

Strongest 291

Chapter 291: Duty Calls And The Enemy Awaits!

When Wendy and the others exited the garden of the Magic Division, an anxious Spencer suddenly appeared out of nowhere and rushed towards his twin sister. He had searched the entire Division looking for Wendy, but he couldn't find her.

Fortunately, when he was about to head to the other Divisions, he saw them exit the garden and immediately ran in their direction.

"What happened to the Knight Commander?" Spencer asked with a serious expression. "Are you okay, Wendy? Are you hurt anywhere?"

"I'm fine, Big Brother," Wendy replied. "Are the Demons still around?"

This was the most pressing concern for them at the moment because William was currently unconscious and unable to protect himself if the Demons decided to rampage inside the academy.

"I don't know." Spencer shook his head. "I left the Grand Coliseum to look for you, right after the Demons appeared."

Wendy felt touched because her twin brother prioritized her safety and rushed towards the Magic Division to look for her. However, when Spencer volunteered to carry William, she firmly rejected his offer. Instead, she urged her brother to check the current situation, while they headed towards the Lunarism Dormitory.

Spencer agreed to his sister's proposal and returned to the Grand Coliseum. Since Est and the others were with her, and his Knight Commander was currently out of commission, the overprotective Sison deemed that his sister was currently safe and left with peace of mind.

The Lunarism Dormitory was the dormitory of the First Years in the Magic Division. Est proposed to take William to his room to rest, while they waited for the battle against the Demons to settle down.

They were confident that the Knights, Instructors, and the students would be able to drive the demons away. This was why they decided to prioritize William's safety instead of going to the Grand Coliseum.

A man wearing a black robe snuck inside the treasure house of the Royal Academy. He and his men used the Demon invasion as a distraction to infiltrate the place where ancient artifacts and treasures were stored within the academy.

The Black-Robed Man was one of the members of The Organization that helped the Demon Race set a warp portal in the Grand Coliseum. If the Astral Worm was there, it would recognize the man as the same person that had given it "Carter" to be used as a vessel in order to enter the academy and carry out its mission.

Due to the sudden turn of events, the defenders of the treasury were forced to split their forces and reinforce the defenders at the Coliseum. Those that remained behind were easily dealt with by the members of the organization who specialized in fighting.

"Sir, all the guards had been eliminated," a man wearing a black mask reported.

"Good," the Black-Robed Man replied. "Guard all entrances and make sure that no one disturbs me."

"Yes, Sir!" The man wearing the black mask nodded his head and stood at the entrance to prevent anyone from interfering with his superior's mission.

After walking for a few minutes, the Black-Robed-Man stopped in front of a huge black door that was covered in many ancient runes.

It was the entrance that led to the treasure house. Only the Dean of the Academy had the key to open it. Fortunately, they managed to steal the key a day ago, while the Dean was having a meeting outside the academy.

They left a perfect replica behind in order to prevent Simon, the Dean of the Academy, from finding anything suspicious.

The Black-Robed-Man took out a small silver orb from his storage ring and raised it above his head.

"Let the glory of the Hellan Academy forever burn brightly!" the man shouted and the silver orb in his hand glowed.

The door of the treasury slowly opened, revealing mountains of gold coins, jewels, weapons, armors, and other artifacts that had been stored in the academy for many years.

The lips of the Black-Robed Man curled up into a grin as he stared at the priceless treasures that were inside the treasure vault.

His leader ordered him to ransack the Academy's treasury in order to increase their organization's funding. They had used many resources and manpower to instigate the war between the Kingdoms and Dynasties, and also support the Demon Race's invasion.

Their coffers had decreased by half and they needed some immediate sources of income to keep their operation going smoothly.

The Black-Robed man was about to enter the treasure vault when a hand patted his shoulder from behind.

"Good Job," a voice filled with happiness sounded from behind the robed man. "I'll take it from here. You can rest in peace."

Before the Black-Robed-Man could even react, the same hand that had patted his shoulder grabbed his head and gave it a twist. The sound of bones breaking reverberated within the quiet treasure vault.

James tossed the dead body aside and entered the treasure vault with a devilish smile on his face.

"Time to loot this place," James chuckled as he activated the storage ring in his hand.

Like a black hole, all the treasures within the vault were sucked towards James' ring until nothing was left.

The "Old Bandit of Lont" whistled in satisfaction as he swaggered out of the treasury. If King Noah, Emrys, and Simon were there to witness James' act of banditry, all of them would definitely summon their weapons and fight the old coot to the bitter end.

Although James cared for the Hellan Kingdom, he cared more about his family and the subordinates that were under his command. He didn't expect much from the King, and he certainly didn't expect him to confer upon him additional rewards for the information he had given him.

For him, The Organization was just a convenient scapegoat. He could put the blame on The Organization for everything.

'I can just tell them that I arrived late,' James thought as he smiled evilly.

Suddenly, Ezio appeared before him holding a short sword stained with blood.

"Everyone has been eliminated, Sir," Ezio reported. "The battle in the Grand Coliseum is also nearing its end."

"Perfect timing. I'll go check on Matthew and Leah, you go and find William. Knowing that boy, he'd probably be at the center of this mess."

"Yes, Sir."

Ezio disappeared into a black mist and flew in the direction of the Magic Division. James watched him go before turning his head to look at this right side.

"How long are you planning to hide?" James asked. "Are you going to report me to His Majesty?" he finished sarcastically.

James' rival, the Sword Saint of the Hellan Kingdom, Aramis Bran Caliburn, materialized out of thin air and stared at him with disdain.

"I've always known that keeping you around was a mistake," Aramis said as he snorted. "You even used the Demons and that secret organization to fill up your pockets with gold coins. How devious of you."

"Why, thank you," James replied. "So, what are you going to do? Are you going to fight, or are you going to fight?"

Aramis didn't bother to reply, and instead, unsheathed his sword from his scabbard before taking a fighting stance. James, on the other hand, summoned his giant axe and rested it on his shoulder. Both fighters released their aura and were about to clash against each other when they heard the tolling of a bell.

Soon, more ringing sounds resounded all over the capital and the two men's expressions suddenly became serious.

Back in the Grand Coliseum...

None of the students had died during the demon invasion because The King, the Grand Archmage, and the Dean of the Academy had made preparations beforehand and linked the Grand Coliseum to Simon's Domain.

The students that had been killed had been automatically transported to a safe location where they would be attended to by the Clerics of the Kingdom.

However before they could even celebrate their victory, the Grand Bell of Gladiolus started to ring.

King Noah, Emrys, and Simon, looked towards the East with grim expressions. The Bell of Gladiolus had been rung and it only meant one thing, and one thing only.

"The war has started," Noah said in a voice laced with barely restrained anger. He had long heard that an unknown Organization was moving behind the scenes and fanning the flames of war from the shadows.

However, he never expected them to act this decisively and use every means at their disposal to make things difficult for the Hellan Kingdom. King Noah clenched his fist so hard that the ground beneath his feet crumbled as the aura in his body burst forth.

"To arms!" King Noah shouted. His voice boomed within the Grand Coliseum as he called out to the Warriors of his Kingdom. "Rally to me! Duty calls and the enemy awaits!"

Chapter 292: First Step For World Domination

"Are you sure the two of you want to do this?" Ian asked. "You might not like what you see."

"I'm ready," Wendy said firmly.

Est didn't say anything and just nodded his head.

The three were planning to enter William's Sea of Consciousness using Ian as the medium. They wanted to know if there was anything else that they could do in order to help the boy regain consciousness.

Wendy lay on William's right and hugged his body, while Est lay on his left, holding his hand. Ian transformed into her spirit form and lay at the edge of the bed, cradling William's head.

"Synchronization," Ian softly muttered and her spirit power enveloped all four of them in a blue bubble.

"T-This is William's Spiritual World?" Wendy covered her mouth with a hand as she looked at the unbelievable scene in front of her.

Ian had said beforehand that a person's Sea of Consciousness reflected the inner thoughts of each person.

Wendy's breathing grew ragged as a pang of pain spread inside her chest.

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She gazed at the broken sky that was similar to a cracked egg shell. Huge portions of the sky had fallen into the sea like pieces of debris from a collapsed building. The sea under their feet was gray, which also reflected that the gray world was on the brink of complete and utter destruction.

Wendy's eyes suddenly found something red amidst the grayness of the world. She immediately ran in that direction with tears streaming down her face as she cried out the name of her beloved.

"Will!"

The image of the cheerful Half-Elf that hugged her every night, kissed her every night, and made her feel safe and secure, flashed inside her mind as she neared the fallen boy that was surrounded by the "debris" that had fallen from the heavens.

A pained and sad wail reverberated inside that dying world as Wendy held William's soul in a tight embrace.

Est looked at William from afar and cried. She covered her lips with her delicate hand as her body trembled in pain and suffering.

Ian, who stood beside her, wrapped her arms around Est and pulled her close.

"It's fine," Ian said softly. "It will take time, but he will definitely recover. I will do my best to make him recover."

Est hugged Ian tighter as her tears fell down like rain. She blamed herself for what happened to William.

"If only I was stronger, this wouldn't have happened," Est said between sobs. "It's all my fault!"

"No," Ian assured her. "It's the fault of the Demons. If not for their vile actions, none of this would have happened. You, Wendy, and William are just victims of their evil schemes. Don't worry, as long as the three of us work together, we will be able to restore him to his peak condition."

Ian said these words, not only to reassure Est, but to reassure herself as well. She knew that it would take a few months for William to recover. But, she needed to be strong in order to prevent the two girls, who also liked William, from blaming themselves for what had happened to him.

She hoped, with every fiber of her being, that the boy would soon open his eyes and tell them that he was fine.

Twenty miles off the shore of the Southern Continent, several ships had anchored themselves.

They were the Cruisers from the Silvermoon Continent and they were waiting for the right time to invade the Southern Continent.

Soon the sounds of bugle horns broke the peace as several Warships appeared ten miles away from their formation.

Elandorr, the nineteen-year old prodigy of the elves, peered through his telescope to identify the newcomers. It didn't take long for him to recognize the flags of the Human Warships that belonged to the Kraetor Empire. Elandorr had already been told that there might be other forces that were planning to invade the Southern Continent aside from them, but he wasn't too worried.

There were four Elven Archmages that had accompanied them on this mission, and they were more than enough to deal with any situation in the open seas. Also, his grandfather told him that, if possible, he shouldn't pick a fight with the Humans until they arrived at their destination.

"Put the fleet on high alert, but do not engage the Humans without my order," Elandorr ordered.

"Yes, Young Master!" his subordinate replied and immediately issued Elandorr's orders.

Elandorr stared at the Human Fleet and sneered. His Clan was one of the factions within the Silvermoon Continent that detested Humans. This was also why he was chosen among the other Eleven Prodigies to be the Grand Commander of this mission to invade the Southern Continent.

The Ancient Elven Families had long wanted to prove to the world that they were the superior race, and all other races should bow before them. If not for the fact that it took many years for the World Tree to fully recover, they might have launched an invasion long ago.

It could even be said that this mission to conquer the Southern Continent was only their first step towards World Domination.

Elandorr believed that after this mission ended, he would be one step ahead of his peers in being able to court the Elven Princess who had accompanied them to this mission. Although the King of the Elves had taken a backseat when it came to politics, and allowed the Elven Council to take over, it didn't change the fact that all the Elves still showed him their utmost respect and reverence.

Just as the Elves were observing them, a handsome young man in his late teens looked back at the Elven Formation in the distance.

He had a smile on his face as he casually waved for his men to stand down. Just like Elandorr, the young man was in his late teens and was hailed as one of the strongest warriors among the young generation in the Kraetor Empire.

His name was Jason, the fifth prince of the Kraetor Empire. His mission was to stake their claim in the Southern Continent and make his cousin sit on the throne as an Empress.

For the young teen, this mission was a walk in the park because there were very few forces in the world who would dare get in their way. He was not afraid of dealing with the long-eared Elves, whom they treated as slaves in the Central Continent.

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He was even looking forward to their future clash with the Elven Race so that he could bring back some beauties to warm his bed.

Jason was not only strong, but very intelligent as well. He knew that this was not the time to fight with the Elves because they needed all of their manpower to conquer one of the four Kingdoms that held the axis of power in the Southern Continent.

Until then, he would leave them alone and settle their differences after they had landed on foreign soil.

Both young commanders were belittling each other's races inside their minds. Even so, they still tolerated each other as they waited for the moment when the skies of the Southern Lands would change their color.

That was the sign that the time was ripe to charge forward and stake their claim among the rich and fertile lands of the South. It was also the prelude, for an all out war that would reshape the balance of power between all the warring factions that were vying for supremacy.

Chapter 293: Important Talk With The Gods

"Will, time to wake up. How long do you plan to sleep?" an adorable voice asked. "If you don't wake up soon, I'm going to give you a kiss."

William's eyes slowly opened when he heard the familiar voice that whispered in his ears. The adorable face of the Loli Goddess appeared in his vision with her lips puckered outward to give him a smooch.

William hurriedly raised his hand to block her lips, but was surprised by what he saw.

Instead of his hand, the one that blocked Lily's lips was a furry, padded, hand that made the Loli Goddess giggle.

"Awww, William is so shy," Lily chuckled as she raised William high in the air and spun him around. "I should have done this sooner. You look cuter this way!"

"Lily? Why are you here?" William asked via telepathy. "Where am I? Better yet, what am I?"

It didn't take long for William to realize that there was something very strange about his body because it felt "weird". It was as if he wasn't fully accustomed to his body and was having trouble moving its parts.

"Alright, calm down, Little Will," Lily happily poked William's nose with a big grin on her face. "I know that you are currently confused, but my explanation will have to wait until we arrive at our destination."

Lily happily carried William out of her residence to meet with Issei and David. Gavin was currently resting in his hut on the outskirts of the Temple in order to recover. The Forceful God Descent he made to save William had rendered him paralyzed and it would take him a long period of time to fully recover.

"We're here!" Lily announced as she arrived at the picnic area of the temple where several other Gods were lazing around.

Issei and David were already seated beside a picnic table and waved at the approaching Loli Goddess.

"How did it go?" Issei inquired.

"It went perfectly well!" Lily replied with a victory pose.

David played with his beard as he stared at the Pink Teddy Bear in Lily's hands. Since Lily had declared that her attempt was successful then the consciousness residing within the stuffed toy was none other than William.

Lily casually placed the Teddy Bear on top of the table with a big smile on her face. "Tadah! I present to you, Little Will version 1.1!"

Issei and David humored Lily by clapping their hands to praise her.

William who was still in a confused state tilted his head as he waited for an explanation.

"Um, can someone tell me what's going on?" William asked. "Did I crossover? Am I dead?"

Lily giggled and poked the Teddy Bear's nose and started her explanation. "Technically, you are now a Half-Dead-Half-Elf. The only thing that is keeping you from crossing over is the newly implanted Spirit Core inside your body. If not for that, you'd be entering the Cycle of Reincarnation right at this moment."

William tried to recall what happened before he lost consciousness and remembered a pair of purple eyes that looked at him in an affectionate manner. He knew to whom those pairs of eyes belonged to and a complicated feeling rose in his heart.

'Looks like I owe her one,' William thought as he sighed internally.

"You have been sleeping for three days and, during that time, your body, and spirit have been taken care of by three beauties," Issei commented on the side. "You should properly thank them when you recover."

"T-Three days? I've been sleeping for three days?!" William gasped in shock. "What happened while I was unconscious? Are the others safe?! What about Wendy?"

"Calm down," David replied. "All of them are safe. At least for now."Â

"For now?"

"Yes. For now."

William wanted to know more, but David didn't say anything else. Lily and Issei also didn't say anything to follow up which made William feel anxious.

"Look. Before you worry about others, why don't you worry about yourself first?" Lily said as she patted her forehead. "Do you know how serious the damage to your soul is? It's a miracle that I was still able to drag your consciousness out of your body."

William quieted down after hearing Lily's words. If his soul remained inside his body, and only his consciousness was dragged out, it just showed how dire his current situation was.

"Mah, there's no use worrying about things outside of your control," Issei said as he patted the Teddy Bear's shoulder. "What you need to think about is what you're going to do from here. Clearly, you can't return to your body in your current state. Even if you were to return, nothing would change. You will just remain in a vegetable state for a month or two."

William closed his eyes and did his best to calm down. Issei was right. Even though he wanted to return to his body, the damage to his Sea of Consciousness remained. After calming down, he once again opened his eyes and faced the three Gods who supported him from the Heavens.

"What should I do now?" William inquired. "Is there a way for my body to recover? Can any of you help me?"

The Three Gods exchanged a glance and looked back at him with serious expressions on their faces.

"The damage in your Sea of Consciousness will recover in time, but it will take at least a few months for it to fully recover," Issei answered with confidence. "Right now, Ian and the others are doing their best to speed up the process, but you can't rush something like this. Souls are very delicate things. It takes a great amount of spiritual energy to damage them, and requires the same amount to restore them."

David cleared his throat as he looked at the depressed Teddy Bear in front of him. "However, that doesn't necessarily mean that you can't awaken from your current state. Of course you can. In fact, you can even fight, but you can only do that for a very short period of time.

"If you exceed your limit, your already crumbling soul will collapse completely. When that happens, it will take at least a thousand years for your soul to recover and enter the Cycle of Reincarnation."

William sighed in relief when he heard that there was still hope for him to awaken in the real world. Although the part about his soul collapsing completely scared him, he was more worried about staying in a vegetable state for months.

"Mah, let's not talk about these things first," Lily interjected. "Let's talk about the important ones. William, it's about time that you learned how to use the Divinities that we gave you. Don't tell me that you only thought of my Lollipop as an ordinary snack to lure cute little girls to follow you around. Although I don't mind if you do that, people around you will definitely treat you as scum."

"Eh? Your lollipop isn't just a snack?" William scratched his head. "I thought it was just a candy that dispelled other status effects. It can do more than that?"

"Of course it can," Lily said in an arrogant manner. "At most, you are only using 10% of its full power."

"And you're using mine at 25%," Issei commented.

"You're also not fully utilizing the power of the Shepherd Job Class," David joined his friends in nagging at William. "You're missing out on a lot of things!"

The Three Gods stared at William with mischievous smiles on their faces.

"Don't be in a hurry to return, Little Will," Lily said with a big grin on her face. "You will be undergoing Divinity Training so that you don't waste the precious gifts that we gave you."

"I still can't stomach the fact that a 'Worm' almost benefitted from the blessings that we gave you. If that really happened, I would have descended into your world and ripped that worm to pieces!"

After Lily's outburst, the three Gods dragged William to the outskirts of the Temple to start his Divinity Training. Issei, and David, shared the same opinion as the Loli Goddess. If William had known how to utilize the Divine Powers that they had given him, even in his weakened state, the Astral Worm wouldn't have been able to beat him so easily.

Chapter 294: Heart To Heart Talk [Part 1]

"... Just, what are they doing?"

"They're playing rocks, scissors, and papers to see who will be teaching you first."

"How about you, Sir David?" William inquired. "Aren't you going to join them?"

David played with his beard and smiled. "I decided to be the last one to mentor you. That way, I don't have to worry about time constraints to make you understand... the true power of the Shepherd Class."

William looked at the smiling God beside him and nodded his head. In truth, he wanted to know more about his Main Job Class. Unlike Dark Magic where he had a teacher to teach him the ropes, The Shepherd Job Class was a mystery to him.

He had played many RPG games back on Earth, but none of those games had the Shepherd Job Class. In regards to the taming system, he doesn't really understand how it worked. More often than not, he had to use contracts in the name of the "God of Contracts" as a medium in order to temporarily add Spire and Psoglav to his herd.

As for Fenrir and the other trollhounds, they had sworn their allegiance towards William and automatically became part of his herd, without being tamed.

In short, the Shepherd Job Class didn't have a Tame Skill that William could use to tame Herd Type Beasts. He just assumed that he could tame them because The System classified the monsters around him by whether they could be tamed or not.

He was hoping that with David's mentorship, he would be able to understand what the Shepherd Job Class was truly capable of doing.

A loud shout broke William out from his daze as Issei raised his fist triumphantly. Lily, on the other hand, hatefully stomped her feet on the ground and gave William a pout. She looked so cute and adorable that most boys would unite and start a crusade against Issei if they were to see Lily's current state.

"Let's go William," Issei said as he picked up the Teddy Bear with a grin. "It's time for you to understand the power of the Divinity that I gave you many years ago."

Before William could even say goodbye to Lily and David, the world distorted and both he and Issei disappeared without a trace.

Lily clicked her tongue as stomped her foot in irritation, "Tsk! This was a good opportunity to turn William into a lolicon. Unfortunately, Issei still got him first in the end. So annoying!"

"You shouldn't say your thoughts out loud, you know?" David commented. "Especially when the other Gods are around."

"Hah~ what do you understand, old man?" Lily sighed. "You're old fashioned. You don't even know what 'Moe' means."

David pretended not to hear Lily's words and decided to visit Gavin in his hut. He was worried about the backlash that his friend received after he had done his best to keep William's soul from shattering.

Seeing that David was not interested in hearing her whining, Lily returned to the temple to wait for the next batch of candidates to arrive. Unlike Issei, who had already reached his maximum number of followers, Lily still had a long way to go.

Fortunately for her, there was not a lack of people who would happily sign her contract after seeing the bright smile on her adorable face.

"William, listen well because what I am about to tell you is important," Issei said as he sat in front of William.

The two of them were inside his palace, where most of Issei's women resided. They were currently taking turns to hug the cute Teddy Bear to their voluptuous chests, not caring that blood was already seeping out of the Teddy Bear's nose.

"Girls, do you mind?" Issei grabbed William from his lovers and prevented them from having their way with him. "We boys are having an important talk. Aside from Abby and Gabby, all of you disperse!"

"Darling, you're so mean!"

"Hmp! Let's see if you're going to get any sleep tonight!"

"You better make us feel good later or else we will make you regret it!"

Several other complaints were made by Issei's lovers, but they all followed his order and left the room.

William stared at the two beautiful twins that stood on Issei's left and right sides. They seemed to be in their early twenties, and had petite bodies. Even so, that didn't change the fact that the two girls were definitely above average.

Issei cleared his throat and started his explanation about the uses of the Divinity he left inside William.

"Right now, you are only able to use 25% of the power of the 'Chess Piece' that I gave you," Issei stated in a serious tone.

"This has nothing to do with affinity, talent, or race. You simply don't have the qualifications to use its full power because you are still too young. Only when you come of age will the final seal on my Divinity break and allow you to use its power to its maximum potential."

Issei stood up from his seat and made a gesture. Abby, the one seated on Issei's left, glowed and transformed herself into a sword. The Harem God firmly gripped the sword's handle and gave it a few swings.

With each slash of his sword, several air blades materialized out of thin air and shot in the direction Issei aimed at. Issei made another gesture and Gabby, who was watching her lover's performance, smiled before transforming into a round shield.

The shield flew towards Issei and the latter caught it with his left hand.

"The power of my Divinity, is the power of bonds," Issei said in a voice laced with tenderness and affection. "The more intimate you are with your lover, the more powerful the connection will be. This will allow you to use powerful abilities that are exclusive to them."

The two girls transformed back to their natural bodies and hugged Issei. The Harem God held their waists firmly and gave both of them a kiss on the cheeks, before facing William.

"I'm not telling you to use your girlfriends as weapons, or pieces of armor. I'm just letting you know that anything is possible, as long as the bonds you have with them remain strong. Also, I have a feeling that if my Divinity and Gavin's Divinity worked together, you might be able to temporarily pass your Job Classes to your lovers for a short period of time.

"Of course, this is not yet confirmed. You need to experiment with this after you return to your world."

William's ears perked up when Issei mentioned that transferring his Job Classes to his lovers might be possible. He imagined Wendy using the power of the Monk Job Class to beat up her twin brother, Spencer, and it improved his mood greatly.

Seeing that William's mood had become better, Issei decided to show him what was currently happening inside his Sea of Consciousness.

William looked at his pale-faced spirit body, that was currently being hugged by three girls.

Wendy hugged his body from his right side, A beautiful mermaid with blue hair hugged him from the back, and a girl with silver-colored hair hugged him from the left. The three girls had their eyes closed as they channeled their spiritual energy around them.

The energy was slowly being absorbed by the blue gem embedded in William's chest. William's gaze softened as he looked at the three girls who were doing their best to help him recover faster.

"William, you are loved," Issei commented. "I'm sure that you already know what to do, so I will not interfere with your affairs. However, allow me to give you some advice. Women like it when the man they love tells them that he loves them.

"Don't just show, and make them feel, that you love them. Use words as well. Communication is the most effective way to keep a relationship healthy, do you understand?"

"Yes," William replied as he nodded his head. "Thank you. I will keep that in mind."

"Good. Since this is a special occasion, allow me to help you a bit. Remember, words are important," Issei reminded William as he placed his hand over his head. "I will let you talk to them for a period of time, so make sure to let them know that you are safe."

Something warm spread throughout William's body as he felt himself being pulled back by a strong force.

Issei and his two lovers glanced at each other before leaving the room. They would give the young boy some privacy and let him settle his affairs with his "girlfriends" before his training officially started.

Wendy, Est, and Ian had just finished channeling their spiritual energy to William, when they felt a gentle breeze brush against them.

Soon, they heard a voice calling out to them. A voice that they had been wanting to hear since he lost consciousness.

"Thank you for watching over me." William's voice reverberated within his Sea of Consciousness which made the eyes of the three girls widen in surprise.

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"I don't have much time, so, please, allow me to talk without being interrupted. First off, I would like to apologize to the three of you. I could have prevented Carter from hurting all of you, but I decided to watch him from the side and allow his filthy spell to corrupt your consciousness.

"Est, I'm sorry. I could have dispelled the spell long ago and prevented you from suffering. Words cannot describe how much I hated myself for not killing Carter at an earlier time. Knowing you, I'm guessing that you might be riddled with guilt right now.

"I'm sorry for making you suffer. I'm sorry for making you feel guilty, and most of all, I'm sorry for not being there to apologize in person."

William then explained everything from the beginning. How he discovered that Wendy was under the effects of a suggestion spell that was slowly invading her Sea of Consciousness and the hesitation he felt in dispelling the spell in its earlier stages.

He explained how Carter tried to use the spell to have his way with Wendy, which forced William to take the matter in his own hands and purify the curse within her body.

Chapter 295: Heart To Heart Talk [Part 2]

"Sorry, Wendy," William's voice, that was riddled with shame, and guilt, permeated within his Spiritual World. "I used you as bait in order to get close to Carter. I placed you in the way of great harm and he almost succeeded in forcing you to do things that you would have never done in your sober state.

"I don't know if you hate me right now, but know this, I will accept any punishment that you will give me once I recover. I'm sorry if you feel disillusioned with me. If you want to put an end to our relationship then I will accept it. I am the one at fault and I don't deserve someone like you in my life."

Wendy clenched her fist and lightly pounded William's chest. She had forgotten that the Half-Elf had told them not to interrupt his words. The feelings in her heart had burst out, which caught the two girls beside her by surprise.

"If you want to apologize then open your eyes and apologize to me face to face!" Wendy growled in frustration. "I'll make sure to punch you without holding back until I have vented out all of my frustration!"

"... Are you trying to kill me?" William's voice laced with helplessness whimpered. "I'm only barely hanging on to life. One full-powered punch from you would immediately send me to the Cycle of Reincarnation."

Wendy stopped her punches. "Okay, I'll wait for you to recover then punch you. Why didn't you tell me this earlier? Is this why you were feeling anxious? Is this why you were feeling guilty? You've been bottling all of these feelings inside you for a very long time and fighting this battle alone. Why? Don't you have any faith in me?"

"I'm sorry," William apologized. "I promise I won't do it again. Just, don't leave me, Wendy."

Wendy buried her head on William's chest and cried. She had seen William's anxiousness throughout the entirety of the past week before the incident happened. She had seen the guilt on his face and the worries in his brows each time he looked at her.

William's consciousness was hovering above them, and saw his girlfriend's pained expression. If he could only move his hands, he would have definitely wrapped them around her body and whispered words of apology in her ears.

He then shifted his attention to the blue-haired mermaid who was hugging him from behind. His head was cradled on her chest. He watched as the gems embedded in his and Ian's bodies glowed in unison like the beating of a heart.

"Ian, thank you," William said. "If you didn't give me half of your heart then I would have surely died. I heard your words and I promise you that I will fulfill it. I will take responsibility, but, can you please, give me some time? I don't want to do things half-heartedly. I want to do it right."

"I know that this might be sudden, but I would like to know more about you. Let's talk about these things slowly. Also, is this why you always quarreled with me? They say that Love is just a thin line away from Hate. Aiyah~ I guess even mermaids can't resist my charms. Being handsome is a sin."

Ian shook her head helplessly because she knew that William was only trying to lighten up the depressing atmosphere. Even so, deep inside, she was happy. She could tell that William was serious when he said that he would take responsibility, and it made her feel that her sacrifice was worth it.

A smile appeared on Ian's face as she patted William's head,

"I would like to know more about you, too," Ian whispered in William's ears. "Don't argue with me all the time."

"It was you who always argued with me first...," William grumbled.

"What did you say?"

"Sorry, I was the one at fault. I will do my best not to argue with you again."

"That's better." Ian nodded and closed her eyes. She was feeling a little exhausted because she was the one that was handling the bulk of the spirit transfer to William's body.

William then shifted his attention to the girl with silver-colored hair.

"Est, you're very beautiful," William said. "Your silver hair, and especially your eyes. I've never seen someone with eyes as red as yours."

Est snorted and closed the eyes that William had praised a few seconds ago. However, her hands that were embracing the boy's body remained firm. It was as if she was afraid that William's body would fly away if she loosened her grip even a little.

"I know that this might sound like a stupid question, but, I have to know. Are you really a girl?" William asked with genuine curiosity.

"I was a girl," Est answered. "But, I am currently under a powerful curse and have to remain a boy for life. I don't know how Ian managed to 'temporarily' unseal the curse placed on her body, but I can only have this appearance inside your Sea of Consciousness."

"Who was it that placed a curse on you? Do you know?" William's voice contained a hint of anger, which made Est feel like a little kitten was scratching her heart.

"I was cursed by a Goddess."

"Her name?"

"Lady Astrid."

"Understood. I will talk to her while I'm here."

"Huh?" Est opened her eyes abruptly and gazed at the pale-faced boy. "What do you mean you'll talk to Lady Astrid? Where are you right now?"

A chuckle escaped William's lips, but he knew better than to say that he was currently at the temple where the Gods resided.

"Est, do you believe me?"

"No."

"Eh? Why not?" William inquired. "You dare not believe this amazing Half-Elf? This handsome Half-Elf that could make all the girls in the academy swoon with a single wink?"

Est scoffed and flicked the unconscious Spirit Body's head in annoyance. "Why should I believe in a womanizer? You already have Wendy, and Ian, now you want to have me, too? I'm not that cheap."

William smiled at the stubborn girl that was clinging to his body.

"I have an idea, why don't the two of us make a bet?"

"You and your stupid bets. I don't like to make bets with a womanizer."

"Don't be like that, listen to me first," William said in a voice that was similar to an adult coaxing a child. "How about both of us make a promise instead?"

"Go on, I'm listening," Est replied in a guarded tone.

"I will find a way to fully undo the curse on your, Ian's, and Isaac's bodies. After you turn back into a girl then you become my girlfriend."

"And if you are unable to undo the curse?"

William paused for a brief moment before answering. "If I fail to undo the curse then you can make me your boyfriend. It's a win-win situation, don't you think?"

"I have a better idea." A mischievous smile appeared on Est's face as she said her proposal. "How about I ask Lady Astrid to turn you into a girl instead? That way, I can marry you. It's a win-win situation for both of us. What do you think?"

"No! I will not allow William to be turned into a girl!" Wendy commented from the side. "He is going to marry me!"

"My Lady, I don't think this proposal is good," Ian interjected.

"Ian, you are still under the curse," Est reminded her retainer. "At most, you can only stay in that form for three hours. The rest of the time, you will be a boy. If William turned into a girl then there would be no problem. We could just have him give birth to both our babies. It's a win-win situation for the both of us."

Ian's heart wavered when she heard Est's words. It was true that she couldn't stay in her mermaid form for a long time. If she sided with Est, she would still be able to be intimate with William. Also, the thought of having the Half-Elf give birth to her babies sounded very tempting.

"No!" Wendy rejected the idea with everything she had. "I will not agree to this! I'm the First Wife. I will not allow William to be turned into a girl!"

"Tsk."

"Tsk."

Est and Ian clicked their tongues, while William watched the three of them with a complicated expression.

Naturally, he didn't want to turn into a girl, and he didn't want to give Est empty promises as well. For the time being, he decided to put the matter on hold until he had a proper talk with the Goddess Astrid.

In order to change the topic, William decided to inquire about what had happened after the incident. The Gods didn't tell him anything, so he was curious about the aftermath of Carter's failed attempt to take over his body.

The expressions on the faces of the three girls immediately became serious. They had completely forgotten about the affairs of the Kingdom after they heard William's voice inside his Sea of Consciousness.

"William, the war has started," Est said with a sad expression. "And it doesn't look good. We are currently being pushed back by the combined forces of the Two Dynasties. I'm afraid that it won't take long before their forces break through to our Second Line of Defense.

"Currently, the Sword Saint and the Archmages are holding them back. Even so, I'm afraid that it will only take a week or two before Windsor Fortress falls."

Est then narrated the series of events that followed the Demon Invasion in the academy. He now understood why David said that Wendy and the others were safe "for now". On that day, William realized how dire the Hellan Kingdom's current situation really was.

Chapter 296: I Can't Die Even If I Want To

"General, they are about to break through!" an officer reported in a panicked voice.

"Just focus on the flying ants first," Gareth Brent, the Great General of the Hellan Kingdom, ordered. Although everyone around him was panicking, he alone had a calm expression on his face.

Such was the willpower of the man who stood at the top of the military forces of the Hellan Kingdom. His eyes glanced at the gate that was on the verge of collapse, before shifting his attention to the three-meter long ants that numbered in the thousands.

Several ants had crawled over the fortress walls, causing the defenders to engage them in a life and death battle.

"Archers and Magicians, eliminate the flying insects," Gareth said in a tone that snapped everyone from their panicked daze. "It doesn't matter if they break through the gates."

Gareth unsheathed the sword in his scabbard and raised it high. "For the Glory of the Hellan Kingdom! Kill!"

""Kill!""

The melee fighters, redoubled their efforts as they slayed the ants that were climbing their fortress walls. The archers and magicians no longer hesitated and rained their attacks on the flying ants that were attacking them from the skies.

Five minutes later, a loud explosion reverberated amidst the shouts and cries in the battlefield. The soldiers from the Anaesha Dynasty came storming inside the fortress. The first wave of invaders hadn't even taken twenty steps inside the fortress before all of their heads were separated from their bodies.

Fountains of blood erupted as the beheaded corpses fell down on the ground, painting their surroundings red with their blood.

A man, wearing a black robe, stood at the main entrance of the fortress, holding a silver sword in his hand.

"Welcome to Windsor Fortress," Aramis Bran Caliburn, the Sword Saint of the Hellan Kingdom, said with a smile. "Please, enjoy your stay, because this is the place where you are going to be buried."

Aramis casually waved his sword and the bodies of hundreds of soldiers were split in two. Those who managed to survive the attack screamed in terror as they ran back out of the fortress.

Unfortunately for them, Aramis had no intention of letting them go. He let out another sword strike to end the lives of the fleeing men, however, a powerful blow stopped his attack from reaching his targets.

"Don't you have any shame, Aramis?" A gray-haired man materialized out of thin air and stood facing the Sword Saint of the Hellan Kingdom. "You've broken the unwritten rule. Saints aren't supposed to cut down those below the Mithril Ranks during times of war. Aren't you afraid of the consequences of your actions?"

Aramis chuckled as if what the man told him was a funny joke. He then pointed his sword at the gray-haired man and sneered.

"Consequences? Unwritten rules? Don't make me laugh, Emeric," Aramis said in disdain. "Two Dynasties attacking a single Kingdom, without even a declaration of war, and you tell me about rules?"

Emeric grinned and unsheathed his sword, "You're right. There's no point in talking about rules at this point in time."

Suddenly, the two Sword Saints vanished from where they stood. A resounding clash that sent shockwaves across the battlefield made the invaders, and defenders alike brace themselves from the impact.

"Aren't you afraid that you'd be killing your own men if we fight inside this fortress?" Emeric said after gaining some distance away from his opponent. His right hand, that was holding the sword, felt numb from the initial clash he had with Aramis.

It had been a long time since the two of them had crossed swords and, from his initial probing, Emeric immediately realized that Aramis had increased his cultivation and was already a level stronger than him!

"I'm not afraid," Aramis replied. "The moment the brave men of Hellan stepped inside this fortress, they were all prepared to die. From the lowest soldier, to the Highest General, they will fight to the death to defend our kingdom."

"What about you? Aren't you afraid to die?" Emeric sneered.

Amaris snorted, "I can't die even if I want to."

Aramis once again raised his sword as his eyes glowed blood red. James had given him a nickname, Salamander, not because he hated him, but because Aramis was one pesky opponent that even the Overlord of Lont found annoying.

Aramis took a step forward and immediately appeared four meters away from Emeric. He thrust his sword forward, fearlessly and didn't care about the fact that the other Sword Saint of the Aenasha Dynasty had already snuck up behind him.

Emeric expertly parried the blow and prepared a counterattack. A sneer appeared on his face as he saw the blade of his partner pierce through Aramis' chest, while Emeric's own sword pierced through Aramis' head.

The two Sword Saints exchanged a look and smiled. They knew that Aramis was strong, but if they created the perfect trap for him, even a Sword Saint would die, or at least suffer a serious injury in the process.

Emeric was about to pull his sword out from his opponent's head when his eyes widened in shock.

"Ru-Arkh!" Emeric wasn't able to finish his words before the hand holding his sword was cut off from his body. His comrade didn't fare any better as a silver sword pierced through his chest.

"Y-You! How?!" the Sword Saint that had stabbed Aramis from behind asked as he fell on his knees.

Aramis didn't give him an answer, instead, the silver sword moved like a blur and separated his head from his body. Until the moment of his death, the Sword Saint still didn't realize how Aramis was able to escape their perfectly timed attack that destroyed both of his heart, and brain, at the same time.

Emeric didn't wait to see his partner's demise because he had already retreated from the battlefield. He decisively left the moment his hand was cut off, and focused his attention on his movement technique.

"Too bad, one got away," Aramis sighed as he stepped on the head of the Sword Saint, who had stabbed him in the back, and turned it into meat paste.

He didn't stop there and breathed flames from his mouth to incinerate the dead body under his feet. As he burned the corpse into ashes, the gaping holes in his chest and head slowly regenerated.

A minute later, Aramis was back to his usual self, with the exception of a bloodstain on his forehead, and chest.

Aramis then looked on top of the ramparts where the Great General of the Hellan Kingdom stood. Gareth gave him a brief nod before shifting his attention back to the battlefield.

Both of them had roles to play and the war had just begun. The Anaesha Dynasty had three Sword Saints. One was dead, another had lost his dominant hand, and the third was somewhere else.

Aramis regretted that he wasn't able to dispose of Emeric because the latter had hastily retreated, while using his companion as cannon fodder to buy him some time to escape.

'It's fine, this will give us a little more time,' Aramis thought as he stepped forward.

A bugle horn sounded in the distance and the army of the Anaesha Dynasty made a hasty retreat. The defenders watched them go with hate-filled eyes, but they didn't dare to pursue them.

They knew that their enemies would be back and, when that happened, another grueling battle would take place.

There was a reason why James hated Aramis, and that was not just because the latter had fallen in love with the same woman as him. No, James hated Aramis because he was one of the few people that he couldn't kill within the entirety of the Southern Continent.

Why? It was because the Salamander of the Hellan Kingdom was nearly immortal. Even if one were to turn his body into meat paste, he would still rise and haunt you like a ghost out for vengeance.

Not many people knew this. Their opponents only thought that he had a very strong regenerative ability that made him very hard to kill. That's why Emeric and his partner had targeted his heart and brain at the same time, in order to kill him instantly.

Alas, they didn't know anything about the curse that was placed on Aramis' body.

A curse that was placed on him by the woman he loved. The same woman that James married many years ago. The woman that had brought the two greatest men in the Hellan Kingdom to their knees and made them spill rivers of blood in her name.

She was none other than Erza Anwen Aoife. The undying witch that hailed from the Zelan Dynasty.

Chapter 297: First Familia Member [Part 1]

James whistled as he sat on top of the ramparts of the stronghold that bordered the Zelan Dynasty.

When the Demons invaded the academy, the Two Dynasties, Anaesha and Zelan, launched an invasion at the same time. The first Fortress that defended against the Anaesha Army fell after two days.

The survivors hurriedly regrouped at the Windsor Fortress in order to resist the advance of the Anaesha Army that numbered in the millions. The bulk of their army was made up of Ant Type Beasts.

This was the main reason why the first line of defense in the East was easily overrun. Although they did their best to resist, the sheer number of enemies outnumbered the defenders two hundred to one.

Only when Aramis, and the Archmages, arrived in Windsor Fortress did the numbers of the ant army decrease drastically.

As for the stronghold that was facing the Zelan Army, they were able to hold out until James and Lawrence arrived as reinforcements. Together, the two managed to make the invaders temporarily retreat.

The Beast Army was a little late in their mobilization and arrived late at the battlefield. This was why the defenders were able to endure until reinforcements arrived, forcing the Zelan Army to retreat.

"Aren't you worried about Windsor Fortress?" Lawrence, Rebecca's Grandfather, and James' good friend, asked. "I heard that it can collapse any moment now."

James scratched his bum as he looked at the vast army that was slowly approaching the stronghold.

"I'm more worried about the enemy once that lizard gets serious," James replied without a care in the world. "I hope they kill the bastard so I can spit on his grave. I've been dreaming of it for years."

Lawrence sighed as he shook his head helplessly. He knew about the bad blood between James and Aramis and so did the other old fogeys that had served the former king. The two were like oil and water, and would immediately attack each other if they were given an opportunity.

"Oh, what a big Ox," James nodded in satisfaction as he appraised the towering giant in the distance. "If I'm not mistaken, its name is Erchitu. Not bad, at least Millennial Rank. I wonder if I can use that Ox to expand our farmlands. Hey, is an Ox part of a Herd?"

"Herd? Well, I guess that you can consider a group of Oxen a herd," Lawrence replied after eyeing the beast from afar. "I didn't know you were interested in these kinds of things."

James chuckled, but didn't say anything else. How could he possibly say that he was planning to catch the Giant Ox and give it to William. The boy had casually told him a few years ago that if James were to see a strong beast that belonged to the herd, he should catch it and bring it back to Lont, so that the Half-Elf could try his hand at taming it.

Although James didn't fully understand how William would be able to tame a Millennial Beast, he was more than happy to agree to his grandson's request.

"Minotaurs, Inferno Bulls, and three Lamassu," James muttered as he scratched his head in frustration. 'Hah~ forget it. I'll just knock them all out and drag them back to Lont so that William can take a look at them, once he wakes up from his coma. If they are useless, I'll just cook them to eat.'

"Damian! Gideon!"

""Yes, Boss?""

"Get some of those minotaurs later, and one of those Lamassu," James ordered. "Choose Class B and above. Make sure to get the high-quality ones. I'll handle that Erchitu myself."

"Okay."

"Sure thing."

The Overlord of Lont then glanced at Jekyll who was busy flossing his teeth at the side. "You stay here and guard the fortress. Don't eat any of the beasts. William might have a need for them."

"I'll think about it," Jekyll replied as he eyed the monster army. Some of them had caught his eye and he was also planning to bring them back to Lont to be used in his experiments.

James massaged his forehead because Jekyll had that look on his face that screamed murder. He knew better than to get in the way of the "Dentist" of Lont when he found something of interest.

He sighed before facing his old friend, Lawrence. "I'll leave the human armies to you. Leave the Beast Army to me."

Lawrence nodded his head. "Fine. Let's end this quickly."

The five men stared at the Hundred Thousand Army in front of them as if they were just dealing with toddlers. Although there were existences within the Zelan army that were equal to them in strength, they were not the least bit worried about it.

Why? Because James was there to oversee the battle.

If he was so easy to kill, Aramis would have already done it long ago. The fact that James was still alive and kicking proved that he was a tough nut to crack.

'It has been a while since I saw the Beast Conqueror in action.' Lawrence narrowed his eyes as he looked at his old friend. 'I swear to the Gods, each and every member of the Ainsworth family is a freak of nature. I'm glad they are not my enemy.'

"Okay, focus," Issei said with a serious expression. "Don't force it. Let your consciousness slowly spread towards your body."

The voice of the Harem God whispered in William's ears as he slowly joined his consciousness with his spirit body.

Issei was training William how to merge back with his body, so he could check on the current status of his King Chess Piece.

The Harem God Insisted that, although William was still unable to use the full power of his Divinity because he was still under-aged, Ian's sacrifice made it possible for William to connect with her through the Spirit Core embedded inside his body.

William felt light-headed as his consciousness merged back with his Spirit Body. Although he was still unable to move his body, he was able to communicate with the System and ask it about certain things regarding the changes in his Divinities.

'System, open the status of the King Chess Piece,' William ordered.

< Opening Chess Piece Status Page >

< Accessing Usable Abilities >

< King's Chess Piece >

-- King's Legion

-- Accolade

-- Familia (NEW!)

William didn't hesitate and asked the system to open the Familia Option. He was curious what this new ability could do for him in his current state.

< Familia >

-- Allows the Host to harness the power of his bond with his Familia Members.

-- Depending on the strength of the bond, the host will be able to use his Familia's ability and vice versa.

Familia:

(Available)

(Not Available)

(Not Available)

(Not Available)

(Not Available)

"Do you see it now? I was planning to wait for your Coming of Age Ceremony before discussing this ability to you. But, since this is already here, it is time for you to train your bond with your Mermaid lover." Issei said. " However, there is a special condition when registering a Nymph to your Familia."

"Nymph?" William inquired. "Ian is a Nymph?"

"Half-Nymph," Issei answered. "But, a Nymph nevertheless. In order to add her to your Familia, you need to know her true name first. Unlike Humans, Nymphs are bestowed a true name on the day of their birth."

Issei's voice became extremely serious as he continued his explanation. "Remember this William, there are some beings in the world that are born with a true name. Whoever knows their name will be able to command them to do anything."

William nodded his head in understanding. Although he had read similar things in novels before, this was the first time he would actually put it into practice.

"What's wrong?" Issei asked after a few minutes passed in silence. "Are you perhaps hesitating to have full control over the lives of others?"

"...Yes. Somehow, this feels wrong."

"Wrong? Are you stupid? Indecisive guys like you are the ones that get NTR'd in real life. Since Ian has already given you half of her heart, you should take responsibility and not be a wishy washy individual. Or, are you perhaps waiting for other men to know her true name?"

"Of course not! It's just..."

"Just?"

"I've been quarrelling with her for a long time and have always treated her as a boy. Never did I dream that the boy who always picked a fight with me would someday turn into a mermaid and become my lover. It just feels unreal."

Issei sighed, "This is the problem with virgins. Once you graduate, you will never hesitate again. Obviously, you can't do that now. But, William, time waits for no one. It won't wait for you to be ready, or for Ian to be ready. Whether it is a mortal, or the Gods, time will not wait for them. So... go already!"

Issei gave William a mental kick which forced his consciousness to merge with the blue gem embedded in his chest.

Currently, Wendy and Est had gone to the frontlines to assist the defenders because it was a critical time. They only stayed for a few days because they were worried about William. Now that they finally knew that he was safe, the two magicians returned to their duties as Knights of the Hellan Kingdom.

They left William in Ian's care because she was the only one that could nourish his spiritual body.

Within William's Sea of Consciousness, the beautiful mermaid laid on top of William with her chest touching his. The gems within their respective bodies were pressed against each other in order to make the spirit transfer more effective.

The moment William's consciousness entered the Spirit Core, a jolt of electricity passed through Ian's body which made her body tremble.

"W-William?" Ian asked with uncertainty.

William had already told them that he didn't know when he could communicate with them again. Although Ian had attempted several times to communicate with him through her spirit core, the unconscious boy remained unresponsive.

This was the first time since their first discussion that Ian got a reaction from him.

'It's me, Ian. There is something very important that we need to talk about.'

"What is it?"

'Do you regret it?' William asked. "Do you regret giving me half of your heart?"

William wanted to slap himself for asking such a cheesy question. He had thought of a lot of things he could say to start the conversation, but nothing came to mind. It was at that moment when this question suddenly appeared in his consciousness.

Since William was currently in this conscious form, all the things that pop up inside his head were automatically spoken out loud. The Half-Elf watched as Ian's expressions suddenly became serious.

He waited with bated breath for Ian's answer. The answer that would take their relationship to the next level.

Chapter 298: First Familia Member [Part 2]

Ian didn't answer William's question right away. Instead, she recalled the first time she met the red-headed shepherd who just happened to be going to the same temple as them. Back then, she didn't know why she felt irritated whenever she saw him.

After pondering about it for a while, Ian might have become irritated when she saw the collar on William's neck. Just like Elves, other humanoids like Beastkins, and the more exotic creatures were sold as slaves.

Ian was half Human and half Nymph. Her mother was a Mermaid, while her father was a Human mage that specialized in Earth Magic. Although such unions weren't rare, they were frowned upon by many.

Just like the Half-Elves.

Fortunately, Ian's and Isaac's Nymph bloodline was stronger. They were more Nymph than Human and had the ability to take on Human form. Due to the secret relationship between the Ruling Family and the Nymphs of the Kingdom, a certain agreement was made in order to strengthen their ties with each other.

"I regret... not being able to take this collar off your neck using my own power," Ian sighed. "You know, I hate slavery. Perhaps, I hate it more than you do. I wish that a day will come where all slave traders will be taken to the guillotine to be beheaded.

"That way, the next generation won't have to worry about getting abducted while walking on the streets and being sold to the nobility to become their playthings. No. William. I do not regret giving you half of my heart. So, don't make me regret my decision, understand?"

"I won't," William replied. "I promise."

Ian closed her eyes and gently brushed the hair on William's head. Five-minutes passed in silence before Ian took the initiative to break the silence.

"Is there something you want to tell me?" Ian inquired. "I can feel your hesitation through the fluctuations coming from my Spirit Core inside your body. What's wrong?"

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William sighed internally and decided to come clean. He told her about the newly awakened ability that had appeared after she had given him half of her Spirit Core.

"You want to know my True Name?" Ian was surprised, but it didn't last long. She had thought long and hard about this topic, even before William had asked her about it. One could even say that she had already made her decision the moment she gave him half of her heart.

"Yes. May I know your True Name?"

"William, do you know? Asking for my True Name is the same as asking my hand in marriage. Are you sure you want to know?"

"I want to know," William answered firmly. "I promise I will take responsibility. I will not let you go, no matter what happens."

Ian felt her heart skip a beat upon hearing William's sincere promise to keep her by his side. The beautiful mermaid lowered her head and whispered her name in William's ears. Although it was only the two of them inside his Sea of Consciousness, her cautious nature didn't allow her to say her True Name out loud.

"Ashera," Ian whispered. "Ashera Dy Cordelia. With this, I now belong to you. Please, keep my name in your heart."

"I will," William replied. "I promise."

The King Chess Piece appeared above the two of them. Golden particles that were similar to snowflakes fell down on the two lovers as both of the Spirit Cores within their chests turned golden.

Among Nymphs, especially the mermaid race, giving one's heart to another person was a sign of love. Once that person made a vow of love to the mermaid, the color of the Spirit Cores would change, which signified that the two were now partners for life.

It was also a sign that the Gods had recognized their union.

< Familia >

< First Familia Member >

-- Ashera Dy Cordelia

-- Host is able to use Wave Rider Skill

-- Host is able to use Water Whip Skill

-- Host has acquired Familia Oversoul Skill

-- Increase +10 enhancement bonus to all stats

[Strength of Stats and Abilities will increase, or decrease depending on the Synchronization Rate between the host and his Familia Member.]

-- Synchronization Rate: 30%

William and Ian felt a stronger connection between the two of them as the King Chess Piece and the System synchronized together to register William's First Familia Member.

"From now on, I'll call you Ashe when it's just the two of us, or when you are in your mermaid form," William said. "Also, call me Will from now on, okay?"

"Ashe... it's been so long since I heard my nickname," Ashe replied with a smile. Deep inside, she was very happy. Although Wendy was William's first lover and had called dibs as his First Wife, the bond that she and William shared now was that of a real husband and wife.

William also understood this, but he wouldn't take back his word to the blonde beauty whom he promised could be his First Wife. Ashe also had no intention of making things difficult for Wendy and decided to just keep this secret in her heart.

She was already feeling a bit guilty for taking a shortcut in order to make William her partner for life.

'Ashe, I don't have much time left,' William said softly.

'I understand,' Ashe replied as she planted a kiss on William's forehead. "I'll wait for your return. Please, don't make me wait too long."

"I will do my best. Until then, please watch over my body for me."

"Don't worry. I won't let you cheat on me. See you soon, Will."

The glow of the crystal in William's chest dimmed then faded away completely. It was now time for him to return to the Temple of the Gods to continue Issei's Divinity Training.

Somewhere within the Temple of Ten Thousand Gods...

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A celestial beauty, wearing a black dress, sat on a black throne and looked into the distance. She was currently looking at a Pink Teddy Bear holding a Water Whip in its hands.

A mischievous smile could be seen on her face. Her eyes, which were darker than black, locked onto the precious soul that resided inside the stuffed toy's body.

The beautiful woman watched as the Teddy Bear accidentally wrapped its body with the water whip in its hand. Clearly, the Teddy Bear was not used to its current body and was having trouble using the whip as a weapon.

A giggle escaped the lady's lips as she watched the Teddy Bear's futile attempts to free itself from the whip that had turned it into a spring roll.

William was not aware that one of the Primordial Gods within the Temple had taken a keen interest in him. A Goddess that would one day make her presence known, not only to William, but the entire world of Hestia.

Chapter 299: One-Sided Massacre

"How is the progress of the collection of souls, that died on the battlefield, going?"

"Everything is proceeding smoothly, Sir. It's quite unfortunate that we didn't meet our goal in building the required altars, but that can be compensated by increasing the number of souls that we collect from the ongoing war."

The man who sat on the throne nodded his head. "What about the key? Do we have any news?"

"The agents that are currently monitoring the two princes say that both of them are doing their best to acquire the key," a man wearing a black robe reported.

"Unfortunately, the timing of the war has caused them delays because the King is always with his war council. There have not been any opportunities for them to ask, or look for the key without making it look suspicious."

"Hoh~" the man sitting on the throne leaned back and tapped his finger on the armrest. "Tell them that they have exactly one week to find it. At the end of the week, if the key is still not in their hands, they can forget about our deal."

"As you command." the black-robed man bowed his head and left the room.

The man sitting on the throne watched him go with a calm expression.

The reason he gave the two princes an ultimatum was because they couldn't hold off their plan for too long. According to the Archmages in their Organization, it would take one week for them to finetune the altars and invoke the continental spell that they had prepared.

The "Harvesting" of souls was proceeding smoothly. Originally, they would only need a hundred thousand souls at most if all of the altars were built. Unfortunately, they had greatly underestimated the efficiency of their agents' ability to instigate the war.Â

Since that was the case, they would just need to gather more souls in order to make up for the lack of altars.

A million souls.

This was the number of souls that they needed in order to activate the spell that would bring the entire Southern Continent to its knees. Originally, they were worried that they wouldn't be able to meet the target. Fortunately, one of the Myriad Beasts participating in the war was an Ant Queen.

With the ability to give birth to thousands of eggs a day, it was able to raise an army of hundreds of thousands that destroyed the first line of defense of the Hellan Kingdom. Even now, the Windsor Fortress was nearing its destruction even with the Sword Saint there to protect it.

The might of a single person, would not be enough to hold off an army of over a million. Especially if this army had several Centennial and Millennial Beasts under the protection of the two remaining Sword Saints of the Aenasha Dynasty.

"Magicians, Open Fire!" Gareth, the Great General that commanded the defense of Windsor Fortress, roared amidst the screams of the Ant Army that had advanced to the walls of the fortress.

A myriad of spells from different elements rained down on the Ant Army with fury. The barrage seemed unending, but looking at the sea of ants that were steadily making their advance, their resistance looked like a futile attempt to prevent the inevitable.

Over twenty Millennial Ants steadily crawled towards the fortress, and their eyes burned with bloodlust. However, they were not the only High-Level beasts in the Aenasha Army. Fifteen more Millennial Flying Ants hovered above the battlefield, which made the defenders almost lose hope.

If not for the Sword Saint, the six Archmages of the North and East, the Aerial Cavaliers from Freesia, the Gryphon Brigade, and the reinforcements of the Royal Academy that had arrived in the nick of time, Windsor Fortress might have fallen already.

"The bombardment of the Second and Third Years is almost over," Est announced. "First Years prepare your spells!"

"Fourth Years, get ready!" Matthew declared.

Hundreds of spells were activated simultaneously as the First Years and Fourth Years waited for their Head Prefects' next orders. Est and Matthew watched the burning Ant Army in front of them as they waited for the right time to unleash the spells that they had prepared.

A minute later, the first round of bombardment had ended, and the Second and Third Year students of the Magic Division backed away to replenish their mana reserves.

As soon as they stepped back, the First Years and the Fourth Years stepped forward to take their place.Â

"Open fire!" Est and Matthew ordered simultaneously.

A rain of spells descended on the battlefield and slaughtered everything in their path.

After the incident at the Grand Coliseum, the King didn't order the Royal Academy to mobilize right away. The shock and anger that the Magic Division experienced on the day of the Inter-Division Battle rendered them unable to immediately participate in the war.

Simon, the Dean of the Academy, had announced that a Demon had possessed Carter's body. He added that the Demon used an elaborate scheme to put the majority of the Magic Division under his control and force them to betray their comrades through the use of a powerful spell.

Several high-level Spirit Users were dispatched to the academy in order to fully neutralize the lingering effects of the Mind Weaver Spells from their bodies. The revelation given by the Dean made the students very angry and caused them to hate the Demons even more.

They also mourned the loss of the talented professor who had fallen into their hands. Since the war had taken a turn for the worse, the King was once again forced to call upon the students of the academy to defend their homeland.

Although a week was not enough to wash away the frustration that the Magic Division had felt, there was nothing they could do but participate in the war that had broken out.

Wendy and Est decided to let Ian remain by William's side in order to continue his recovery. All the students had been mobilized to participate in the war, and Priscilla was chosen to temporarily command the Angorian War Sovereign, which had also been sent to Windsor Fortress.

"Show them the might of Freesia!" the Captain of the Aerial Knights shouted as the Hippogriff Formation charged towards the flying ants in the sky.

Flying beside them was the Angorian Knight Order led by Priscilla. Due to William's efforts, the Aerial Knights of the Angorian War Sovereign had several mock battles against the Gryphon Brigade which allowed them to gain battle experience when fighting with their mounts.

This was their first official battle. The young knights under Priscilla's command felt anxious because William wasn't there. Although Priscilla was present to command them, she couldn't replace William's "invincible image" in their minds.

Priscilla knew this, but there was nothing she could do at the moment.

"I know that all of you are feeling anxious, but you should focus your attention on the enemies in front of you," Priscilla said with a determined voice. "The commander didn't train all of you to die meaningless deaths. Let's show everyone the might of the Angorian War Sovereign! Kill them all!"

""Kill!""

The Captain of the Gryphon Brigade laughed as he raised his spear. "You bastards, make sure not to lose face in front of the kids! Death to our enemies!"

""Death!""

The Aerial Defenders and the Insect Swarm collided. Blood rained down from the sky as shrieks and screams reverberated all over the battlefield.

The battle lasted for three hours before the Aenasha Army was forced to retreat once again. However, they had successfully destroyed the walls of the Fortress, leaving it open for their next invasion.

If not for the fact that Aramis had successfully killed Emeric, at the cost of the thousands of brave Hellan Soldiers that had accompanied him in a suicide charge towards the center of the enemy's formation, the Aenashans wouldn't have opted for a retreat.

The Archmages accompanying Aramis had also thrown caution to the wind and unleashed 8th Circle Spells that attacked both friend and foe alike. These frenzied attacks deterred the General leading the Aenasha Army and forced him to order a retreat.

Although the main bulk of their forces were the Ant Army, Aramis and the Archmages ignored the Ants and focused on killing the Human soldiers. After a one sided-massacre and the loss of a Sword Saint, they had no choice but to retreat in haste and in the fear that the berserked Archmages would wipe all of their Human resources off from the face of the world.

The suicide charge bought the defenders a few days of reprieve, but it was not enough to prevent the inevitable.

Three days later, Windsor Fortress finally fell and the surviving defenders were forced to retreat. They made their way to Ravenlord Citadel. The last fortress that stood between the Aenasha Army and the Capital of the Hellan Kingdom.

Chapter 300: Fall In Love All Over Again

Two days before the fall of Windsor Fortress...

"W-Will?" Ashe stuttered as she looked at the cute teddy bear in front of her

(A/N: This may take you guys a bit of getting used to, but I will shift to calling Ian as Ashe when she's in her mermaid form, or when she's alone with Will.)

"Yes. it's me," Will nodded. "There's an impo-- hey! Don't pick me up!"

Ashe ignored Will's protest and twirled around holding the teddy bear in her hands. She then pressed "William" to her chest and squashed him to oblivion.

"So cute!" Ashe exclaimed.

William sighed internally and allowed Ashe to have her way with him.

It was then when a chuckle was heard around them and Issei appeared with his twin lovers by his sides.

"Sorry to disturb your happy moment, but we're in a bit of a rush," Issei said with a smile. "Young Lady, I'm Will's Big Brother. You may call me Issei."

Ashe immediately summoned her Spirit Sword and put up her guard. She could feel a very strong Divine Power coming out from Issei's body, and she understood that the person in front of her was a very strong existence.

"Good." Issei nodded his head in approval. "Your reaction was on point. As expected from my brother's partner."

William, who was currently being held in Ashe's firm embrace, patted her chest in order to calm her down.

"Don't worry, he's not an enemy," William explained. "He is my Big Brother and he takes good care of me."

Ashe lowered the weapon in her hand, but kept her guard up. She wasn't a little girl that would trust strangers as soon as she met them.

Seeing that Ashe had calmed down, Issei crossed his arms over his chest and grinned.

"Like I said earlier, we are in a bit of a rush," Issei stated. "Young Lady, I pulled your spirit from your body and brought you here to my domain. However, your spirit cannot leave your body for a long time, so I prepared something that will help you remain here for an extended period of time.

"But before that, allow me to tell you why you're here. You see, William is currently undergoing training about how to use the powers he gained from your union. Naturally, he won't be able to utilize them properly unless you are here. Because of that, I decided to 'forcefully' bring you here to ensure that his training will be a success. Are you following me so far?"

Ashe frowned, but she still nodded her head. She would listen first before she decided on how to interact with her "partner's" Big Brother.

Issei cleared his throat and continued his explanation.

"Your soul can only stay for half of a day each day and for no longer than a week.

Due to not wanting to harm your soul, half a day in your world will be three days inside my domain.

"Of course, I will not force you if you don't want to help William by participating in his training. Everyone is entitled to a choice, so I'll give you two minutes to decide."

"There's no need to wait," Ashe replied. "I will help Will with his training."

"Excellent choice!" Issei clapped his hands and looked at the teddy bear in the young lady's hold. "I got to hand it to you, Little Brother, your girls love you very much."

The teddy bear raised its chin in an arrogant manner in acknowledgment of Issei's words.

"This is what you call charisma, Big Brother," William replied. "Just one smile from me and all the girls in the academy will line up to give me a kiss."

Ashe grabbed the teddy bear's leg and dangled it upside down in irritation. Issei chuckled as he watched at the two's shenanigans before waving his hand to bring William and Ashe inside his special domain.

After a brief flash of light, William and Ashe found themselves in a familiar place. The two of them stood in William's "destroyed" Sea of Consciousness.

"I temporarily linked William's Sea of Consciousness with my domain in order to keep the Young Lady's soul from weakening," Issei said as he appeared along with the twin ladies by his sides.Â

"Right now, William doesn't have any sort of power. Also, fighting for an extended period of time will hasten the destruction of his Sea of Consciousness. In order to prevent that from happening, he has to use an outside source of power. That is where you come in, Young Lady."

Issei pointed at Ashe with a serious expression on his face.

"Since the two of you are linked through your Spirit Core, the Synchronization Rate of both of your body and soul has reached the minimum requirements for the Familia Oversoul."

Instead of explaining, Issei kissed the lips of the twins by his sides and uttered two words.

"Familia Oversoul."

The bodies of the two girls became ethereal and merged with Issei's body. Soon, the silhouette of two girls wielding swords and shields, each, hovered behind Issei's body.

"It's similar to Aura Intent," William muttered as he narrowed his eyes to observe the two "Spirits" that were floating behind the Harem God. "But, it feels more like magic power..."

"Spirit power," Ashe corrected. "That's Spirit Power and not Magic Power. Although they feel the same, the method behind the two is different."

Issei nodded his head, "Correct. This power can only be used if the bond between me and my lovers reaches a certain threshold. The stronger the bond, the stronger the powers that will manifest after a successful fusion are.

"This is the thing that the two of you need to master within one month. Whether you succeed in mastering this ability or not, both of you will be evicted from this domain when the one month is over."

William and Ashe exchanged a glance and nodded their heads. The Teddy Bear then looked at his Big Brother and asked the question that he had been meaning to ask.

"Big Brother, how can we strengthen our bond?" William inquired.

The grin on Issei's face widened as he looked at William and the young lady that was holding his "temporary" vessel.

"The fastest way is for the two of you to embrace each other's body." Issei chuckled. "But since both of you are underage, and I don't want the F.B.I. God to arrest my Little Brother, the two of you can just settle for hugs and kisses for the time being.

"Naturally, you need to practice merging as well. The only advantage is that, since my domain is linked to William's Spirit World, he will be able to manifest a bit of his Spirit Powers to keep your connection stable. I'll return after the two of you manage to perform the Familia Oversoul. At the very least, a 50% Synchronization Rate is needed to make it happen."

Issei waved his goodbye and disappeared in the blink of an eye. He wanted to give the two "newlyweds" some privacy, so they wouldn't have to worry about someone eavesdropping on their "intimate" interactions.

After Issei left, the Teddy Bear's body glowed and increased its size. Soon, it transformed into William's true form, which surprised both of them.

'Don't worry, Will,' Issei said via telepathy. 'I'm going to give you a freebie because I know that it is hard to be 'touchy' with your lover, while you're in that teddy bear's body. No need to thank me. Just make sure to do your best and score First Base! As for the Second Base, that is a Gray Area. I'll leave it to your discretion. Have fun!'

William's face reddened when he heard Issei's words. His feelings for Ashe were still in the initial stages, but he knew that since the 'deed' had already been done, he needed to take responsibility and care for her for the rest of his life.

"Ashe," William said softly as he held her hand. "I will do my best. So, please, have more faith in me. I promise you that I will cherish you for the rest of my life."

Ashe smiled as she rested her head on William's chest. "Ever since that battle with the Terrorhand, I knew that you were someone that I could depend on with my life. Perhaps, that was also when I fell in love with you. Will, I'm scared. This is the first time I've felt this way. I don't know what to do."

"It's fine," William patted her back and kissed her forehead. "Let's start slow, okay?"

"Okay," Ashe replied as she buried her head in William's chest.

Both of them understood that they couldn't rush their relationship, but that didn't mean that they couldn't take that first step, to remove the anxiety that they felt in their hearts.

Ashe looked up and closed her eyes. Her heart beat wildly inside her chest as she waited for her lover to remove the fears and doubts inside her. William lowered his head and kissed her lips.

The kiss only lasted for a few seconds, but it was more than enough for Ashe to understand the feelings behind it. The insecurities that she had been bottling up slowly melted away as she took the initiative to kiss him back.

Ashe wouldn't admit it, but ever since William had made Wendy his lover, she felt extremely envious and jealous of her. Now, she didn't have to worry about that anymore. William's actions assured her that he was taking their relationship seriously.

With this, the haze in her heart and mind finally disappeared as she surrendered herself to her lover's passionate kisses, that made her fall in love with him all over again.