

Supreme M 96

Chapter 96 A True Genius Worries

After dimensional magic, it was time for the specialization lessons. Professor Nalear's course was on forced hold. The number of students requiring a second evaluation had far exceeded expectations, a day hadn't been enough.

Phloria had the rest of the morning free, while Lith and the others went to the Master Healer class. Once at the academy's hospital, the students discovered that Professor Vastor had organized a small refreshment before officially starting the new trimester.

The class had gone down from thirty-four to twenty-eight student, and some of them had barely broke a C. Between those who had lost a friend and the ones terrified at the idea of suffering the same fate, very few were in the mood for celebration.

Vastor didn't seem to notice, though, and even if the report cards were supposed to be a secret, it wasn't hard to guess grades based on how he treated the different students. He devoted a lot of attention to Quylla and Lith, arousing the envy of many.

Those who like Professor Rudd were biased against commoners' bloodlines, would have given an arm and a leg to get the opportunity to teach them a lesson.

Yet they were well aware that because of the Ballots, the best they could do was get demoted from unsuccessful mages to expelled ones. Not to mention that instead of being reprimanded, Vastor had received an award for beating unruly students during the mock exam.

"Keep working hard, my dear pupils. And remember what I said at the beginning of our lessons. After the second trimester the class will be halved. We will be lucky if twenty of you manage to actually graduate as healers."

From how he was looking at the angered students, he had got a taste for it.

During the lesson, Lith's group had finally the opportunity to take the lead in delicate procedures like re growing lost limbs and organs.

Previously, the three men teams, one responsible for the regeneration and the other for keeping the patient's vitals stable, were both comprised of two professors and only one student.

Now the balance had shifted, and only a professor remained in each team.

When Quylla and Lith weren't in charge of one of the teams, Professor Vastor would always put them as second in command, ready to take over the procedure in case anything went wrong.

It took Lith a few patients to understand all the quirks and risks of regenerating a lost limb. The tier four spell couldn't be handled by just mindlessly pumping mana, or everyone could have done it, even without a specialization.

The whole process revolved around a delicate balance between the two groups of healers, with the patient as their fulcrum. The mage leading the regeneration had to keep the spell active, while giving the patient's body the time to rejuvenate.

With too short intervals between mana pulses, most of their effectiveness would be lost, making the procedure longer and more difficult. Also, it would put a great stress on the patient's body, with the risk that the new limb would be defective.

One had to give the vitals support team the time to reintegrate the patient's lost vitality during the process, burdening his metabolism as little as possible. The second team acted as a life force IV, but the drip rate had to be manually adjusted depending on the circumstances.

Too fast and the energy would be lost, just giving the patient a sensation of euphoria. Too slow and the massive drain caused by the regeneration could kill or permanently incapacitate him.

The teams had to coordinate between themselves, the first sending mana pulses spaced enough to allow the life force infusion to be effective, the second adjusting the flow whenever was necessary, to avoid the regenerative spell to be interrupted by a too prolonged pause.

Lith and Quylla quickly mastered both roles, receiving many compliments from the medical staff and thirty points from Professor Vastor. They were the only ones that despite occasionally losing control of the spell, would manage to fix things on their own, without needing a Professor to take over.

In Lith's case, he did it on purpose. Thanks to Invigoration, he was capable of having complete awareness of the patient's status.

Lith could understand with a glance when more life force was necessary or not, instructing the other team to speed up or slow down, and time the regenerating pulses so that the next one would arrive only when the previous was already losing effectiveness.

Yet he had to make mistakes, achieving perfection from day one would have been too eye-catching.

Even with the help of true magic, the task took a heavy toll on both his mind and body. The stress of handling a human life put a huge pressure on everyone, the patients were real persons and not test dummies anymore.

Because of the long pre operation phase, the students had been forced to spend time with them during the previous semester, to talk and know them personally. It was impossible to consider their lives just a number in their success/failure ratio.

And while Lith used Invigoration, the others could only rely on their magic sensitivity, listening to the patients' pulse and keeping an eye on their complexion and pain.

It was something incredibly hard, Lith had no idea how others could manage to do it.

The scariest thing was that despite all that, Quylla was just a few steps behind him. Even if stuck with fake magic, she was able to absorb like a sponge all the notions and suggestions Professor Vastor gave them, managing to get in tune with every patient.

Lith would have never been capable of doing that, at least not that fast. He learned by experience, little by little with every procedure, using Invigoration as a guiding hand whenever he had a doubt.

The more time they spent together, the more aware he was that it was only a matter of time before she revealed herself to be a genius. Her mana core was already on par with Lith's.

- "I can only pat myself in the back for taking care of her for all this time. If necessity ever arises, she can become an invaluable asset.

If she really is an S class healer, she'll relieve me of all the unnecessary attentions, avoiding for a simple A class talent like me to be pressured.

Besides, it's not like she can threaten my position. With my knowledge of biochemistry, biology and anatomy, I will always be the top in the theoretical field.

Who would ever guessed that all the extra credits seminars for the college would pay off like that?"

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All the other students didn't know if to laugh or cry at their helplessness. Envy and shame fought in their hearts, like two lions tumbling down a cliff. No matter which one would win, the result would be the same.

Even Yurial and Friya felt a tinge of jealousy while comparing themselves to them. But most of all, they were proud and happy for their friends. Lith had helped them countless times in the past, never asking anything in return.

What had started as a simple business relationship, had evolved in honest friendship.

As for Quylla, they could never resent her. At the beginning, Yurial had approached her just out of curiosity. He had considered her like a pet, someone talented that would be easy to manipulate due to her childish naivety and poor background.

But Quylla's growth as a person and mage had stunned him, leading Yurial to shed his prejudices and accept her as a peer. Now, after three months together, he felt deeply ashamed of his initial attitude towards her, and was trying to make amends.

Friya, instead, liked to think of her as the little sister she had always wanted. Quylla was honest and had a big heart. Their friendship had developed naturally from their first meeting, both suffering from the constant harassing from the other students.

When Quylla's body had started to change due to the rapid growth induced by the tonic, Friya had helped her managing her first period, teaching her everything about what being a young woman meant, becoming her confident.

When Friya had hit a wall during the Healer specialization, Quylla had volunteered to help her. They had started studying together, and whatever difficulty Friya encountered, Quylla had been always there for her.

She had never talked about her private lessons to anyone, not even trying to impress Lith, for whom Friya knew she had a huge crush. Quylla's humble and gentle nature had moved her beyond what words could express.

Friya had found in a stranger, something that even her own family had always denied her. She was ready to do anything for her little adoptive sister.

As for Quylla, she was thankful for tier four magic being so hard. Her work as a healer, with the constant pressure of having another human's being in her hands, was the only thing forcing her unruly heart to rest.

When they had first met, Yurial was like a Prince Charming out of the fairy tales she read as a kid. He was noble, powerful, rich, handsome, smart, and gentle. Almost too good to be true.

Lith, on the other side, had been more like a demon lord. Cold, scary, brash, talking to everyone like they were ants, glaring with soul chilling dead eyes. But after the first two days, something had changed.

She had noticed how indifferent Yurial actually was, sometimes even forgetting about her existence. Friya was the one actually caring for her, while Lith was... complicated.

When the first magic private lessons had started, he had lost most of his edge, becoming more supportive and helpful than Professor Trasque himself. He was the only one not staring at her for the amount of food she gobbled every day.

On the contrary, he would even encourage her to eat more, and help her keep her diet balanced. Lith would always worry for her safety, encouraging her to pick up a Ballot, even defending her when she still had to get her own.

In the last months, whenever students tried to "casually" bump into her, Lith would switch place with Quylla. No matter how big the other guy was, Lith would remain immovable like a mountain, while the other would fall on his a*s wincing in pain.

After a month from their first meeting, when she had her first period, he had been the one noticing her distress, relieving the pain with one of his personal spells and bringing her to Friya to get help.

As a healer, he was bound to know everything about it too, yet he had the sensitivity to avoid embarrassing her, letting another woman help her face that awkward situation.

It was after that moment that something inside Quylla had changed. Whenever she saw him, she would get butterflies in her stomach, her mouth would go dry. Each time they spoke, she needed sheer willpower to not speak fast, or giggle at everything he said.

Over time, he had become gentler and kinder, helping them whenever he could during the private lessons, answering all their questions and giving them pointers.

She started to admire his cold attitude towards strangers, not giving a damn about what they thought or said, having eyes only for his friends. Lith soon revealed to be wise beyond his years, knowing many things and having anecdotes about almost everything.

Sometimes, when they walked side by side, their hands casually touched. In those moments, she felt really hard to resist the compulsion to take his hand, to feel his warmth.

Other times, when she was alone in her room, her mind would go crazy with fantasies and delusions, making her feeling hot and fuzzy in the strangest places. When Quylla talked about that to Friya, she told her that it was perfectly normal, even though she blushed listening to the question.

When Friya explained what it meant, Quylla thought she would die of embarrassment. Luckily, there were just the two of them, and she knew that she could trust her friend.

Over time, she had learned to manage her feelings, mostly because she was too scared to do anything about them. Except that towards Professor Nalear, Lith seemed to be completely uninterested in girls.

Quylla was conscious that even if thanks to the tonic she was now 1.5 meters (4'11") tall, she was nothing special. Her figure was still undeveloped and very childish. She lacked Friya's curves or

Phloria's innate charisma.

The only thing she could do was stay strong and hope for her feelings to fade away.

Chapter 97 Just a Warning

After the end of the lesson, the group went to lunch, finding Phloria waiting for them at their usual table.

- "I seriously think I have overestimated myself, thinking to be able keeping my nice guy façade for two whole years. If it wasn't for my big brother instinct, I don't know how many times I would have snapped already.

I really don't get these guys at all. To make things worse, no matter how much I force myself, I keep feeling I don't belong with them." – Lith inwardly sighed.

Solus had no idea what to say to make him feel better. Returning to the academy, right after spending some time with the people he loved, had made Lith depressed.

"Hey guys, how was your lesson?" Phloria asked.

"Same old, same old." Yurial shrugged. "Vastor keeps pushing forward those who are good, and spreads salt on the wounds of those who aren't. And while the class struggles with each task, these two monsters keep running circles around us mortals."

"How did your morning go?" Lith tried changing topic. Ever since his encounter with the Scoricore, every time someone called him monster, he could not help but shudder.

He had realized that calling what happened to him 'reincarnation', was far from correct. He was more like an evil spirit from a horror movie, possessing the bodies of the recently deceased.

"Depressingly so. After Professor Rudd's speech, I was eager to check if his subject is really as hard as he says. Well, he lied. It's much worse than that. I spent the last two hours trying the 'parlour trick' we are supposed to perform tomorrow.

I read his book over and over, but I didn't succeed, not even once." She sighed.

"Are you serious?" Friya asked. "We have passed the first part of Professor Nalear's course. Could it be that the spell requires something she has yet to cover in her lessons?"

Everyone at the table turned gloomy. Two hours were the regular duration of a class, Phloria failing so badly was unprecedented, not to mention a bad omen. If she wasn't able to, it was unlikely that any of them could succeed.

Even Lith was on the same boat. Without true magic or Invigoration as crutches, he wasn't much better than them.

- "Solus, what is the average time for succeeding in the pebble trick?"

"More bad news." She replied. "The school records are not helping this time. The only thing reported is the number of lessons for opening a Gate."

"Lessons, not hours? This is worse than I thought. How many for geniuses, and how many for regular students?"

"Geniuses usually need around three lessons, the others around twenty." –

Lith almost choked himself on bread when he heard that piece of news.

"Normally, I'd propose to gobble our lunch fast and go practice dimensional magic, to not let that old coot embarrass us." Friya said.

"But Phloria and I have yet to take our Mage Knight class for today."

"Same, I have Forgemastering later."

"What about we meet at Quylla's place after the end of the lessons?" Yurial proposed. "I bet that with her learning speed, by the time we get there, she will be able to teach us the basics."

That afternoon, much to Lith disappointment, Professor Wanemyre went back to theory lessons. In the first trimester, they had learned how to infuse a single enchantment in an object.

The topic of the new lesson was how to mix two enchantments together, introducing a new set of runes and magic circles whose complexity was on all another level. He was eager to get back in the lab and put them to test.

Because of Soluspedia, when it wasn't involved fine mana control or a particular timing in manipulating volatile energies, such lessons were just redundant for him.

He already knew every rune and circle, so he spent most of the lesson practicing how to draw them perfectly, instead of listening. The second forgemastering tome was a gold mine of inspiration for Lith.

Meanwhile, Yurial was diligently taking notes about the arrays Professor Tinnam was introducing. A Warden had a supportive role, he couldn't cast random spells like most mages.

It was important to understand in what circumstances a magic formation would do more good than harm. Since the Griffon Kingdom was at peace, Yurial had chosen such specialization hoping to help the development of his family's fief.

His wish was to become able to build dams, bridges and roads almost by himself, saving the money to hire more healers and teachers. One of his great-grandmother teachings, was that without its people, a Country was just a piece of land.

The new arrays were even more difficult to perform and hard to control than those of the first trimester, but at least the casting speed was the same. The biggest flaw of a Warden, was the long time necessary for a single spell.

After the lesson, he was about to leave, when he was approached by an old acquaintance. It was Lyam Lukart, the military looking guy that Lith humiliated during Trasque's second lesson.

Yurial knew him because he was the son of archmage Lukart. They had started the academy together, three years prior, but had quickly parted ways. The Lukart family was one of the oldest magician bloodlines, and were pretty stuck up about that.

Despite their fathers held the same status, Lyam had never treated Yurial as a peer, let alone as a friend. Following his family's teachings, he considered the Deirus household a branch family at best.

Having centuries of mystic legacy, a household with only three generations of mages was too young to be considered a real magical bloodline. Lyam demanded blind respect and loyalty from those he deemed inferior.

The Deirus household, instead, didn't give a damn about traditions, respecting only talent and achievements. Yurial couldn't bear Lyam's groundless arrogance, so after a while, he had politely but firmly put a distance between them.

"Deirus, do you have a minute?" Lyam asked.

Yurial put up his best smile, trying to cut that conversation short. Calling Yurial by his last name, was a polite way to underline their difference in status. Whatever Lyam wanted, he wasn't willing to give.

"Not really, Lyam. Dimensional magic seems really hard. I'm in a hurry to practice for tomorrow's lesson." Refusing his request was usually enough. For someone like Lyam, having to ask twice was akin to begging.

"Then let me accompany you for a while, I promise it will not take long."

Yurial was so flabbergasted, that for a second he lost his composure, but was quick to recover. He nodded, prompting the other to continue.

"You have been here as long as I have. What do you think of all the changes Linjos introduced?" The question was odd, but Yurial had no reason to lie or refuse to answer.

"Honestly, I don't know what to think. No finals, that terrifying mock exam, the new Professors and their scoring system. It's too soon to judge his performance, but I must admit that so far things have become more interesting."

That clearly wasn't the answer Lyam hoped to hear. His upper lip curled up in an expression of disgust, without even trying to hide his feelings.

"I get your point." He sighed.

"Tradition has value only for those who contributed crafting it, and live by it. But, you see, many people feel differently about what's happening. First the seed of a bad apple got accepted to one of the six big academies.

Then, an outstanding member of the magical society, like Headmistress Linnea, has lost everything in the name of diversity, just to quench the thirst for revenge of social climbers that got too close to the Queen's ear.

And now the prestigious White Griffon gets rid of its history, treating it as garbage, abolishing finals in favour of this farce of a grading system?" Lyam spat on the floor, uncaring of the disgusted looks people threw at him.

Yet his voice was calm and collected, Yurial doubted that anyone beside him could hear anything.

"Many people, both at the Court at the Mage Association, are not pleased with the course of these events. They would like the Queen to reconsider her decisions, taking her time to properly reflect before doing something this... drastic."

Yurial knew there was little if no trust between them, and how Lyam was being subtle, making no names.

"What all this have to do with me?"

"Well, some think that all magical bloodlines should stick together and try to correct this situation. People like Linjos need to be put back in their place. And for that, I'd like your help."

"I'm not going to hurt my friends!" Yurial angrily retorted. "Nor I am going to let anyone harm them!" His hostility only met an amused laughter.

"Your friends? It's what you think this is all about? No one cares who do you pick as boot boy, or what kind of wench you prefer for warming your bed, to each his own. Everyone has his eccentricities.

No one will touch your servants, there is no need to. What we want is to get rid of Linjos. To prove that all these so called 'changes' do nothing but let weeds proliferate, while real talents get smothered in the crib.

I came to you today, because I need you to persuade your father to join our cause."

"Good luck with that." Yurial managed to say. "Do whatever you want, but leave me out of this. Be it the old or the new system, is none of my business." He didn't know if to report everything to the Headmaster, but he wasn't stupid enough to reveal his intentions.

Keeping a neutral stand while deciding what to do was the best course of action.

"That's unfortunate." Lyam clicked his tongue.

"I really hoped you would come to your senses. Picking the wrong path in life can have terrible consequences."

Yurial looked around, noticing that the corridor was empty. No one was around anymore, only the two of them remained.

Before he could demand for an explanation, Lyam punched him in the stomach, following with a hook to the chin that sent Yurial to the ground.

Suddenly, several people joined the beating, carefully avoiding to hit his face or vitals. While trying to protect himself, Yurial recognized some of them, all heirs of powerful nobles or ancient magical bloodlines.

"The good thing about stupidity, is that up to a certain degree it can be beaten out. Even dumb dogs learn their lessons with the proper training." Lyam kneeled, using a powerful tier three healing spell on Yurial to leave no trace of the brutal aggression.

The pain, though, was still there. Yurial needed all of his willpower to not give them the satisfaction of begging to stop or screaming in agony. He hadn't made a sound the whole time.

"Tell your father that this was just a warning. We can't wait to have a proper talk with him too."

Chapter 98 Failures

When someone heard referring to the King's Council Chamber, usually his mind would think of the throne room.

More than twenty meters (66,6 feet) long and over ten meters (33,3 feet) large, a single red silk carpet with gold embroidered edges going from the three meters (10 feet) wide double doors up to the two steps that distanced the floor where nobles stood and the raised one for the royal family.

That way, even sitting on their gold thrones, carved to resemble a rampant griffon, they would be able to look down on everyone present, reaffirming their status and authority.

The whole room was lit by crystal chandeliers, fueled by magic, leaving no space for shadows or need for maintenance.

On the walls, magically enchanted tapestries would recount over and over the great feats that the current King had accomplished to be deemed worthy of his power. Both the floor and the pillars of the room were realized from gold veined marble, the most precious and robust material available in the Griffon Kingdom.

And that someone would be dead wrong. The throne room was perfect for holding social events or awarding a particular general or noble. But when it came down to state secrets, it was a security nightmare.

Between the main entrance, the servants' passages, the secret passages and the balconies for the spectators, circling around the room, a small army of spies could easily go unnoticed, even after searching the whole place with a tooth comb.

The real Council Chamber was located in the King's private apartments, inside of a heavily guarded tower. The room was about 6 meters (20 feet) long and 4 meters (13 feet) large with only a round table and wooden chairs as furniture.

The round table didn't mean that every opinion held the same importance, it was simply the only way to be heard from every side of the room without the need of shouting non-stop.

Aside from the furniture, the room was bare, with no windows and only one entrance. Both the floor and the walls were of a pale grey, there was no colour outside that of the magical stones the room was made of.

Most of the assemblies would last hours, and given the sensitive nature of the subjects that required the King's direct approval, discretion was of vital importance.

The whole place was enchanted to prevent eavesdropping, either by conventional or magical means, not to mention all the protections necessary to avoid the whole high command getting killed in one fell swoop.

In that particular day, the Council Chamber wasn't occupied by ministers or generals, but by the upper echelons of the Mage Association. In such occasions, it was the Queen's duty chairing the debate.

For the Crown to have absolute control over both political and magical matters, responsibilities were shared as such. The one of the royal couple most versed in the magical arts would become the head of the Mage Association.

The other, would be in charge of all the military power and oversee the ministers' activities. Together, they would hold all the keys to the Kingdom.

Queen Sylpha wore a simple blue satin morning dress, with long sleeves covering her arms. Despite being over fifty years old, it was hard thinking her a day past thirty.

With her square chin and sharp features, she couldn't be considered beautiful, but the aura of confidence and power she exuded coupled with her perfect manners, still made her quite charming.

"Your Majesty, we still cannot find Linnea." Said a bald middle-aged man with a grey goatee. "We are certain she hasn't crossed the borders yet. She would never leave her children behind."

The Queen dilated her nostrils in annoyance. Recently she would only receive bad news.

"And? I want results, not hypothesis! If you can't find her, she could have defected to the Blood Sand tribes or even hiding up my powdered a*s for all I care. What about the Gorgon Empire? Is it true that they are developing clairvoyance magic?"

The idea of their worst enemy being able to spy on them from a safe distance, caused the Queen to lose sleep over it.

"Yes and no." Sniggered an old woman with long white hair, held up in a pony tail. "Yes, they spent thousands of gold coins to indulge the Emperor obsession with prophets, seers and all that cr*p about predicting the future.

No, because up to date all those so called 'mediums' were only frauds. Some of them were actually our agents, that managed to drain considerable sums before disappearing."

"Finally, something goes right!" She slammed the table with her fist hard enough to make several goblets fall off.

"What about the great academies?" An awkward silence fell into the room, instantly ruining her good mood.

"Your Majesty, maybe you should reconsider your line of action." Said a tall middle-aged woman with short red hair.

"So many changes at once are hard to accept. It would be better to implement them one by one over time."

"One by one over time." The Queen echoed, drumming with her slender fingers on the armrest.

"Tell me, dear Bolna, how long has the Mage Association tried to change the rules nice and easy, to avoid unrest?" Her tone was calm and amiable, causing those present to shudder.

The Queen was many things, but amiable was not one of those. As any purebred politician, she was capable of hiding her emotions and thoughts whenever it was necessary, but her nature was that of a fiery woman, passionate in everything she did.

When speaking about state affairs with her counsellors, she would not mince words or waste time with niceties. Her being calm meant that a storm was incoming.

"Over forty years." The woman swallowed a lump of saliva, forcing herself to answer without trembling.

"Even before my crowning, yes. And how many rules have been actually been changed until now?"

"None."

"Last question. How many potential Magi did we lose during all this time?" Her voice had turned stone cold.

"At least four." Incapable of returning the Queen's gaze, Bolna lowered her eyes.

"All of them defected swearing an oath of vengeance."

"Let me get this straight." The Queen pulled back her chair, standing up. She was a woman of average stature 1.62 meters (5'4") high with a slender build.

Despite being held up in a chignon, the long black hair still revealed her uncanny gift for the mystical arts, with all the six shades of colours marking her as blessed by all the gods of magic.

"We lost four one-man armies for nothing but petty grudges, and your great idea is to keep up the 'good work'?" The Queen moved so fast that one could think she had Blinked, but the blur behind her told a different story. She had simply walked.

"Do you think that when the god of death returns from the Blood Desert, leading the army of undead that he has been raising for all this time, will he take his revenge bit by bit overtime, or just slaughter us all?"

Sylpha said while lifting her by the neck with only one hand, despite Bolna was taller and double her weight. None dared to interfere. All of those present were very powerful archmages, but there was a reason for Sylpha being the Queen.

She was capable of casting several spells with barely any delay, moving faster than a wild beast and ripping in half a fully armed knight with her bare hands. Many suspected she was actually a dragon in human form.

"Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is the very definition of madness." She brought Bolna's purple face near her own.

"Your masters should have trained you better." Sylpha clenched her fist, producing a snap, before throwing the body in a corner of the room. Bolna's head was now tilted at an unnatural angle, her limbs sprawled under the heavy magician robe.

"Now that we got rid of the spy among our ranks, we shouldn't lose so many agents anymore." She said returning to her chair.

"Bolna was a spy?!" Everyone was shocked at the news, questioning and discussing what had just happened.

"Yes, she was." The Queen rubbed her forehead with a sad expression. She looked tired and thin, with no trace of her previous vigour.

"The old families have their men and women planted everywhere. Academies, Court, even the Mage Association is not outside their grasp. They know I invested too much money and energies in the White Griffon.

If my project fails, it will be only on me. I would be left with no choice but leave everything as it is, hoping that my successor will have better skill and luck. I may even be forced to resign as head of the Mage Association and leave the position to one of my children.

I already have too many failures on my shoulders, another one of such significance and my authority and role would be greatly diminished. Even I would question my competence."

The Queen's aides didn't know what to say, so they waited in silence for her to recover.

"Bolna's reports were all fake. The unrest is growing, many took their children failing grades or being expelled as personal attacks. They can't stand anymore not being in control."

She took out several folders from a dimensional ring, passing them to the old wizards, for them to see with their eyes how dire the situation was. According to the documents and the transcribed conversations, the Kingdom was on the verge of a civil war.

The new nobles, those who had risen in status thanks to their talent and achievements, be them of military or magical nature, weren't willing anymore to live their lives under the heel of an unfair system.

The old nobles, instead, felt their position threatened, and feared losing some of their privileges, or even worse, being forced to share resources that up to that point had been their exclusive.

The two factions were now too close in numbers and power, it was only a matter of time before the old balance crumbled.

"I know that despite being loyal to the Crown, many of you do not really support my idea." Sylpha sighed.

"But I need you to understand how much is at stake. No matter what your personal beliefs are, if the White Griffon turns out to be just another failure, we'll have a generation at best, before the Kingdom plunges into chaos."

Chapter 99 Information

After finishing the lessons, everyone was in Quylla's room, waiting for Yurial to begin practicing dimensional magic. Lith was very nervous, tapping with his foot while counting the seconds.

"Where the heck is he?" He grumbled.

"We have been waiting for him for..." Lith realized that without the sun, he had no idea how much time had passed.

- "Barely ten minutes." – Solus mind-rolled her eyes at his impatience.

"Over ten minutes! It doesn't take that long to fly over here. Maybe we should start on our own."

"Why so anxious? Don't tell me that you let that Rudd guy get under your skin." Friya mocked him playfully.

"He can believe whatever he wants. As long as he judges the students semi-fairly is fine by me. I don't fear the Professor, as much as his subject. Is nothing like I ever done before, and I will not relax until I know I can do it."

"Is the same for all of us, yet you are the only one freaking out. Do you know why?"

- "Because you are all a bunch of children that still believe in unicorns and rainbows. In real life, only results matter. No one cares for the reason why you failed or succeeded. The magical power of friendship has never solved anything, unless in works of fiction." –

"Because despite all of your talent, you are so single-minded on a task at hand to become obsessive. Ten minutes aren't going to affect our chances with dimensional magic. Try to relax. Sometimes one has to stop and smell the roses.

Who knows, maybe he has met someone special. I mean, any other guy I know would be delighted to be in your place, surrounded by girls. Yet you just nag all the time like my grandpa."

Lith didn't miss her poking Quylla's back, probably to encourage her to say something instead of staring at her own toes. She had been awfully silent since he had entered her room.

- "Is not like there's something embarrassing around. This place is as empty as mine. I wonder if I was so awkward at her age too." –

Despite she really wanted to join the conversation, Solus kept silent. Having access to all of his memories, she knew that the twelve years old Derek's past was better forgotten. There was only pain and misery there.

"I'm flattered by your feelings." Lith replied. "But it's better if we stay friends. It's not you, it's me."

Friya was left speechless, while Phloria was rolling on the bed laughing.

"KD after the first move! You better stay down, sister."

Before Friya could scold the two of them, they heard knocking on the door.

Lith quickly opened it, eager to begin, letting a groggy Yurial walk inside. He was leaning on the wall just to stand on his feet. His eyes were semi closed, like he was about to fall asleep any moment.

"Are you drunk?" It was the only explanation he could find. Yurial shook his head, while Lith helped him reach the bed. He clearly needed to sit down.

While the other girls started worrying, asking him what was wrong, Quylla used one of her personal diagnostic spells, finding that he was perfectly fine, just like Lith did with Invigoration while supporting him.

"He is not drunk." She said. "For some reason Yurial has barely the strength to walk."

"I can easily fix that." By using a tier four light spell, Lith gave him some of his life force.

Yurial finally managed to speak, telling them what had happened, down to the last detail.

"That b*astard beat me so hard that the healing spell drained all my remaining energy. I had to fight just to put one foot in front of the other. It's a miracle I managed to get here without fainting."

"What a scheming son of a swine!" Phloria snapped.

"By healing you not only he covered his tracks, but also left you so weak that even if you managed to call for help, it would have been too late. He can be anywhere at this point."

"Yeah. I need to inform my father of what happened. If I were you, I'd do the same. You come from a magic bloodline too, I'm surprised they didn't try to recruit you already."

"Maybe they did." Friya suddenly realized.

"Do you remember the cute guy that seemed wanting to talk with you, but walked away as soon as he noticed we were together?"

"The one we joked about being too afraid to confess in public? Yes, I do, but what makes you think he was one of them?"

"Nothing, just that it seems too odd to be a coincidence. We have attended the same classes for months and he chooses today to make his move? Also, was he afraid of me or my Ballot? Everyone knows I have one." freeWebnovel.com

"It makes sense." Yurial nodded. "I think at this point is better if we all get one. Our family names make us targets. It could happen to you too, Friya. Contact your mother and see where she stands in this matter."

Lith was shocked contemplating all the possible consequences. It was ironic how he and Quylla were the least affected from the sudden turn of events. Being commoners, they had no value in a political struggle, at least for the moment.

If they really wanted to hurt Linjos' reputation, their existence as the top students of the Master Healer class would make them targets too, sooner or later. The other class wasn't a problem, there were better Forgemasters than him.

Or at least, it was what he had made them believe.

Friya, Phloria and Yurial took out their communicator amulets to inform their parents of the current predicament.

"Mind if I use the bathroom?" Lith asked. In a world where underwear did not exist and the uniform was the only dress they wore, it was unlikely there was something embarrassing lying around. But he wanted to make sure to not invade her privacy.

Quylla nodded, and after entering Lith used his Hush spell to prevent being heard before calling Marchioness Distar. Despite answering immediately, she seemed annoyed by the call, but as soon as she heard the news, her attitude changed.

"Good gods, those b*stards dared to involve their own sons. This is even worse than I thought."

"I'm sorry, your Ladyship, but you do not seem surprised at all. Can you please tell me what's happening exactly?"

Marchioness Distar drummed with her fingers on the desk for a while before answering.

"What happened today, is just a side show of the real struggle. It goes on from decades, with new powers demanding more equity, and the old ones fighting to keep things as they are. Every year, commoners rise to the status of nobles thanks to magical or military achievements.

But getting lands and titles means nothing if bureaucracy stands in your way at every step. Kings come and go, but paper pushers are forever. Over the centuries, all such positions have been taken over by the old powers, and they use it as a bottleneck to others' authority.

No one gets anything, unless they agree. And that made many people angry. In a way, they can even overrule the Court's orders, simply by delaying everything as much as they can.

So, the Court has started to replace bureaucrats, and that also made many people angry. The conflict between old and new powers keeps escalating, despite all the attempts of mediation.

Why do you think my family is under a constant death threat? Because in my Marquisate there is not one, but two of the six great academies, and they are key points in the balance of power.

Both factions want me dead, hoping to take my place and further develop their agenda."

"Both of them? Then what side are you on?" Lith asked in confusion.

"The Court's side. I believe in compromises. Radical changes lead to chaos on the short term, and the neighbouring countries would exploit the opportunity to invade us. No changes, instead, mean the collapse of the system.

If no matter how powerful you are or how much you contribute to your country, you do not get a proper reward, then you have no reason to remain loyal. Not when other countries work much better. That's why so many defect."

"But what does this mean for me and my family? Are we safe?" He had little to no interest towards political struggles, unless they involved Lark.

"Yes, you should be. Believe me, very little can get past the Queen's corps, and in the scheme of things you are insignificant. No offense."

"None taken." Lith sighed in relief.

"This is not the first attempt of sabotage, Linjos knows what to do. I'll let him know everything, so stay away from his office and don't draw attention on yourself. Stay out of it as long as you can, but keep me updated if anything else happens."

He promptly agreed.

- "If this goes on from so long, then I just need it to last a bit longer. In less than two years from now, is none of my business anymore."

Chapter 100 Family Matters

While Lith spoke with the Marchioness, everyone was having a conversation with their respective families, deciding how to face the incoming storm.

Everyone but Quylla, of course. She had no relatives, hence she never spent precious points for a communication amulet. Yet it was the second time already she was considering getting one.

The first time had been during the four days break. While the others had returned to their homes, she had remained in the academy. Even in her old village, she had always been surrounded by people.

The bustling noise of the daily activities had become part of her life.

But during the break, she had no lessons to attend, nowhere to go, and no one to talk to. Ever since Quylla had got her Ballot, she had become an outcast, but she never really noticed up until that point.

She would always spend so much time with her friends, that being alone once in a while was actually pleasant. During those four days, though, the silence had started to scare her.

Walking along the empty corridors, Quylla felt like she was traveling through the belly of a giant dead beast, with only her steps' echo to keep her company. Being apart from Yurial or Phloria was meh, while from Lith was actually good, it gave her the time to sort her feelings.

The emotional rollercoaster she went through every time they met, was so frustrating that more than once she almost confessed, just to get rid of the uneasiness. Until the fear of being rejected kicked in, making her thank the gods for stopping her.

What she really missed was Friya's company. She didn't know if Lith was her first love or just a crush, she never had experienced anything like that before. What she did know, was that Friya was the closest thing to a family she had ever had.

They would spend hours together, not only for studying, but also talking about their dreams and hopes once they graduated from the academy. She would listen to all the stupid little things that crossed her mind, her fears and anxiety and never judged her for that.

And now, seeing them talking to their parents, gave her a sense of estrangement.

- "I know it's stupid, but maybe if I had one too, if I could call them whenever I want, I wouldn't feel so... different. – She thought.

Velan Deirus, Yurial's father, was so outraged that his eyes almost popped out.

"That Lukart scum. How dares treating my son like a dog? I was willing to remain on the sidelines, to see from which side we could profit the most. But this blatant lack of respect shows that if those old farts have it their way, there will be no future for us but servitude."

"What do you want me to do, father?"

"Tell Linjos what happened, get a Coward's... I mean a Ballot, and then wait for my instructions. Don't try to get revenge, if he is smart, Lyam has a Ballot too.

That little act was probably meant to either make you submit, or anger you enough to retaliate and get you expelled. Trying to recruit you like that makes no sense, unless they wanted to make us an example for other young magical families.

To show that they can reach us both on the inside and the outside. Would be a good plan, if we were some stuck-up self-righteous idiot nobles. I'll play this game by my rules.

Don't do anything stupid, son. Think before you act, and if anything new happens, contact me. Love you."

The conversation between Friya and his mother, Duchess Solivar was of a different tone.

"Sabotaging a new Headmaster? It has always happened, even to the most insignificant, petty bootlicker. Let alone to a young radical, uncaring for political gains." Her voice was bored.

"Everyone with half a brain knows there is a huge storm ahead, and I don't plan getting caught in the middle of it. We will remain neutral. In every war, the real winner is the one that does not take part in it, profiting from both sides.

Whoever comes on top, I'm covered.

Contact me only if you need to get out of the academy. You are the first real mage of household Solivar, act as one. Take no unnecessary risks."

Then she hanged up the call.

- "Well, I love you too, mother. Thanks for asking me if I was all right or if I needed something. F*ck you and your precious Solivar household! I'll do whatever I want. For once, I am in control. You need me, not the other way around! –

Friya was so angry that only Quylla's worried face prevented her from throwing the communication amulet against a wall.

Phloria's father, Orion Ernas, was of course well informed too. He was deeply involved in one of the factions that were closest to the Queen, so nothing she said was actually of any relevance, outside the attack on Yurial.

Orion had kept her in the dark, because he didn't want her to grow up scared by the rumors about the impending civil war. He had hoped for the stalemate to hold until she was big enough to choose what to do, but time was running out.

He told her the same things Marchioness Distar had explained to Lith.

"I think that they are closing ranks. Attacking a member of a magical bloodline means that they are not willing to tolerate neutrality anymore. Either you are with them or against them."

"What can I do for the Queen, dad?"

"You?" Orion laughed for the first time since that conversation started.

"What can you possibly do? You are just a kid, the real battle is out here, what has happened is barely a ripple effect. This is but the last attempt to sabotage in a long line. They have simply raised the ante a little.

Instead of worrying for the Queen, here is what you can do for me. Pick a Ballot, stay out of trouble, and if push comes to shove, attack first and ask questions later. Always go all out, no one can get killed in an academy, the castle does not allow for that."

"It's the first time I hear about this. How do you know for sure?"

"It's supposed to be a secret, but when your daddy was younger and hot blooded, someone dared to draw his sword against me. I lost my temper and...

well, let's just say that the academy's arrays saved a lot of people that day. Things escalated quite a bit."

"If it's a secret, aren't you breaking some rule by telling me?"

"Do you think I would put a 'secret' that the gods only know how many idiots like me know above my daughter's safety? I would rather see you safe and expelled, than let anyone put a finger on you."

At that point, Lith had already returned in the room. Not exchanging any pleasantries saved him a lot of time. Only Friya was already done with her amulet.

Lith didn't know what to do, being a commoner was a double-edged sword in that situation.

It meant that he and Quylla were more likely to be left alone, but at the same time that they had no way to help their friends.

When all the conversations ended, with the exception of Lith, they shared the information received. The Marchioness had made clear from the beginning that she had already enough on her plate.

Revealing their connection would only draw more attention, something that both were glad to avoid.

"I guess we both need a Ballot, now." Yurial sighed. Being a victim was a scary feeling for him. His family name had always been the strongest sword and shield, yet now it was reduced to a bullseye.

"We need to go to Linjos' office." Phloria nodded.

"And let everyone know that even powerful people like you are scared? That would mean playing into their hands." Lith objected.

"What do you propose then? Ignore my father's advice and wait for their next move?"

"That would be stupid. I say to play it smart." He took out his Ballot, pushing the button twice.

A Warp Steps opened, and Professor Trasque came out of it. When he saw where he was, he furrowed his brows in disapproval.

"Kid, a Ballot is not a toy. Don't try to give me the 'I accidentally sat on it' bullsh*t."

"We need to see the Headmaster, it's an urgent matter. I had to resort to the Ballot because we can't allow for others to know about it. I'm sorry if I caused a false alarm." Lith deeply bowed, even though if necessary, he would do it again.

Trasque's interest was piqued. He opened another portal, leading straight to the Headmaster's office. The room was immaculate as Lith remembered it.

His hardwood brown desk was right in front of a glass wall, capable of blocking the excess daylight or amplify it, keeping the lighting uniform during the whole day. Several pieces of paper were arranging themselves in ordinate piles after he finished looking at them.

Hearing the Gate open, he turned towards them. He seemed to have aged ten years since the last time they saw him.