very rare cases.

"What are you humans doing here within the territory of our Chiron Tribe?" A centaur carrying a silver spear, and wearing a silver helmet, asked in a booming voice.

"Chiron Tribe? Are you that same tribe that the Sword Saint allowed to settle in these lands?" Cid asked back.

The centaur snorted and faced the Sword Saint's disciple with arrogance. "Allowed to settle in these lands? Boy, you'd better watch your mouth. Or else, I will be more than happy to cut out that tongue of yours."

"You can try," Cid replied. The boy was about to unsheathe his sword, but was held back by William's hand.

"What did I say about not getting in the way of our mission?" William asked with a smile. "I'll handle this. Everyone, don't draw your weapons."

The Half-Elf stepped forward and addressed the person who seemed to be the leader of the Centaurian platoon.

"My name is William Von Ainsworth," William announced. "May I know your Excellency's name?"

The centaur captain looked at William with a frown. His instinct was telling him that the boy in front of him was not an enemy, but a friend. However, he had met a lot of humans in the past and all of them were sly creatures who not only stepped on their kindness, but even captured their tribe members in order to sell them as slaves.

In short, the Centaurs inside the Whimsical Forest were wary of humans and would usually repel them whenever they met them in the forest.

"You can call me Bastian of the Chiron Tribe," Bastian answered. "What is your purpose for coming to our territory?"

"Before I answer your question, may I know your relationship with the Hipogriffs?" William inquired.

Bastian and the rest of the Centaurs immediately took a fighting stance as they glared at William.

"So you are here to capture Hipogriffs," Bastian said in contempt. "As expected of the greedy humans. All you know how to do is make the creatures of the forest your mounts or slaves!"

"Wait! You are making a very big misunderstanding here." William raised both of his arms in order to calm the Centaurs who were about to engage them in battle. "First of all, I'm not a human. I'm a Half-Elf. Secondly, I came here to negotiate with the Alpha of the Hipogriffs and not forcefully take the members of its herd away."

While William was explaining his reason for coming, the Golden-Winged Hippogriff had walked towards his location and raised its head arrogantly towards the foreigners who entered its domain.

'I was already informed by Jeros about your purpose for coming,' the Alpha Hippogriff said via telepathy. 'The answer is No. I will not allow you to take any member of my herd and be used as mounts!'

The Alpha screeched hatefully at William, while Bastian held his spear firmly in his hand. The Hippogriff had allowed him to listen to its reply to William because both of them had made an alliance. As allies, it was only natural for both of them to stand against the intruders that had entered their domain.

## Chapter 199: Your Name Will Be Aethon

In fact, it was not only the Hippogriffs that were allied with the centaurs. All the creatures that were grazing in the meadow were part of their alliance as well. This was why the Centaurs appeared when William's group arrived in the meadow.

The Wild Bison, Moose, and Deer had already trapped William's group in an encirclement and were only waiting for Bastian's order to attack.

The only reason why they were still being civil was because of the fact that William was radiating a presence that made them not want to have a conflict with him if possible.

"Leave!" Bastian ordered. "This is your last warning. The next time you return, we will treat you as enemies!"

William sighed internally because they were left with no other option but to leave the meadow.

"Okay, we will leave." William nodded his head. He then turned to his group and made a hand gesture. "Let's go."

Cid and Aerith were frowning, but they still followed William's orders.

William's group retreated a mile away from the meadow and formed a temporary camp. It was only lunch time, so there was plenty of time to think of their next course of action.

William was currently resting on top of a branch with his back leaning against the tree. He didn't want to engage in a full blown confrontation with the Centaurs and their allies because the latter treated them in a civil manner, despite the fact that they went there to "capture some Hippogriffs".

'There must be a way, but how?' William pondered as he gazed at the Northeast.

While he was mulling over his options, the Wren that chatted with him earlier perched on his shoulder and began chirping.

"Oh?"

"Chirp!"

"How many?"

"Chirp."

"Hmmm..."

William crossed his arms over his chest as he digested the information that was given to him by the little bird.

"Say... do you want to travel together with me?"

"Chirp?"

"Yes. Our meeting must be Fate," William said with a smile. "Although you're very small, you're quite capable of gathering news. How about you work for me as my news informer?"

"Chirp."

"If you come with me, you'll never go hungry again. I promise you."

The Wren thought for a while before chirping in affirmation. William grinned and added the small bird to his herd.



< Wren >

-- Common Bird

-- The wren is a tiny brown bird, although it is heavier and not as slim as the even smaller goldcrest. It is dumpy, almost rounded, with a fine bill, quite long legs and toes, very short round wings and a short, narrow, tail which is sometimes cocked up vertically. For such a small bird it has a remarkably loud voice.

"Let me think of a good name for you," William said as he rubbed the little bird's head.

The little bird looked at William in anticipation as it waited for its name.

After giving it much thought, the red-headed boy finally thought of a good name for the little guy who stumbled upon them in the forest.

"Aethon," William smiled. "From now on, your name will be Aethon."

The King Chess Piece in William's Sea of Consciousness glowed thrice and a small change appeared on the Wren's body. A golden crest appeared on Aethon's chest.

It was like a small marking that allowed William to identify him from birds of the same species.

After adding Aethon to his ever growing herd, William climbed down from the tree and shared the news he just received.

"We need to leave the forest," William announced. "A tribal war among the beast groups is about to take place. We don't want to get caught in the crossfire, so we'd better leave as soon as possible."

The young noble that had offered the spear to William a day ago raised his hand. "Commander, what about the mounts?"

"Worry not, my dear comrade," William said with a mischievous smile. "I'm sure that we will be able to snatch a few creatures during their internal conflict. For now, let's go back to the camp and wait for the aftermath."

Aethon had told him that the fight would be breaking out any moment and the sooner they left, the better.

If William was alone, he was confident that he would be able to maneuver freely in the forest. However, since his subordinates were with him, he didn't dare to act boldly. It was best to return to their encampment first then sneak back inside the forest to play the fishing game.

Ella, Dia, Ragnar, and Aethon looked at William with a knowing glance. Since they were part of his herd, they could understand his thoughts to a certain extent.

He was already looking forward to the Grand Haul that was about to take place.

"No good. The Young Master is really similar to the commander," Damian whispered to Gideon who was seated behind him. "Look at that smug expression on his face. That is what Commander looks like when he is just about to raid a Bandit Camp and steal their treasures!"

"You're right," Gideon whispered back. "I have a feeling that he will drag the two of us along as well. If he really is the Commander's grandson, he will throw away his dignity and become shameless."

As if feeling their gazes, William glanced at the two men and gave them a refreshing smile. That smile alone confirmed the two men's suspicions that the brat was up to no good!

Kenneth sat beside William and tapped his shoulder. "Whatever you are planning on doing, take me along."

"Um?" William looked at his roommate with a curious gaze. "What do you mean?"

"I can tell that you are scheming something."

"Nonsense! Just look at this handsome and innocent face of mine. Does it look like the face of a schemer?"

Kenneth nodded his head. "Not only the face of a schemer, but the face of a scammer as well."

"How rude. Looks like my Secretary is going through a rebellious phase." William grinned. "Very well, I will agree to take you with me on one condition."

"On one condition?"

"Yes."

Kenneth thought for a while before nodding his head. "Let me hear the condition."

William motioned for him to come closer as he whispered something in the delicate-boy's ears.

Kenneth frowned, but still nodded his head in agreement. "Very well. I accept this condition."

"Good." William patted his roommate's shoulder. "We are going to move tonight. Make sure not to alarm the others when we sneak out of the encampment."

Later that night, William, Ella, Kenneth, Damian, and Gideon headed deeper inside the Whimsical Forest. They had just traveled a mile into the forest when they heard the distant roars of beasts.

"Looks like we just arrived in time," William said as he made a hand gesture for everyone to stop.

Ragnar was currently seated on top of Ella's back with his tongue lolling outside of his mouth. Dia, on the other hand, was resting on William's head, while Aethon was perched on his shoulder.

William raised his hand and a portal appeared beside him. Psoglav, the Demonic Dog, arrived with a smirk plastered on his face.

"Are we going to start our hunt?" Psoglav asked as its single eye glowed eerily in the darkness.

William nodded in acknowledgement. "Tonight is a bit special. If we get lucky, we will strike it big time."

"Oh?" Psoglav rubbed its chin with its clawed hand. "I like the sound of that."

It then raised its head and listened to the roars of the beasts in the forest.

"A Faction War." Psoglav chuckled. "I looooooove Faction Wars. It is the best time to snag some easy prey."

William and the Demonic dog shared a knowing glance before running towards the North. It was the place where the strongest conflict was currently taking place. Ella, Kenneth, Damian, and Gideon followed behind them.

Since William was a Half-Elf, his Dark Vision allowed him to see perfectly in the night. For some reason, this ability of his was shared with the entire herd, and allowed Ella and the others to see clearly in the dark as well.

As for Kenneth, Damian, and Gideon, they had their own ways to see in the dark and kept up with William's and Psoglav's advance towards their destination.

When they arrived, they were just in time to see a fierce battle being fought between the Centaurs and a group of Wyverns. After observing the Pseudo-Dragon's rampage, William noticed a unique individual among the group.

The Wyvern's body was red in color, and there was a crimson crystal embedded in its forehead.

William used his appraisal skill on the creature and his face suddenly became serious. It had been a while since he faced off against a creature of such rank, and he knew that it was a steel plate that he didn't dare to kick.

< Blood Wyvern >

-- Pseudo-Dragon

-- Centennial Beast

-- Threat Level: S (High)

-- Cannot be added to the Herd

-- The Blood Wyvern is one of the evolutions of a Wyvern.

-- It has the ability to continuously grow stronger by drinking the blood of magical creatures.

-- This Wyvern has the ability "Bloodthirst", which allows it to identify the location of any warm-blooded creature within two square miles with it as its center. Even those with the Stealth or Invisibility skills will not escape its sight.

-- It also has the ability "Skill Absorption" that allows it to acquire the skills of the creatures it has consumed.

-- The Blood Wyvern can evolve into a Crimson Wyvern once it has stepped into the ranks of Millennial Beasts. A Wyvern known for its brutality and strength that can even overpower pure blooded dragons of the same rank.

Chapter 200: The Fisherman's Game [Part 1]

"That one is one nasty beast," Psoglav commented as his single eye locked on the Blood Wyvern that was currently circling around the Centaur Tribe.

The Blood Wyvern was currently fighting against the top dog of the Centaur Tribe who was also of the Centennial Rank. However, not all creatures of the same rank were equal. There would always be racial differences between the two which would decide who had the upper hand or not.

< Centaur War Chieftain >

-- Humanoid Creature

-- Centennial Beast

-- Threat Level: S (Mid)

-- Can be added to the herd

-- Success Rate: 1%

William briefly glanced at the information of the Centaur War Chieftain. Basically, it was a Centaur that boasted the highest combat skills within the tribe.

Right now, that same Centaur was keeping the Blood Wyvern at Bay using magical range attacks. However, that was exactly what the Blood Wyvern intended it to do. As long as the War Chieftain focused on it, the other Wyverns would be able to decimate the rest of the tribe using their superior strength.

Although the Centaur Tribe numbered around two thousand, the majority of them were Class C creatures with only a dozen Class B warriors at most. Wyverns were one of the Apex predators in the Whimsical Forest and even though the centaurs had the advantage in numbers, it was futile against their enemy.

While the battle was ongoing, a loud shriek pierced the air and fifty Hippogriffs appeared on the battlefield.

They were allied with the centaurs and it was only natural to lend their assistance during times of need. Currently, there were fifteen Wyverns circling the tribal camp and some of their claws and beaks were already dyed in blood.

Clearly, they had killed a good number of centaur warriors during the clash and had gorged on their enemy's blood to regain their strength.

William recognized Damian leading a troop of centaurs while shooting arrows towards the Wyverns. These arrows harmlessly bounced off the Wyvern's scales which made the centaurs grit their teeth in frustration.

When the Hippogriffs arrived, the battle was no longer one sided, but the invaders still had the upper hand.

William sighed as two hippogriffs were impaled by the Wyvern's stinger and crashed toward the ground. Naturally, they couldn't possibly interfere in the war directly, so the two hippogriffs died not long after their fatal crash.

"So, what's the plan?" Psoglav asked as he crossed his arms over his chest. "Although I can't defeat any of those Wyverns, I am confident that as long as the Blood Wyvern doesn't interfere, I will be unharmed."

Psoglav was about to say more when they heard high-pitched chuckling sounds coming from the forest.

The centaurs grimaced as they saw one of the most annoying beasts that lived within the forest and that was none other than the Werehyenas. Just like the name suggests, they were quite similar to "Werewolves", but the difference was that they were Hyenas instead of wolves.

William frowned as he, once again, used his appraisal skill to identify the newcomers

< Werehyena >

-- Therianthropic Hybrid

-- Threat Level: C (Mid)

-- Cannot be added to the herd

-- A powerful scavenger that feasts on the flesh of both humans and beasts.

-- This creature has three forms, a human form, a large hyena, or a hybrid that is similar to a Werewolf.

-- Unlike Werewolves who can only transform during the night, Werehyenas can transform any time of the day and don't have many restrictions like the other Therianthropic Hybrids.

-- Strong and sly, these creatures are one of the most annoying beasts that one can encounter in the Southern Continent.

The Werehyenas' high-pitched laughter made the already hopeless situation unbearable. They ran towards the location where the two hipogriffs had fallen and immediately dragged their dead bodies away.

They didn't go far before they started to feast on the Hipogriff's flesh. They had a very strong resistance to poison, so even the Wyvern's poison--that had killed the magical beasts--wasn't a concern to them.

Psoglav whistled as he looked at the new arrivals with admiration.

"Now things have become more complicated," Psoglav chuckled. "What are we going to do now, Shepherd?"

William assessed the situation carefully and knew that he wouldn't be able to turn the tides with his current power. Since that was the case, it was now time to borrow the power of others.

"Fourth Master, can you lend me your assistance, just this once?" William asked.



Kenneth and the Psoglav looked at him in confusion because they didn't know who this "Fourth Master" was.

A soft rustling sound was heard beside the tree opposite them and a man wearing a hooded robe appeared out of thin air.

"What do you have in mind?" Ezio asked.

Ezio officially became William's Fourth Master after the boy had succumbed to the dark side of humanity. He taught the Half-Elf many things, including the art of torturing people. Among William's Masters', Ezio was a man of few words. When talking to him, William had to get straight to the point in order to save time.

"Fourth Master, can you deal with the Blood Wyvern?" William asked.

This was the most pressing matter right now. As long as the Blood Wyvern was defeated, the Centaur War Chief would be able to deal with the other Wyverns quite easily.

"I can, but I will need some help," Ezio replied as he glanced at his two comrades who were sent by their commander.

Damian and Gideon just nodded their heads in understanding. They would help Ezio deal with the Blood Wyvern, while William dealt with the rest.

"Be safe, Young Master," Damian said as he patted the boy's shoulder.

"Don't let the Werehyenas bite you," Gideon commented. "The Commander will kill us if you turn into one of them."

William nodded his head. "Be at ease, Seniors."

After getting his reply, the three men disappeared. William didn't know where they were, but he was certain of one thing. The Blood Wyvern would soon be dealt with.

"Let's go," William said as he jumped off the tree.

Kenneth and Psoglav followed suit and landed on the ground.

Ella transformed into her War Ibex form and allowed William and Kenneth to ride on her back.

"We will first join the centaurs and help them repel the Werehyenas," William explained his plan.

"Psoglav, summon your Doppelganger to help catch the Hippogriffs just like you did yesterday. Leave the rest to me."

"Alright, but I want a few cores from the Werehyenas," Psoglav replied while stating his condition.

"Okay."

"I like dealing with smart people."

Ella charged towards the battlefield while William fired arrows at the Werehyenas that were closing in on the Centaurs.

The centaurs, on the other hand, glanced at Damian to wait for his orders. They didn't know whether to attack William or turn a blind eye on his actions.

"Don't mind him for now," Bastian ordered. "Attack the Werehyenas!"

The centaurs roared in acknowledgement and charged towards the annoying scavengers with their pikes and lances. The battle became more intense as both sides fought tooth and nail for supremacy.

The Centaurs were clearly at a disadvantage because the Wyverns and the Werehyenas seemed to be in cahoots with each other. Using their superior numbers, the centaurs chased away the Werehyenas and managed to kill six of them.

However, the Werehyenas and the Wyverns managed to kill more than a hundred centaurs in the span of a few minutes.

William waved his hand and shamelessly snatched the dead bodies of the Werehyenas inside his storage ring. The centaurs were not in the mood to pay attention to his petty action because their entire tribe was at stake.

Ella's horns embedded themselves in a Werehyena that was about to deal the finishing blow to a fallen centaur. The creature shrieked in pain, but William's spear pierced its eyes, all the way through its brain, ending its life in the process.

The Werehyenas attack became frenzied, but William's and the Centaurs' united assault overpowered their rabid attacks.

Suddenly, a Wyvern descended towards the Werehyenas and the Centaurs that were engaged in close combat and opened its jaws wide.

"It's going to fire its Dragon Breath!" Damian shouted in order to warn William and their temporary allies. .

Flames erupted from the Wyvern's mouth as it shot it towards the ground like a flamethrower. The centaurs immediately evaded, but some of them weren't able to react in time. A dozen warriors were incinerated by the flames and died while crying out painfully.

Psoglav did his best to catch the falling hippogriff's, but most of them were already dead when he caught them. Unlike Gryphons, Wyverns could easily tear a Hippogriff in half due to its superior strength.

Out of the fifty Hippogriffs that joined the battle, fifteen had already fallen, and Psoglav was only able to save four. However, the four magical beasts were already in a near-death condition with their wings and limbs torn off from their bodies.

One of them had been impaled by a Wyvern's stinger and was only a minute away from dying.

William hurriedly added these beasts to his herd, and gave the dying Hippogriff an antidote.

One of the Wyverns saw William's action and immediately dove down from the sky in order to kill him. When it was only a hundred meters away from the boy, a silver-steel thread wrapped around its body, stopping it in its tracks.

Ezio, Damian, and Gideon jumped on its back and forcefully veered it to its right side. The Wyvern was enraged by the sudden ambush it had received from the weak humans and tried to shrug them off from his back.

Unfortunately, the three men riding on its back were its worst nightmare. Damian laughed as he clamped a collar on the Wyvern's neck. After the collar was firmly locked in place, the Wyvern froze in the air before rising to the sky.

Damian was a Beastmaster. Naturally, he could tame many kinds of beasts. His forte was taming flying creatures.

Gideon was a Beastmaster as well. However, his specialty was land based creatures. Together, they formed a formidable team that could capture different beasts in both land and sky.

Damian controlled the Wyvern and sneakily approached one of its brethren. When he was close enough, the Beastmaster jumped off from the Wyvern's back and threw the silver-steel thread towards the opposite Wyvern's neck.

The Wyvern was busy dealing with the centaurs on the ground, so it didn't notice the Beastmaster that had snuck up on it from behind. Just like the first Wyvern, Damian easily took control of the second one.

"I can only control two of these Beasts at a time," Damian said. "The Blood Wyvern's Rank is too high for me. I won't be able to capture it."

"Don't worry, just let me get close to it," Ezio replied.

"Alright." Damian nodded his head as Ezio transferred to the Wyvern he was currently controlling.

Ezio's confident reply made Damian remember that this reclusive comrade of theirs was someone who could fight against Centennial Beasts alone.

Ezio eyed the Blood Wyvern in the distance with a calm expression. However, deep down inside, he was feeling a sense of anticipation. Perhaps, it was because he had become so accustomed to killing people that he hadn't had the time to hunt down strong beasts as of late.

Regardless of the reason, William's Fourth Master looked at the Centennial Beast with admiration.

'It's very rare to see a Blood Wyvern, even in the Southern Continent,' Ezio mused. 'Killing it would be a waste.'