

## Strongest 381

Chapter 381: All Troublemakers Will Be Left Behind!

William travelled for two days before arriving in the town where he had saved Matthew and Leah from the members of The Organization that the Crown Prince had sent to capture them.

It was the nearest town to Lont that had a teleport gate he could use to reach the capital. Naturally, William didn't enter the town using his flying carriage. He had ordered Dave to land two miles away from the town where they would travel by foot.

Lionheart, the Wyvern, as well as the Lamassus that accompanied William, entered the Thousand Beast Domain. Since he knew that the members of The Organization were the ones in control of the Hellan Kingdom, he didn't want to attract any unwanted attention.

He planned to go to the Capital City, Gladiolus, and reunite with Est and Isaac. There, they would form a plan about how to deal with The Organization and the Crown Prince who had betrayed their kingdom.

Several children wandered the streets looking for something to eat. After the adults had turned to statues, all of them were left to fend for themselves. The same thing was happening to all of the settlements in the Southern Continent..

If not for the fact that the heirs of the ruling nobles had returned to their territories, things might have escalated beyond anyone's control. Just like Matthew and Leah, who had been trained to oversee their lands, the other Heirs also took action.

They gathered the survivors to form teams that would handle the hunting of food, cooking, and other necessities that would give their lives some sort of normality.

Even so, some places were worse than others, just like this town in the countryside. It seems that the Heir of the Town's Mayor had died during the Dungeon Outbreak, leaving no one to handle the aftermath and lead the survivors during this time of need.

William saw several children sitting in front of their houses while holding their stomachs in hunger. Dave, who had once been a commoner, took pity on them and offered them his own food to alleviate their hunger.

However, no matter how good his intentions were, it brought about unexpected results. Several children, who saw him giving away food to others, ran towards him and begged him for food. Their loud voices were heard by others nearby, which also increased the number of children asking for food to eat.

Conrad's expression became grim as he saw his friend being swarmed by teenagers who were older than them demanding that Dave give them all of the food in his possession.

When Dave said that he had nothing more to give, the teenagers snatched the food that the chubby boy had given to the younger kids he had seen first. This made Dave very angry and soon a brawl, consisting of several teenagers ganging up on the chubby boy, started.

Conrad wanted to help, but was held at bay by William.

"It's going to be fine," William said as he held Conrad's arm firmly. "Let Dave handle this."

Conrad frowned and reluctantly obeyed William's order. He watched the brawl with a serious expression with the intention of helping Dave at the first sign of weakness.

Although their numbers were greater, Dave was no push over. He had survived the Dungeon Outbreak as well as several other life and death battles. How could a group of ordinary teenagers beat him in a fight?

Five minutes later, the teenagers that started the fight lay on the ground unconscious. Dave didn't hurt them too much because they were just civilians, and not trained warriors. After the fight ended, the children who numbered in the hundreds looked at Dave in fear and admiration.

None of them moved away, because there was no place for them to go. It had been several weeks since the adults had turned into statues, and almost all of the food they had was now gone. They were only barely able to survive by drinking water, but that wouldn't last for long.

"Sir, what should we do?" Dave asked. "Should we leave them all behind?"

William sighed internally as he looked at the hundreds of children that had gathered around them. The surviving children in this town were almost a thousand, and the red-headed boy had no idea on how he could help them all.

"Let's take them with us to Gladiolus," Conrad proposed. "The capital may have the resources to support them for the time being."

Dave gave William a pleading gaze. He also wanted to save the children who were starving in this town that was located in the countryside.

"Very well," William agreed. He then stepped forward and raised his voice. "Listen, all of you. I am a Knight of the Kingdom and serve directly under the king. All those who want to eat food can follow me to the capital."

The children's ears perked up when they heard the word food and looked at William with expectant gazes.

"Naturally, I will only take the obedient ones," William stated. "All troublemakers will be left behind!"

"H-How about us? Can we come too?" One of the teenagers who had fought Dave earlier regained consciousness.

The others were also starting to stir and looked at William with sorrowful expressions. They knew that they did a bad thing. Even so, they only did it out of desperation. They hoped that William would forgive them and take them as well to the capital of Gladiolus where there was food to eat.

"I will allow it," William said firmly. "However, I will not accept any other wrong actions coming from any of you. Do I make myself clear?"

""Yes!""

The teenagers felt that they were given a new lease of life and hurriedly agreed to William's condition. Some of the children didn't know if they should go because their parents' statues were still inside their homes.

However, William told them that their parents were safe. He added that his own relatives had also turned into statues, but they were not in any immediate danger. Using his charisma, the Half-Elf convinced the children that their parents would be sad if they were to die of hunger before the curse was lifted.

William assured them that the curse would automatically be dispelled in the future, which made the children sigh in relief.

"Erchitu, show yourself!" William ordered.

A portal appeared behind him. Suddenly a Giant, White Ox, stepped out of the portal which made the children scream in fear.

"Do not worry. He is a Guardian Beast that protects our Kingdom," William shouted in order to calm the children who had panicked at the appearance of the giant Beast. "He will ensure that all of you will safely reach the capital. So, you don't have to be afraid. Just follow my orders."

Erchitu wanted to retort that he wasn't a Guardian Beast of the Hellan Kingdom. However, he knew what William wanted to accomplish by summoning him, so he didn't make him lose face in front of the children.

After the initial shock had passed, the children became more orderly because although they only half-believed William's declaration of being a Knight of the Kingdom, the appearance of Erchitu gave them hope.

The Erchitu was a giant Minotaur that stood on two legs. It looked so strong and powerful that the children looked at it in awe and fear. This allowed William and his two knights to lead them all to the teleport gates.

William summoned one of his High-Quality Magic Crystal from this Thousand Beast Domain in order to power up the teleport gate and allow the hundreds of children to cross it. Dave and Conrad had gone ahead and waited in the capital where the connecting gate was located.

William and Ian stayed behind to ensure that all the children were safely sent to the capital of Gladiolus.

The System had already done a full sweep of the town and didn't find any members of The Organization. However, it found several children that were too weak to leave their homes and join the migration to the capital.

William summoned the Cercopes Monkeys in order to retrieve these weakened children and carry them towards the teleport Gate. The sky was already starting to turn dark when the last batch of children, who were carried by the Cercopes Monkeys, crossed through the gate.

It took William nine hours to finish this town-wide evacuation. Although this task delayed him from doing his mission, his heart was at peace. He knew that he would feel very guilty if he left these children behind to fend off for themselves when he could have helped them.

The red-headed boy asked the System to do one final sweep of the town to ensure that no children were being left behind. After another full sweep of the surroundings the System gave the all clear signal which meant that everyone had been accounted for.

Only after hearing the System's confirmation did William and Ian step into the portal that would lead them to the capital.

As William stepped into the gates, his determination to overthrow The Organization became stronger. He would not allow an Organization that could start a war and sacrifice millions of lives to have their way with the Hellan Kingdom.

## Chapter 382: The True Meaning Of Jealousy

William had temporarily taken the children of the town to the Hellan Royal Academy.

The sudden arrival of hundreds of children in the capital had caused a disturbance among the local kids who were being managed by the sons of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom.

When the Crown Prince was taken to prison, Conner decided to temporarily assign the Prime Minister's nineteen-year-old son to handle the affairs of the kingdom. To his surprise, the candidate he chose was quite capable and used his circle of friends, who had also grown up in the capital, to handle the needs of the survivors.

Brendan Schwartz, the Prime Minister's son, was groomed to take his father's place as soon as he retired from his position.

He had single-handedly kept the capital of Gladiolus afloat amidst the chaos that had descended among the children within the capital of the Hellan Kingdom.

Naturally, there were also members of The Organization inside the capital, but none of them paid attention to the sudden appearance of more children in the city.

Conner had ordered them to take the treasures of the Kingdom and evacuate the city as soon as possible. As his last act of kindness, Conner left the granaries of the kingdom untouched, which Brendan used to help feed the survivors..

The leader of The Organization was still on the fence about what he should do with Crown Prince Lionel and his brother, Prince Rufus. Calum proposed that they take the two Princes' to be used as hostages, if ever an opportunity arose.

Conner thought that this was a sound proposal because even though the two Princes' had betrayed their Kingdom, they were still the Princes of the nation. They hadn't lost their value and could be used as bargaining chips in the future.

Aside from the remaining members of The Organization who were tasked with disabling the traps and protection of the treasury, the rest had already moved to their headquarters where the statues of King Noah and the important nobles of the kingdom were stored for safekeeping.

Conner was using this brief moment of peace to use all the manpower in his disposal to search for the monument that had disappeared from under his grasp.

The corner of Dave's and Conrad's lips twitched when they saw Erchitu mixing the rice gruel in the three-meter wide Yin-Yang cauldron using a giant ladle that William had just crafted using alchemy.

Earlier, William asked Dave and Conrad to grab the giant pots that were in the kitchen to cook rice gruel for the children that they had brought with them. Since it was already evening, he asked the kids, who knew how to cook, to help with the food preparations as well.

After securing several pots and pans from the kitchen of the Royal Academy, the cooking process began. Just like the City of Gladiolus, the Royal Academy had its own food reserves that it used to feed the children who were studying inside their institution.

When Erchitu saw the Yin Yang Cauldron, it mentioned something in passing that piqued William's interest.

"I wonder what rice gruel would taste like if it was cooked using the Yin Yang Cauldron?"

That was what Erchitu had muttered when William was about to put it away. After hearing this casual question, William also became curious. He even wondered what a rice gruel would taste like if it was cooked using the Yin Yang Cauldron and the Flames of Purification?

Because of this, the two decided to conduct an experiment. The one who would cook the rice gruel would be Erchitu, while William focused on controlling the flames using the Flames of Purification.

Ian didn't do anything and simply watched from the side. He didn't specialize in cooking because that task was left to his twin, Isaac.

Mohawk, the leader of the Giant Apes, was busy throwing in some pieces of meat, and other seasonings, per William's instructions.

The three were so focused on their task that they didn't notice Dave's and Conrad's presence. Both boys were already holding a bowl of rice porridge each and looking at this scene with dumbfounded expressions.

Naturally, it didn't take long before William noticed them and invited the two to join them for dinner.

"How are the children?" William asked while he decreased the power of the flames.

"They're currently eating," Dave answered. "So far, the Commander's threat worked and none of them are causing trouble."

William nodded. The reason he had summoned Erchitu in front of the kids was to scare them and prevent them from doing anything bad. This deterrence worked and all of them were behaving properly.

"After they finish eating, bring them to the public pool," William commented after pondering for a while. "Separate them by genders. I will have the Angray Birds and the Cercopes Monkeys guard the girl's area to prevent any boys from causing mischief."

Dave and Conrad nodded their heads in agreement. The children who had been left behind were like homeless people who hadn't bathed for days. Naturally, there were those who cared about hygiene, but since the town was located in the countryside, not everyone prioritized cleanliness over food.

This was very true during these dark and difficult times.

"It's done," Erchitu said after stirring the ladle one last time. It then proceeded to grab the bowls that William had prepared beforehand and started to pour rice gruel into them.

The first bowl he handed to William, the second it handed to Mohawk, the third it gave it to itself.

The three ate at almost the same time and their expressions changed drastically.

"D-Delicious!" William stuttered as he ate more of the rice gruel that they had just cooked.



'It seems that our experiment is a success,' Erchitu agreed as he ate from the Big Bowl that William had made for him.

Dave and Conrad ate their rice gruel hurriedly. After emptying their bowls, they asked if they could try some of the porridge that their comrades had cooked.

"Go ahead," William said with confidence. 'Dang, I should really get a Chef Job Class. Maybe it will taste even better if I equip that profession while cooking.'

If the God of Alchemists saw that his precious Ying Yang Cauldron (Replica) was being used to cook rice gruel, he would definitely throw a tantrum and whack William's head in anger.

Lily, Issei, and David were already laughing in the Temple of the Gods when they saw this scene. The Alchemist God was also a member of the Neutral Faction and one of the richest Gods in the Temple.

All of his pills would be auctioned in the God Shop and the chosen candidates of the Gods would bid, using their hard earned God Points, to get his miraculous pills that would give them power beyond their wildest imaginations.

After William and the rest finished eating, he cleaned his Yin Yang cauldron using his water magic and stored it back inside his storage ring.

He was just about to go to his room in the Solaris Dormitory with Ian when he saw a familiar face walking towards him.

"You sure know how to create a ruckus," Est said as he looked at William with a fed up expression. "Instead of seeing me first, you brought these kids to the academy without saying a word. If not for the fact that Isaac was scouting the city for news, I wouldn't have known that you had arrived in the capital."

William scratched his head as he walked towards the handsome boy who was giving him the "You're gonna sleep on the floor tonight" glare.

The Half-Elf lightly cleared his throat as he gave his explanation.

"Actually, I planned to see you first, but the circumstances didn't give me the opportunity to do that." William sighed. "The evacuation of the town took a lot of time. I planned to look for you tomorrow, but who would have thought that you missed me so much that you came here personally?"

William flicked his hair in arrogance as he gave Est a dazzling smile.

"By the way, have you seen Wendy?" William asked. "I've missed her, too, and, if possible, I want to sleep with her toni--aahhh!"

Ian who was standing beside him pinched his waist in irritation, while Est stepped forward and pulled on his ears.

Clearly, both of them were very dissatisfied with William's choice of words. How could he possibly look for Wendy when the two of them were already here in front of him.

The pitiful Half-Elf had been dragged away by the two jealous boys, leaving the dumbfounded Isaac, Dave, Conrad, Erchitu, and Mohawk, behind.

That night, William understood what jealousy truly was. Inside his Spiritual World, two beautiful girls made sure that the red-headed boy wouldn't commit the same mistake again in the future as they performed the Union of Souls, to help the annoying Half-Elf speed up the recovery of his Sea of Consciousness.

Meanwhile, in the Armstrong Duchy...

"Wendy, what's wrong?" Spencer asked when he saw his twin sister suddenly look in the direction of the City of Gladiolus.

Wendy frowned as if deep in thought. She didn't understand how or why, but somehow, she thought that she heard William's voice call out her name.

"Nothing, Big Brother," Wendy replied as she returned to the task of reading the documents that were submitted by the retainers of their Duchy. She thought that she was imagining things because she wanted to see William so badly.

Every night, Wendy dreamed of the place called Asgard where her adult self lived together with her husband, Will.

Wendy was very jealous of her adult self. Not only did the Valkyrie Wendy look mature and charming, she was also someone that took the initiative. The Will in her dreams would sometimes resist her advances, but her overwhelming strength would render him helpless.

Wendy would often wake up hot and bothered in the morning after the husband and wife had shared a steamy night together. Deep inside, she wished that there would come a time when William and her would really, truly, be married. Not solely in her dreams, but in reality as well.

#### Chapter 383: Ambition's End [Part 1]

The next day, William was about to do his own investigation to gather news in the city in regards to the movements of The Organization when he felt a very familiar presence within the academy.

It didn't take long for William to identify who this presence belonged to and he felt both shock and joy at the discovery. Immediately, he headed towards the garden in the First Year Magic Division where he recently had a face-off with Carter.

"It's good to see that you are safe, Fourth Master," William said. His tone was laced with relief and happiness knowing that one of the most dependable veterans of Lont wasn't affected by the Continental Spell that had turned everyone into statues.

"Mmm," Ezio hummed as he patted William's shoulder. "You did well."

Among William's Masters, Ezio was very straightforward and didn't like sugar coating his words. This was why William was quite happy to receive praise coming from the man who always walked in the Shadows.

"You're going to gather information, I presume?" Ezio asked..

William nodded, "Yes, Fourth Master."

"Very well. I will also share the information that I have gathered while staying here in the capital," Ezio stated. "First off, Crown Prince Lionel and Prince Rufus are no longer in the capital. They were taken by the members of The Organization to their headquarters in the North East."

William listened attentively to Ezio's explanation. Frankly, he had wanted to give the Crown Prince a good slap on the face for trying to kidnap his Big Sister and Big Brother during their return to Lont.

Unfortunately, he had missed his chance because they were no longer in the capital.

Ezio explained that The Organization had also started to pull out from the capital and were all gathering at their Headquarters. He had tried to gain some information by capturing some of the members of the organization, but none of them knew anything.

All they knew was that their leader was recalling all of them without giving any further explanation.

After telling him about the current state of The Organization, Ezio returned to the domestic problems that the Kingdom was currently facing.

"Brendan Schwartz is a very capable young man. He was able to handle the immediate problem within the capital which was the food shortage." Ezio praised the son of the Prime Minister due to his ability to quickly solve the problems that had propped up after the adults had turned into statues.

"However, because he is very capable, he has started to have thoughts about this Kingdom. After the two Princes had been taken away, he thought of himself as the De-Facto Regent of the Hellan Kingdom. Since he is the son of the Prime Minister, he indeed has the authority to give out orders while the members of the Royal Family are not present in the capital."

William scoffed because he had already seen how greedy people could be when they gained power and influence. "You mean to say he is planning to become the King's Regent, Fourth Master?"

"Exactly." Ezio nodded. "The leader of The Organization sent one of his subordinates to inform Brendan that they would pass the control of the Hellan Kingdom into his very capable hands temporarily, while they handled some important matters. I think this is where Brendan's plan to become the new ruler of this nation started to bloom."

William sighed and scratched his head. The last thing he wanted to deal with was an ambitious mouse who thought that it could play king while the cat was away.

Ezio looked at the young man with a smile on his face. Although the time he had spent with William was short, he knew that the red-headed boy had already formulated a plan about how to deal with the son of the Prime Minister.

Brendan sat on the throne of the Hellan Kingdom with a smug expression on his face. If he had done this during normal times, he would have immediately been charged with treason and sent to the gallows to die.

However, right now, no one in the kingdom had the authority to make him pay for this crime. The Organization had already taken away the two Princes' leaving the throne unattended. As for the youngest Prince, traces of his whereabouts were nowhere to be found.

Although this raised a concern towards his plan of becoming the Regent of the Kingdom, he didn't think of it as a big deal. Prince Ernest was just a child and posed no threat to him.

One of the lackeys standing by his side smiled as he looked at the imposing throne in front of him. He had seen this throne several times in the past, but he had never seen it this close before.

"Lord Brendan, it seems that the fate of the Hellan Kingdom is now on your hands," the lackey said with a flattering smile on his face. "If there's anything that you need just tell me, I, the House of Caldwell, will follow it without fail."

The other lackeys that had become part of Brendan's small circle had also raised their voice to proclaim their allegiance.Â

Brendan smiled and nodded his head as if he was indeed a King who was showing benevolence to his subjects.

"Your loyalty will not be forgotten," Brendan stated crisply. "As long as I sit on this throne, your families will prosper."

"Thank you, Your Excellency!"

"Lord Brendan is truly magnanimous!"

"A prodigy among prodigies!"

Words of flattery fell like rain and Brendan basked on it with a benevolent smile on his face. The dozens of noble heirs that had pledged their allegiance to him may not be the heads of the Ducal families, but they were influential families nevertheless.

Sons of Marquesses, Viscounts, and Barons were fighting against each other in order to get into his good graces. Brendan allowed them to flatter him for the sake of raising his ego.

Suddenly, the doors of the throne room swung open and a red-headed boy, holding a wooden staff, swaggered in as if he owned the place.

Brendan frowned because he recognized who the uninvited guest was. How could he possibly not recognize the youngest Knight Commander of the Hellan Kingdom. He then gave the red-headed boy a kind smile as he stood up from the throne.

"Lord William, it is good to see that you have recovered from your injuries." Brendan nodded his head to acknowledge William's rank and position. "Right now, the Kingdom is in a state of strife. Foreigners have invaded the land and the peace of our Kingdom is in danger. If possible, I would like to humbly request your help in order to protect our citizens from the threat of invasion."

Brendan had been schooled properly by his own father about how to talk to high-ranking nobles of the Kingdom.

William had to agree that Brendan was indeed a capable young man because his choice of words were on point. If not for the fact that he had already known about his greedy ambitions, William might have considered working hand in hand with him in order to deal with the current problems that the kingdom was facing.

Sadly, William had no time for bullsh\*t, so he decided to handle the matter his own way.

"Brendan Schwartz, as the Knight Commander of the Hellan Kingdom, I hereby find you guilty of treason," William announced in a righteous voice. "You are hereby asked to surrender obediently or suffer the consequences!"

The corner of Brendan's lips curled up into a smile when he heard William's words. A moment later, he laughed out loud as if ridiculing the boy for his stupid declaration.

"Lord William, I tried to be civil with you, but it seems that your position has clouded your vision." Brendan sneered. "The one who can bring him down will become my Prime Minister! Get him!"

William smirked as several portals appeared behind him. The most notorious member of William's Legion appeared inside the throne room and hurled a barrage of... curses at the snot-nosed nobles who thought that they could beat the Half-Elf with their superior numbers.

"Fck off!" A Yellow Bird headbutted one of the noble brats and sent the latter flying.

Several other Rainbow Birds dealt with their targeted nobles the same way which made William chuckle from the side.

Although the Rainbow Birds didn't look imposing, they had already raised their rank to the peak of the Class D and were also equipped with William's lollipops. Several magical darts flew through the air as the Angray Birds unleashed their Magic Missiles.Â

The Angray Birds were like miniature, cursing, Kamikaze Jet Fighters that brought fear into the hearts of the young nobles that had sided with Brendan.

Brendan snorted and raised his hand to summon his Beast Companion.

A Winged-Tiger appeared inside the Throne Room and gave out a mighty roar. It was a Class A Beast that the Prime Minister had given Brendan on his eighteenth birthday. It had been with him for more than a year already, and their bond had grown quite strong over that short period of time.

"Kill him, Alistar!" Brendan ordered.

Brendan had seen how strong William was during the battle against Kingsley at the Half-Elf's Knighting Ceremony. However, he didn't believe that the red-headed boy was capable of dealing with a Class A monster that could only be fought by a team of Mithril Rank fighters.

#### Chapter 384: Ambition's End [Part 2]

William raised an eyebrow because a Winged Tiger was a very rare beast in the Hellan Kingdom. Even so, he wasn't perturbed by this overgrown cat with wings. William had been fighting against Centennial and Millennial Beasts ever since he was young, and the Tiger's intimidating presence almost made him yawn.

"Come out and play with this cat, Erchi..."

"I'm Rolling!"

William wasn't able to finish his command because a rainbow-colored Anteater suddenly appeared in front of him and curled up into a ball. It then increased its size to two meters before hurtling itself to the Winged Tiger who had been caught completely by surprise.

A roar of pain erupted in the throne room as the Winged Tiger slammed into the wall. Kasogonaga didn't give it any opportunity to regain its footing and repeatedly slammed its body with its full powered charge.



William winced when he saw the bloodthirsty Anteater pound the helpless Tiger to oblivion. Only when the Winged Tiger had lost its consciousness did the Anteater's rampage stop.

The little beast arrogantly raised its head in the air as its small foot stepped on the head of the unconscious Tiger. Its futile attempt to look imposing was greatly hampered by its adorable stature which made William scratch his head.

A thud sounded in the room as Brendan fell on his bum looking at the unbelievable results of the battle that had started only a few minutes ago. His eyes locked on the small, rainbow-colored, Anteater that was standing arrogantly on top of his Beast Companion's head.

"Do you have any other tricks?" William asked in a teasing voice. "Go on. Take them out while you still have a chance."

Brendan shifted his attention on William as he clenched his fist in frustration. Aside from being a scholar, he was also blessed with Grade B talent in magic. However, for some reason, he had a feeling that he wouldn't be able to defeat the smiling Half-Elf in front of him even if he gave it all he had.

"Lord William, I think we can talk things out," Brendan said as he stood up from the floor. "Like I said earlier, this Kingdom is in need of talented people to help it survive the current situation. If you like, you can become the King, and I'll be your Prime Minister. Together we can reshape the Hellan Kingdom and bring it to new heights. This is a good offer, don't you think so?"

William admired Brendan's quickwittedness. Since the son of the Prime Minister wasn't able to beat William in battle, Brendan immediately chose to act servile in order to get into his good graces.

This shift in attitude was a tactic used by Ambassadors and other officers of the kingdom who specialized in negotiations. William had seen similar cases when people had pleaded with him for mercy, but Brendan's attitude made the Half-Elf quite impressed.

'This is a dangerous person,' William thought as he narrowed his eyes. 'Capable but dangerous. If the son is already like this, I wonder what the father is like.'

William didn't really care about the politics of the Hellan Kingdom. Just like his grandfather, James, they were people who preferred to do things their way. They didn't want to be bound by laws or authority and would even smack anyone that would try to put them down.

The Half-Elf also understood that Brendan only acted this way due to the convenient circumstances that fell on his plate. As someone that was born to serve the King of the next generation, Ambition was a very important attitude to have.

Frankly, William was at the fence about how he should deal with Brendan. On one hand, he could just imprison the teenager and look for someone to take his place. On the other hand, he could use his amazing managerial skills to let the kingdom function properly.

"If I tell you to go West, would you dare to go East?" William asked.

"I will go wherever you want me to go, Lord William," Brendan replied with a calm expression on his face.

"If I tell you to jump?"

"I'll ask you how high I should jump."

William nodded as he looked at Brendan with a serious expression. "You still want to become the Regent of this Kingdom?"

"Yes." Brendan replied.

William smirked. He thought that the older boy would deny his ambition, but to his surprise, the latter admitted it openly.

"You are an incredible person." William praised. "And very dangerous as well. To be honest, I just want to lock you up until all of this is over."

Brendan nodded in understanding. "Of course you can do that. But I dare say that no one in this Kingdom will be able to do the things that I can do during this chaotic time."

"I hate to admit it, but you are correct."

"Right? So, how about my proposal? You can become the King and I'll be your Prime Minister."

William shook his head firmly. "I do not wish for Dominion."

"Such a shame." Brendan sighed. "We need someone who will lead the people, and I believe that Lord William would be the right person for the job. Also, Sir William, I just want to tell you one more thing."

"And that is?"

"We have no grudges against each other."

"This is true."

William crossed his arms over his chest as he eyed Brendan. The boy only had an average looking face. A face that you could easily be forgotten if he blended in with the crowd because no one would give him a second glance.

But there was one thing that made him stand out in William's eyes.

It was a feeling of Cleanliness.

This was a trait that was very common among Professional Assassins. If Brendan had chosen to become an Assassin, instead of a scholar, he might have been a very dangerous foe that would bring terror to his enemies.

'I think I know what to do with him now.' William grinned as he looked at the boy in front of him. His attitude towards Brendan had a complete reversal and the latter shivered because William was looking at him as if he was a very beautiful prostitute that was being sold in a brothel.

"What? Are you serious?" Est asked as he looked at William as if he said something ridiculous. "Me? The Regent of the Kingdom?"

William nodded. "Of course I am serious. I don't trust anyone else[,] aside from you[,] to manage the capital while I am away. I will leave Dave and Conrad by your side to act as your bodyguards. With them around, you don't have to worry about anything."

"But, I don't think I am the right person for the job..."

"Did you forget what I told you before?"

William patted Est's shoulder and gave him a teasing smile. "Heroes are not born, they are made. A hero is an ordinary individual who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. Look at the brightside, at least this time, we're not fighting against a Terrorhand."

"Yes. We are not fighting a Terrorhand, but something more sinister like an unknown Organization and thousands of Elves right outside our border," Est argued.

"You're not wrong," William nodded in agreement. "But, if not you then who? Do you have any recommendations?"

"How about Prince Ernest?" Est proposed.

"The shrimp is still too young and too henpecked to handle the affairs of the [K]kingdom." William shook his head. "If you don't want to take the position then I'll just let that guy named Brendan Schwartz handle everything. At least, he is capable of managing the [K]kingdom while I am away."

Est frowned. Naturally, he knew who Brendan was. He also thought that the son of the Prime Minister could fill in the role of a temporary leader while the Royal Family was out of commission.

However, for some reason, he didn't like the idea of handing over the authority of the Royal Family to another person.

"Fine, but I will need some help." Est compromised. "I can't do it alone."

William smirked, "Don't worry. I already made preparations for this."

Chapter 385: Meeting With The Diabolical Hell Ape [Part 1]

"Lord Est, it's a pleasure to be of service to you," Brendan pressed his closed fist over his chest as he bowed respectfully. "Lord William had already told me the details. I will do my best to serve you faithfully in the absence of the Royal Family."

"T-Thank you," Est stuttered as he looked at the son of the Prime Minister.

He and William had only talked about this very same person a few hours ago, and now, Brendan was standing in front of him acting all servile.

"Can I ask you a question?" Est asked. His curiosity had gotten the better of him as he looked at the average looking man with short blonde hair and blue eyes.

"Of course," Brendan replied.

"How did William convince you to work for me?"

"He introduced me to someone."

Est tilted his head in confusion. "Introduced you to someone?"

Est's curiosity grew as he looked at the Prime Minister's son with a serious expression. He wondered just what kind of person William introduced to Brendan in order to make him act this way.

"A very amazing person." Brendan smiled. When he saw the man that William had introduced to him a few hours ago, an electrical shock passed over his body. It was as if he was meant to meet that person.

Like the last piece of the puzzle falling into place, Brendan knew then and there that he had found his true calling. He was already looking forward to studying under that man's tutelage, and the condition for that to happen was to serve Est as his right hand man.

"Lord Est, I know that you have a few more questions, but Lord William has left me with some orders," Brendan said as he opened a scroll in his hands. "For now, it would be best if we gathered the survivors on the outskirts of the Hellan Kingdom and bring them to the capital."

"Understood." Est snapped to attention as soon as he heard that they needed to rescue the survivors in the towns that were the farthest from the capital.

"I suggest that we send some representatives to these areas and have them evacuate to the capital," Brendan explained. "Right now, we have enough grain to last us fifteen years. All of them are magically preserved in the granary of the Royal Warehouse. Even if we bring in ten million more mouths to feed, it will only shorten our reserves to four years.

"Aside from that, every Duchy has their own granaries. If we can get in touch with the local nobles, we could ask them to coordinate with us when it comes to sharing resources."

Est nodded. This was the first time that he was hearing these kinds of things and his impression of Brendan grew by the minute.

"The most pressing matter right now is the threat on our borders." Brendan frowned. "Lord William told me that he would handle this matter, so we should just focus on rescuing more survivors, and finding ways to gather food and other resources. Also, we should build a local knight force that will ensure that no crimes will be committed in the capital."

Brendan gave Est a serious gaze as he continued his explanation.

"Even though the majority of the survivors are children, some of them are also in their late teens. Their age might make them bully the younger kids and take advantage of them. This is something that we should prevent at all costs in order to gain peace within the City of Gladiolus."

"Understood." Est nodded. "Is there anything else that we should do for the children?"

"One step at a time, Lord Est. If you focus on everything," Brendan replied. "You will not be able to accomplish anything. Let's rescue the survivors first, and form a Knight Unit that will patrol the city. This will give the survivors a sense of security if they see that there are uniformed officers upholding the law."

The two finished their meeting in half an hour and immediately went to action. Their role was to maintain the stability of the Kingdom.

The first thing Est did was order Dave to travel to the Armstrong Duchy where Spencer and Wendy were located. Among the heirs of the high-ranking nobles, Wendy was someone that he could count on when it came to accomplishing the things that William wanted to have happen.

Although he still felt conflicted about Wendy being William's first girlfriend, there was nothing he could do about it. He could only blame the curse that was placed on his body because he had met William as a boy, and not as a girl.

Brendan also sent some of his trusted subordinates, whom William had beaten up earlier, to use their manpower to reach out to the survivors on the edges of the Hellan Kingdom. Although they were still reluctant about Brendan becoming someone else's subordinate, they still decided to follow him.

Afterall, as long as the one they were following was the person that was calling the shots, they would definitely get an opportunity to make a good impression, and show Est how capable they truly were.

As for William...

He had already left the Capital in order to gather forces to fight against The Organization and the Elven Army.

The two were riding on the back of a Lamassu as they headed towards the Forest where William was planning to meet someone.

"Are you sure that leaving without telling the Young Master is a good idea?" Ian asked while hugging William from behind.

"It will be fine," William replied. "Est will understand because both of us have responsibilities now. Also, time waits for no one. Every second counts."

What William didn't tell Ian was that he was still not used to suddenly being intimate with Est, even while she was in her girl form, inside his Sea of Consciousness. The transition from becoming his best friend to a lover was so sudden that William struggled to accept it right away.

For now, he planned to take his time to nurture their feelings for each other so things wouldn't become awkward for the two of them.

Still, the night that Est had spent with William inside his Spiritual World was not in vain.

'Her real name is Estelle. If I'm not mistaken, her name means Star,' William mused as they neared their destination. 'It's a very good name.'

Estelle had taken the initiative to tell William her real name, because she was jealous of Ashe. She also wanted the boy she liked to call her by her real name and not the fake name that she had to use because of the curse placed on her body.

"You're thinking about her, right?" Ian asked.

William didn't need to turn around to know Ian's current expression. "Jealous?"

Instead of answering him, Ian asked him another question. Ian already knew Est's feelings for William and had long accepted it in her heart. Since that was the case, why should she make things difficult for the boy she liked?



"Do you think the Lord of the Forest will accept your invitation?" Ian asked.

William quieted down as he pondered the answer to this question. After arriving at the capital, the first Beast he wanted to invite was the Diabolical Hell Ape that ruled the forest near the Hellan Royal Academy.

He was Psoglav's Sovereign and a very powerful Beast that would definitely bolster William's forces if it were to agree to his request.

"We'll know soon enough," William said softly as he guided the Lamassu to where the most powerful Aura was located.

William had already communicated with Psoglav and asked him to relay a message to his Sovereign. The Demonic Dog agreed because it had already planned to hug William's thigh until it reached the Millennial Rank.

Soon, a wide clearing appeared in their vision

Waiting for him in the wide clearing was the Diabolical Hell Ape. However it was not alone. Gathered around it were the other rulers of the forest. All of them were expecting William's arrival, and they were very curious whether their Sovereign would accept his proposal or not.

Chapter 386: Meeting With The Diabolical Hell Ape [Part 2]

William stood in front of the Diabolical Hell Ape, and his gaze never left the Millennial Beast's eyes. In the past, the Ape had used its overwhelming pressure to knock him unconscious with a single stare.

Now, that same powerful stare was aimed at his body once more. Although the pressure was the same as he remembered, he was not the same boy that had met this Beast for the first time. He had undergone many battles in the time that he had spent at the academy and it had further strengthened his ability to hold his ground against strong opponents.

"Good," the Diabolical Hell Ape said via telepathy. "Your eyes have more strength in them now compared to the first time we met. Now, tell me, child, why have you come to meet me?"

William knew that if the Diabolical Hell Ape wanted to harm him, he would definitely not be its match. He had a feeling that even Erchitu, the Giant White Ox that was now part of his herd, would not be strong enough to face off against the Sovereign of the Forest.

Unlike Erchitu and the other powerful beasts in the continent, the Diabolical Hell Ape wasn't affected by the spell. It was born from a place where miasma was everywhere, its body had long surpassed the limits of ordinary creatures, making it almost immune to debuff spells that would weaken it..

"I am here to ask for help," William replied after organizing his thoughts. He knew that he needed to pick his words wisely in order to command this mighty beast to lend its aid. "I am about to fight against the Organization that was responsible for casting the Continental Spell[, which has turned all the adults in the continent into statues. If possible, I would like to ask for His Excellency's help in dealing with them."

The Diabolical Hell Ape nodded in understanding. "That spell was truly powerful. I have never seen a spell of such magnitude in my lifetime. However, this is an affair between Humans. I don't see any reason for us to fight. Also, what can you offer us so that we will accept your proposal?"

William was expecting that the negotiation would head in this direction. Although he had a few treasures in his possession, he wasn't sure that the Sovereign of the Forest would be interested in them. Because of this, he decided to take a gamble.

"Is there something that His Excellency wants in return?" William inquired.

He knew that, as a being that had already reached the Millennial Rank, there were very few things that could pique its curiosity.

"Oh? So you're asking me what I like? Now, this is something I didn't see coming." The Diabolical Hell Ape smiled a devilish smile that matched its sinister profile. "I thought that you were going to present me with priceless treasures and allow me to choose from them."

"Although I do have those treasures, it will be best if I just give His Excellency what he truly wants. That way, I will be able to secure your help wholeheartedly."

"Smart. But, the question is, are you capable of giving me what I want?"

"What is it that you desire, Your Excellency?"

The Diabolical Hell Ape looked down at William with a serious expression as he pondered the thing that he really wanted to possess. A few minutes passed in silence, but no one within the clearing said anything.

William, Ian, and the rest of the creatures in the Forest[,] waited for the Giant Ape to state what he wanted. Finally, the Sovereign of the Forest stated his demand. William's expression became serious, but he was not alone.

Ian, Psoglav, and the rest of the rulers of the forest looked at the Giant Ape in shock when they heard his wish.

"I want to become Human."

Five simple words.

Yet, those five words relayed how serious the Diabolical Hell Ape was.

William didn't dare to ask the Millennial Beast to repeat what it just said because he knew that the answer would be the same. If anyone who didn't know the temper of the Diabolical Hell Ape were to hear this request, they would definitely laugh out loud.

Why? Because it was a ridiculous request. A request that seemed impossible.

But no one within the clearing dared to laugh. Because they know that the Millennial Beast would end their life the moment they did something disrespectful to it.

After a few minutes of silence, William took a deep breath and asked the Giant Ape a question.

"Your Excellency, I just want to confirm something," William said as he stared at the Sovereign of the Forest with a serious expression. "Do you just want to be able to take Human form, or do you really want to become a Human?"

The Diabolical Hell Ape replied firmly and without room for negotiations. "A true Human. However, I still want to retain the power I currently have. If you can make it happen, I will put my life on the line to aid you in your request."

"Your Excellency, may I ask why you want to become Human?"

"You don't need to know."

The Diabolical Hell's Ape carried a tone of finality. William knew that asking for more might jeopardize his chances of being able to ask it for help. Now that the Millennial Beast had stated its terms, it was now time for him to find a way to make it a reality.

'System, is there a way to do this?'

< Host, If we use the God Shop, we can definitely do it. However, the cost will be not lower than 100,000 God Points, which we currently don't have right now. >

William sighed internally. He had just been given a loan of a Million God Points by the Gods in the Temple. His face was not thick enough to ask for more.

"Your Excellency, I cannot grant your request," William replied honestly.

The expression of the Diabolical Hell Ape remained calm. It didn't expect that William would be able to grant his request. If it was easy, he would have already turned into a Human long ago.

"Then we have nothing more to talk about," the Diabolical Hell Ape stated. "When you find a way to turn me into a Human, you will know where to find me. Until then, you will be barred from returning to this forest."

The Giant Ape was about to leave when a thought crossed its mind. "If any of the rulers of the forest, aside from Psoglav, want to accompany you then I will allow it. However, once they decide to join you, they will no longer be welcome in my domain."

The Beasts in the forest looked at their Sovereign, and the Giant Ape only gave them a light snort before walking away. It had already said everything it wanted to say. Whether the Rulers of the Forests wanted to join William or not, he had already given them his explicit permission, in exchange for being expelled from his Domain forever.

The Rulers of the Forest, who planned to discuss terms with William, hesitated because of their Sovereign's ultimatum. Frankly, they were fine with the current lifestyle they had. They were just jealous of Psoglav's increase in strength and ranking due to the resources that were given to him by the red-headed boy.

They all had a difficult choice to make now.

Should they join William and take a gamble?

Or should they stay where it was safe and where they could live their lives without having to fight against strong opponents?

The Beasts were all pondering the answers to these questions while the Half-Elf stood in place. Only Psoglav was grinning ear to ear. Naturally, he already knew the answer to these questions, but he had no intention of saying anything.

For him, the less competition he had, the more rewards he would gain by staying by William's side. As the boy's first Demonic Business Partner, Psoglav had no intention of sharing his resources with anyone!

It hoped that his comrades in the forest would all back down. That way, he would be able to cross into the Centennial Rank in the not so distant future. After all, he was not like the other rulers in the forest.

He didn't want to stay in a small place for the rest of his life. Psoglav also wanted to travel the world. It was a Demonic Beast that had a thirst for conquest. Although it liked to play it safe and stay away from dangerous situations, it didn't mean that it was a coward.

It was only waiting for the right moment, to open its razor sharp fangs, and go in... for the Kill!

#### Chapter 387: Lord Of The Wilds [Part 1]

The Lamassu soared in the sky as William guided it to the Southern Region of the Hellan Kingdom. It had been three days since he had his meeting with the Diabolical Hell Ape. As he expected, none of the Rulers of the Forest approached him after being given a stern warning by their Sovereign.

His next destination was the Whimsical Forest.

The place where he met Aethon, tamed the Hippogriffs, the Gryphon--Lionheart, met the Centaur Race, and captured the Wyverns.

After the battle with the Werehyenas, the Centaur Chieftain told William that he could ask them a favor as repayment for lending his hand to save their tribe. Although the red-headed boy felt a little guilty to use the favor in this manner, he didn't have much of a choice.

What he needed now were fighters that would lend their aid to his cause. The matter of the Diabolical Hell Ape would be put on hold for now. He had no time to worry about things that were outside of his control.

The Lamassu soared above the trees as it traveled to their next destination. None of the creatures in the forest challenged its approach, because it was a Class A Beast. Although there were beasts that were of the Centennial and Millennial Rank inside the forest, they didn't meet any of them along the route that William had chosen for them.

The System had already detected these powerful beasts and had labeled their location on William's map. Naturally, William avoided these places as he headed deeper into the forest.

After the battle between the Centaurs and the Wyverns, the Centaur Race had decided to migrate deeper in the forest. Their allies--the Hipogriffs, the deer, the moose, and the wild bison--followed them as well.

The Centaur Chieftain's good friend was a Millennial Beast. With its help, the Centaur Tribe was able to relocate and live peacefully within its domain.

Bastian, the Captain of the Centaurs had given William a special artifact that would lead him to their new home. Centaurs were prideful creatures. Once they had given their word, they would do it.

This was why William was feeling very guilty because he was going to use their favor to ask them to fight in a war that had no relation to them.

Three hours after arriving at the Whimsical Forest, William finally arrived at a grassland where hundreds of deer, moose, and bison were grazing. Not far from there, were dozens of Hipogriffs resting near a river.

As soon as they sensed the Lamassu approaching their location, the Alpha of the Hippogriff gave a war cry and several of its companions soared into the sky alongside it, to fight against the intruder that had entered their sanctuary.

The sounds of running hooves resounded in the grassland as a platoon of Centaurs rushed to the scene wielding their bows and arrows. The Centaurs had already nocked their arrows on their bows when they heard a shout come from the rider of the Lamassu that had entered their airspace.

"Everyone stand down. It's me, William!" William shouted. "Bastian, hold your fire!"

Bastian immediately raised his hand in a stopping gesture to prevent the Centaurs from releasing their arrows.

The Alpha of the Hippogriffs also recognized the shameless brat who had extorted him in handing over some of the members of its herd. Honestly, it wanted to attack William, but the boy's "I dare you to do it" glare deterred it from doing anything reckless.

It only gave the boy a hateful shriek before returning to the ground to guard his herd. The Alpha of the Herd had already made a decision. If William came once again to snatch members of its herd, it would throw all caution to the wind and fight the Half-Elf to the bitter end.

Fortunately, they were not the reason why William had returned to the Whimsical Forest. Although William was tempted, he didn't want to antagonize the Alpha Beast who was already glaring at him with hate.

"Welcome, Friend," Bastian greeted William as soon as the Lamassu landed on the ground.

William smiled, "Thank you. I have come to talk to your Chieftain. Is he around?"

Bastian nodded. "Did you come here because you are going to use the favor that has been rewarded to you?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Follow me."

William didn't expect that Bastian would be this casual when it came to his purpose for coming to the Whimsical Forest. Although things were going smoothly, he was still feeling anxious about whether the Centaur Chieftain would honor their promise or not.

Bastian guided William to a valley, not far from the grasslands. Hundreds of Centaurs were hard at work as they skinned the wild animals that they had hunted down in the Whimsical Forest. When they noticed Bastian's approach, most of them greeted him.

They also greeted William whom they recognized as a hero that had helped save their tribe in their time of need.



"Centaurians do not forget the favor we owe," Bastian said as he guided William towards the biggest structure inside the valley. "Even if we have to sacrifice our lives, we will honor our pledge. We are the Chiron Tribe. Never forget that, William."

William nodded. Earlier, he was still doubting whether the Chiron Tribe would honor their word. Now, all of those worries disappeared completely.

Bastian's words were filled with pride and determination. It would be disrespectful if William were to challenge his Tribe's dignity.

The residence of the Centaur Chieftain was quite big. It was as if it was built to host celebrations that could sit over a hundred centaurs at the same time.

When they neared the entrance, William felt an unfamiliar presence that made him raise his guard.

'A Powerful Beast and its strength is even stronger than the Diabolical Hell Ape!' William couldn't help but be shocked at this unexpected development. For him, the Sovereign of the Forest was already at the peak of the Millennial Beasts. He didn't expect that he would find someone stronger than it during his visit to the Centaur Tribe.

'Could it be a Myriad Beast?' William thought as he followed behind Bastian. 'I have only met the Myriad Ant Queen, but this presence is stronger than hers.'

Although William wasn't a studious person, he still knew that the Hellan Kingdom didn't have a Guardian Beast protecting it.

'There's no point in overthinking things.' William sighed in his heart. 'I just hope it won't turn hostile when it meets me.'

Soon they arrived at an imposing gate that Bastian said led to their Great Hall where their Chieftain usually held his conferences.

The powerful presence that William felt was undoubtedly behind the double gates. He took a deep breath to calm himself as Bastian opened the gates to lead him inside.

There, he saw a creature that was over four meters tall. It had the head of a stag and antlers adorned with two golden bangles on each side. Its antlers looked so majestic that Spire's own antlers seemed to be dwarfed by its elegance.

It had the body of a man and a dark-green snake had coiled itself around his arm, resting its head on its shoulder.

Out of instinct, William had activated his appraisal skill to see the identity of the Beast that was currently staring back at him.

< Cernunnos >

-- The Horned One

-- Lord of the Wilds

-- Protector of the Forest

-- Threat Level: SSR (Mid)

-- Myriad Beast

-- Can be added to the Herd

-- Success Rate: .000001%

## Chapter 388: Lord Of The Wilds [Part 2]

William's pupils shrank as he read the information in front of him. He had only seen the first half of the Myriad Beast's information, but it was more than enough to tell him that his hunch was right.

What he felt was an existence that was stronger than the Diabolical Hell Ape. He stood in place, daring not to move[,] as he read the full information of the being that was in front of him.

< Cernunnos >

-- The Horned One

-- Lord of the Wilds

-- Protector of the Forest

-- Threat Level: Myriad Beast (High)

-- Can be added to the Herd

-- Success Rate: .000001%

-- This Myriad Beast is often referred to as Horned One because of its majestic antlers that are second to none.. He is a protector, and a provider, which has also earned him the title The Lord of the Wilds due to his power, and influence, to control every beast living inside his domain.

-- The Torc on its antlers symbolizes Life and Death, and holds the power to control Nature and Life Magic.

-- This Myriad Beast has a dual personality. Due to being able to wield the power of life and death, it sometimes has a gentle personality and, at times, is a Death God that will reap the lives of others.

-- Just like the forces of nature that are wild and unpredictable, it is both a giver and taker of life. It would be best to tread carefully in the presence of the one who is said to also wield the power to summon the Ancient Treants to fight by its side.

'Fck!' William cursed internally. He didn't know if he should praise or slap himself for picking this time to visit the Centaurs in the Whimsical Forest.

The Myriad Beast in front of him was no laughing matter. It had a dual personality, which made it very dangerous. The only advantage that William possessed at the moment was that this particular Beast was also a herd type creature.

He hoped that out of respect for his profession, Cernunnos wouldn't do anything to harm him and Ian, who was right beside him.

"Forgive me, Great One," Bastian pressed his closed fist over his chest as he greeted Cernunnos. "Our friend, William Von Ainsworth had arrived. He came here to see the Great Chiefta--"

Bastian wasn't able to finish his words because Cernunnos silenced him with a stare. It then looked at the red-headed boy who was also looking back at him with a calm expression.

"Ainsworth you say? Are you related to James, perhaps?" Cernunnos inquired. It had a neutral expression on its face, so William didn't know if it had a good relationship with his grandpa or not.

"He is my grandfather," William answered. "Your Excellency, do you know of him?"

"Of course. How could I forget James?" Cernunnos nodded. "We've known each other for many years. In fact, both of us met fifty years ago."

William smiled because it seemed that the Myriad Beast and his grandfather were old acquaintances.

"Since you are related to him then you can... die now!" Cernunnos roared as the dark-green snake that was resting on his arm increased its size and charged towards William with the intention of eating him whole.

William hurriedly grabbed Ian's hand and vanished from where he stood. He had retreated to the Thousand Beast Domain in order to escape the attack of the Myriad Beast who seemed to have a vendetta against his grandfather.

Cernunnos clicked his tongue when he saw that William was able to escape his attack. It then recalled the dark-green snake, which obediently coiled itself on his arm again and rested its head on his shoulder.

Bastian's body became stiff as he stood in place. He didn't expect that their benefactor would be attacked by the Guardian that ruled these lands.

"Your Excellency, he was the boy who had saved our tribe when the Wyverns attacked," Bastian commented.

Cernunnos paused before shifting his attention to Bastian. The pressure he was radiating earlier disappeared and was replaced by a gentle and refreshing aura.Â

"... Why didn't you say sooner?" Cernunnos inquired.

"... Your Excellency, you didn't wait for me to finish."

"Are you saying that it was my fault?"

Bastian hurriedly shook his head like his life depended on it. After living with Cernunnos for a while, they had realized how quickly its mood changes. However, most of the time, it was gentle and kind.

Sometimes, it would even mediate between the conflicts of the denizens of the forest when it affected the balance of nature within its Domain. Due to its nature, it didn't mind if both sides killed each other because it was part of the natural cycle.

Still, whenever Cernunnos was in his aggressive mood, it would still be lenient enough and not kill anyone right off the bat.

Clearly, Cernunnos and James didn't have a good relationship and might even be enemies for the Myriad Beast to instantly attack the young boy who was a guest of the Chiron Tribe.

"Are you okay, Ashe?" William asked as he helped his mermaid lover who had instinctively transformed to protect him when the dark-green snake charged towards them.

Ashe had two forms, her usual mermaid form and her mermaid battle form.

If she was on land then she would stand on two legs and fight. However, her strength would be halved when fighting on land. Only when she was in the water could her full power be unleashed.

She was wearing sea-blue armor that seemed to be made from a metal that William wasn't familiar with. His only gripe was that the armor was quite revealing and showed Ashe's curves which the red-headed boy had already claimed for himself.

'Well, at least it's not bikini armor,' William thought as he stared at Ashe's Battle Regalia.

"Have you stared enough?" Ashe asked as she bumped her closed fist on William's head. "What's wrong? Why did that Millennial Beast attack us? I thought it knew your grandfather!"

William raised both of his hands in order to calm the Mermaid who was throwing a barrage of questions at him.

"Correction, it wasn't a Millennial Beast, that one is a bonafide Myriad Beast," William answered. "Second, how was I to know that my old man and Cernunnos had bad blood between them? This is the first time I've seen The Lord of the Wilds and the first thing it did after asking a question was attack me."

Ashe calmed down a bit after hearing William's explanation. However, that calmness soon disappeared as the words that William had said registered in her mind.

"T-That was a Myriad Beast?!" Ashe stuttered as she covered her lips with her hand. "How can you tell?"

"It's because this is not the first time I have met a Myriad Beast," William replied.

He trusted Ashe, but the System had warned him repeatedly to not tell anyone about his Appraisal Ability because it might cause some problems if people were to discover it.

There were also Appraisers in the world of Hestia, but most of them could only appraise weapons, armors, jewelry, accessories, and artifacts. However, none had the ability to appraise Beasts and people.

The System even added that if William were to upgrade his Shepherd Job Class to its final form, he would gain the ability to appraise the True Name of any mortal in the world of Hestia.

Having the ability to know the True Name of named beings was a priceless ability because it would give William the power to control their lives. This was why The System had advised him to never tell a soul about it.

Not even to his family, Masters, and lovers.

"If that was a Myriad Beast, and it's on bad terms with your grandfather then what do we do now?" Ashe asked anxiously. "If we leave this Domain, won't we appear in the same place we were standing a while ago?"

William once again nodded his head to affirm his lover's worries.

"Ah don't worry, I'm not going to harm you again. At least, not until after you finished your business with the Centaur Chieftain."

William's and Ashe's bodies stiffened when they heard the voice of the Beast they had tried to speak to just a few minutes ago. The two exchanged a glance before their heads slowly turned to the side to see the four-meter tall Cernunnos standing a few meters away from them.

## Chapter 389: Negotiation With The Centaur Race [Part 1]

William summoned his staff and Ashe summoned her sword. The two of them took a fighting stance as they faced the Myriad Beast who had, for some reason, appeared inside the Thousand Beast Domain.

"How did you get here, Your Excellency?" William asked. "How did you manage to enter my Domain?"

This was the first time someone had entered his Domain without his permission. Not only that, the one who entered it was the Lord of the Wilds that had attacked with the intention of killing him earlier!

"Good question," Cernunnos replied with an amused expression on his face. "Very well. I will tell you the reason as compensation for attacking you earlier."

The Myriad Beast casually sat cross legged in front of William as if the Domain belonged to him. The other inhabitants of the Thousand Beast Domain had sensed his presence and immediately gathered to William's side, with the exception of Ella.

Although Ella had sensed the Myriad Beast, she remained inside the Magic Crystal Cavern to watch over the three sleeping beasts. Even so, she was paying attention to the uninvited guest and would immediately come to William's aid if Cernunnos tried something funny.

"First and foremost, the entire Whimsical Forest is my Domain," Cernunnos explained. "The moment you entered the forest, you were already inside my jurisdiction. Since this is my [D]domain, I have absolute control over whatever I want to do inside it."

William was surprised to hear this. He never thought that the forest, that could be visited by anyone in the Hellan Kingdom, was actually a Domain that belonged to a Myriad Beast.

'I wonder if the Sword Saint is aware of the existence of this Myriad Beast,' William thought as he looked at the Myriad Beast who seemed to be keen on telling him how he managed to enter his Domain without permission.

"The second reason is because when the entrance to a Domain opens, it will remain open for less than a minute," Cernunnos continued his explanation. "Even if the entrance disappears it is still there, only invisible. Do you understand?"



William frowned. This was the first time he heard of these things and it made him anxious.

Seeing the red-headed boy's reaction, Cernunnos chuckled. "Relax. Not everyone can enter a Domain that easily. Even Myriad Beasts and Demigods can't enter someone else's Domain that easily. Like I said earlier, you entered my domain then opened the gateway to your own in order to escape my attack.

"This caused a rift in my Domain. As a Domain Master, I have the ability to fix or pry open the rift that appeared in my territory. Ah, before I forget, not all Myriad Beasts and Demigods have Domains. I just so happen to be one of those few beings that has my own Domain."

William nodded. Although he didn't know if Cernunnos was telling the truth or not, it didn't change the fact that the Myriad Beast was now inside his Domain. Based on the information he gathered from his Appraisal Skill earlier, the Lord of the Wilds had two sides.

Right now, it was the good side of Cernunnos that was talking to him. This gave him a little peace of mind, but he knew that this Myriad Beast's mood could flip anytime, so he didn't want to act disrespectful to it.

"Your Excellency, is there a way for me to prevent any uninvited guests from entering my Domain?" William inquired. "Those who have the same abilities as you?"

Cernunnos shook his head. "No. The only way to prevent anyone from entering your Domain is by choosing a safe location before you open the gateway that leads inside it."

The Lord of the Wilds then gave William an appraising stare. He could feel James' bloodline flowing inside the boy's body and determined that he was indeed the annoying man's grandchild.

"Well, even though you made a mistake in allowing someone to enter your Domain without your permission, it wouldn't change the fact that, if you hadn't done what you have done, you'd be dead by now. This is also a fact. So, good job in surviving the attack of a Myriad Beast."

William didn't know if Cernunnos was complimenting him or pitying him. All he knew was that The Lord of the Wilds didn't seem to want to kill him right now.

After finishing his explanation, Cernunnos scanned his surroundings. Its eyes, that could see every nook and cranny of the Whimsical Forest, weren't able to examine William's Thousand Beast Domain in detail.

This was a normal thing because this particular Domain didn't belong to him. After seeing that further prying would bear no fruit, Cernunnos once again shifted his attention to the boy who was looking back at him with a guarded expression.

"Boy, unlike the Minotaur race, there are beasts that won't bat an eye in killing the disciple of the Eternal Guardian," Cernunnos stated. "Although I will pay a hefty price in doing so, make no mistake that not even you are safe from Beings that far surpass your current level of strength. Even if they were to fall under the jurisdiction of the Eternal Guardian, they would not bow to you and give you face."

William's expression remained serious throughout Cernunnos explanation. He already understood that not all Herd Type creatures would get along with him. Even so, he still nodded his head to acknowledge the Myriad Beast's sincere warning.

"Thank you for the wisdom you have imparted to me, Your Excellency," William replied.

Cernunnos nodded and stood up from the ground. "Let's go back to the Great Hall. The Centaur Chieftain is waiting for you."

The Lord of the Wilds didn't wait for William's reply and disappeared from where he stood.

William immediately asked the System to find the Myriad Beast's location. He also extended his senses throughout his Domain to see if Cernunnos decided to take a stroll inside it.

Half a minute later, the System and William confirmed that their uninvited guest had truly left the Thousand Beast Domain.

"Let's go together," Ashe said. "Don't even think about leaving me here while you deal with that Myriad Beast by yourself."

William looked at his mermaid lover before reluctantly nodding his head. The thought of letting Ashe stay inside his Domain while he negotiated with the Centaur Chieftain crossed his mind. However, before he could even say his thoughts out loud, Ashe had already shot it down.

"Very well. But, stay close to me, understand?" William asked.

Ashe nodded firmly. She didn't want to be baggage for William, but she didn't want her lover to face his challenges alone.

After holding each other's hands, both of them returned to the Great Hall where the Centaur Chieftain and the moody Cernunnos were waiting for them.

William hoped that the negotiation with the Centaur Race would proceed smoothly now, so that he could leave the Whimsical Forest as soon as possible.

#### Chapter 390: Negotiation With The Centaur Race [Part 2]

"Welcome to the Chiron Tribe, Young William," Vrol, the Centaur Chieftain of the Chiron Tribe, said as he extended his hand to shake William's hand.

William extended his own hand and held Vrol's hand firmly. The two smiled at each other as they finished their handshake.

"Bastian told me everything," Vrol said in an apologetic tone. "Cernunnos... is prone to mood swings. I hope you don't hold a grudge against him."

William gave a sidelong glance towards the Myriad Beast that sat cross legged in the corner of the Great Hall. If possible, William wanted to have a private talk with Vrol, but Cernunnos seemed to be interested in the reason for William's visit.

Knowing that he had no other choice but to negotiate with Vrol alongside Cernunnos, William steeled himself and replied with a smile.

"How can I possibly hold a grudge against His Excellency?" William replied.. 'I am someone that holds a grudge. But, if I say that out loud, this moody Myriad Beast will slap me into meat paste.'

The Centaur Chieftain nodded with a smile. However, before they could continue their discussion, Cernunnos opened his eyes and glanced at William.

"Ah. I forgot to tell you, I can read people's minds as well," Cernunnos commented. "So you like holding grudges? What a coincidence. I like holding grudges as well."

William's body stiffened as several beads of sweat appeared on his forehead. He wanted to curse out loud and give the bastard beast the middle finger for not telling him that he could read minds!

"Ha.. hahaha." William laughed. "So His Excellency also likes to hold grudges. They say that birds of the same feathers flock together. When I saw his Excellency for the first time, I knew that the two of us would get along well."

Cernunnos laughed as well. "Hahaha. You're just saying that so I won't slap you and turn you into meat paste, right?"

"... Yes."

"Honesty is a virtue. Make sure to remember that in the future, Little Will."

Ian, who was watching from the side, covered his lips with his hand. This was the first time he had seen the narcissistic, and arrogant, William become timid. He found it funny enough that he could barely restrain his laughter.

Usually, it was the Half-Elf who always had the final say on things. Even when the two of them were inside his Spiritual World, William would always tease and bully her, and she was unable to fight back.

'Seeing this is so refreshing,' Ian thought as he glanced at the red-headed boy who was squirming in his seat like he was suffering from diarrhea.

Fortunately, Vrol was a good host and immediately threw an olive branch to save William from his current predicament.

"Young Friend, you visited us here to ask us to repay the favor we owed you, right?" Vrol asked. "Tell me, how can our Tribe be of service to you?"

William looked at the Centaur Chieftain that was at the peak of the Centennial Rank and gave him a thumbs up in his heart. He was finding it hard to take the initiative to open the discussion in regards to his reason for visiting the Chiron Tribe due to Cernunnos presence.

"Sir Vrol, I came here to ask for the Tribe's aid in fighting against The Organization that was responsible for casting the Continental Spell that affected the entire continent. I don't know if you are aware, but all the adults have turned into crystal statues. My goal is to find a way to break the curse and free the adults from their crystal prisons."

Vrol rubbed his chin after he heard William's explanation. Naturally, he had also seen the Continental Spell as it descended upon the land, but it didn't affect them much because Cernunnos had shielded his Domain from the effects of the Aurora Borealis.

Vrol was also not aware that the adults in the Human lands had turned into Crystal Statues. As a creature of the forest, it didn't really care about the affairs of men, but hearing such a story made him frown.

"Let me get this straight. You plan to fight against this Organization with the members of our Tribe, right?"

"Yes."

"Also, aside from this Organization, you also want our help to resist the invasion of the Elves as well."

"That is indeed the case, Sir Vrol." William nodded.Â

The red-headed boy was currently at his wits end about how to fight against The Organization and resist the Elven invasion at the same time. The Half-Elf didn't believe that the current Hellan Kingdom could withstand an Elven invasion even if all the survivors were to fight with their life on the line.

Vrol closed his eyes as he pondered how to deal with the current situation. Naturally, he was duty bound to send some of his warriors to assist William because this was the promise that their tribe had made.

The problem the Centaur Chieftain was facing at the moment was the number of warriors that he could assign to William's cause.

After the Wyven incident, their tribes had suffered many casualties. Many of their warriors died in fighting against the Wyverns and Werehyenas and he couldn't send a lot of men to aid William in his quest.

After careful consideration, the Centaur Chieftain opened his eyes and gave his answer.

"I will place Bastian's Company under your command," Vrol stated. "His subordinates only number one hundred, but all of them are seasoned fighters. I apologize, but I cannot send more warriors to assist you in your endeavors."

William knew that the current Chiron Tribe was unable to give him many warriors. Frankly, he had already prepared himself to accept any reinforcements that they could give him, but the force that was assigned to him still exceeded his expectations.

Although a hundred centaurs was only a tenth of the Chiron's Tribe current forces, it didn't change the fact that all of them were Class C (Mid) Beasts.

Bastian, their leader, was a Class B (Low) Centaur and William had seen how proficient he was in commanding his subordinates. He was very happy with the Centaur Chieftain's generosity and thanked him for the help that he had given him.

After the two finished their discussion, Cernunnos cleared his throat as he stared at the Half-Elf that was itching to leave his Domain.

"Although I don't know how strong this Organization is, it is very clear that a hundred Centaurs are not enough to fight them," Cernunnos said. "Also, the Elven race is superior to Humans. Even if you managed to beat The Organization you spoke of, you have no chance of beating the Elves. In my eyes, this endeavor of yours is fruitless. Your best alternative is to surrender and ask for favorable conditions."

William could understand why Cernunnos thought like this. In the face of the Elven Prodigies, the Human survivors were like toddlers that were waiting to be bullied by adults. They just didn't have the ability to resist their invasion.

Especially when they succeeded in finishing the teleport gates they were building. According to Takam, this gate is a one way gate that would allow Elves from the Silvermoon Continent to teleport to the Southern Continent.

This very notion made William very anxious. This was why he planned to sabotage the Elven Teleport Gates once he finished dealing with The Organization.Â

"It's futile," Cernunnos declared as he read the plan in William's head. "But, I'm curious as well. How will you, the grandchild of that bastard James, be able to pull it off? This remains to be seen."

The Lord of the Wilds stood up and took one of the bangles hanging on its antlers off and gave it to William.

"Wear this in your arm," Cernunnos said in a tone that wouldn't accept 'No' for an answer. "Treat this as a lucky charm. Who knows? This might save your life once."

William gingerly took the golden bangle from the Myriad Beast's hand and wore it on his arm like a bracelet. The bangle adjusted its size to match William's arm size and stayed in place.

The Half-Elf didn't feel anything special about the bangle, but he had no doubt that it was not an ordinary accessory.

"Thank you, Your Excellency, for your generous gift." William bowed respectfully.

Ian, who was standing beside William also bowed his head to thank the Myriad Beast. Cernunnos didn't say anything else and left the Great Hall without a second glance.

The Lord of the Wild had stayed inside his Domain for hundreds of years without interacting with the outside world. Although Cernunnos didn't mind who got to rule the Human lands, he was very keen on witnessing the struggles that would take place during this chaotic time.

The Golden Bangle was a life saving item. It would save William's life once before returning to Cernunnos hand.

However, until that time arrived, the Lord of the Wild would be able to see the world through William's eyes. It was looking forward to seeing the battles that James' grandson would be fighting in the future.

Perhaps, by doing so, it would learn more about Human emotions. Emotions that it still couldn't understand after so many years of living in the Whimsical Forest.