

Supreme M 56

Chapter 56 Bargains And Promises

"Nice trick, by the way. Silverwing's Hexagram is an uncommon skill for an admission exam, but generally those who are capable of performing it are fighting oriented mages, that don't apply to either White or Black Griffon.

I must admit to have underestimated you. I would have never expected a country bumpkin to have such deep knowledge, and to be able to exploit it to turn a good performance into an excellent one. They have not seen one of these in decades."

"F*ck me sideways!" Lith's smug and thoughts were polar opposites.

"Either Nana didn't know about this, or she set me up. Let's hope my score isn't too high. I don't want some 'school princess/prince' bother me because of it."

In a matter of minutes everything was settled, new dimension doors opened and the mages disappeared without saying a word.

Back into the Headmaster's office, Linjos gave them the result.

"Congratulations, young..." He remembered that Lith had no family name.

"...mage. Your admission at White Griffon has been approved unanimously with a score of 93/100. Your actual score was 88, but since it has been years since an applicant was capable of performing the Hexagram, we awarded you 5 extra points."

"88/100?!" Lith thought. "Either I limited myself too much, or someone is really cranky today. The Hexagram proved to be a wild card, but luckily my score is still within the expected range."

Linhos continued his speech, unaware of Lith's worries.

"I look forward to see you back here in a couple of months, to start your specialization years. Here, this is some material you can study and revise to take your choice."

The Headmaster gave Lith seven small books, the first six were about elemental specializations, while the seventh one was about item creation. Lith took them all avidly.

"Those are highly confidential. You are not supposed to show them or discuss about their content with anyone outside the White Griffon."

Linhos tone was dead serious, Lith gave his most heartfelt assurances.

"Perfect. Any question before I call in the wardrobe for your uniform?"

"Yes, one. What is the academy position about bullying? As you know, I come from a backwater village, my father is a farmer, and I don't even have a last name. In my experience, even the best of us tend to look down upon me, if not worse."

He threw a meaningful look at the Marchioness, who pretended not to notice.

Headmaster Linjos puffed his chest with pride, straightening up his back even more.

"Glad that you asked. Before my time, commoner's and merchant's children had quite a rough experience. But I have established a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and violence in my academy. I hope to set up an example for everyone.

The Queen picked me up for this position because even as a student, I fought hard to defend the rights of the less fortunate. No matter their origin, powerful mages are too precious assets for the Kingdom, to allow some spoiled brats to ruin years of hard work.

You have no idea how many academies' alumni have defected our Kingdom to get their revenge. The Court is giving this matter the utmost importance, that's why I expect many heads to fall in the next years."

Just thinking of how many brilliant mages, even geniuses, had their lives destroyed by abuses of power, made Linjos heart bleed. Once they grew in power, they had left their home country with no hesitation, turning into a thorn in the side of the King.

Their rage was unbridled, the only way to make them come back would be to wipe out entire ancient noble families, but that was something outside even the King's reach. It would start a civil war, he had to choose the lesser evil.

But that didn't mean he would let that evil to keep eroding the Kingdom's backbone.

"Yes, that's exactly what I'm afraid of." Lith didn't feel even a bit reassured by his words.

"As a hunter, I learned that a cornered beast is the most dangerous one. What if, hypothetically, I would be harassed by one or more influential people?"

"I would stand by your side, and give them the proper punishment!"

The answer was too quick.

"Man, this guy is green. Either he comes from a fairy tale, or has not been in the real world long enough for it to bite his a*s." Lith thought.

"I'm sure of your sincerity, but please, think about it. Prince whatever harasses a country bumpkin and gets reported. It's just the victim word against someone who has at his back political and magical influence. What could you do?"

"I would order for an exhaustive investigation, listening to all the witnesses."

"And what if the witnesses get intimidated? Or if there is no witness at all? Are you telling me you could still do something?"

Linjos long face seemed to become even longer.

"No, I could not. Prince whatever would at worst get a reprimand, and I could only ask the staff to keep an eye on the bumpkin."

"Isn't there anything at all you can do to prevent this?" Lith was seriously rethinking everything. Getting admitted with a high score and having just Count Lark as an official backer, would make his permanence a nightmare straight from day one.

"With all the magical marvels you got, isn't there some kind of alarm? A panic whistle? A 'gods please, someone, anyone save me' device?"

"Actually, there is." Linjos words made Lith sigh with relief.

From one of the desk's drawers, Linjos took out a big wooden box twice as big, full to the brim of black pearl-lookalike spheres the size of a baseball.

"Lucky bastard! Even his drawers are pocket dimensions. I want to learn forgemastering so bad."

"These spheres are actually magical items, called Guilty Ballots." The name was self-explanatory. Even in that world, justice was represented holding a scale.

The jurors would cast their vote by setting black spheres on one of the plates for a guilty verdict, white on the other for an innocent one.

"Once you imprint one as yours, just like for a communication amulet, the Guilty Ballot will record every word and action happening around you as soon as you send some mana into it.

A second mana pulse would trigger a call for help, alerting the academy staff that something is wrong. It would also work as a beacon for Warp Steps, allowing us to intervene immediately."

"Warp Steps, uh?" Lith thought. "I'm a man of tradition, dimensional door sounds much better, but when in Rome, do as the romans do."

"Thank you very much! That's exactly what I hoped for." Lith grabbed one without a second thought.

"Wait, there is a reason why I didn't offer it to you immediately."

Lith wasn't much interested, but he had to keep appearances.

"Is there any side effect?"

"No, the Ballot itself works perfectly, it has been made by the best Forgemasters, after all. The problem is that its use is socially frowned upon, by both students and teachers. I must warn you that it's much more famous as the 'coward's end'."

Lith hid his mouth with a hand, pretending to be in deep thought, while he was actually grinning in disgust.

"Yeah, right. I had enough of this bullsh*t back on Earth. 'You need to learn how to stand up for yourself', they said. 'A little bullying helps you build your character and prepare you to face real life' and all that cr*ap.

Then, all those as*holes of teachers would be the first to cry when one of the victims committed suicide, or even better if they took up a gun to settle their scores."

Seeing that Lith wasn't replying, Linjos continued.

"Very few students have picked a Ballot, and even those who did, usually returned it after some weeks. Isolation and ostracism are another form of violence I can do nothing about.

And for someone away from home for the first time, a bad friend is better than none at all. It could prevent you from socializing, keeping everyone away from you, even those who could actually become your true friends.

Please, have faith in me, I will stand by your side, no matter what. All the teachers I handpicked share my vision and will do all they can to help you."

Lith wanted to sarcastically laugh in the face of his groundless optimism and wishful thinking.

"Thank you very much for your concern, but as I can see it, it would be a thorny path with or without it. Besides, I decided to join your academy to quench my thirst for knowledge, not to make friends.

Without the Ballot, I would be in the hands of fate. With it, instead, if you are right, I will never need it, nor ever be forced to reveal I do possess one. If I am right, we both will have our backs covered, and you will have what you need to pursue your ideals.

It's a win-win situation."

Lith tried to be polite and accommodating, but in his mind, he could see several flaws in Linjos' pep talk.

"He admitted not being able to purge all the bad apples, this means that I need to be wary of both students and teachers. Not to mention that we barely knew each other. How can he possibly be so naïve to expect me to take his word at face value?

For all I know, he could as well be a strawman with no actual power, that a rotten system has put into this place just for marketing. Only time will tell me if this guy is just a frigging paintjob on a rust bucket or the real deal."

Linjos sighed, but insisted no more. It hurt his pride and spirit seeing such a young man being so cynical. When he had started as a Headmaster, he had always pictured himself as a charismatic figure, capable of instilling trust in his pupils.

But being a mage, he was more pragmatic than idealistic, and recognized the truth behind Lith's words.

"After Linnea destroyed his future, it's natural for him to be biased. I'll show to both him and the Queen that my methods work. The Ballot is a sad relic of the past, born because of the incompetence of my predecessors.

Nobles and commoners can and will go along!" Linjos thought.

After concluding that matter, Linjos summoned in his office a wardrobe clerk, that delivered a uniform way too big for Lith's size. It consisted of a white shirt, blazer, pants, a robe and black shoes. The embroideries instead were of a pitch-black colour.

"At the moment, the uniform is at its biggest available size. Our Forgemasters enchant them so that they are able to perfectly fit the wearer. As you grow over time, it will expand, so you will not have to change it.

The uniform has many other properties. They are all described in a note inside the chest pocket, with one exception."

Linjos took out his shirt's cuffs and an unused Ballot, bringing them close. The black sphere suddenly disappeared.

"You do not possess yet any dimensional object, and you cannot walk with a Ballot in your hand the whole time. So, our uniforms' cuffs possess a hidden function, a very small dimensional storage that only applies to Ballots.

As far as I know, aside from us and the Forgemasters, no one is aware of its existence."

Lith nodded, sending mana to the Guilty Ballot in his hand. The magical item absorbed greedily the energy, imprinting Lith's mana as its master. In many ways it was similar to Solus, yet the differences were like heaven and earth.

The Ballot needed Lith's mana to function, not to live, and it was incapable of absorbing it on its own. Through his mana flow, Lith was capable of making it start/stop recording, projecting the recorded images and sounds.

"This thing is dead as a doornail. Is just like some kind of CCTV and I'm the power plant. The uniform, though, has some pretty sweet properties." Lith thought while skimming the instructions.

Before leaving the Headmaster office, Lith received even more booklets that described the academy's history, its forest, how the student point system worked, and so on. There was enough to fill a small library.

Thankfully, the Marchioness offered to carry them for him in one of her dimensional pockets.

"Dammit, if it wasn't for Soluspedia, it would take me months to read and memorize all this stuff. Between knowing the White Griffon rules and regulations inside out and the Guilty Ballot, I should have what I need to survive the next two years. Maybe."

Chapter 57 A Bad Start Is The Other Half

There was still some time before the start of the academic year. Lith spent most of it reading the Headmaster's books and planning his future. According to the school records, most students would achieve only a specialization.

Good and great mages would achieve two, while attaining three or more was the sign of a true polymath genius. It wasn't enough attending the courses to be considered a specialist, one should also possess considerable talent in the field.

And like most things in life, genius couldn't be evaluated with just numbers. Krishna Manohar, the resident god of healing, had only two specializations, simply because he had no interest in other topics.

His second one was as Battle Mage, and even in his biography it was mentioned only once, for the sake of completeness.

Yet Nana having only one specialization felt wrong on so many levels, that Lith decided to take a pause from his studies to ask her why.

Those days, the White Griffon uniform was the only dress he would wear, not for swag, as much for practicality. It was capable of self-cleaning, getting rid of any dirt or sweat, and to offer some degree of protection from both physical and magical attacks.

It allowed him to be more relaxed during his day life and when hunting. It was like wearing a full armour, but light as silk. It could withstand a bear's claw strike without ripping, but Lith would still feel the blunt impact.

He had made many experiments, to test its reliability and limits. Oddly enough, the protection was extended to his head and hands too, despite being uncovered. The robe, though, was still stored in Solus' pocket dimension.

Wearing it would strengthen the protective effect, but it was too long and impractical to use. It would get caught in trees, bushes, everything.

Not to mention that being stealthy while wearing an oversized bathrobe was nigh impossible.

"I said this back on Earth and I'll repeat it now. Mages' fashion sense sucks. Capes and robes are idiotic to wear, they make you so easy to grab and slam around like a carpet."-

Lith could have flown, yet he preferred walking. Those were his last moments of true freedom, and he wanted to enjoy them to the fullest.

At Nana's home office, everyone showered him with praises and congratulations, giving the healer the time to speak with her former apprentice.

"Sorry to disappoint you, young sprite..." Ever since Lith had saved Count Lark's family years ago, she had promoted him from little imp to sprite.

"...but I only have one specialization." She winked blatantly, despite they were alone in her private quarters.

"Here is an unrequested advice. Life is unpredictable, and many things you'll need to survive are not written in any book." She winked again.

"You need to learn them by experience."

"I understand, sorry to have wasted your time." Lith winked back.

"Do not apologize, dear. It's always a pleasure seeing you. And don't even think about leaving without saying a proper goodbye, or when I'll die, I'll haunt you as a ghost!"

"Please, if it's true that weeds never die out, then you'll probably outlive us all!"

Lith bought some fresh pastries and white bread, before returning home.

"I can't decide if the idea of hidden specializations is more interesting or disturbing. I wonder if Nana's second talent is the real reason for her downfall. Maybe she was a magical assassin that either failed an important mission or was framed.

Either way, to avoid repeating her mistakes, I must stick to the plan, get my specializations and as much backers as I can. And to get them, being a healer is the best bait.

The Marchioness proved to me that no matter how rich and powerful, they are still scared sh*tless of death. Also being a great healer brings you more clients than envy. If they see you as an asset, those in power don't feel threatened by your existence."-

Lith's last months went by peacefully. Count Lark held a small private goodbye party, attended by Lith's and Lark's family, Nana and Selia. Hilya, the first cook, still believed in #TeamRaaz, so she went all out for the occasion.

She even called him "Young Master" a couple of times, embarrassing both Lith and the Count. They didn't know if to laugh or cry, rumors indeed die hard.

The only sour note was the presence of Senton, Rena's soon-to-be husband. Lith had still a hard time letting his sister go, so when he shook the man's hand, he reminded him two truths.

"Remember, when you marry a woman, you marry her whole family." Lith said out loud, triggering laughter and joy in the participants.

"And I know where you live." He threatened him, whispering in Senton's ear when they were embracing.

The Marchioness had been invited too, albeit only out of politeness, but she could not intervene, and for a good reason. Her family had been attacked once more, and she had her hands full trying to identify the instigator.

His first day of school, Lith left home before the sunrise. All his belongings were sadly able to fit in a chest smaller than an armchair, that his father Raaz had handmade for the occasion.

Despite the happy circumstances, his parents cried like he was about to go to war.

"Oh, Lith, promise to write me every day." Sobbed Elina, his mother while hugging him strong enough to squeeze the air out of his lungs.

"Mom, we have the communication amulet, remember? Do you really want to wait for the mail to be delivered?"

"Of course not, you silly. Call us as soon as you have a minute to spare." She said throwing him into his father's arms.

"Remember, little one, no matter how far you will be, you'll always have a family and a house here." Raaz's cheeks were streaked with tears, his voice broken.

"Far? Dad, between flight and Warp Steps I'm barely an hour away from home. I'll be back at the end of the first trimester, in time for the Spring Festival."

Lith was moved and confused by their feelings. Back on Earth, when he and Carl had left their home, their mother send away gift had been changing the door locks.

His sisters' goodbyes were much more joyous. They were both moving on with their lives, and were happy that their little brother too was able to pursue his dreams.

Trion was nowhere to be seen. Their relationship had never mended, and the more power and authority Lith gained, the more Trion felt a stranger to his own family.

He had left home as soon as he turned sixteen, announcing his decision to perform voluntary military service and marry outside the family, leaving Tista to inherit the farm and the house.

Lith left home, making the chest fly alongside him. Only when he was far enough, he stored it inside the pocket dimension and went pedal to the metal.

He took it out before approaching the nearest Mage Association branch, keeping it floating while he walked through the Warp Step to the academy. An attendant accompanied him to his personal room, in the fourth-year wing of the castle.

To avoid hazing, each year had a separate wing for its classes, living quarters, even the canteen. Students from different years had no common spaces.

After imprinting the room with his mana, becoming its master, Lith left his chest and dismissed the attendant. He had the map of the castle copied and stored in Soluspedia, hence needing no help to reach his classroom.

Regardless of the chosen specializations, the students of the fourth year had some classes that everyone had to attend. Theory of Combat Magic was one of those mandatory courses. (*)

Lith was one of the first to arrive, the classroom was almost empty, except for a few students that had already occupied the desks in the last row.

The classroom resembled a lecture classroom from a college, with a pitched floor and the desks arranged in a semi-circular shape. At a first glance, it seemed to have a capacity of at least two hundred students.

In any other circumstances, Lith would have admired the perfect lighting of the room, the magnificence of the marble floor, the refined craftsmanship of the desks. Each one was made with the best materials available, drawing a merciless comparison with his old college.

At that moment, however, his eyes were only noticing how all those present had sighed in relief seeing him. Judging from their positioning and nervousness, they were clearly trying to lie low and go unnoticed.

Lith had walked enough in their shoes to know what it meant, and how futile their effort was.

"Poor guys, you still haven't learned that you can't avoid trouble when it's the trouble looking for you, uh? Just like in middle school, the preys come early to avoid contact, while the predators take their sweet time."-

He chose a seat in the middle row, not too close, but not too far. He would still be able to see clearly the professor and read from what appeared to be a chalkboard.

"Sigh, I would love to sit in the first row, but I bet that's the cool kids' gathering spot. It's better to avoid useless arguments and stay in the safe zone. If someone comes to bother me, it would be on purpose."-

Lith took out his notebook and inkwell, to prepare for the lesson, hoping things to go smoothly.

According to Nana, the real class hierarchy would be established from day one. Both he and Solus remained alert the whole time, while the classroom was getting filled with people.

Some sneered looking at him, others shook their head with a sad expression, deeming him too dumb or naïve to know his place.

"It's very interesting," Solus said. "The worst mana core I detected is bright green, all the rest are different shades of cyan or deep blue. It's not a surprise that so many of Lark's proteges failed at the admission."

"Yeah, peachy. Not only I am not the top dog mana core-wise, I cannot use any magic outside the fake one. Eyes on the prize, Solus, this is Sparta. Based on the glances I received, the situation may be worse than I expected."-

When only fifteen minutes remained before the scheduled start of the lesson, three girls waddled in like they owned the place. Lith threw a quick glance in the back rows, and judging from the cowering behind the desks, the queen was in the house.

After shaking his robe's right sleeve, he braced for impact.

They were chatting among themselves, looking around the class like hungry wolves in a butcher shop. He could hear the one on point, a red-haired girl, say:

"Let's give the new guys a proper welcome."

They walked up the stair, until they were in front of Lith's desk.

"Hey, shorty, what are you doing so close to my desk? Your filthy peasant smell makes me nauseous. Scram to the last row together with the rest of the garbage!"

Said the red-haired girl, that was barely five centimetres (2 inches) taller than him, while her two companions giggled and sneered eerily.

-"What the f*ck?!" Lith thought. "This seems out of Aesop's 'The wolf and the lamb' fable. I bet that even if I was already sitting in the last row, she would harass me for not respecting my seniors or something."

She is looking for a fight, no matter what I do. Solus, let's go with the worst-case scenario contingency plan."-

"I am sorry?" Lith replied with his most innocent tone. "According to the White Griffon rules, I have the right to sit whenever I want. You have no authority to order me around. Please, leave me alone and we can all forget about this incident."

Lith was really disappointed inwardly. A least on Earth bad girls were hot stuff, these three, instead, were barely cute, with average curves and the charisma of a rotting opossum.

"You insolent fool!" She snarled at him. "Don't you know who I am? I..."

At that point, Lith activated his Hush spell on both his ears, preventing himself to hear the load of bullsh*t the girl was spewing.

He knew his temper enough to know that otherwise he would have probably lost his cool, especially if she mentioned his family. Falling for their provocations would mean giving them and others an excuse to harass him.

-"Hey, Solus, I can't read lips, but I guess she is making herself appear high and mighty, flaunting her family status. All while belittling me and my physical appearance. How close did I get?"

"Very close. By my maker, this girl really has a way with words. If I had a body, I would kick her a*s already. The things she is saying about you! She is just the worst! Not to mention those two harpies, ganging up with her at the right time."

"Please, do not give me any details. I am already outraged, don't add any more fuel to the fire. It's time to put the Headmaster's word to the test. I won't stand for this sh*t one more..."

Before he could complete the thought, Solus interrupted both him and the spells.

"That's your cue!"- Lith barely made in time to listen to the:

"Are you listening to me?"

"For the gods' sake no, sweetheart. Your voice is so squeaky that it would make me rip my ears off, if I had to actually listen to all your whining and ranting."

The three girls were silenced out of shock.

"Sweetheart?" Someone in the classroom echoed.

"It's just a figure of speech, of course." Lith replied as it had been the leader of the pack speaking.

"You're not blind. I'm pretty sure that, despite your over inflated ego, you know deep inside your rotten heart that you are almost as ugly on the outside as you are on the inside.

We have nobles even in my backwater village, but you win the prize for the one with the longest stick up her a*s and biggest sh*t in her nose hands down, that much I have to give it to you."

Lith had only one way out of that situation, the least he could do was let off his chest all the pent-up rage.

"How... How dare you?!" The girl face had turned purple, her eyes were popping out of rage and brimming with mana.

"Look, kid, the lesson is about to begin and I'm already bored. Maybe you are used to scare people with your ugly mug and annoying voice, but I faced much worse in my life. Now scram, before I report you for harassment.

This isn't your home, this is one of the six great academies, it has rules!"

Since they meant to harm him anyway, he would give them all the rope they wanted, hoping they would end up hanging themselves with it.

The girl laughed heartily.

"Rules? I don't give a damn about the rules, I could kill you right here and now and get away with it in less than an hour. Do you think any of these cowards would dare to say a word?

That anyone from a noble or magician family would waste even one breath for a filthy peasant? The likes of you shouldn't even be here, your kind does nothing but taint this place and ruin magic's good name."

Lith stood up indignant, ready for the grand finale.

"How dare you? I spoke with the Headmaster when I enrolled, he said..."

The girl on his left cut him short.

"Who? That loser? My father says he is so young that he probably still wets himself at night."

"He is just a strawman, like all the Headmasters." Added the one on his right. "He is just a puppet in the hands of the great families. You are all alone in here, country sh*t."

The leader of the pack had regained confidence, her arms were crossed in front of her chest, a smug grin going from ear to ear.

"Now get your filthy a*s out of that chair, kneel to me and lick my shoes clean. If you do it, I promise not to beat you too hard."

Their fists were now set ablaze, their mouths and hands moving in unison, each one casting a different spell.

Lith just took his right hand out the robe's long sleeve, revealing a small black sphere. Magic was gently coursing and pulsing within it.

He put it front of her horrified face, the smiles and spells had disappeared, the whole class fell silent.

"Once more, with feeling"

Chapter 58 Aftermath

"A Coward's End?!" The classroom exploded with exclamations of shock and outrage. Everyone knew what it was, but no one had actually used it in years, to the point it was considered just a myth.

"How despicable!" The leader of the pack was desperately trying to search for a way out, this was the first time she had her back against a wall.

"You made me say those things, I just fell into your trap, it's all your fault!"

Lith laughed his a*s off.

"Seriously? That's your excuse? 'He made me do it'? You did it all by yourself, and everything that happened since I walked in the classroom has been recorded. I doubt anyone would find an image of me begging to get my a*s kicked."

She had realized the idiocy of her plan the moment she said it out loud, so she decided for a subtler approach.

"Look, I get it. We started with the wrong foot, but we can still fix everything."

"But of course! I can report everything to the Headmaster or use the Ballot for summoning help, either way you'll permanently be out of my hair forever."

The girl turned as pale as a ghost, but refused to back down.

"Don't you have any shame? Incapable of doing anything on your own, hiding behind a crutch made for cripples and weaklings? It's no surprise that you commoners can't get any respect in here, you do not deserve it!"

Lith laughed even harder.

"Playing the pride card? Maybe if I was a five-year-old, it could even work. But you know what? It's rich hearing a speech about shame and incapacity from you. The pot calling the kettle black.

You are three years older than me, and together with your friends gang up against one. To make things worse, the only reason you did it was to torment someone you consider an inferior being, just because you think that you are untouchable.

You can call me a coward for using a Ballot, but then what's your excuse? You are nothing but three pathetic little girls, used to hide behind their parents, that cower in fear when they have to face the consequences of their foolish actions.

It's not being brave or strong, when the only reason you are so cocky is because of your family name. That's cheating. If you really think what you are doing is right, you should attack me, Ballot or not Ballot, uncaring of the consequences.

After all, the Headmaster is just a puppet, your words. If the White Griffon is really in your hands, what do you have to fear? But if you do not make a move, it's because you know that you are wrong, and that you are just a hypocrite!"

She wanted to kill that little bastard, shove all his words down his throat, but she could not, and neither could her friends. They were already at risk of being expelled, the only option remaining was damage control.

The Headmaster had issued a zero-tolerance policy against bullying, and everyone in the Court knew that there was the hand of the Queen pulling his strings.

Her father, Duke Hertia, had been crystal clear with her.

"Do whatever you want, I'll cover for you as long as you don't get caught red handed. I don't give a sh*t about commoners' or small nobles' lives, but I worked too hard to lose everything for such a petty reason.

If you are so incompetent to leave proofs, our family will be put under scrutiny, our assets frozen during all the investigation. I'd rather throw you to the wolves, than putting the family name at risk. I can always have another daughter, after all.

It's only my Dukedom that's irreplaceable."

Too many mages had defected the Griffon Kingdom after graduating from the academies, trading all the secrets they had learned in exchange for the promise of revenge and riches.

The system had proven to be corrupt decades ago, but now it was crumbling under its own weight, snowballing out of control faster and faster.

Despite the noble families and magicians' bloodlines had always opposed to the changes, after losing two Magus level mages due to the unfair treatment they had received, both the Queen and the Mage Association were out for blood.

During the past year, Duke Moniar's son had been proven guilty of causing a brilliant young mage to move to the Gorgon Empire, where he revealed to possess an outstanding talent.

The Duke had defended his son's action until the verdict, and ended up serving the same sentence. The Queen had stripped him of his title and all of his possessions, passing them to the next of kin.

He took his life the day after, incapable of accepting the loss.

The standstill between Lith and the girls lasted until Professor Trasque entered into the room. Lith walked up to him, the Ballot still in hand.

- "Please, don't be a jerk. My day has barely started but there still plenty of time for going from the frying pan to the fire. Please, don't be a jerk!" He wished as strong as he could. -

When Lith regained his cool, he noticed that Professor Trasque was fairly young. He was pretty handsome, around thirty years old, one meter and eighty-two centimetres (6') high and with the build of an athlete.

His dark brown hair had a military cut, yet he had a stubble, no robe and the sleeves of his shirt were rolled up to the elbows, revealing his muscular arms.

- "Seems more an adventurer than an academic. Either way, judging from his age, he should be one of the professors the Headmaster handpicked. I need some frigging luck!" He thought. -

Lith bowed deeply to him before speaking.

"Professor Trasque, please I need to report to the Headmaster. My name is Lith from Lustria and..."

An odd light shone in Trasque's eyes at those words.

"The sassy kid! I knew I recognized your face from somewhere. Man, did you really manage to get into trouble even before the first period? This academy is way sh*ttier than I thought. Who's the jacka*s this time?"

Still dazed from the professor's mettle, Lith managed to point at the three girls.

"Hmm. I have no idea who they are. It's my first year too, you know. But I'm sure that with the coward's... I mean the Ballot, we'll solve everything in a jiffy. Go get them, tiger. I'll wait for your return before starting the lesson."

After almost drowning Lith with his words, the chatterbox stamped his left foot, opening a Warp Steps straight to the Headmaster's office. As soon as Lith crossed the threshold, it closed behind him.

Lith greeted him with a small bow, too depressed to keep up with etiquette, handing him the Guilt Ballot without saying a word.

"Already?" Linjos was even more shocked than Lith.

"Yes. I don't know the range of this thing, but they called it 'a proper welcome'. So much for a safe environment."

Linjos took the Ballot, placing it on a small tripod. It projected a 3D hologram of the recording, starting from the moment Lith had taken it out from the cuffs.

Contrary to Lith's expectations, even that phrase was perfectly audible by adjusting the audio settings.

When it ended, Linjos was hiding his face between his hands, full of shame and embarrassment.

"I'm so sorry, I had no idea the situation is so dire. A Headmaster that has no knowledge or control of his own academy, I must look like a fool in your eyes."

- "That's quite an understatement." Lith thought, but since his entire academic career rested on Linjos' shoulders, he decided to give him the benefit of the doubt. -

"Headmaster, I don't mean to be rude, really, but that was the daughter of a Duke. Right now, what really concerns me is what will happen to her, to me, and more importantly, what can you do to guarantee my family's safety."

Lith was seriously worried about the consequences of that clash, but he couldn't back down again and again out of fear. Even forgoing wasn't worth having his self-esteem and body broken every time some rich kid wanted to have fun at his expenses.

Linjos didn't fail to notice how depressed and downcast Lith was, and that hurt even more than just his pride. He had failed another of his precious students.

"Don't worry about it. The three of them will be punished according to the rules. As I said to you the day we met, I don't do favouritism. You are the victim, nothing will happen to you.

And your family is safe, as a student, every single one of them is under the protection of the Mage Association, not even a Duke would dare defying their will."

"Yeah, right." Lith scoffed. "Like I should have been safe here, nobles shouldn't abuse their status, and so on. Again, I mean no disrespect, Headmaster, but reality doesn't give a damn about 'should'

and 'could'.

People do things simply because they can, especially when they know they will go unpunished. What do you think would have happened if I didn't have the Ballot? You would probably be scraping off the floor my remains with a spoon.

Officially, my only backer is Count Lark, and to make things worse, a Duke is a title even higher than a Marchioness. I don't think Duke Hestia would be much impressed by a piece of paper that says 'Please don't. Be a good man'."

At those words, Linjos had a dazed expression, then he shook his head and took a deep breath.

"I'm sorry, Lith, I forgot you know nothing about these matters. After all you are just..."

- "Is he really going to add insult to the injury?" Lith thought. -

Yet Linjos stopped in time, managing to correct himself by the skin of his teeth.

"...unfamiliar of how seriously this kind of things are considered. You see, every magician, but especially the students that have yet to reveal their true potential, are all considered as properties of the Crown.

That's why all the academies' uniforms are so flashy to the point of being almost tacky. It's a warning, just like for poisonous animals. Harming one of you, or using your families as a bargain chip, is considered an act of treason against the Kingdom.

Treason is the worst crime anyone could commit, is the equivalent of harming the King himself, and is punished by torturing and killing not only the responsible, but also his bloodline until the third generation, with no exceptions.

It's an open secret in the Court, that once one gets admitted to an academy, a full team of royal spies watch his/her loved ones 24/7. That serves the purpose of protecting them from internal and external enemies.

Without such precautions, envoys of the Gorgon Empire or any other powerful influence, could coerce our students in betraying their country. No one would be so stupid to leave a gold mine unprotected.

As much as it saddens me to say it, in all the academies' history, the successful attempts can be counted on one hand. The real problem is what happens within the academy walls."

- "Records can be forged, and spies can get bribed." Lith thought. -

"Are you sure is not better for me to drop off the academy and take private lessons? Power and prestige are meaningless to me if I have to one to return to..."

"Over my dead body!" The Headmaster jumped up from his chair, it was the first time for Lith seeing him angry.

"I didn't tell you earlier to not put pressure on you, but our labs have finished analysing the poison you extracted. When they knew that you also applied for a Master healer specialization, well, let's just say that the Light department has the butterflies in the stomach at the idea of having you among their ranks.

You have already been marked as an A rank student. As such, your family's security detail is composed only by members of the Queen personal units. Would you like me to tighten the security even more?"

"Yes, please." The Headmaster left the room to give the proper instructions, and Lith used that opportunity to contact the Marchioness, explaining her the situation and asking for help.

"Duke Hertia, I know him well." She said. "He's a venomous snake, but he is very greedy. He would rather exterminate his whole family rather than losing an inch of authority or prestige. If Linjos said he will take care of it, you can believe him.

I made a full background check on him, he is really the good guy he seems."

"Do you still have your extraordinary authority?" Lith asked.

"Yes, why?"

"If it was your family, what would you do?"

"Everything I can, I get it. I'll make sure the Association does his job properly, and put some extra guards in Lutia. If anything happens, I'll make you know."

After thanking her profusely, Lith interrupted the communication.

- "A rank, uh? So far so good." Lith thought, but he felt no joy for his achievement.

"I put myself in this golden cage, it's time to put its bars to the test. I don't give a sh*t about Dukes, Queens and politics. If anything befalls my family, I will put everything I have to wipe out the Griffon Kingdom off the maps!" -

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Lith returned to the classroom with another Warp Steps, so the first period ended to be delayed by only twenty minutes.

Professor Trasque winked at him with a kind smile, sending him back to his desk before starting the lesson.

The three girls had been forced to stand up alongside the chalkboard the whole time.

"There's no reason for you to get comfortable, since you are going to leave us soon." Trasque had a cold smile the whole time, he seemed to be taking great joy from their misfortune.

As soon as Lith returned, the three girls were called in the Headmaster's office. Only then the Warp Steps closed and the lesson began.

"First of all, let me introduce myself. My name is Jian Trasque, and I was born a commoner." He took a long pause, letting those word echo through the class, taking a mental note of whoever made a disgusted or disapproving face, for future reference.

"Back in my days, I got rejected by the Fire Griffon academy. I was forced to join the Association as a home-schooled, and then worked my way up as an adventurer, until I managed to get my specializations.

My talent has been acknowledged to the point that I was offered a position as a Professor in this academy, and the Fire Griffon Headmaster got fired for being an incompetent old fool. If any of you shares his vision, feel free to join him."

Trasque pointed at the door.

"No one? Well, then let's start with the good stuff. Theory of Combat Magic, you'll be asking yourselves: what the heck does it even mean? You all are proficient in the first three tiers of magic, what I could possibly teach you?

The answer is: how to keep you alive by revealing the true value of the so neglected chore magic. I know, the name is horrible, but since the dawn of academies has helped examiners to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Have you ever asked yourselves why it was the first thing they required you to perform? Because here, inside one of the great academies, from now on you'll learn how to love and respect it with its true name: the first magic.

First magic is the reason why a mage can live long enough to have children. Sure, is weak, but do you really believe you'd have the time for even a tier one spell if someone tries to stab you? The answer is: no, you wouldn't.

Without first magic you would die, wasting all the time, effort and money that your parents and the academy have invested in your formation."

The lesson proceeded with Trasque making examples of different life and death situations and how to survive by using simple tricks of first magic.

Most of the class was furiously taking notes, only Lith and a few others of the over two hundred attendees would look around, surprised by the ignorance of their peers.

- "Can you believe, it, Solus? Those noobs are taking notes with a frigging pen! Now I understand why this course is mandatory for all. I doubt many others have spent the last eight years hunting and refining their skills."

"First magic." Solus pondered. "For a second I expected him to call it true magic. Most of the tricks he is explaining, you invented them back in the crib. If all his lessons are like this one, it will be quite boring."-

After two hours, the lesson came to an end.

"And that's it for the explanations. This part is covered, albeit less charmingly, in the first twenty pages of your book. For the next lesson, I expect you to know them inside out, together with pages from twenty to fifty.

The best way to learn the theory behind a fight, is experiencing it first-hand, so we won't meet again in a classroom, but only in training rooms. From the fourth year onwards, you are required to get your hands dirty.

You will study in your free time, if you need to. The same stands for all classes, the first lesson is explanatory, then comes only practice. Those who don't keep up will fail and be expelled. Remember that there are no second chances, always give your best."

All the students had worried expressions, one thing was reading and memorizing from a book, having an exam every three months. Another was being constantly tested, day after day, pushing you to your limit.

Since the next lesson was also a mandatory course for all, the class wouldn't change. There would just be a short break before the next Professor arrived. Lith took immediately out the Ballot, just to stay on safe side.

As Linjos had predicted, Lith's desk was avoided like the plague, all the students threw him looks filled with contempt and disgust, even the commoners from the last rows.

- "Well, at least they all agree on something." He thought. -

Lith stood up to stretch his legs a little bit, and he noticed that wherever he would go, people would make way for him, keeping themselves at least two meters (2.2 yards) away.

- "That's actually pretty sweet. I wish had a Ballot whenever the metro was too crowded or every time I got stuck in a line. He travels best who travels alone."-

Lith checked up his schedule, Professor Nalear was in charge of Principles of Advanced Magic.

"Another cryptic title. It's too bad they have yet to give us our books, or I would already have stored them inside Soluspedia. I don't have the time to read it the old-fashioned way. Damn if I hate riddles."-

When Professor Nalear entered the room, Lith's heart skipped a beat.

She was in her mid-twenties, around 1.7 meters (5'7") high. Her face had an oval shape with delicate features, her honey blonde hair with shades of purple were pulled back in a pony-tail.

She wore almost no make-up, accentuating her natural beauty. Despite her robe being completely buttoned up, it was not baggy enough for Lith's highly trained male eyes to be incapable of measuring her three sizes.

With every stride she took, he was able to appreciate her soft curves more and more.

- "Wow! She is stunning!" Solus commented. "After the swimsuit model Professor Trasque, I'd say that Linjos had quite the taste in picking the new staff, right Lith? Lith?!"

Solus was worried, her host head was empty. She could only hear some kind of white noise.

"Lith, are you alive or what?" She mentally screamed, making him regain his rationality.

"Solus, I'm in trouble. The woman that just walked in is a 10/10 on my personal scale. I never believed a real 10 could actually exist in real life! And even worse, this stupid body has just decided to experience its first crush!"

Solus was flabbergasted.

"Are you crazy? Right here and now? With all that is at stake, you want to become the teacher's pet?"

"Do you think I have any choice? I know that a twelve-year boy has less chances with her than a snowball on the Sun, the problem is that my body doesn't give a damn! It was only a matter of time before hormones would screw up my teenage life.

I need your help to keep my cool and avoid acting like an idiot. It's a lost cause, but at least we can do damage control. Please, I want to avoid shameful memories like those from high school!"

"I'll do my best." Solus assured him, soothing his chaotic thoughts and draining the excess mental energy. -

"Good morning, boys and girls. My name is Valesa Nalear, nice to meet you all."

Her voice was nothing special, but to Lith's ears was a choir of harps and violins.

While looking around, she noticed that some spots in the classroom were packed, yet there were still lots of available seats around Lith. When she asked for an explanation, Lith raised the Ballot in his right hand.

Her upper lip curled up in an expression of disgust.

"Despicable." Her words sounded like she was trying to spit something disgusting out of her mouth.

The whole class erupted with mockery and laughter. Strong of the teacher's support, many students threw some trash at Lith, despite the Ballot.

Lith felt his heart sank. All the warmth he had felt until a second ago, the silly hopes and dreams of friendship bordering love that he had nurtured, burst like a bubble. Only cold and darkness remained inside of him, making even that pain feel good.

- "That's right." He thought. "Do you see now, stupid pubescent body? That's what happens when you lower your guard. Wishful thinking bears only sour fruits made of tears and disappointment.

The silver lining is that I managed to put an end to this mad crush fast, sparing me countless humiliations. I must remember it, and remember it well. Rule #1: trust no one. Always expect the worst out of everybody, and you'll never be disappointed."-

The class was still laughing, when Professor Nalear roared:

"Silence!"

When the shower of garbage ceased and order returned to the classroom, she spoke with a voice full of rage, her green eyes reduced to two fiery slits.

"I wasn't talking about him, but about you filthy maggots!"

- "Or not!" Lith thought, surprised by that sudden turn of events. -

She looked at the various groups of people all over the class, glaring at them with fury, while a blue aura emerged from her body, making her robe move like she was amid a storm.

Her hands moved too quick for the eyes to see, even Lith's heightened senses could only perceive a blur. Suddenly, one of the guys that had thrown trash at Lith was suddenly pulled toward Nalear.

He was floating in mid-air, desperately holding his neck, gasping for air.

- "Isn't that spirit magic?!" Lith thought, shocked. "It closely resembles my Spirit Choke, I can barely spot any difference. Could she be a true mage too?"-

"You b*stards!" She roared. "Do you have any idea what the likes of you pulled me through during my academy years?"

Only because I was a pretty girl and my father was just a lowly knight, you guys always tried to turn me into your plaything, harassing and molesting me every single day. But the worst always came from my so called 'girlfriends'."

Her hands moved again, pulling another of those who had thrown trash, but this time it was fifteen years old girl, wearing a heavy make-up.

"Always calling me a sl*t at my back, spreading rumors and trying to lure me into traps to give their male friends the opportunity to 'have some fun'. And that only because I was more talented than them, so they needed to 'put me in my place'.

The only reason I am still alive and sane up to this day, is because I too took a Guilty Ballot!"

The two youths in mid-air had started to turn purple, their eyes shedding tears of fear and desperation.

"What's the matter?" She mocked them. "Aren't we just having fun among friends? According to your rules, might makes right. Not only I am a Professor at this academy, I'm also an archmage, which puts me at the level of an archduke."

She looked straight in the boy's eyes, grabbing his throat and lifting him up with only one hand.

"That makes your father's Marquis title a joke. I could kill you right here and now, and then claim you tried to r*pe me. Not only no one would dare to doubt my word, I could even ask for satisfaction, personally wiping out all your filthy family!"

She then did the same to the girl, her feet daggling in the air in search of support.

"And what about you, ugly b*tch? Why are you not laughing anymore? Why don't you go crying to your mommy, Duchess Baran? I want to see her face when I will rip your heart out in front of her eyes and make her eat it raw as an apology for being weaker than me!"

Only when their faces turned blue for the lack of air, she let them go, throwing them away like trash. Professor Nalear immediately conjured water, washing her hands like touching those two could stain her very being.

- "By my maker!" Solus was blown away. "Now I finally understand! Headmaster Linjos didn't choose his staff based on physical appearance. He replaced the old professors with talented people that have been victims of the system in the past!

This way not only he is sure to have at his service someone that can truly empathise with the victims, but also people that will never back down in front of abuses of power. They are all hell-bent on revenge, if they cannot change the system from inside, no one can."

Despite their symbiotic link, Lith wasn't able to hear a single thought Solus had sent to him. He watched the events happening in front of him in a daze, his mind blank, incapable of accepting reality.

"Please, marry me." He suddenly blurted out loud.

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When Lith realized what he had done, it was already too late. His face blushed up, even the end of his ears turned to bright red.

- "Smooth move, stud." Solus mocked him mercilessly. "Too bad you forgot the flowers, the chocolate, and more importantly, the ring. What will she think of such poor performance?" -

Professor Nalear giggled, making Lith turn to an even brighter shade of red. He felt so ashamed of himself, that he could only hide his face between his hands, incapable of watching her, while banging his head on the desk.

- "You f*cking idiot!" He inwardly screamed. "Since when do I have a d*ck for brains? Just when I thought that things couldn't get any worse, I turn out to be my worst enemy." -

"I'm honestly flattered by your feelings..." She said while still chuckling.

"... but I'm not into kids. I'm looking for a tall and strong mage as a life companion. If in six years I'm still single and you haven't changed your mind, I will be happy to resume this conversation."

Lith wanted to cry and run away, spending the rest of his life hiding in the deepest hole he could find. But he had already made a fool out of himself, there was no reason to add insult to injury.

He took some deep breaths to calm down, using water magic to cool down both his face and nether regions, finally regaining his focus.

- "If I apologize, I will make everything worse." He thought. "She reacted like I was joking, let's play along. The more I stir it, the more it will stink." -

"Now, before going back to the course's topic, one last word of warning for you scum. The next time I catch you doing something disrespectful towards one of your classmates, I will make every single one of you regret not having a Guilty Ballot.

Are we clear?"

No one dared to reply.

"Perfect. Let's forget about your pathetic, miserable existences, so I can explain to you what Principles of Advanced Magic is about."

She approached the chalkboard, a long and thin piece of mineral appeared out of thin air in her hand, allowing her to draw a human silhouette.

"As you should already know from your first three years, every human possesses a certain degree of talent for magic. The extent of such talent is defined by the amount of mana one has stored into his mana well."

Lith followed her speech with interest.

- "So, they really have no concept of the mana core." He thought. -

"An individual talent can be roughly split into three categories: the normal human, ..." She hit the chalkboard at the level of the silhouette's knees, and suddenly the empty space within it was filled by a glowing blue light up to that point.

"... the magico/magica, ..." This time the mineral hit at the chest level, and the light rose up accordingly.

"...and finally, the mage." The whole empty space within the silhouette was now filled to the brim with a pulsing blue colour.

"While performing the first three tiers of magic, hands signs and magic words are the equivalent of a bucket, that once dropped in the mana well allows you to extract the right amount of power.

Hence, the spellcasting will be successful, as long as you are capable of forming a perfect bucket. Sadly, from tier four and up, this process no longer works.

This kind of magic requires such an amount of mana, that there are only two ways of extracting it from the well. The first one, that you can learn in minor academies or in the books available for purchase, is to create a bigger bucket.

This method is feasible, but most of the time impractical. It requires so many magic words, hand signs so complicated that either your opponent is a rock, or you work with a team that keeps it occupied during a very long spellcasting time.

Just like using a bucket too big and heavy, extracting mana that way out of the well requires much more time and effort than just using the old bucket twice."

- "What the f*ck?! This is exactly what I learned from Lark's books. This explains why it took me so long to perform them correctly with fake magic." -

"The second one, is only available in one of the six great academies. What I am going to teach you, has its roots in the first magic's multi casting skills. Professor Trasque should have stressed already the importance of first magic, right?"

The whole class nodded.

"Multi casting means the talent to form and control more than one bucket at the time. Let's say that a mage capable of double casting, potentially can control up to two buckets. That's the minimum requirement for tier four spells.

Some may require even three, while only tier five magic demands an even higher multi casting capability. Please, understand that all this talk about buckets and water is just an oversimplification.

In advanced magic, mental visualization is a key element for success. You can choose to imagine it as a jar of wine, a chest full of gold, whatever fits your bill is fine. Always remember that the second method has a much faster cast time in exchange for a greater focus and mental strength.

It's up to you to learn how to form and control more than one 'bucket' at the time. Hand signs and magic words are still necessary to form the first one, then you need to be able to sense it and generate as many copies as you can.

Those who are incapable of learning such method by the end of the academic year, will be dismissed as of insufficient talent. Money and status cannot help you, only talent and hard work will guarantee your promotion."

The lesson went on for another two hours, and soon was lunchtime.

Lith was so engrossed in what he had learned, that he completely forgot about his crush and the poor impression his previous marriage proposal could have left.

He said goodbye to Professor Nalear before leaving the classroom, but didn't give her a second look or even a thought.

- "The more I learn, the more fake magic does indeed resemble true magic, but most of the things she explained are completely wrong. The only right thing she said was about mental visualization.

If one does not realize the existence of the mana core, the approach about magic is too passive to be effective. It's not a matter of water and buckets, more like about how to build and fine-tune a power plant that can provide energy for countless applications.

According to her theory, a fake mage with 100 mana points can only produce as much energy.

A true mage, instead, despite having the same amount of mana, by stimulating the core can generate an output that depends on the situation, bringing it up to 120, or even 150 if necessary.

Sure, the physical burden would be remarkable, but everything is better than being dead. Not to mention that this difference allows a true mage a versatility that fake mages can only dream about."

-

Thanks to the academy map stored in Soluspedia, Lith was able to move faster than anyone else. While others would get lost or needed to get directions, he managed to arrive at the canteen first.

Once again, the skill of the Forgemasters left him speechless. It was nothing like his old high school cafeteria. There was no cash register, no need to form a line or pick up a tray.

The room was of rectangular shape, five meters (16'5") high, with the long side 200 meters (219 yards) long and the short side 100 (110 yards) meters long. Except for the door he came from and the floor, all the other walls had been turned into windows on the outside world.

Lith knew that above the fourth floor, where he currently was, there was still the floor for the fifth year and many others, yet by looking up he was able to see the brilliant light of noon.

The room, like all the others, was perfectly lighted. The whole canteen was filled with rectangular dinner tables, each one capable of accommodating up to six people.

The tables were evenly spaced among them, allowing to walk to and fro them with ease, even when the room was at its max capacity.

Lith chose a corner table with a corner seat. Having a wall behind him and another at his left, no one could get to his back without him noticing.

- "Interesting, they choose to make the cafeteria look like a panoramic restaurant. Probably to let the students remember how the outside world looks like, and to avoid the claustrophobic feel that windowless rooms give." -

Once he sat down, he discovered that the chair was somewhat bolted to the ground. Lith could not move it, but as soon his butt touched the cushion, the seat auto adjusted its height and size to a perfect fit.

The only thing left for him to do was placing his order. Lith put his hands on the table, injecting a small amount of mana, activating the embedded communication device.

"I'll take fillet steak, 2 centimetres (0,8 inch) high, medium rare. Also, a vegetables cream soup, a side or roasted spiced potatoes. To drink red wine or beer are equally fine."

A small Warp Steps appeared in front of him, delivering his order with the exception of the alcohol.

"Sorry, sir." Said a voice coming up from the still open Warp Steps.

"Only sixteen years old students are allowed to drink fermented beverages, and only moderate quantities. You can choose between water, milk and fruit juice."

Lith sighed deeply. It would not be the same without some spirits to lighten up his heavy mood.

"I'll take water."

Soon he completely forgot about his problems, the academy's chefs were worthy of a five-star restaurant. The meat was tender and juicy, without nerves. It simply melted in his mouth.

The potatoes were crispy on the outside and tender on the inside, spicy enough to make his blood run and pleasantly tickle his tongue.

The cream soup was excellent as well, but Lith ate it for last. He hated vegetables, of any form and kind. Yet he left the plate clean, he knew how important it was keeping his diet balanced while his growth spurt approached.

He managed to enjoy his whole meal, ignoring the people around him and only looking at the forest outside. It stretched as long as his eye could see, and during his brief time in the canteen he was able to spot many beasts and herbs he had never seen before.

- "I wish I could take seconds, but if I eat too much, I will be so sleepy that I will be barely able to pay attention. It's my first lesson for my Master healer specialization, and first impression is very important."-

Despite considering himself to already be a great healer, Lith was really curious about tier four light spells, since there was none in all the books he had previously access to.

- "Over the years, there were so many things that I wasn't able to come up with a solution for, so many patients I have lost. This is my occasion to learn from the masters and impress them.

If I manage to keep my status as an A rank student, my life will be much easier!" -