

Strongest 251

Chapter 251: You're Not Qualified To Fight Me

Great Chief Evander gripped the armchair in an attempt to prevent himself from killing the boy then and there. As the Great Chief of the Northern Tribes, he had to be the example for every warrior to follow.

However, even he was finding it hard to keep his rage from rising to the surface. The boy's mouth was simply too obnoxious that he wanted to rip it apart so badly. Even so, he endured. There was a right time for everything, and now was not the right time.

"Is this the attitude of a Knight Commander?" Great Chief Evander asked. "I expected more from an official of the Hellan Kingdom."

William snorted before he gave his reply, "My attitude depends on who I am talking to. If I'm talking to dogs, there's no need to be polite. Why do I have to act respectful to mongrels who only know how to hide in these mountains? Even a grandma from my hometown has more balls than all of you combined."

Another round of roars reverberated across the Third Peak of the Chivalry as several of the warriors weren't able to stop themselves from jumping inside the arena. They would rather die than be insulted by the hateful Half-Elf who was stepping on their pride and dignity!

"Damn this boy!"

"His mouth is too evil!"

"Brothers, let me kill that bastard!"

"No! Let me kill him!"

"Even if I die, I will bring him to the afterlife with me!"

Seeing that everything was going South, Great Chief Evander was forced to stand and pacify his people.

"Stop! Don't listen to him! He's just provoking all of you!" Evander shouted. "Did you not see what happened earlier?! Do you want to die as well?!"

The warriors stopped after hearing their Great Chief's words, but soon, William's mocking laughter irritated their ears once again.

"Would you rather die as warriors? Or die as dogs?" William sneered. "Just take a good look at your Great Chief. He is just standing there while I call all of you cowards, dogs, and pus*ies. Do you know why he's not reprimanding me? I'll tell you why! It's because it's the truth!"

William raised his chin arrogantly. "What mighty warriors? Such audacity! If you really are as mighty as you say you are then why are you hiding here in the mountains like little rats? If you are as mighty as you say you are then why don't you challenge the Hellan Kingdom to war in a fair battle?"

William spat on the ground before sneering at Great Chief Evander. "Brave Warriors who only dare to fight when it was three against one? Just like now, I stand here alone, and yet all of you want to fight me at the same time, and you still have to ask why I call all of you pus*ies?"

The devilish Half-Elf pointed at Connal with a mocking expression.

"Look at your leader! He is desperately hiding his second son under his skirt! Second Warrior? More like Second Pus*y."

William laughed one more time and his irritating laughter made all the warriors who heard it gnash their teeth in rage. After laughing, William raised his chin in an arrogant manner in order to continue his taunting.

"Why don't we ask your God whether he thinks of you as warriors or not?" William then pointed his finger at the First Peak of Divinity that could be seen in the distance.

The Warriors glanced at the direction of the First Peak and waited. They wanted their God to smite this irritating boy and turn him into an ice sculpture. That way they could place him as a permanent landmark in the Third Peak where everyone could spit on his face anytime!

William wasn't aware of what the warriors were thinking as he shouted with all of his might.

"Sovereign that rules over the Kyrintor Mountains. If everything that I have said is false then punish me here and now! The warriors of the Kyrintor Mountains are not warriors but cowards! Mere dogs who are now wagging their tails at their new masters which are the Two Dynasties of the Southern Continent! Tell me! Am I wrong or not?!"

Everyone held their breaths as they waited for the response of the Demigod that ruled over the entirety of the Northern Region.Â

There was no bolt of lightning, no peal of thunder, and not even a sound that came from the First Peak of Divinity. The deafening silence made the warriors' blood turn cold for they felt that their Sovereign's silence was its silent acknowledgement of William's claims.

William, who was the source of the commotion, had an arrogant look on his face, but deep inside he was feeling anxious. He didn't know what kind of being the Demigod was, or its stance towards the war that the Northern Tribes were planning to wage.

Actually, William wanted to know if the Sovereign of the Kyrintor Mountains was also in cahoots with the Two Dynasties. This was more scary than having an army invade the Hellan Kingdom because fighting against a Demigod was no laughing matter.

The silence continued. William could have sworn that mere seconds had passed, but for him, it felt like hours. When five minutes passed and still no answer came from the First Peak, the warriors of the tribe looked at their Great Chieftain anxiously.

Great Chief Evander felt cold. Not because of the warriors' stares, but the silence of their Sovereign. Its silence was more deafening than the war cries of all the warriors combined and it chilled his very soul.

"See?" William said softly. "Even your God agrees with me. You are not warriors. All of you are just cowards who only know how to fight when it is advantageous to you."

William was about to say more when a shout reverberated in the air.

"Shut up! Shut your mouth!" Connal's bloodshot eyes stared at William as he rose from his seat. "You want to steal my bride? Fine! Let's fight! If you win you can have the princess, If I win you will take your words back!"

William chuckled. However, this chuckle seemed more deafening than his laughter earlier. He no longer needed to fight Connal because he had already achieved his goal. Now that the tribe thought that their "God" agreed with William's claims, their will to fight had also disappeared.

Connal also knew that, if this continued, his family would no longer remain as the ruling family of the Northern Tribe. The reason Evander was called the Great Chief was because all the tribes acknowledged him. If this acknowledgement disappeared then a new Chief would take his place.

There were many who had wanted to replace Great Chief Evander for a long time, but they hadn't found a good reason to do so. Now, William presented them with an opportunity, an opportunity that they could use to finally end the Great Chief's reign over all the Tribes in the Kyrintor Mountain once and for all.

"Take my words back? Sorry, but not happening," William said. "Are you stupid? Even your Sovereign agreed with me. If I take it back, wouldn't the esteemed Excellency hit me with lightning bolts?"

It was at that moment when thunder roared in the heavens. The warriors who heard this knelt down on the ground because they clearly felt the Divinity that accompanied it. Their God had finally made Its presence known and it seemed to be siding with William once again.

Great Chief Evander's and Connal's faces turned deathly pale. They knew that now was a crucial time and they needed to turn the situation around before it was too late!

"Fine, you want my princess? Then I'll give her to you!" Connal shouted. "But in return, you will fight me in a duel! As per the laws of our domain! Do you dare accept my challenge?"

Connal didn't care anymore. All he wanted to do was end William's life in order to vent out the anger in his heart

"You're not qualified to fight me." William gave Connal the middle finger. At the start, he really wanted to fight Connal and make the Great Chief agree to his demands after he won the duel. However, the current situation was already good enough.

He really didn't care about Princess Aila. Although he felt pity for her, and found her beautiful, she was just a stranger he had met for the first time. He had no obligation to help her.

'This is the Fate of people that have chained themselves to the whim of their God,' William thought. 'As long as the God is on their side they are invincible, but the moment they lose Its favor, the Northern Tribes are merely castles made of sand that would easily crumble once the waves come to shore.'

On that day, on the Third Peak of Chivalry, the Great Chief, Evander Zeke, was forced to bow his head. His ambition for the Northern Tribes to march and conquer the Hellan Kingdom was put to an abrupt stop.

Cadell covered his face in regret. If only he had refused Sir Jerkins' proposal to travel with him to the Third Peak of Chivalry none of this would have happened. How he wished that he could turn back time and correct the mistake that he had made.

He would definitely kick William out of the mountains and ban him from setting foot in their domain for as long as he drew breath.

Chapter 252: Distant Relative

"Well, that sure was something," Alaric, the Crown Prince of the Zelan Dynasty, said with a smile. "Aren't you happy? You don't have to marry a barbarian anymore."

Princess Aila, who was seated opposite him, had a calm expression on her face as she drank her tea. They were currently inside the tent where they stayed after arriving at the Third Peak of Chivalry.

William's appearance had put a stop to their plans to use the Northern Tribes as the hammer that would hit the Hellan Kingdom from behind, while the Two Dynasties faced them on the frontlines.

"Ah, right, your ex-husband candidate said that he's giving you to the Knight Commander of the Hellan Kingdom," Prince Alaric teased her half sister. "Do you want to go with him? I personally don't mind if you do that."

Princess Aila placed the teacup on the table before looking at her elder brother. "Surely you jest, Big Brother. Our father is going to attack the Hellan Kingdom soon, why should I stay behind enemy lines?"

"If you go back, you will definitely suffer. You also understand that, don't you?" Prince Alaric propped his chin up using his fist and smiled at his little sister. "Since your purpose for coming here was in vain, Father might get angry and marry you off to the son of the Minister of War that you hate so much."

Princess Aila's hands trembled as she thought about marrying the most notorious womanizer in their dynasty. That man was three years older than her and had the body size of a pig. The only reason why he was able to have his way was due to his father's influence.

The Second Princess would rather die than marry the bastard pig that had ruined the lives of countless women in the Zelan Dynasty.

Princess Aila looked at her Big Brother and saw that the smile had disappeared from his face and was now replaced by a serious expression.

"Aila, I cannot guarantee that I will be able to protect you if we return to the palace," Prince Alaric said. "Someone is whispering in Father's ears and is urging him to go to war. Right now, the Zelan Dynasty is not a safe place for you to stay."

"So you're telling me that the most dangerous place is the safest place, Big Brother?"

"That's right. Also, I can write a letter to that person and ask him to take care of you. In a way, that Knight Commander is a distant relative of mine."

"Distant relative?" Princess Aila asked in confusion. "What do you mean?"

The smile on Prince Alaric's face returned as he thought of the uncanny work of Fate that brought him to the Kyrintor Mountains and personally saw a distant cousin of his that was staying in the Hellan Kingdom.

"My grandmother and the Knight Commander's grandmother were twins. Lord Ainsworth fell in love with her when she went to the Hellan Kingdom to meet the previous King for a missionary mission." Alaric shared his story. "Back then, Lady Erza was the foreign ambassador for our dynasty.

"The two of them hit it off pretty quickly and became lovers for a few years before finally deciding to settle down and marry. I'm sure that the esteemed Lord Ainsworth, who crushed all of Lady Erza's suitors back in the Zelan Dynasty, wouldn't mind this small favor of mine."

Princess Aila's eyes widened in surprise when she discovered this unbelievable backstory. Who would have thought that the current Crown Prince of a Dynasty, and the Knight Commander of the Hellan Kingdom were distant relatives?

"Big Brother, please, be honest with me," Princess Aila pleaded. "Is there really no chance of turning the situation around? I don't mind marrying a barbarian as long as our father will be happy. After all, this is for the sake of our homeland."

Prince Alaric shook his head, "Nothing will change even if you marry Connal. The Zeke family is in a precarious situation right now. Great Chief Evander might lose his position and, even if he remains as the Great Chief, the Northern Tribes expedition towards the South is over.

"I don't see any value in marrying you off to a faction that can only stand on the sidelines while we wage war on the frontlines. Also, I am not too keen on this war. I feel like we are merely puppets being played by a puppeteer from behind. This leaves a very bad aftertaste in my mouth."

Prince Alaric had already discovered that there was an organization inside their domain that had been pushing for this war to happen. At first, they were only whispering in the ears of the Minister of War. Now, they were the advisors of the King. He found all of this very fishy and he didn't like it one bit.

The Crown Prince extended his hand and held Princess Aila's trembling hand in a firm grip. "Hide in the Hellan Kingdom for the time being. At least, that way, you will not be immediately married to that pig. Once we win the war, I will come and find you."

"And if we lose?" Princess Aila inquired. She was loyal to her homeland, but after seeing William's performance, she was having second guesses whether they would succeed in the upcoming war.

"If we lose then we lose," Prince Alaric said casually. "To be honest. I hope that we will lose this war. Maybe that is what Father needs to wake up from his delusions."

"Big Brother!"

"Listen, Aila, and listen well. Remember, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Everything has a price. I'm afraid that the price we paid for getting a share of the Hellan Kingdom was something that we will regret in the future."

Prince Alaric was an ambitious person, but he was not stupid and short sighted. War would cause many of their people to die. This was an inevitable thing. However, dying for a greater cause and dying as chess pieces were two different things.

Prince Alaric would not mind dying for his homeland, but he would never accept dying as a pawn to help someone else achieve their goals.

'Once I return, I will get to the bottom of this,' Prince Alaric swore in his heart. 'Father, I hope that you know what you're doing.'

Meanwhile, somewhere on the Third Peak of Chivalry...

The Chiefs of each tribe were currently discussing important matters. The "Bride Selection Ceremony" had already become a farce, and the other Chiefs were no longer interested in presenting their young ladies to become Connal's brides.

The Second Warrior was put under house arrest by Great Chief Evander in order to prevent him from doing something stupid due to anger. Liam, the First Warrior, was currently guarding him and making sure that he stayed inside the main residence of the Great Chief.

Although none of the other Tribal Chiefs were telling Great Chief Evander to step down, they had already told him that they were not satisfied with his unilateral decision to cooperate and angering their God in the process.

Great Chief Evander cursed them in his heart because these same men were those who had supported him wholeheartedly when he told them that they would expand their territories by joining the Two Dynasties in a pincer attack.

He swore that after he managed to keep his position, he would ensure to deal with each and every one of them!

While they were in the middle of their talks, a beautiful lady, who seemed to be in her late twenties, suddenly appeared before them.

The Great Chief and the Tribal Chiefs immediately knelt and bowed their heads to pay homage.Â

""We greet you, Great Oracle!""

"Raise your heads."

All the men raised their heads and looked at the Holy Maiden that resided on the First Peak of Divinity. She was the one and only messenger of their God. Seeing her here right now could only mean one thing and that was...

"Did His Excellency say anything, Oh, Holy One?" Great Chief Evander asked. He was feeling very anxious right now because he was afraid that their God would punish him for his actions.

"Yes, The Great One wants to talk to the... interesting boy who made all of you look like clowns in a circus. His Excellency is very, very, displeased right now. Ah, he also said that the new Great Chief of the Tribe will be chosen by the boy as well. But that will have to wait until the two of them have talked. Now, pass on my orders and escort him to the First Peak of Divinity. Don't keep His Excellency waiting."

After saying her words, she vanished and turned into an icy mist that flew towards the First Peak of Divinity.

The Tribal Chiefs glanced at each other before hurrying to find William. All of them were thinking the same thing. This was the opportunity that they were waiting for.

As long as they managed to make a good first impression on the boy, and agree to his demands, the position as the Great Chief of the Tribe was as good as theirs!

Great Chief Evander looked bitterly at the group of old men who had already had a head start. He never dreamed that he would have to curry for the favor of the same person who had brought him to his knees. Fortunately, there was one more card that he could play, and that was none other than pairing him with his granddaughter, Brianna.

Since the Half-Elf already "owned" her, he couldn't possibly return her like some used thing. This was the law of their domain. Even their God recognized it. He hoped that, with his granddaughter's help, he would be able to keep his position and ride out the storm that had befallen their family.

Chapter 253: The Law Of Equivalent Exchange

"Is there something that you need, Lord William?" an old man with a crooked nose asked with a big smile on his face. "Our tribe is willing to accommodate your every command. You already have two beautiful wives by your side, but we could add more if you want to! Such a handsome and chivalrous young man like you will have no problem having a dozen wives!"

"Don't listen to him, Sir William," another old man, who had the same sturdy build as William's grandfather, James, said as he patted the boy's shoulder. "Our tribe produces the most beautiful and excellent fighters in the Northern Regions. If Lord William makes any number of them his wife then they would definitely give birth to handsome, and strong, warriors just like your grace."

"Nonsense! Our tribe has the most beautiful ladies!"

"Hah? You old crook, why don't you just kick the bucket already? You're already this old and you're still playing matchmaker! Go home and just lay quietly to the side! Shoo!"

William was using all of his willpower to prevent his lips from twitching as over a dozen old men tried to ingratiate themselves to him. He was having some afternoon tea with Wendy and Amelia when this group suddenly barged inside their tent.

The Half-Elf thought that they were planning to fight him, but they did the opposite instead. The old men started to bribe him with beautiful wives and kept on calling him handsome, strong, chivalrous, manly, and many other positive things that made even the thick-skinned Half-Elf blush in embarrassment.

"Everyone, please calm down." William raised his hand in order to put a stop to the old men's bickering. "Can one of you, please, tell me the reason for your visit?"

The old man with a crooked nose smiled and nodded his head, "As expected of the handsome Knight Commander, you truly know how to cut to the chase. This old one's name is Alden, I am the Tribal Chief of the Cato Tribe. The reason why we are here is because the Great Oracle has invited you to go to the First Peak of Divinity to have a meeting with the Great One."

Cato bowed his head respectfully after referring to their God. "We of the Cato Tribe are willing to escort Lord William to the First Peak of Divinity and brave the dangers together! Even if we face a mountain of fire and a sea of knives, our Tribe will remain by your side until the bitter end!"

"Shameless!"

"You old fart! How dare you promote your tribe in front of Lord William."

"Oi, aren't you afraid that if you force yourself to look good, your crooked nose will straighten?"

"Alden, why don't you just sit down? Lord William, the Boman Tribe is willing to become your sword and spear to overcome the challenges together!"

The old men started to bicker with each other and spittle flew in the air. William frowned because this sudden change in the Tribe's stance caught him by surprise. A few hours ago all of them were glaring at him, now, all of them were acting as if he was their best friend!

"All of you stop talking!" A commanding tone immediately silenced the rowdy crowd who was so close in having a brawl.

Great Chief Evander stepped forward and his intimidating presence made the other Tribal Chiefs unconsciously take a step back. Although his position was being challenged at the moment, that didn't change the fact that he was still the recognized Great Chieftain of the Allied Tribes.

Their long years of being subservient to him had penetrated deep inside their bones that it was hard for them to immediately shake off his hold over them.

Seeing that his deterrence still had some effect, Evander made his way towards William and passed the exact words that the Great Oracle had given him.

"You may bring anyone you want to the Great Peak of Divinity, but know that it will not be an easy climb," Evander explained. "Those who manage to reach the First Peak will gain great rewards. Those who fail will return here to the Third Peak of Chivalry. I know that the two of us have started off on the wrong foot and I have no plans to ingratiate myself to you.

"However, I would like to remind you that Brianna is already yours. What you do with her is up to you, but you cannot return her to the tribe. This is the law and since you have used the duel to fight for her hand, you'd better take responsibility or else, even if the Gods forgive you, I won't forgive you!"

William faced Great Chief Evander's glare fearlessly. He didn't deny the Great Chief's words because it was true. William had fought for Brianna's hand in the name of their God and he couldn't take those words back even if he wanted to.

However, there was a loophole in the law and that was William could either marry Briana, or marry her off to someone else. Since the Half-Elf knew that Brianna and Prince Ernest liked each other, he had already decided to play matchmaker between the two and have the adorable loli be recognized as the Youngest Prince's fiancée.

William may not be the smartest Half-Elf in the world, but he understood what Great Chief Evander was trying to imply.Â

'The two of us are already attached at our hips, if we fall, Brianna will also fall!'

This was Great Chief Evander's message, and William understood the logic behind it.

"Let's talk after I meet with your God," William replied. "As for Brianna, she already belongs to me. What I do with her is none of your business."

Great Chief Evander nodded his head. William's clear, light-green, eyes had already told him what he wanted to know. Deep inside, he was able to sigh in relief because there was still a chance to keep his position from getting snatched by the other Tribal Chiefs.

"By the way, what happens if I don't go to the First Peak?" William inquired.

Great Chief Evander and the rest of the Tribal Chiefs looked at William as if he was the most stupid person they had seen in their life. No one in the Kyrintor Mountains would dare disobey the decree that the Great One had passed down. But, the Half-Elf even dared to question what would happen if he didn't go. Wasn't this a very stupid thing to ask?

"I don't know what will happen if you don't go to the First Peak," Great Chief Evander admitted. "However, what I do know is that no one has defied the orders of our Sovereign since the tribes made the Kyrintor Mountains their home."

Great Chief Evander smiled evilly at William. "I'm also very curious, Knight Commander. I want to know what would happen to you if you dared to defy our God's decree?"

It was at that moment when all of them heard the consecutive roars of thunder across the mountain. It was like a loud laughter, but to William's Half-Elven ears, it sounded very ominous. Since his question had already been answered, there was no choice but to go to the First Peak and meet the God of the Kyrintor Mountains.

William and his Knight Order made their journey towards the Peak of Divinity under the watchful eyes of the warriors of the Northern Tribe.

Since none of them were invited, they couldn't accompany William on his journey. The greatest glory in their lifetime was to have the opportunity to meet their God at least once in their life. They envied William because it was very clear that their Sovereign looked at him kindly.

The moment William's party reached the Second Peak of Enlightenment, a powerful blizzard rained over them. Visibility was almost zero and they could only see a foot in front of their faces.

Suddenly, a strong gust of wind blew over them which scattered their formation. William reached out to hold Wendy's hand, but he was already too late. Wendy and the rest of his Knight Order were blown away by the wind and were nowhere to be found.

"Wendy! Answer me!" William shouted as he tried to look for his comrades. "Amelia! Ian! Bruno! Brutus! Where are you guys?!"

William shouted over and over again, but only the howling of the wind answered him back. On the First peak of Divinity, Ella stood straight and looked down over her beloved. She then glanced at the humanoid goat that was kneeling beside her.

"Don't give him and his friends any special treatment," Ella ordered. "William is not a vase that will easily break."

The humanoid goat that was over three meters tall bowed its head in a respectful manner. The wings behind its back unfurled as it stood up. The Sovereign of the Mountains then glanced at the boy that was stranded inside the blizzard.

He felt envious of him, but held no malice for the boy. Since he was the one chosen by their Goddess then it was only natural that he recognized him as well.

"As you wish, Lady Amaltheia," the Demigod replied. It then clenched its fist and allowed the Peak of Enlightenment to activate.

The Peak of Enlightenment was a trial for the warriors of the Northern Tribe. If they successfully cleared it, they would be able to gain great rewards. Of course, if they didn't succeed, then they would have to pay a price as well.

Afterall, the Peak of Enlightenment followed one law and one law only, and that was the Law of Equivalent Exchange.

Chapter 254: My Name Is Will [Part 1]

"Fck!" William cursed as he found himself falling in what seemed to be a bottomless pit.

Just a few minutes ago, he and his comrades were traversing the path to the Peak of Enlightenment when a blizzard suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Then a gust of wind blew everyone away from each other.

William was about to look for his friends when the ground under his feet opened up and sucked him in, which brought him to his current predicament.

The boy did everything in his power to stop his fall, but it was all in vain. He couldn't communicate with his system and none of the artifacts in his possession was working. After struggling on what felt like hours, the boy finally gave up and ceased all activities.

Just when he thought that he would keep on free-falling for all eternity, a light appeared below him and then... he fell face first on solid ground.

"Pei! Pei!" William spat the grass, and dirt, from his mouth as he hurriedly propped himself off the ground.

He scanned his surroundings to see if there was any danger around him. The sun was about to set, leaving the sky with an orange glow. William frowned when he realized that he seemed to be in a flowerfield in the middle of nowhere.

He was about to look behind him when he heard an "Eh" sound coming from his back.

William turned his head to look at the owner of the voice. His body stiffened when his gaze landed on a lady who seemed to be in her late teens. She had long black hair and her eyes were the same pair of eyes that made his heart skip a beat a lifetime ago.

The young lady, who was as beautiful as a painting, looked back at the boy that had suddenly appeared out of nowhere in shock. She had come here to admire the sunset, like she usually did everyday, and had never experienced something like this before.

However, for some reason, the heart inside her chest started to beat wildly. It was as if it was seeing an old friend that it hadn't seen for years.

"B-Belle?" William stuttered.

He could hear his own heartbeat as the emotions that laid dormant inside his heart started to resurface uncontrollably.

"No. This must be a dream or an illusion," William muttered as his eyes focused on the girl in front of him. "That's right. This is just an illusion. How could this be real? I was on the Peak of Enlightenment when a blizzard happened..."

William did his best to calm his emotions. His brain was telling him that everything he was seeing was not real. However, his heart was telling him that this was reality.

While he was waging an inner battle with himself, the young lady stood up and looked at him in a guarded manner.

"Who are you? Why do you know my name?" Belle asked. "What are you doing on our property?"

William stopped his mumbling and stared at her. It was at that moment when he realized that he had missed her so much that even hearing her voice was making his heart ache.

A tear fell, followed by another. Soon, more tears streamed down on William's face as the floodgates in his heart burst open. He, who had hardened his heart from the darkness of humanity, wasn't able to stop the flood of emotions that had accumulated for many years.

William stared at Belle as if trying to burn her image in his soul. He didn't care anymore if this was a dream or an illusion. What was important was that she was here, right now.

Seeing that the younger boy was crying, the beautiful lady felt alarmed and hurriedly approached him.

"What's wrong? Are you hurt?" Belle asked. She then scanned William's body for injuries. "What's your name?"

William's lips trembled as he gave out his name. "My name is Will."

"Will? Your name is Will? What is your surname?"

"Ainsworth."

Belle pondered for a while before shaking her head.

"Sorry, but I don't recall anyone in this town with that name," Belle replied. "However, don't worry. I will ask my servants to help you find your family later."

William had no recollection of what happened next. He felt light-headed and he couldn't think straight. All he knew was that Belle held his hand and took him back to her Villa so he could change his clothes.

"Did you buy this from a cosplay shop?" Belle asked. "This is very well made. Unfortunately, there is some damage here and there. From the looks of it, it seems to have been scorched by fire."

'Not fire, but acid,' William said internally as he put on the clothes that were lent to him by Belle. He had just finished taking a bath and changed into a set of clothes that belonged to Belle's younger brother who was studying in the city.

"I'll ask the maid to have this washed," Belle stated with a determined expression. "I'll also ask them to patch this up. Don't worry, Will. I'll make sure that this will become as good as new."

William could only nod his head and thank the over enthusiastic girl. This was the first time he had seen Belle act this animated. Back then, she would always have that distant and aloof expression on her face when she was in the academy.

"Those ears of yours look so real." Belle's eyes sparkled as she stared at William's ears. "Who is the character that you're portraying? Is he an anime or game character?"

William unconsciously touched his Half-Elven ears. Although they were not as pointy as that of an elf, they were still pointer than that of a normal human's.

"Actually they are real," William said in a half teasing voice. "I am actually a Half-Elf."

"Yes, and I'm actually a fairy."

"But, you are a fairy."

"You're still young, but you sure know how to compliment the ladies." Belle smiled sweetly as she patted William's head.

She didn't know why, but she felt very close to him--as if she had known him for a very long time. The moment her eyes saw him, she felt as if something that had been missing in her life had finally reappeared and it made her feel complete.

"Can I touch them?" Belle asked.

William nodded. "Of course."

Belle's soft and delicate hands moved to touch William's ears. She kneaded them with her fingers while trying to find the hidden attachment that made the ears pointy. A minute later, she took back her hands and her expression became serious.

"No way...," Belle muttered. She then grabbed William's hands and looked straight in his eyes. "Are you really a Half-Elf? Like one of those characters in fantasy books? Can you use a bow? Can you use magic? Do you know Legolas?"

Belle's barrage of questions made William chuckle. Since he couldn't access his system and artifacts, the Half-Elf thought that he was in some sort of dreamlike state. Because of this he was not afraid to hide that he was a real Half-Elf and answered all of Belle's questions.

The only thing he didn't reveal was his real identity. He was afraid that the moment he told Belle the truth, this dream of his would break into a thousand pieces.

'Who is this girl?' Ella thought as she looked at the pool of water in front of her. 'Is this the world where William lived his past life?'

She was currently seated beside a spring, watching William and his trial. Ella was very curious because she had never seen this girl before. With a glance, she could tell that William "loved" the girl. Like a mother appraising her future daughter-in-law, Ella's eyes narrowed as she observed the two's interaction in the spring.

"Well, she's not half bad," Ella said with a smile. A plan was brewing inside her mind as she thought of her beloved. What she wanted was William's happiness. Since that was the case, she was willing to pull some strings in the background to make William's dreams come true.

Chapter 255: My Name Is Will [Part 2]

"Are you for real?!" Belle exclaimed. "You're really a Half-Elf?!"

Belle couldn't believe that Will was the real deal. She only thought that the boy was one of those cosplayers that liked to go to conventions while portraying their favorite characters. Never in her wildest

dreams did she think that she would meet a real, breathing, fantasy creature, in the flowerfield right outside their villa.

"Can you cast Magic?" Belle asked.

"I can't," William replied. "My powers are currently sealed."

"Then, can you tell me more about your world?"

"It is a very long story, are you sure you want to hear it?"

"Definitely!"

Belle listened to William's tale. The boy said that he was born in the Elven Continent then taken to a town called Lont and was raised by my relatives and a goat named Ella. William also told her about the exciting battles against Magical Beasts and the people he met along the road to the temple.

"I think Est and Ian are traps," Belle said. "Either that or both of them are girls in disguise."

"Est and Ian are girls?" William snorted. "Impossible. I've been around them for a long time. Do you really think that I can't differentiate between a boy and a girl? Especially that snot-nosed pansy. If he was really a girl, I'd spell my name backwards!"

"Haven't you heard about women's intuition?" Belle smiled mischievously. "Most of the time I'm right, and this is one of those occasions when I think that I am right."

"Something is off with your intuition then."

"How mean..."

William was about to continue the story when they were interrupted by Belle's maidservants. It was time for dinner, and the Head Maid had ordered them to bring the food inside Belle's room because she seemed to be having a good time with their guest.

Although she didn't know where William had come from, the Head Maid was a good judge of character. This was also the first time that she had seen their Young Lady so happy that she didn't dare to destroy it. She had been depressed for a long time after the operation, her Father decided to let her spend some time in the Villa to recover.

He was hoping that the lush scenery and the fresh air of the countryside would improve her mood.

After the two finished their dinner, Belle told William more of her observations.

"This girl Wendy is really in love with you," Belle said like an expert in romantic relationships. "You better treat her well. However, your Ex-Roommate Kenneth, isn't this like one of those soap operas when a girl pretends to be a guy to be near the guy she likes?"

"... You sure have a wild imagination," William replied. "You watched too many dramas."

"Oh? You know about dramas? Does your world have any modern technology? Based on what you said earlier, I thought that it was a pure fantasy world. Is it Sci-Fi? Do you have spaceships? Interstellar travel?"

"Forget about what I said about dramas... My world is pure fantasy."

The Half-Elf scratched his cheek as if reprimanding himself for saying something unnecessary. Belle just smiled and didn't pry any further. She felt that Will was hiding a few things from her, but it didn't matter. She was not the kind of lady who would force people to tell her their secrets.

"Still, you should pay extra attention to Est, and Ian," Belle insisted. "As for Kenneth, he's still fifty-fifty. He could be a trap or a real girl in disguise."

"Okay," William replied half-heartedly.

Belle knew that the boy was only agreeing on the surface, but he had no intention to find out whether her conjectures were true or not.

"You know, something is bothering me." Belle leaned her back on the chair she was sitting on.

"And that is?" William asked.

"You have many bride candidates around you. Let's not talk about the unconfirmed Est, Ian, and Kenneth. Rebecca, Wendy, Amelia, and even that little girl Brianna. But, are you planning to become a Harem Protagonist?"

Belle's gaze locked on at William. For a brief moment, William thought that the girl was looking at him like he was some kind of scum.

"You know, harem protagonists are the worst," Belle added without mercy. "How can they have so many girls? Isn't that being unfaithful? Neh~ tell me, are you planning to have a harem?"

The Half-Elf coughed lightly as his eyes wandered around the room. Clearly, he didn't want to answer this touchy subject.

"Will, I know that polygamy is not banned in your world. However, you must promise me that you will not go after girls willy nilly and not care about their feelings at all," Belle said with a serious expression. "If you do that I will cross between worlds and pull on your ears until they detach. Do I make myself clear?"

"...Yes." William lowered his head.

His dejected expression made Bella's expression soften. She didn't want to admit it, but she felt a little irritated when the handsome boy mentioned the names of the girls around him.

'Why am I feeling this way?' Belle thought. 'Is it because Will is the only boy I have interacted with aside from William? Their names are very similar as well.'

When Belle thought of the sickly boy that would often steal glances of her while she was in the Archery Club, she wasn't able to stop herself from feeling sad.

William noticed the sudden change in her mood and thought that it was due to him being a "harem protagonist" he immediately stood up and held her hand and looked into her eyes.

"Belle, I am not someone who takes relationships lightly. Please, believe me." William said with a serious expression on his face.

For a brief moment, the sickly boy's face in her memories overlapped with William until the two of them became one.

"Belle?" William asked. "What's wrong? Are you not feeling well?"

"I-I'm fine," Belle replied as her hand unconsciously gripped William's hand. "It's already late. We can continue our talks tomorrow. Since you have no place to go, you can stay in this residence until we figure out a way to send you back."

Belle didn't know how or why the Half-Elf suddenly appeared in her world. However, one thing was certain, she wanted to know more about the red-headed boy in front of her.

"You don't have to worry about that," William replied. "I think I will return to my world after three days' time."

"Three days?" Belle asked in surprise. "How do you know that you will return in three days?"

"I just know. Call it a Half-Elf's intuition."

"That thing actually exists?"

"Yes," William replied as he looked at the ticking counter that had suddenly appeared on his status screen.

< 71: 57: 06 >

The timer had suddenly appeared after Belle's change in expression. William didn't know what triggered the timer, but he felt half happy, and sad, at the sudden development. Happy because he knew that after the timer ended, he would be sent back to Hestia. Sad, because it will also marked the end for his brief encounter with the girl that he had loved a lifetime ago.

Chapter 256: The Ending Of A Fairy Tale [Part 1]

The next day, William and Belle spent the day walking around the countryside. Before they left the house, Belle made William wear an eyepatch and a pirate hat that she had unearthed from the attic.

To top it off, she even found her little brother's pirate costume that he once used during a school play. She intended to hide William's identity by making him cosplay.

Naturally, Belle also decided to join him and asked the maids to remodel a set of her clothes to resemble a pirate costume. William found this quite interesting and agreed to Belle's proposal. With his "disguise" the two was able to spend the day walking hand in hand around town.

William noticed that stalls were being built along the way leading towards the temple of the town. There were also decorations being hung around the main plaza which gave off a very festive vibe in the air.

"Is there some sort of festival going on?" William asked as they passed through the stalls that were being arranged side by side.

"Have you heard of the Star Festival?" Belle asked. "In our world, there is a story about a shepherd who tended goats and a Celestial maiden that weaves beautiful dresses. The two fell in love with each other, and the Gods bestowed upon them their blessings. However, their story didn't end with a 'Happily Ever After'.

"Due to their intense love for each other, both of them neglected their duties. The Celestial Maiden stopped weaving, and the Shepherd stopped tending his herd. The Gods became angry and separated the two of them from each other."

William continued walking, but the hand that held Belle's tightened. Of course, he knew about the story of the star crossed lovers. After the two were separated the Gods took pity on both of them and allowed them to meet once a year.

Every year, on that same day, the two would spend a day in each other's embrace. When the day was over, the two of them would once again be separated for another year until the fated day when they would be reunited again.

Back then, William didn't think much about this tradition because he couldn't relate to it. Now, it all sounded like it was a tailor made festival just for him.

"Do you know how to weave clothes?" William asked as he looked up at the taller girl walking beside him.

"No. I'm not good with needles," Belle replied. "But I am good at archery. Why don't we have an archery match tomorrow? You said you're also proficient with the bow, right?"

"Sure. I'll give you a handicap."

"Just because you are a Half-Elf you think you can beat me in archery? Remember, William, I am five years older than you."

"... You forget that I'm a Half-Elf. What makes you think that you're older than me?"

"How can you be older than me?" Belle patted William's head. "Look at you, you're so small."

"..."

William wanted to retort, but Belle's soft hand, that was patting his head, felt so comfortable that he decided that it was not worth it. He only had a few days to spend with her, and he wished to make every second count.

Even though William wished that he could stop time and let this moment last forever, he knew that it was not possible.

Just like the sands falling down in an hourglass, two and a half days passed like a fleeting dream.

The day of the festival arrived and William accompanied Belle to the temple. It was currently five in the afternoon and the two were checking all the stalls along the way to the temple.

William felt his heart aching with every minute that passed. He wasn't able to stop himself from checking the timer on his status page every now and then to see what little time he had remaining.

< 04: 59: 09 >

'I will return to my world at ten o'clock,' William thought with a sigh. Although he was feeling depressed, he kept a smile plastered on his face.

"Oh! What a cute couple," a charming voice called out to William and Belle as they walked past a stall. "Young man, why don't you buy your girlfriend an accessory to commemorate this special occasion?"

William and Belle glanced at each other before walking towards the stall of the lady who was wearing a veil on her face.

For some reason, the lady's stall reminded William of the stalls found in the Temple of Ten Thousand Gods. The place where the Gods gave contracts to people whom they deemed worthy to enter the Temple's doors.

"Take a good look at these accessories," the sales lady said enthusiastically. "I guarantee that all of them are high-quality items."

Belle's eyes sparkled because all the accessories were very beautiful and well made. As a young lady from a rich and influential family, she could easily tell that they were genuine and not fake accessories. Because of this, she also knew that they were very expensive.

"How much is this?" William pointed at a golden necklace with a blue jewel embedded at its center.

"That would be 40 Million," the saleslady answered. "I'm willing to give you a discount and sell it to you for 38 Million."

William's hand that was about to touch the necklace immediately retreated. "What? This is 40 Million?!"

"Yes."

"Why are you selling expensive things at a stall and not a jewelry store? Aren't you afraid that people might steal them from you?"

"Don't worry young man. Anyone who dares to steal from me will not have a good ending." the sales lady patted her chest with confidence. "I guarantee this on my name."

"What is your name?"

"Freya"

"..." William rubbed his face. He thought that the lady was either making fun of him, or thought of him as a gullible child who didn't know who Freya was. He had also read Norse Mythology during his free time, and Freya was the Goddess of Love, Beauty, Fertility, War, and Death.

However, among the many attachments to her name, everyone agreed that her main role was the Goddess of Love and Beauty.

While William and the saleslady were chatting, Belle's gaze unconsciously landed on a silver ring. There was nothing special about the ring. It was just a plain silver ring without any decorations, and yet, it held a very strong attraction to her.

"How much is this Silver Ring?" Belle inquired.

The lips of the sales lady behind the veil curled up into a smile. If William and Belle were to see it, they would immediately be charmed by how beautiful her smile was.

"You have good eyes, young lady," the saleslady said with an approving tone. "This silver ring is part of a pair. The name of this ring is called the 'Ring of Vega' and its counterpart the 'Ring of Altair'.

"Legend has it that if two people were to exchange and wear these rings, no matter how far away they are from each other, they would eventually be reunited. Just like the legend of the Star Crossed Lovers."

William looked at the Silver Ring and felt his heart skip a beat. Although he knew that the sales lady was merely saying these things to make a sale, the promise to be able to be reunited once again resonated with his heart and soul.

"How much is it?" William asked.

"You can't buy this with money, young man," the sales lady said in a teasing tone.

"Then how?" William inquired. "Since it is in this stall, it means that you intend to sell it right?"

The sales lady nodded and picked up the Silver Ring.

"Young man, the price of this ring is a promise," the sales lady said. "I will sell it to you if you promise me one thing."

"A promise?"

"Yes, a promise."

"What kind of promise?" William asked.

"Since this ring represents love, the promise you must fulfill is also one of love," the saleslady replied. "You will be unable to refuse this promise. No matter what happens, you will do it, regardless of the price you have to pay. Can you make this promise?"

Chapter 257: The Ending Of A Fairy Tale [Part 2]

William frowned. A voice inside his head was telling him that he shouldn't underestimate the sales lady's words.

Belle, who was standing beside William, grabbed his arm and pulled him away from the stall. The black-haired beauty half-dragged William towards the temple without saying a word.

The saleslady watched the two of them with a smile hidden under her veil. She had already given William a choice, whether he accepted it or not, was his own choice.

As William and Belle walked towards the stairs of the temple, a gentle breeze blew and whispered something in William's ears.

"Star-crossed lovers, heartache and regret. When I look in your eyes, I wish that we had never met."

< 3: 55: 42 >

After the incident at the stall, the two wandered around the temple before offering their prayer to the Deity that was said to be the patron of the temple.

Ironically, the Deity of the temple was said to be the Deity of Love and Reunions. As someone who had met real Gods and Deities, William closed his eyes and clasped his hands together.

He prayed...

He prayed with all his might to allow him to spend more time with Belle.

He poured out his heart in his prayer, hoping that his words would reach the Patron Deity that governed over Love and Reunions.

Belle had finished her prayer and looked sideways at the handsome Half-Elf that had been with her for the past two and a half days.

William had told her that he would return to his world at exactly ten in the evening. Belle had only spent such a short time with him, but something deep inside her wanted to hold onto him and never let go.

And she did just that.

While William was praying, she hugged him from behind. At first, William was surprised, but he once again closed his eyes and resumed his prayer. Belle was two heads taller than William, and if one was to look at them from the side, they would think that the two of them were brother and sister.

Finally, William finished his prayer. As if both of them had an agreement, they walked away from the crowd and looked for a place where the two of them could be alone together.

"According to the staff, there will also be a firework display," Belle said as she sat beside William.

The two of them went to a small clearing that was located at the back of the temple. William looked up at the countless stars in the sky. These were the stars that he had not seen for many years. They looked both familiar and foreign to him.

"The stars here are different," William said softly.

"Will," Belle said as she held his hand. "Why don't you just stay here? Stay here with me? I will look after you and make sure that you don't suffer. You don't need to fight anymore. Just, be with me. Please?"

William gazed at her eyes and felt his heart waver.

He was very tempted to say "Yes. I will stay with you".

But each time he tried to say those words, the faces of several people flashed inside his head. They were the faces of the people that were important to him, who were on the "other side" where Belle didn't belong.

A place where the Shepherd goes to tend his sheep...

A place where the weaver couldn't hope to reach.

"Can you hear it?" William held Belle's hand and placed it over his chest. "Can you feel it? This heart of mine yearns for you, and yet, I can't say Yes to your proposal."

"Why?" Belle asked. "Why can't you just stay here with me? Here, where it is safe, and you don't need to risk your life to fight for a kingdom that might fall in the upcoming war?"

"Because they need me."

"I need you, too!"

Belle hugged William in a tight embrace. "I need you[,] too, William!"

William felt something wet fall on his head as Belle's body trembled.

"You promised me," Belle said between sobs. "You said that the next time we met that you would never let me go. You promised me!"

William felt like a lump was stuck to his throat as Belle poured her feelings over him. He never mentioned who he really was, but for some reason, Belle was able to guess his true identity.

The Half-Elf wrapped his arms around Belle and held her tight.

"I wish to stay with you as well. I really do," William replied. He was doing his best not to let the tears in his eyes fall. "I'm sorry, Belle, but I can't stay here with you."

Belle felt her heart breaking as the emotions that she had held back for a long time exploded inside her chest. She begged William over and over, but his answer was still a no. In the end, Belle stood up and ran away with tears falling down her eyes, blurring her vision.

"William, you're a liar! I hate you!"

Those were her parting words as she ran away from the boy who had unknowingly crossed the multiverse just to see her again.

William watched her go and the tears that he had been holding back fell like rain. He wanted to run after her, but he didn't have the courage to do so. He just covered his eyes with his hands as his body trembled, fighting off the longing he held for her.

Back then, he was not able to be with her because of his illness.

Now, he was unable to stay with her because he had a duty to fulfill.

< 00: 59: 59 >

< Ding! >

< Do you wish to remain in this world? >

< Yes / No >

William opened his eyes as he stared at the string of words that appeared on his status page. He was sure that when the timer reset, he would be sent back to his world. However, this time, a new option appeared.

'I can stay?' William was half in doubt when he saw the system message blinking in front of him. For a moment he thought he was imagining things, but after wiping the tears from his eyes, he realized that what he was seeing was real.

He didn't make a decision right away, instead he walked back to the Temple Shrine then down the stairs, until he reached the stall where the accessories were being sold.

"Looks like you've broken up with your girlfriend," the saleslady teased the boy who hadn't even bothered to wipe the tear stains from his face.

"You said that you will sell me the ring for a promise, right?" William asked.

The sales lady nodded. "As this ring represents the promise of love, I shall make a request as one who also loves. I wish to save the one I love.

"If you promise me that in the future you will help me save him, I will give you the ring. He resides in your world, so if you choose to take this ring, you will have to return to your world. The choice is yours to make."

"Do you want me to write a contract or make an oath?" William inquired. "I will do it."

"There's no need for that," the lady chuckled in an almost musical tone. "I believe that you are someone who will not take back your word."

The sales lady took the silver ring from her collection and gave it to William.

"Here you go," the saleslady said. "The Ring of Vega is yours."

"Thank you," William replied.

"No need to thank me, after all, it is not free." the sales lady patted the boy's head. "Go. Every second counts."

William nodded his head and left the Temple Grounds. He ran with all of his might towards Belle's Villa. He wanted to see her, to hold her, and tell her how much he loved her with the little time he had left.

Chapter 258: The Ending Of A Fairy Tale [Part 3]

When William's back disappeared from view, the sales lady giggled as she leaned back on her chair.

"Looks like I won the bet, so what will you do, young lady?" the sales lady asked.

Belle walked out from behind the stall and looked in the direction where William ran. She bit her lip as she thought of the last words that she had said to him a while ago. She felt guilty and embarrassed because she tried to use William's promise to bind him to her.

The sales lady presented a small box to Belle and opened it.

"All I need as payment is a promise," the sales lady said. "The choice is yours to make."

William stopped at the gate of the residence panting for breath. He had run all the way from the temple only to arrive as soon as he could. However, when he asked the guard if Belle had returned, the latter said that the Young Lady was still not inside the residence.

William didn't believe him and entered the house to look for Belle. It didn't take long for him to realize that the guard didn't lie to him and hurriedly went out to look for her.

He ran back to the temple but the girl he was searching for wasn't there. William looked everywhere, but still couldn't find her. In the end, William walked dejectedly to the place where they first met.

< 00: 14: 25 >

< Do you wish to remain in this world? >

< Yes / No >

William stood in the middle of the flowerfield as he looked at the stars in the sky. All it would take was for him to select "Yes", and the pain and suffering would end.

However, he didn't do that. There were things that he couldn't leave behind. He couldn't be selfish. There were people who were waiting for his return.

"I just want to see you one last time," William said softly.

It was at that moment when something exploded in the sky and a beautiful golden flower appeared in the darkness. Soon, several more fireworks painted the darkness with an array of colors.

William watched them silently. The fireworks display lasted for five minutes before coming to an end. The fleeting beauty disappeared and the sky once again was bathed in darkness.

Suddenly, a pair of slender arms hugged him from behind. William looked up to see a beautiful face right next to him.

Belle lowered her head and planted a soft kiss on William's lips. When the kiss ended, William faced her and wrapped his arms around her. He then stood on tiptoe to kiss the girl he had loved for many years.

The two kissed, and kissed, and kissed until they ran out of breath.

< 00: 07: 20 >

< Do you wish to remain in this world? >

< Yes / No >

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said those words to you," Belle said. "I was being selfish."

William buried his face on her chest and listened to her heartbeat. "Belle, I love you. Always have, always will. Now and forever."

Belle hugged him and kissed his head lovingly. "So you say, but you have so many girls waiting for you back in that Fantasy world of yours. I'm sure that you will forget about me soon."

"I will not," William said firmly. "For the past fourteen years of my life, I have always kept you in my heart."

Belle felt something warm spread on her chest when she heard that William had always kept her in his heart, even though he was living a new life in another world.

"You know it's funny," Belle said as she brushed William's head. "You spent fourteen years in that world, while here, only a year has passed. Well, I'm not going to complain. At least you didn't find an old hag when you returned. That would be the worst."

William reluctantly pulled back from Belle's warmth and softness and looked straight into her eyes. He then took out a ring from his pocket and gently placed it on her ring finger.

"Belle, for me, You are the beginning of a letter, the contents of a poem, the ending of a Fairytale," William said after he finished putting the ring on Belle's finger. "I don't know what the future holds, but I will do my best to find you."

Once again, William rose on tiptoe to kiss the woman he loved. He couldn't get enough of kissing her and wished that he had more time. If he could only pause the annoying timer on his status page he would have paid 1 Million God Points to do it!

After their short, love-filled kiss ended, Belle took out a ring from her own pocket and placed it on William's ring finger.

William's eyes widened in shock as he looked at the ring on his finger. He then looked at Belle anxiously because he understood the meaning of her gesture.

"Don't worry, it's not as bad as you think." Belle ruffled William's hair. "Do your best to find me because if you can't do that, I will have no choice but to find you."

< 00: 03: 48 >

< Do you wish to remain in this world? >

< Yes / No >

"Let us make some ground rules before you return to your world," Belle said with a serious expression. "If you marry dozens of wives I will castrate you."

"Okay," William replied. "I didn't intend to have dozens of wives in the first place."

"You can marry nine people. Whether they are wives or concubines, I don't care. However, you are not allowed to have more than nine." Belle stated. "If you surpass that number, you'd better not show yourself to me, or I'll make sure to fight you to the death. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes ma'am," William nodded his head like a henpecked husband. "But, why does the number amount to nine?"

"Because it is the... nevermind! Just make sure that you don't surpass that number, or I will hate you for life!"

"Okay. I promise."

< 00: 01: 53 >

< Do you wish to remain in this world? >

< Yes / No >

"You don't have much time left," Belle cupped William's face. "Let's not waste it."

"Mmm." William agreed with her wholeheartedly as he raised his head.

Their lips once again pressed against each other as they savored their last kiss together.

< 00: 00: 36 >

< 00: 00: 15 >

< 00: 00: 08 >

< 00: 00: 03 >

< 00: 00: 00 >

"I love you, Belle."

"I love you too, Will."

"See you later."

"See you soon. Also, that girl, Wendy. Treat her well."

"I will. I promise."

William's body glowed and slowly turned into particles of light. The light flew towards the sky and bathed Belle with its golden light.

When the light finally receded, Belle knelt on the ground and covered her face with her hands. Her pained sobs echoed in the quiet night, for her star-crossed lover was no longer in her sight.

Chapter 259: Let's Meet Again When The Sky Falls

William looked at the ring on his ring finger when the light around him receded. He could still feel Belle's warmth on his body, and the lingering sweetness of her kiss on his lips.

The red-headed boy stood there in a daze completely oblivious of his surroundings. It was as if he was trying to hold on to the memory of his star-crossed lover that was now far beyond his reach.

Suddenly, a light cough brought him out of his trance. William sighed and raised his head to look at the beautiful woman in front of him wearing priestess clothes.

"Congratulations on passing the Trial of Enlightenment," The Oracle of the Peak of Divinity said with a smile. "Come with me, our Sovereign wants to have a chat with you."

William nodded his head and followed behind The Oracle. He wanted to meet the Demigod that governed the Kyrintor Mountains and personally thank him for the opportunity that was given to him.

The two walked for ten minutes before arriving at a white gate that was over ten meters tall. Several golden runes were written on its surface and they twinkled like the stars in the sky.

The Oracle raised her hand and the gates swung open, William couldn't see what was inside the room because his sight was blocked by a white mist. Even so, he walked forward with steady steps and entered the room fearlessly.

He had only walked a few steps into the room when the gates closed behind him.

"Over here, young shepherd," a confident and domineering voice called out to him.

William walked towards the voice with a calm expression.

Soon, the mist started to recede and he came face to face with a three-meter tall humanoid goat with its wings spread wide. A black, five-pointed star (pentacle) could be seen on its forehead and its golden eyes stared at William like it was appraising a rare species of animal.

William felt like the goat looked familiar because he had seen it somewhere before. He pondered for a while and his eyes widened in shock when he finally recognized that Demigod that was standing before him.

"Baphomet," William muttered as he unconsciously took a step back.

"Oh? You know my father?" The humanoid goat's gaze softened when he heard William mention his father's name. "I didn't know that he was popular in the Lower Realm. Even so, it's good to know that his name is not forgotten."

The goat unfurled his wings as he sat on the white throne behind him. He then propped the side of his face on his fist as he crossed his legs. To once again stare at the boy whom the Goddess has chosen.

"I already know your name, but it would be best if we introduced ourselves to each other like civilized beings," the Demigod said. "The Tribes of the Kyrintor Mountains call me the Great One, for I do not want them to know my real name. However, for you, I will make an exception. You may call me by my name, Takam."

< Takam >

-- The King of Goats

-- Demigod

-- Threat Level: Calamity (Low)

- Can be added to the herd

[illegible]

-- ?????

-- ?????

-- ?????

-- ?????

-- ?????

Aside from the general information of the being in front of him, William wasn't able to know more about the Demigod that ruled over the tribes of the Northern Region.

The red-headed boy pressed his fist over his chest and gave a brief bow, "William Von Ainsworth. It's an honor meeting you, Your Excellency."

A playful smile appeared on Takam's face as he made a gesture for William to come closer.

"I know you have many questions. Fortunately, I have all the time in the world to answer them all," Takam said with a smile. "It's very rare for me to have guests, so I'll give you the VIP treatment."

Takam snapped his finger and a small table, laden with sweets, and tea appeared in front of William. With another snap of his finger, the boy found himself sitting on a chair and holding a cup of tea in his hand.

"Wet your throat first," Takam said in a teasing tone. "You must be feeling very thirsty after kissing your girl until the last second."

William wanted to retort, but decided that it was not a good idea to argue with a Demigod. The latter was treating him as a guest, so it would be best if he just went with the flow for now.

The tea he drank tasted oddly familiar and William drank again to confirm his suspicions. He had tasted tea like this during the three days that he had stayed with Belle and it felt weird tasting it again here in Hestia.

"Although your old world is in the Lower Realm, it has many interesting things, especially this Lepton Ice Tea." Takam chuckled. "Fortunately, We were able to get this item in bulk given the small timeframe that we had."

William's ears perked up as he listened to the Demigod. He then placed the teacup on top of the table and looked at the Humanoid Goat sitting on the throne.

"Can I go back to Earth?" William asked. This was the most important question in his mind right now. If possible, he wanted to find a way to travel between worlds to be with Belle from time to time.

"No, is what I'd like to say, but since you already managed to get there once... I guess the possibility exists," Takam replied in a casual manner. "To be frank, even I was surprised when the Trial of Enlightenment sent you to the Lower Realms. The Trial was about testing one's resolve. If you had chosen to stay in your old world then you would have stayed there until your dying breath.

"William, do you know? A God doesn't have the power to send someone from the Higher Realm to the Lower Realm. Even if two Gods were to work together it would still be very hard, unless both of them are extremely powerful Gods."

William carefully listened to Takam's explanation as if he was afraid of missing a single word. He then thought that if one or two Gods can't do it, what about four? The images of the Four Gods who had a good relationship with William appeared on his head and wondered if they were the ones responsible for his reunion with Belle.

'I will properly thank them the next time we meet,' William swore in his heart.

Back in the Ten Thousand Temple...

Lily: Was it you?

Gavin: No.

Lily and Gavin then stared at the two Gods that were playing a game of chess beside them.

David: *Whistles*

Issei: *Whistles*

Lily, Gavin: ...

William took a deep breath then asked his second question.

"What about my friends?" William inquired. "What happened to them?"

"Don't worry about them," Takam answered. "All of them have passed the trial and are now waiting for you at the Main Hall. This might be the first time that a group of people has succeeded in overcoming the Trial of Enlightenment at the same time."

William sighed in relief after knowing that his friends were safe. He then talked to Takam about the difficulties of the Hellan Kingdom and the reason why he came to the Kyrintor Mountains.

Takam listened with a smile and waited for William to finish his explanation.

"I am already aware of your purpose for coming...." Takam rubbed his chin. "Sadly, I can't agree to your request."

"Why?" William asked.

"Because this war is only the start of something more sinister and I need to preserve the strength of the Northern Tribes until the right moment arrives." Takam gazed in the distance as if looking past the white mists that surrounded them. "You don't have to worry about the Tribes stabbing you in the back, I will not allow that to happen. However, that also means that I can not offer you any assistance."

His expression didn't change, but William could tell that the Demigod had already made a decision. He would not get help from the Tribes during the war, but he was thankful that their planned invasion had come to a halt.

"You said that the war is only the start of something more sinister. What do you mean by that, Your Excellency?" William inquired.

"William."

"Your Excellency?"

"Survive the war first," Takam turned his head to look at the boy that he could easily pinch to oblivion if he felt like it. "Then and only then can you come to the North to ask for assistance. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Your Excellency."

"Let's meet again when the Sky Falls."

Those were the last words that William heard before his surroundings faded. His meeting with the Demigod had come to an end, but their talk only brought more questions than answers.

William was forced to put these matters aside for now because the Demi-God was right. He needed to survive the war first. As long as he was alive, there would be plenty of opportunities to find a way to be reunited with the beautiful lady that was waiting for him back on Earth.

Chapter 260: For The Sake Of My Cute Little Sister

"Will!" Wendy ran towards William and gave him a hug. "Did you also pass the trial?"

"I did," William replied and he returned Wendy's hug. He was surprised that after meeting Belle, his feelings for Wendy hadn't changed. It meant that the straightforward girl had managed to worm herself inside William's heart and the latter had also recognized her as his lover candidate.

'Belle said that I can have up to nine wives or concubines,' William thought. 'I guess I'll just cross that bridge when I get there.'

His gaze then landed on Ian and remembered Belle's warning about him.

"What are you looking at?" Ian asked. "You look creepy."

"Yep. It's impossible for this snout-nosed pansy to be a girl," William muttered as he averted his gaze. 'Belle's intuition was wrong.'

The Oracle had already warned them that they should keep the contents of their own trials a secret. Although they could share it with other people, she advised against it. She said that if other people were to know the contents of the trial, they would not be able to set foot in the Northern Regions again.

Because of this, none of them asked each other what happened in their trials. They returned to the Peak of Chivalry because William still had loose ends to tie up. To his surprise, the representatives of the Anaesha Dynasty had already left, while the representatives of the Zelan Dynasty remained.

Sir Jerkins personally informed William that Crown Prince Alaric wanted to talk to him. Although he was surprised, William decided to meet with him after he settled the issue with the tribes.

"As you may already know, the Great One has appointed me to choose the next Great Chieftain of the Tribes," William said with a serious expression.

All the different Tribal Chiefs looked at him anxiously and waited for his next words.

"The Great One has also issued a decree," William continued his speech. "The Tribes will not participate in the war nor will they act as the reinforcements for the Hellan Kingdom. They are to stay in the Northern Regions until the war is over."

Some of the Tribal Chiefs sighed, while others nodded their heads. Most of them didn't want to participate in the war because it would only cause the death of many of their tribesmen. Although the regions of the North were harsh, they weren't lacking in anything.

"There's more, the nearest town of Stanmore will now fall under the jurisdiction of the Tribes," William said. "This will be the compensation of the Hellan Kingdom to the Tribes for not participating in the war."

Earlier, Sir Jerkins had told William that the King had told him that he could use the three towns near the Kyrintor Mountains as bargaining chips to gain the aid of the Allied Tribes. However, since the Demigod had forbidden them from joining the war, the bargaining chips became useless.

William knew that some of the Tribal Chiefs still had the notion of expansion, so he was willing to compromise and satisfy their itch. The Half-Elf told Jerkins that in order to prevent the tribes from joining the Tri-Party Alliance, they needed to sacrifice one of the towns on the border in order to appease them.

Jerkins readily agreed to William's suggestion because he was afraid that the tribes would really switch sides if they didn't give them some form of compensation.

For the Ambassador, losing one border town was better than fighting on three fronts of the battlefield.

Just like William expected, the Tribal Chiefs were quite happy with the new territory they had gained for free. Even Great Chief Evander gave William a nod of admiration for his ability to compromise.

"Okay, now that is settled, we will talk about the position of the Great Chieftain of the Tribe." William gazed at the Tribal Chiefs and completely ignored Great Chief Evander, which made the latter's smile stiffen.

"Four years," William held out four fingers in front of everyone seated in the Great Hall. "For four years Evander will remain in his position as the Great Chieftain of the Tribe. After that, all the Tribal Chiefs will vote if he should continue to stay as the Great Chieftain or if he should step down from the position.

"If the Tribal Chiefs are going to ask Evander to step down after four years, each tribe needs to send one of their representatives to clear the trial of Enlightenment. The first person to clear the trial will become the next Great Chief of the Allied Tribes.

"There will be no age restriction to the trial. Anyone can become the Great Chief, but only one representative per tribe is allowed to participate in the selection ceremony."

The Tribal Chieftains nodded their heads in agreement. They thought that the new system was good since it prevented anyone from holding the position of Great Chieftain for an indefinite span of time.

Great Chief Evander happily accepted the new system after confirming that members of his tribe could also participate in the selection ceremony. He knew that William had given him four years to remain as the Great Chieftain, so that Brianna wouldn't suffer.

After he had settled the issues of the Tribes, William asked Sir Jerkins to invite the Crown Prince of the Zelan Dynasty to his quarters. He was very curious about what the "next king" of the neighboring dynasty wanted to say to him.

It didn't take long before Prince Alaric came to William's tent to converse. He didn't come alone. Princess Aila, Connal's Ex-Bride Candidate, was with him as well.

The beautiful brother and sister pair sat opposite William and looked at him with calm expressions on their faces.

"When I came here to the Northern Regions, I thought that I would only be meeting with the leaders of the different tribes," Prince Alaric said with a smile. "I didn't expect that I would see a distant relative and witness his amazing battle prowess first hand."

"By relative, you mean me?" William asked in confusion. "You might be making a mistake, Your Highness."

"Well, if your Grandmother's name is not Erza then yes, I may be making a mistake," the Prince replied in a playful tone. "Tell me, Sir William, is Lady Erza not your grandmother?"

"She is," William replied.

"Great!" Prince Alaric clapped his hands. "Actually, your grandmother and my grandmother are twins. Lord James went to the Zelan Dynasty to personally ask her parents for her hand in marriage. Naturally, they didn't agree at the start and made things difficult for him."

Prince Alaric chuckled. "However, Lord James was able to beat all of Lady Erza's suitors, and finally gained the approval of her parents. She then went with your grandfather to the Hellan Kingdom and would just occasionally visit our domain whenever she felt homesick. Long story short, you and I are distant cousins since we share the same heritage."

"I see." William nodded his head in understanding. "So, what does your Highness need from me?"

Although he agreed on the surface, William didn't take the Prince's words to heart. He would have to consult with his grandfather first and confirm whether what the Prince had told him was true or not. Even so, he was still willing to hear what the Prince had to say since the latter had waited for him to return to the Third Peak of Chivalry.

"I want you to pass this letter to Lord James and also take my little sister, Princess Aila, to meet him," Alaric replied. "I know that this is an odd request from the Crown Prince of a Dynasty that is planning to wage war on your borders, but it is still something I need to do for the sake of my cute little sister. You can do this for me, right, Cousin?"

William frowned, but still nodded his head. "Is that all?"

"Yes, that is all." Prince Alaric smiled. "Perhaps, this is the last time we will meet in such an amicable manner. The next time we see each other will be on the battlefield. Until then, make sure that you stay alive, Cousin."

William returned Prince Alaric's smile but said nothing else. He then looked at the beautiful Princess who had been observing him since the moment she entered his tent.

"I hope you don't mind living in the countryside, Your Highness," William said. "Because that is where you will be staying until the war is over."

"As long as there is food to eat, a bed to sleep on, and a roof over my head, I believe that I will be able to manage, Sir William," Aila replied. "I am looking forward to meeting the legendary Lord James who single-handedly defeated a hundred warriors when he asked for Lady Erza's hand in marriage."

Princess Aila smiled sweetly as she gazed at William's eyes that were as beautiful as sapphires. She wanted to know more about the Knight Commander who was wearing a slave collar on his neck.

The Princess of the Zelan Dynasty knew that her brother was right. It would be safer to stay in the enemy's territory than return to their domain. Because if she did return to the Zelan Dynasty, all that was waiting for her was a life filled with regrets and misery.