

BEYOND THE BLAZE

#Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION : investigation - Read BEYOND THE BLAZE Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION : investigation

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The dimly lit room was shrouded in shadows, candles flickering like fireflies in the darkness. Three men huddled together, their voices hushed.

"There are crazy rumors going around about the Xylonia Empire these days," Shinji said, his voice tinged with concern.

Haruto nodded. "Oh, you mean the despicable monsters?"

Shinji's eyes locked onto him. "So you've heard about them, huh?"

"Yeah. I'm worried about the situation. They've been sending messages nonstop to the capital, searching for a hero."

Ryota snorted. "Hero??"

"Yes, according to the legend..." Haruto began to explain, but was cut off by Ryota, who didn't like stories.

"Another legend story," Ryota muttered dismissively.

"Hey, shut up. I'm trying to listen," Shinji warned, giving Ryota a sharp look.

"Okay, then I'll continue. I don't know about this one, but I guess it's real," Haruto said quietly.

Shinji muttered under his breath, "Real, my foot..."

"I've checked many books, and I think it's real," Haruto added confidently.

"Stop beating around the bush, Haruto. Get to the point already. I've already said I want to listen, so I am," Ryota said impatiently.

"Alright. Long ago, maybe not too long , there was a demon lord." (Ryota gasped at that line, signaling he wasn't paying attention.) "He sent his followers here to create our pure land, but lucky Elysian, thankfully we were saved. Saved by one man!"

"Wait, one guy?" Ryota asked curiously.

"Yes. The books say he was a swordsman and he..."

As the men discussed the legend, a dark figure lurked in the shadows, listening quietly. The figure growled softly.

"...almost killed me, but luckily, I survived using my skills," the figure muttered. "Now these stories are being passed down through generations by these lowly humans. To them, I was..."

Meanwhile, in a cozy room, a father read a story to his son.

"He was killed by that man, and he was the..."

Back in the dimly lit room, Haruto suddenly exclaimed, "...HERO!"

Ryota raised an eyebrow in astonishment. "That hero guy died a long time ago, didn't he?"

"Obviously, but..." Shinji interrupted, "There's something called an heir."

"Wait a moment. An heir? How are we supposed to find the heirs of that guy? I doubt they'll be found easily."

"I'm sure they can be found," Haruto said confidently. "I can look into the heirs because they once became quite popular."

Just then, a female voice echoed through the room. "I will."

Ryota and Shinji turned, surprised. "Mika??"

Mika smiled, her eyes sparkling. "What's wrong, boys? Surprised to see me?"

Shinji stammered, "Ahh, I... um..."

Ryota asked, "Wait, how are you going to help him?"

Mika responded confidently, "Investigation, of course."

"Suit yourself. I'm sure such information won't be easy to find. It requires focus, effort, and many people," Shinji said.

"Yeah, that's right. But we won't be doing it alone," Haruto added.

"What do you mean, Haruto?"

"I'm here, aren't I?"

"I didn't ask you, Shinji! I know you're here."

"Hey, stop fighting like puppies. Mika's here, and she's good at investigations."

"Yes, maybe he's right. I can do it. Once I get the name, I'll start digging."

"Oh, yeah, the name. Check out the Tanaka family. According to my research, the hero was from that family."

"On it. Wait, is that even possible?"

"Oh, yeah. I had the same question."

"Yes, it's possible. And they also need protection."

"Protection from what?"

"Either from the Xylonians or monsters trying to finish the hero's heir."

"Oh, okay."

"Mika, we're all counting on you. Make this mission a success!" Haruto pleaded.

"Yes, sir!"

Mika left the room, cautious about calling the elders "boys."

The Next Day

The sun shone brightly, casting a warm glow over the landscape. A five-year-old boy named Akirion played with his toys ; a knight, a horse, and a demon. His mother called out, "Akie! Akie!"

Akirion ran to his mother, his face lighting up with a smile. "Yes, Mom."

"Could you help me set the table, please?"

His father, Eriolth, arrived carrying a wild rabbit. Akirion's eyes widened. "Daddy!"

Eriolth chuckled. "Wow, that was quite a run, son."

They laughed together as Mirabel, Akirion's mother, came over.

She greeted Eriolth with a cheerful smile and asked, "So, is the food ready? Do you want a bath or food?"

"I'll go for a bath, please."

Eriolth went for a bath while Akirion and his mother prepared for lunch.

After Eriolth finished his bath, they all sat down to eat. Akirion exclaimed, "I've made up my mind: I want to be a knight. You know, saving people from monsters."

"There's no such thing as monsters, Akie," his mother replied.

"But there are, Mom! Oh, wait, I left my knight outside."

"What? You left your toy outside?"

"I'll go get it now."

Akirion ran outside to retrieve his knight toy. As he turned back, he saw black clouds gathering, and within them, a pair of frightening red eyes stared back at him.

Chapter 2: CURIOUS AKIRION

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Akirion ran back to the house with a scared look on his face, surprised by what he had seen. He hurried inside, trembling, but tried to hide his fear with a fake smile. His father noticed that he looked disturbed and thought about asking...

"Akie, are you okay?" Eriolth asked gently.

Akirion forced a smile. "Of course, Dad. I'm just... I'm feeling thirsty, that's all." He quickly drank some water.

Dinner was finished quietly, and soon everyone was getting ready for bed. Akirion helped his mother clear the table before heading to his room, leaving his parents sitting at the table.

"Good night," he said softly.

"Good night," Eriolth replied.

"Good night, son," Mirabel added.

Eriolth watched him go, a little worried.

"Is he really sleeping now?" Eriolth asked as he was surprised.

"Maybe he's tired." Mirabel cleared the tension in Eriolth's head.

Akirion went to bed and lay there staring at the ceiling.

"What was that?" he wondered. So scary. 'Was it a good idea not to tell Mom and Dad?' He exhaled slowly with his eyes gently closed. 'They probably wouldn't believe me anyway. The real question is... what was that?'

Meanwhile, Eriolth and Mirabel took a moment to talk quietly.

"There are crazy rumors about demon monsters lately," Eriolth said softly. "I wonder if they're real."

"Oh, that? Yeah, maybe," Mirabel replied. "But I think it's just some wild stories."

Eriolth nodded. "Yeah, probably. Still, what if... I just don't want anything to happen to our only son."

Mirabel looked at him with a soft gentle look. "He has a bright future ahead. I just hope he changes his mind about wanting to be a knight. That's the most dangerous job out there."

Eriolth sighed. "It is risky. The good part is, he doesn't know I was once a one."

"Shh," Mirabel whispered, "what if he overhears you?"

"Oh, right. Anyway, let's go to bed."

They both decided to sleep, unaware of what the next day would bring.

Meanwhile

Later, Haruto and Mika were in a hidden place.

"How's the investigation going? Any leads?" Haruto asked.

Mika shook her head. "Sorry, sir. We're doing our best to track them, but no clues yet."

"It's okay. Keep searching. Their lives are our top priority. We need to protect them at all costs."

"Yes, sir,"

Haruto added, "And one more thing—report everything useful, and don't start a search without telling me first, understood?"

"Yes, sir," Mika answered.

Meanwhile, back at the house, Mirabel and Eriolth laying on their bed.

"This monster stuff is really messing with my peace of mind," Eriolth said quietly. "I don't know what's happening to me."

"Just try to clear your mind a little," Mirabel suggested.

"I'm trying. And I had this crazy nightmare—darkness lurking around, screams, burning houses, and a black cloud with two red eyes," Eriolth said, his voice trembling.

"Oh, God, really? I should tell you about mine," Mirabel said.

"Huh? Yours?"

"Yes. It's about Akirion. In my dream, in his fifteens."

Eriolth burst out laughing. "Haha... that's funny."

"Why are you laughing?" Mirabel asked.

"Sorry, sorry. Dreaming of Akirion at fifteen sounds funny. He's only five. Not fifteen. Is that even possible?"

"Not again," Mirabel sighed. "Stop making fun of me. Anyway, listen. I saw that kid carrying a sword, looking terrible, with dirty clothes, like he have been fighting for a while. I didn't see with what, but I remember the dark sky, no moon, no stars."

"Wow. I hope that's not my Akie," Eriolth said.

"Me too," Mirabel agreed.

Eriolth yawned. "I'm sleepy. Good night."

"Good night," Mirabel replied.

They both fell into a deep sleep, unaware of what the next day would bring.

In the morning, everyone woke up and started their chores. Mirabel did the housework, and Eriolth went outside to deal with the garden and firewood. But where was the curious little boy?

Akirion yawned and stretched. "Ahh... it's morning already," he said. Flashbacks of the dark cloud with red eyes flooded his mind. 'Was I dreaming? Should I tell Dad? No, they'll say I'm seeing things at a young age.' He decided to go outside.

As he stepped out, he saw a scabbard lying on his parents' bed.

"Whoa, is that a scabbard?" he wondered. "It looks like it fits a big sword." He reached out and touched it. "Wait, why is it...?" His eyes caught something shiny-silver metal. "Whoa, a sword! So cool." He reached out and touched the big sword. 'So heavy.' Then he looked at the door, holding the sword.

"Mom?"

Mirabel looked disturbed. "Akie, what are you doing here? That sword...." she quickly shut her mouth.

"Whose sword is this?" Akirion asked.

"Ah, no one really," she said hurriedly.

"What do you mean, Mom? It's in your room."

"Uh, it's for decoration. Yes, decoration for the house. Now come on."

Akirion didn't believe her but put down the sword and followed her.

Later, he saw his father outside chopping firewood.

"Hey, Dad."

Eriolth looked up and smiled. "Oh, my hero! How are you, my boy?"

"I'm good. Just a lot of questions," Akirion said.

"Huh?"

"One question, actually," Akirion added.

Eriolth chuckled. "Hmm, I wonder what that is."

"I saw a sword in your room," Akirion said, making Eriolth gasp. "Whose sword is that?"

He paused, lost in thought. "..."

"Dad?"

'...Uh, wait. Where did I put that sword after I cleaned it?' Eriolth mumbled, scratching his head.

"Dad?" Akirion pinched his father.

"Ouch! Why did you do that?"

"Because you turned into a sticker after I asked a question."

Eriolth laughed. "Question? What question?"

"Stop joking, Dad. I want to know whose sword it is."

Eriolth rubbed his chin. "Hmm..."

"Could you please pick up that log for me?" he asked suddenly.

Akirion thought. 'Just like Mom, dodging the question.' He went to pick up the log.

"Why did Mom react the same way you did?" he asked.

"Huh? What do you mean?" Eriolth asked.

"I asked about the sword, and you won't tell me."

Eriolth looked at him. "Sorry, what did your mother say?"

"She said it's for decoration."

"Exactly," Eriolth said with a smile. "We wanted something classic, so we bought that sword."

Akirion nodded. "I see."

"Good. Let's go inside."

Akirion nodded back.

The afternoon flew by quickly, and night fell. The sky was full of stars shining brightly with the cool night sounds.

After dinner, Akirion went to sleep, and his parents sat at the table for a while.

"How long are you going to hide your real self from him?" Mirabel asked.

Eriolth sighed. "I think he's old enough now. I can't believe he saw that sword today."

"Don't hide things from my curious Akirion," Mirabel said. "He's a good detective. If you don't tell him, he'll find out the truth himself."

Eriolth nodded. "It's better to tell him, tomorrow. That'll be the day."

Chapter 3: The Beginning of The Young Training

The next day arrived with the soft light of dawn filtering through the windows. Ryota sat with Haruto with a curious look.

"Hey, Haruto," Ryota said.

"Huh?" Haruto responded, turning to face him.

"So, that girl... what's her name? Mika, right? Did she find anything about the Tanaka family?"

Embarrassingly, Haruto shook his head. "Not yet."

Shinji, who had been listening, chipped in. "I see. So, what now?"

Haruto sighed. "The investigation is still ongoing. We're not there yet."

On the other side:

Later that evening, after supper, Akirion felt himself growing sleepy. He yawned and decided it was time to go to bed.

Just as he was about to lie down, Eriolth spoke up. "Hey, Akie. Don't you want to hear a scary story tonight before you sleep?"

Akirion hesitated. "Huh? I'm feeling sleepy."

Eriolth smiled. "It's okay if you don't want to listen, but I thought you'd like it. It's about a knight."

Akirion's eyes widened instantly, and he lost his sleepiness in an instant. His curiosity flared.

"Oh, oh! Dad, tell me!"

Eriolth paused. "Wait, didn't you say you're....."

"Not anymore," Akirion cut him off hurriedly.

Eriolth chuckled. "That was quick. Alright then. I want you to listen very carefully. Do you hear that? Very close."

Akirion nodded. "Okay, Dad."

Eriolth cleared his throat and began. "Here goes the story. A long time ago, there was a man who dreamed of becoming a knight. He wanted nothing more than to join the army of the capital, Elysia. But he failed the combat test twice, and he felt terrible about it. So, he gave up training and focused on his future. After two months, he received a letter from the capital. He was shocked and hesitant to open it at first. But after some hours, he finally did. Do you want to know what he saw inside?"

"No Daddy! I'm all ears," Akirion said eagerly.

Eriolth grinned. "Alright. He took the letter and opened it, and his eyes widened as if he'd seen a ghost. Tears welled up, only tears of joy. The letter said he was approved to be a knight. They promised to train him further and make him a strong one. He was so happy he couldn't wait to start. He headed to the capital and dedicated himself to training. He took on small missions, protecting citizens from robbers and more, and gradually grew stronger. Eventually, he joined the knight force, fighting alongside professionals to defend the city from invaders. One day, the ferocious Empire declared war on Elysia. The knight was part of the team fighting the Empire's army. It was a fierce battle, and many knights lost their lives. But, in the end, Elysia won...narrowly. The knight became a hero, celebrated as the savior who survived and defeated the Empire's forces. He rose to become the commander of the Elysian army. After some years, he retired and started a family. Now, he has a son, and he's telling him stories."

Akirion listened, eyes shining. "Wow. He was a great knight. I can't wait to become just like him... Wait, Dad, did you just say 'now' in the story?"

Eriolth looked a little taken aback. "Feels like I did."

Akirion's brow furrowed. "And that part 'he's telling his son stories'...that doesn't add up. But wait... that sword. It can't be just for decoration because it's so big, and that's the first time I've seen it. So, Dad!"

Eriolth nodded slowly. "Hmm."

Akirion's eyes sharpened. "You're that knight, aren't you?"

Eriolth smiled knowingly. "As expected from my investigator."

"So, you were a very well-trained knight," Akirion said with admiration.

Eriolth nodded again. "Yes."

"Then... May I train too?"

Eriolth hesitated briefly. "Very well."

"Yes!" Akirion exclaimed, practically bouncing.

Eriolth looked a little uncomfortable. "Huh? Wait, no..."

"Good night," Akirion said cheerfully, walking off with his hands in his pockets. "Training tomorrow morning."

Eriolth sighed. "He cheated me. Such a son."

Mirabel, who had been listening, clapped softly. "I didn't want to say this, but you're in deep trouble. And your story..." she clapped again "...was superb. Excellent, really."

Eriolth grumbled. "I thought maybe you would help me stop the unplanned Akirion's plans..."

Mirabel laughed. "Good night, honey. And good luck tomorrow morning."

Eriolth sighed again. "Ouch."

He followed Mirabel to their bedroom, seeking some rest.

In the morning, little did Eriolth know, Akirion was already awake. Early the next morning, the boy quietly slipped out of his room and started knocking on his parents' door.

"Goo-goo," came the muffled sound.

Mirabel groaned and pulled the pillow over her head. "Oh dear, you are doomed."

Eriolth lowered his voice. "Haaa, totally."

The knocking resumed. "Goo-goo, goo."

Eriolth sighed. "Coming."

"Hurry up, Dad! Before the sun rises," Akirion urged.

"Okay, okay. I'm coming. Do me a favor and go outside for a couple of warm-up runs around the yard. Two rounds would be perfect."

"Happily. Okay, Dad. See you outside," Akirion said eagerly.

Eriolth raised his voice. "Okay." Then, softer, "This kid is super energetic."

Mirabel finally removed the pillow from her face. "What do you expect from the son of the best Elysian knight?"

Eriolth grumbled. "Really? Is he supposed to be that energetic? I don't think I was this lively. Besides, I didn't want him to train with swords because I don't want him to be in danger like I was."

Mirabel nodded. "Same here, but it looks like he shares your interests."

Eriolth shook his head. "It's too risky. I saw it with my own eyes, it's dangerous."

"Alright, enough stories," Mirabel said gently. "He'll be back soon. And this time, he'll probably.."

Suddenly, Akirion's voice called out from the door. "Hey, Dad! I'm done. I'm coming in." He pushed the door open and saw his father already prepared. "Good morning, Mom. Good morning, Dad."

"Morning, sweetie," Mirabel replied.

"Dad, let's go," Akirion said.

"Like I said," Mirabel teased, "I told you so."

Eriolth sighed. "Alright, let's go."

They headed outside to begin their training. Eriolth looked at his son and smirked.

"Looks like the young training starts now," he said softly.

Chapter 4: YOUNG TRAINING

Eriolth picked up a stick and tossed it toward Akirion. "Get that stick," he said, his tone firm. "You want to be a knight, don't you? Come on, it's time for your training. I'll teach you how to hold a sword, what to do, and more. Got it?"

Akirion responded in a low voice, "Yes."

Eriolth raised an eyebrow. "What?"

"Yes," Akirion repeated.

"Speak up," .

"YES!" Akirion exclaimed, raising his voice.

Eriolth nodded. "Good. Now, we start..."

"Wait, where is my sword and yours?" Akirion interrupted.

"You'll have to earn your sword," Eriolth said with a smile. "And as for me, I don't need it. Now, let's begin."

They moved to start the training.

Eriolth demonstrated how to hold a sword properly, guiding Akirion's hands. Then, he moved on to the next steps of combat training.

"Come on, Dad," Akirion challenged eagerly. "I know how to hold a sword. Let's get going. I want to fight you."

Eriolth chuckled. "Oooooo, that's odd. I'm being challenged by a five-year-old. Cute. Okay, attack me now."

Akirion ran forward, wielding his wooden stick as if it were a sword, aiming at his father. Eriolth moved swiftly to the side and gently struck Akirion's back.

"Ouch," Akirion said, rubbing his back.

"What happened, knight boy? Can't even touch my sword?" Eriolth teased.

"Grrr," Akirion growled. He stood up quickly and launched another strike, but he failed to land a hit on Eriolth's weapon.

"Don't rush," Eriolth advised. "Be calm and patient. Watch your opponent's movements carefully. Keep your eyes wide open. Got it?"

"Yes," Akirion replied, nodding.

"Now, come at me. And remember, don't expect just to land one hit. Aim for two or more. If you miss, expect to land a hit if I'm not attacking. But if I am, be prepared for danger. Understand?"

"Yes," Akirion said determinedly.

"Good. Now, come at me. Don't hold back."

Akirion charged forward, swinging his stick. Eriolth dodged easily, then countered with a quick strike that forced Akirion to retreat.

"Good," Eriolth praised. "That was brave. I was about to hit you, but your attack made me block instead. Listen, are you going to keep fighting, or do you want to stop?"

"Ahh, I'll listen," Akirion said, catching his breath.

"Alright. First, I want you to train your body. That means exercising—jogging, running, push-ups, squats, and more. Can you do that?"

"Yes," Akirion replied.

"Okay. Start by running four laps around the yard. After that, jog for ten minutes. Then, do the other exercises."

"Alright," Akirion agreed, but he only managed two laps before slowing down and walking.

Mirabel watched from a distance, frowning. "Are you trying to punish him?"

Eriolth shook his head. "No. That's his training. To be a knight, you have to work hard."

"Come on, he's only five," Mirabel said.

Eriolth nodded. "He wants to be a knight."

"He's young," Mirabel persisted.

"That's why this is early training—early childhood development," Eriolth explained.

"Really? But..."

"Alright, alright," Eriolth said, raising his hands. "I'll call him back."

He called out. "Akirion! We're done for today." The boy promptly collapsed onto his stomach, breathing heavily.

"Hah, hah," Akirion panted.

He continued this training for five years, driven by his dream to become a knight. Though still young, he had learned how to wield a sword. The years had passed quickly, and now, he was firmly training with his father.

During a combat training session, Eriolth watched proudly. "Wow, son. I'm proud of how much you've improved," he said as the two clashed with wooden sticks, their movements sharp and fierce.

"Thanks to you," Akirion replied, smiling. "I'm not scared to face you anymore. It's like I'm always a winner, even if I lose after this training."

Eriolth laughed. "Haha, obviously. Do you really think I'd be defeated by a ten-year-old?"

"One day, I'll win for sure. Even today," Akirion challenged boldly.

Eriolth scoffed. "Pfft, that's even stupid to say."

Gritting his teeth, Akirion launched a quick attack, trying to scratch his father. Eriolth dodged skillfully and countered, blocking the strike.

"You think you can win while leaving openings like that," Eriolth warned. "When you're rushing forward, don't put your sword in front of you. You'll miss, and even if you hit, your target might not break. That's why I told you to train at that tree for so long." He pointed to a sturdy tree in the yard that Akirion had been using for years.

"But I've been training there forever," Akirion protested.

"Don't worry," Eriolth said. "It's training, and you're learning. Nobody's perfect right away."

"So, how do I close all the openings in close combat?" Akirion asked, determined.

Eriolth hesitated. "..."

Meanwhile, Haruto was in a different conversation with Mika.

"Any good news?" Haruto asked. "It's been five years, and we still have no leads."

Mika shook her head. "Sorry, sir. We've identified some suspects, and we've started investigating them closely."

Haruto nodded slowly. "That's the good news. We started by saying we're here to protect them, but now, it seems they need to protect us. The monsters are lurking around, and I don't know where they came from."

"Calm down, sir," Mika advised. "We'll find them soon. When we do, we'll need to protect and train the children. Then, they will protect us in return."

Haruto sighed. "Yeah, that's the idea. Increase your efforts, Mika. We don't have much time. The Empire's army is mobilizing again to attack Elysia. We barely won last time—luck was on our side. I wonder where we'll find the strength to fight again."

Mika nodded. "Like I said, sir, stay calm. We'll get through this."

Haruto looked grim. "This won't end well. The monsters from the east, the Empire from the west—things are getting worse. I wonder what we're supposed to do."

Later that evening, Akirion enjoyed dinner with his parents before heading to bed. Eriolth looked troubled, lost in thought.

Mirabel noticed. "Hey, honey, are you alright?"

Eriolth hesitated. "..."

"Hello?"

"Mhhh," Eriolth murmured.

"Are you okay?" Mirabel asked again.

"Yes, I'm fine," Eriolth replied softly.

But she could tell something was bothering him. "You look worried."

He finally spoke. "Yeah, you could say that. Remember the monster threats?"

"Yes," Mirabel replied cautiously.

Eriolth's voice grew tense. "The eastern lands of Elysia are under attack. My son has yet to enjoy life, and now these things come to wipe everything out. On top of that, the Empire's army is gathering strength."

Her eyes widened in shock. "Really?"

He nodded grimly. "Yes. They want revenge."

Chapter 5: The chaotic Elysia

Chapter 5

Mika stood alone, eyes burning with a fierce determination. She muttered to herself, "The last famous knight who retired... there's gotta be a connection to the last hero. I just know it. Five years of research... it's coming to an end. I have to investigate on my own—I don't want anyone messing this up." Her fists clenched. "Not those guys. Not my team. I'm coming for you, Hero's heirs."

A few days slipped by in tense silence. The city of Elysia remained under a dark cloud—fear hung heavy in the air, thick enough to choke on. Demons prowled the streets, and

the Empire's army moved like shadows, waiting for orders. Then, suddenly, a different story broke through the chaos.

Footsteps thundered from a distance, rushing toward Haruto's office.

A female voice, breathless and urgent, burst through the door before anyone had a chance to knock. "Sir! Sir!"

Haruto looked up, startled. "What? What's the problem, Mika?"

She hurried inside, coughing softly as she tried to catch her breath. "Sir, we've got a big problem."

His brow furrowed. "What? Not the army? Not the monsters?"

She shook her head, eyes wide with fear. "It's worse than that."

Haruto stood abruptly. "Worse? Tell me—quick."

Mika hesitated, then spoke, voice trembling. "It's... it's about the humans. They're turning into monsters."

Haruto's eyes widened in disbelief. "What are you talking about?"

Mika pressed on, voice strained. "Some of my crew saw it. Teenagers with spiritual powers—some can't control it. They're causing chaos all over the city. I... I think they've become something else. Monsters, maybe. Because monsters are the only ones who can use those powers like that."

Haruto's heart sank. He looked around, sensing the weight of her words. Before he could say anything, footsteps echoed down the hall, and the doors swung open to reveal a gathering of elders, eyes heavy with worry. Mika looked like she might cry at any moment.

The chaos in Elysia was undeniable now. The room was thick with whispers—distrust, fear, uncertainty. Mika's words only fueled the storm.

Haruto cleared his throat, speaking with authority. "Sorry to disturb you all. I know you'd rather be elsewhere, but we're in deep trouble. Mika's report is serious. I called this meeting because we need to face the truth. We have a crisis, and we need answers."

Shinji, one of the elders, leaned forward. "What's going on, Haruto?"

Haruto nodded at Mika. "She'll tell us. But I warn you—what she's about to say might be even worse than what you're imagining. Mika?"

She took a shaky breath and spoke, voice barely above a whisper. "Today, five of my crew members saw it—the dehumanization. Humans with spiritual powers, mostly teenagers, losing control. Causing chaos. Some can't stop their powers, and others... they've turned into monsters. I think it's like what we know about monsters—except now, it's happening to humans."

The elders exchanged anxious glances, their whispers lowering into murmurs. Mika shrank under their scrutiny, afraid they'd dismiss her as exaggerating.

Kaelen spoke first, voice dark. "So it's real. Last night, I heard similar rumors. Several eastern houses destroyed. No sign of retreat from the Empire. We're staring at annihilation."

Bram nodded grimly. "What are we supposed to do? The army's stretched thin, and the ones left are barely trained. We're defenseless."

Haruto stepped forward. "Calm down. We need a plan—quick. We can't just stand here and watch our city fall. We'll inform the king, but we need options. Arrest them? Find a way to strip their powers? Or... kill them."

Kaelen scoffed. "That last option seems the only way. They're monsters now—there's no turning back."

Shinji hesitated, voice soft but firm. "They're still human. Killing them would make us monsters too."

Ryota leaned in, eyes sharp. "Shinji's right. We can't just wipe out our own people. We need a better plan."

Haruto nodded, fighting his frustration. "We don't have time for idealism. Lives are at stake. Mika, how many of your team have combat experience?"

She hesitated. "Ten or fewer, I'd say."

He sighed. "See? We're not ready for this. We're just spies, not warriors. We're barely equipped to handle what's coming."

Mika clenched her fists, determination flickering again. "I'll find a way to neutralize those human-monsters. I have to. And I need to revisit that knight—find out what I can about him. Maybe he's the key."

Haruto looked at her, seriousness in his eyes. "Good. Keep working. We need solutions—fast."

Mika nodded and turned to leave, her face shadowed with frustration and resolve. She knew the elders looked down on her team, dismissed their efforts. But she couldn't stop now.

Back in her mind, she whispered, *We have to find a way to neutralize them. I have to research that knight again. This can't be the end.*

Haruto watched her go, then turned back to the elders. "Our plan? We need one that will save Elysia. We can't afford mistakes."

Dorian broke the silence. "Executing them might be the only way. Better than letting them destroy everything."

Kaelen nodded grimly. "It's decided then. We'll handle it."

Night fell over Elysia.

As Akirion and his parents enjoyed dinner, a strange shuffling sound grew louder around their house. Eriolth moved to the window, eyes narrowing in fear. His face paled as he stared out into the darkness, the unsettling realization sinking in—something was coming.

Chapter 6: Death

The atmosphere became almost impossible to endure; the family crumbled in fear as the sound of approaching footsteps grew louder, mixing with a strange, crazy smell that seemed to come from nowhere around the house.

Eriolth forced himself to steady his nerves and peeked through the window. His eyes widened in terror, and Mirabel and Akirion, drained of strength, stared as Eriolth's gaze locked onto something unseen—like he had seen a ghost. Mirabel was speechless, and Akirion's cleverness seemed to vanish in the face of this nightmare.

"Dad...?" little Akirion called out, trembling. "Wh—what is it?"

Eriolth slowly turned his head, like a chameleon sensing danger, and fixed his eyes on Akirion's face. Gathering all his remaining strength, he managed to rasp out:

"Go and f-fetch me my sword!"

Mirabel didn't have time to ask what was happening; instead, the brave little Akirion ran toward their parents' bedroom.

Meanwhile,

Mika broke free from the Underground Walls and headed straight for Elysen, the nearby village, determined to start her investigation. She pushed through the bushes near Elysian, searching for clues about the hero's heir.

Suddenly, a robotic, human-like voice echoed outside Eriolth's house. "'Sniffs in enjoyment* Pffff haaaaaa, do you smell that? Some fresh dinner. It's time for our supper, boys.'" A grotesque, green, humanoid monster grinned with its mouth stretched from ear to ear, eager for human flesh.

Akiron and his family trembled with fear, desperately searching their hearts for help, but found nothing. Eriolth tried to stay calm, unaware that the monsters had already slipped inside. These creatures were ones they'd only heard about in rumors—goblins, elves, twisted and bloodthirsty.

Suddenly, Akiron heard glass shatter in the kitchen. His heart pounded like it was about to leap out of his chest. The monsters started to break through, their horrifying forms appearing before Akiron could even reach for his sword. With his short legs, he ran as fast as he could toward his father.

"Here!" Akiron shouted, thrusting the sword into Eriolth's hands. Eriolth looked at his son with a faint smile, a flicker of gratitude amid the chaos.

"Mirabel, do me a favor," Eriolth gasped.

"Wha—what?" she finally managed to say.

"TAKE AKIRION TO THE TUNNEL. GO TO OUR BEDROOM—there's a red rope. Pull it, and you'll find a tunnel. Escape through that. Run!" Eriolth commanded, fighting off the small goblin-like monsters that swarmed him. He shielded Mirabel, who was trying to breathe through the foul smell filling the air.

"Mirabel, Akie, RUN!" he yelled as he fought.

"Dad, look out!" Akiron shouted, but it was already too late. Eriolth was scratched deeply on his back. Mirabel gasped in fear, her heart pounding as she tried to help.

"Mirabel, take Akirion NOW!" Eriolth urged, grimacing from the pain.

Mirabel seized her chance and sprinted with all her might toward the tunnel. She and Akirion reached the entrance just as the monsters began to surge forward, their footsteps pounding ominously around the room.

"Go, go, go!" Mirabel urged, pushing Akirion inside.

Once inside, Akirion looked back and saw his mother hesitating at the entrance. His voice echoed in the darkness: "Mom! Come on!" But she was already fading into the shadows. Heartbroken, he called her name, but only the silence answered him.

Finally outside, Akirion emerged into the yard, breathless. The house was ablaze, screams echoing as the monsters destroyed everything. Tears streamed down his face as he stared at the burning home, desperately searching for his parents.

Suddenly, a sinister voice cut through the chaos.

"Oh, a little survivor? He's mine to finish. You've killed some inside, right? Well, I didn't — so he's mine," sneered the green-aurad monster, its foul breath steaming as it lunged toward the crying boy.

The roof collapsed in a fiery explosion, lighting up the night. Akirion froze, anger and sadness filling his eyes. The monster advanced, but then it hesitated, trembling.

"What's going on here?" it muttered, confused by its own hesitation. "Why am I not moving? I should kill this lowly human now."

Akirion's tears started again, but then something inside him ignited. He screamed—louder than ever—and a burst of energy erupted from his body, unleashing a devastating explosion that shattered the surroundings.

A powerful gust of wind swept through the area, knocking Mika off her feet as she approached to check on Eriolth. She ducked behind trees, narrowly avoiding being blown away.

Meanwhile, the green aura monster was thrown back, crashing into the broken walls of the house. Most of its minions were killed instantly, leaving only the boss monster gasping for breath. Akirion's body moved on its own, driven by a fierce new resolve. Without hesitation, he charged forward and delivered a final, brutal punch to the monster, ending its life.

Exhausted, Akirion collapsed face-first into the dirt, his body trembling from the effort.

Chapter 7: 'What was that'

After the explosion, the rain came, followed by big lightning. But the citizens didn't care about the rain; they were only disturbed by the explosion.

The city shook; a lot thought it was an earthquake, the surrounding trees fell, and many things were blown away.

'What was that?' asked Haruto, but the walls didn't reply to him. He stood up and found his way to his followers. He chanted the same question, but no one had a clue. The whole city started to ask each other what happened, and many had their own ideas. Some thought that the world was crumbling. Some thought maybe the Empire attacked because they were all always in fear.

The almost flew Mika came up with her own idea.

'Ohh damnit, I was late, wasn't I? But what was the explosion all about, and that crazy air? Mhh, better go check, but this rain—agh, I'm dripping wet right now, and I'm near to the place where I was going, and I should hurry before the Residents Protection Unit (RPU) shows up to check this place out.

Little did she know, the citizens were shaking; even the unit didn't want to step foot outside their gates.

During the same night, the Underground group held a meeting.

Haruto started the meeting: 'Sorry for disturbing you, but I'm sure you were already disturbed, so I called you guys here to ask some questions regarding the earthquake or something else that happened. The whole city is on its feet; they don't want to sleep. They want to know whether it's safe to sleep or whether they will kick the bucket during their sleeping hours. So, anyone with an idea on what happened, something to tell the public? Because I'm sure by now the castle is crowded; there's no space for air to go through.

Shinji replied with a disturbed voice, saying, 'Ahh, I, I can't even think of anything right now, maybe those human monsters, I guess.'

'Yeah, maybe you've got a point! They said, those guys are powerful, so they can be the cause.' Said another elder in the meeting.

Haruto replied with his own point for the public: 'The public won't grasp that, and we will end up creating chaos within the state, having some civil wars between us and our loved ones. I only have this point, which everyone is almost think of, but I'm not saying we should go with my point; we can still investigate the explosion, where it came from, and why. So my public opinion is...

Mika reached the place and saw a clear place with no house or trees, but some fallen trees at the end of the clear place.

'What happened here?' Mika asked herself a question that everyone can ask. She continued saying, 'I remember my map indicated a house space here. Was it wrong?

She continued walking around the place searching for answers.

'Wait, what's this?' She saw a piece of fresh cloth and a vegetable □. Where is it coming from? This place is like a... wait a minute, it looks like there was a house here (she saw the fallen burnt bricks). Did the people who lived here move away? But what about the fresh vegetables? This is ridiculously bad. I wonder where to start the investigation. What can I touch? Only the fallen trees and fresh vegetables. These can't be enough. I need some solid information, clear enough to submit as a cl... ' She became speechless after what she saw.

Haruto continued the meeting. They came up with ideas of things they will do and say to the public.

'We need to send our best men to the East; we can't lose the information right under our nose.' Haruto said.

'Our team from group C is or can be ready and head out in a blink of an eye.' Said another elder in the meeting.

'Team A is all good to go.' Haruto added,

'Team B can be organized and can be ready to head out,' Shinji suggested too.

Okay then, all decided. Hurry up and get your teams into the forest; we can't lose anything, because that couldn't be an earthquake. Haruto fired up the engines.

In the Elysian castle, the big crowd was more like protesting, searching for answers, with some thinking that they were not protected.

The big crowd made a lot of noise in front of the big gates of the castle. The whole castle wasn't in peace; they couldn't even get sleepy because it was like someone was knocking with stones at the gate. But thankfully to the guards, their physical peace was around.

Princess Fiana—new characters

Prince Kaid

King...

Princess Fiana bloomed with happiness when she saw Haruto.

'Haruto!' Thank God you are here.' The princess said happily.

'Haruto? How did he get in here?'

'Calm down, son, there is something called a back door, and this man got access to it,' said the king. He continued, "Give me some good news. What was that?"

'Ahh, we are still investigating the explosion, and we also came up with an idea that can calm down the public.' Said Haruto.

'That's good to hear, so tell me the idea before my ears block because of this noise.'
Replied the king.

'We thought of this one; the whole crowd outside can grasp this one easily, because I'm sure many of them are thinking the same, but their mindsets won't stay on one option, so we thought of this one to calm them down and to make their hearts at ease just by planting it into their mindsets.'

'Just say the idea, Haruto; we don't have all the time in the world. Some of us are tired, and we need to crash peacefully.'

'Calm down, son. Let him speak; don't interrupt him. He's our only trusted agency man, so treat him with respect.'

'Yeah, yeah, yeah, trusted agency man. My foot, he will betray you one day, Da...!

'Kaid, be very cautious with your words towards Dad and Mr. Haruto,' said the respectful and beautiful princess 🥰.

'Speak, Mr. Haruto.'

'Okay, Princess.' The whole room kept quiet as if there was no one in it ,in order to listen to the idea.

'We thought of saying it was an earthquake....'

'Stupid idea, is that all you've got?' the angry prince intervened.

'I guess your idea is good for the public, Mr. Haruto.'

'Thank you, Princess.'

'What!? Do you think they are that dumb?'

'Shut up, Kaid, this is the best idea yet. We can't come up with any other ideas now; as you heard him, they are conducting an investigation.' said the honest princess.

'Okay then, I'm shutting them off now.' Said the king.

Chapter 8: Captured

The crowd received the calming words from the King, and they accepted them, so they calmed down their hearts, because a lot of them thought maybe the Empire had

ambushed them. The king gave Haruto a big thanks because the whole crowd was going to sleep on the castle's gates.

The investigation about what happened continued; the underground society headed to the East for some clue. They were also followed by the unit (RPU) after they heard some calming words from the king. The city went back to normal after that, but they were not comfortable enough because they heard that the Empire wanted to declare war against Elysia.

The next day, Akirion woke up in an unknown wagon going to the capital. He didn't notice that he was cuffed up. He starts to think about his parents, and his cheeks get wet with tears.

'Mommy?' said Akirion, but the wagon driver didn't hear anything because he was a happy man. Because he was a slave trader, so he saw himself as a rich guy after capturing Akirion. When they reached the Elysian Gates, the man covered his face with a scarf to hide his identity, to make the guards think that he was a traveller.

"Why are there too many guards today? It's ridiculous. Every time when I come empty-handed, there won't be a lot of guards like today, and I always pass freely. Today I captured something, and they are blocking the gates as if they lost something,' said the man in his thoughts.

'HEY YOU!'

'Huh?'

'YES YOU, STOP RIGHT THERE!'

The slave trader shook like the river reeds; fear's icy grip sent shivers down his spine, his knees buckled beneath him, and his limbs trembled like leaves in a storm. He stopped the wagon, but his body reported that he was in terror, and it was like he was going to release something down there.

Yo, wassup? You are sweaty; what's the problem? Asked the guard.

'Ahm—ah, you know, it's hot in here, phewwww.'

'Wait, is it hot here? There are clouds all over, and you are wearing a scarf.

'Ahh, just forget it. What can I do for you, officer? Why are you blocking the road today?'

'We are conducting an investigation....'

'Investigation? Why, what happened?'

'Something happened where you are coming from, and we believe we can find some clues from the people who came from the Eastern side, so may I check your wagon?'

'{Ohh God, why did I even come from this side? I should have headed to the southern or northern gate....}'

'Hello?' (The guard snapped his finger to try and wake up the slave trader. But he failed; he ended up touching him. The slavery trader jumped like a surprised person.

'What's wrong?'

'Nothing really!'

'I've been calling you, and it seems like you were lost in thoughts.'

'Ahh, sorry, sorry. What were you saying?'

'May I check your cargo, please?'

'Yes, sure, why not?'

The guard went to the back of the wagon.

'{Huh, why is it open? Who knows? It looks like he got a lot of luggage inside; maybe that's why it's not closed.'}

The guard found a lot of things that the guy was transporting and found no human. The alert-danger bell rang, and a lot of soldiers went to the gate running. The soldiers included the Unit, the Underground, and the castle soldiers.

'What happened?' asked the gate guard.

One soldier replied, saying, 'A magical creature was spotted by the magical detectors that we received from Xylonia.'

'Magic dictators? When were they installed? 'We know nothing about them,' the guard curiously asked.

'But now you know.'

The guard let the slave trader go, and the soldiers started to check out the surroundings. The slave trader went. He got happy because his money wasn't detected. On his way, he stopped by to cross-check whether the guard was a loser or his money was gone. He opened the wagon and checked behind his luggage and found nothing. He screamed louder than he ever had, as if he were pierced by a sword.

Everyone turned around and checked out what happened to him, and some soldiers instantly appeared around.

'Hey, Sir, what happened? Are you okay? Something wrong?' A kind soldier asked.

'Huh, no no no, nothing is wrong. Sorry, I was just excited to reach Elysia safely again.

Meanwhile, a crazy strong scary aura passed through the gate next to the soldier who was looking at the man who screamed like a baby. The soldier noticed and looked next to him in fear but found nothing.

Meanwhile,

'Is that kind of screaming a new type of expressing your happiness? And your face doesn't show any happiness at all. Tell me, what happened? A soldier asked.

'Hahaha, nothing really, haha, I'm fine, I'm happy, such a wonderful Elysia, mxwa (kisses).'

'Okay, sir, be safe. Let's go, guys.'

'Thank you.'

The soldiers left, and the guy suddenly started angrily hitting his wagon.

The soldiers turned around and quietly took the guy into custody.

Meanwhile,

'Wait, I sensed something,' Soldier 1 said.

'Huh? You also did?' (soldier2)

'What are you guys talking about?' (soldier3) Soldier 3 looked confused by the way the other two were talking.

'Come with me,' soldier 1 summoned the 2 to go and check the side where they sensed something.

'The what? Where do you think you are going? I'm not following you.' Soldier 3 denied.

'Don't worry about him; let's go. I'm sure there's something around here.' S2 agreed to follow S1 to check out the surroundings.

The two went around the buildings near the gate to search for anything they would find suspicious enough to trigger the alarms.

They started their search. They searched the place as if they had lost a needle. After some time of searching, they spotted a young boy who was running around those buildings. Those buildings were set to off-limits, so they suspected that the young boy they spotted could be the one who triggered the alarm, and maybe he was a monster who shape-shifted into a small human. They started to search for the young boy; the buildings were more like mazes, and the two soldiers were crossing each other again and again until they reached the end and found no one.

'SHIT, SHIT, SHIT! HOW DID WE LOSE THAT THING?' S1 shouted.

'Ahh, maybe it was our own imagination.'

'What!? Of course not, I'm sure I saw something!'

'Let's just go back because we found nothing.'

'GRRR'

Chapter 9: Mission failed

A young man's voice sounded from nowhere.

'Phew, thank God they went back. Why were they even chasing me, ridiculous humans? They were supposed to chase that guy who chained me up, not me. {By the way, why was that place crowded by many soldiers? That's completely new. There are always 2 or 3 soldiers, guards actually, but today, there are soldiers. I wonder where to go because they'll start chasing me if they spot me again. By the way, how did I burn that chain?'

Ohhh, it's Akirion! He started remembering what happened to him when he woke up. He started crying, but when he saw the chain, he remembered the way the whole place exploded. He then tried something; without his concern, his hands became hot and red, and the chains fell down. He managed to move the trader's luggage without making a sound. Lucky him, he successfully got out of the wagon.

'Haa, so I got magic. That's cute, but how can I use it? I used it by mistake inside that wagon, so how can I do it? Hiiiiiiii!' He tried to use his magic, but he failed.

'So, how did the mission progress? Anything interesting?' Haruto asked, expecting a wonderful answer.

'No sir, sorry!' Mika replied.

'By the way, I didn't see you during the meeting last night; where were you?'

'Ahh, I—I ran to where the sound was coming from to search for the cause, but I found nothing.'

'Wow, you are as fast as always; that's good. Keep up the good work.'

'Thank you, sir. By the way, there is a house that got attacked by monsters last night too, and I believe that was the house of the hero's heir.'

'Intriguing and also disappointing. So there were no survivors?'

'No sir, they were all killed.'

'So the 5-year mission came to an end, huh?'

'Yeah, I guess so.'

They both had some gloomy faces because the echoes of fate came up; it felt like they lost something important. (Comment that something important, if you have the idea.)

'So what tripped the alarm?' a curious and tired soldier asked.

'Wasted our valuable time; can't even imagine it was a false alarm.'

'Those Xylonian things are fake. I knew it from the beginning; it's ridiculous.'

'But that's the best new technology ever made in a short period of time. In a blink of an eye actually, because the monster problem started 5 years ago.'

'Wait, did you even hear yourself? Does your eye blink for 5 years? I mean, in one blink?'

'Aww, come on, man, I was trying to express the idea of fast!'

'But 5 years is a long period of time; you can't say it is a short period of time?'

'Just forget it; I thought maybe we were going to see a monster today!'

'Don't worry, you will see it soon enough, and when you see it, you will regret the day you were born!'

'Stop scaring me, dude; they are just some pests that need to be taken care of, so wonder how will it be like spraying them away?'

'Phwahaha, are you for real, bro? Kwahaha, do you even think of listening to stories about things that are happening around the world?'

'Ahh, what's so funny? They are monsters, we are humans, we will take good care of them, and why did you ask me about news stories? I'm not interested in politics.'

Bwahaha, can't stop... Kekeke, bwahaha, who told you that those stories are all about kingships and more? You should try and research about them; it's rare for a normal human to defeat those monsters.'

'HEY EVERYONE, THERE'S NOTHING HERE. LET'S MOVE OUT. IT'S A FAILED MISSION, SO LET'S GO.' One of the army commanders called off the search.

They all embarrassingly moved out, with their heads low.

In a dark prison room, there was a man, a slave trader actually, who got arrested earlier in the story and was surprisingly taken by the underground society.

'Hey, tell us your story now!'

'I got nothing to say; I'm just a traveler, that's all.'

'Hey, don't waste our time if you don't tell me the full story... Have you ever heard of torturing? I'll start that process.'

'No no no, I'll tell you everything, I swear, everything!'

'That's good to hear, so shoot.'

'Okay, I'm a traveler; I always come and g....'

'Hey, I don't want to hear your personal story; I want to know why you were screaming like that.'

'So that's why you arrested me?'

'Of course, additionally, you were spotted hitting your wagon in anger after you told us that you were happy. So would you mind telling me before I get the burdizzo and start the castration process?'

'W-w-wait, I'm a human, not an animal. You can't do that to me; I got some human rights too!'

'Not in Elysia, and if you tell me the whole story, I'll let you go without using a burdizzo.'

'Okay, I'll tell you. When I looked into my cart, I realized that I forgot something important, so I didn't hold myself, so that's why I screamed like that. As for hitting the cart, it was because I was blaming myself for forgetting.'

'Wow, your story is temptingly good. Yo bro, bring me the burdizzo and start the castration process.'

'HUH?! I TOLD YOU EVERYTHING. W W WHY ARE YOU...?'

'SHHHH, Tell me the whole story; I don't want lies. Hurry up!'

The slave trader started shaking, sweating like he was in a 60°C hot room.

'Hey, wassup, you are sweating instead of talking?'

'The other guy came with a big scary burdizzor, and the slave trader lost his control over the underwater, and he got his pants wet.'

'Now tell me.'

'Okay, okay, I'll tell you; please don't hurt me' (he cried like a baby). '{Oh dear, I'm finished. How did they figure out that I was lying? Ridiculous agency! Seems like my mission failed; now I have no other option.} I'm a very poor man; I always try to make a life by trading some goods. So when I was on my way here, I saw a small young kid, 10 years maybe, lying around in the middle of nowhere, and the place looked like ruins, so I took the kid. I came up with an idea of making money using the kid. I'm a trader, so I thought of trading the kid for money, but it looks like I failed....'

'So this is the meaning of these chains?'

'{huh? That's why he didn't believe my story; I'm doomed.} Yes, the kid escaped; I don't know how, and I screamed because I lost a lot of money that I thought I had.'

'That's good to hear. You are under arrest for doing human trafficking!'

Chapter 10: Hope

Akirion ran around the buildings, hiding from people who looked suspicious enough to chase him, and finally reached a spot where there were a lot of people listening to a public speech from the king.

'EVERYONE WHO GOT SUPER POWERS IS CONSIDERED A MONSTER! THOSE PEOPLE PROVED THEMSELVES TO BE DANGEROUS TO THE PUBLIC, SO BEWARE, HIDE FROM THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE DANGEROUS TO YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AND ALSO YOUR PROPERTY TOO,' said the humble king.

'SO, WHAT MEASURES HAVE YOU TAKEN?' An Elysian citizen spoke alone, and the king proved to be deaf. Little did he know, the whole crowd started making noise as if they were protesting.

'SO, WHAT MEASURES HAVE YOU TAKEN!' The whole crowd started repeating the same thing, like sad or embarrassing memories.

'What was he actually saying? I got super powers too, so does that mean I'm a danger to the public? That's stupid enough. How can I hurt someone? That's totally ridiculous....'

'Hey kid, where's your Mommy?' A stranger popped up in front of Akirion.

Akirion ran into the noisy public, and he stayed there. The king reversed and started to reply to the noisy ones.

'As for our search continuing, we found out that those monster-humans can't control their powers.'

'That's true, I can't even control it.' Akirion said to himself. And the king continued saying,

'So, WE THOUGHT THAT WE SHOULD ARREST THEM; IF THEY PROVE TO BE OUT OF CONTROL, WE WILL EXECUTE THEM. DISMISSED!'

'Wait, what? Kill us!?' Akirion acted surprised, and he got caught while he was undercover.

'Wait, kid, are you a monster too?' someone who overheard Akirion talking to himself asked.

'Of course not.'

'What was the meaning of 'us'?

Akirion started running away from the crowd, but his bad luck followed him around. [Can you guess what happened? Comment your answer.]

[A hint]

That person started...! Akirion ran faster than a cartoon character, but bad-luckily, the castle soldiers appeared in front of him. Lucky him, he held up his handbrake and stopped. People made a circle around him; suddenly there was smoke everywhere, and he disappeared. People screamed louder, and the soldiers found nothing in the circle.

'What? How did I do that, and how did I escape that circle? I guess coincidences happen. The only thing to do is to thank the Lord for help.'

Meanwhile,

'YOU SEE? THEY NEED TO BE KILLED, BECAUSE THEY ARE DANGEROUS TO THE PUBLIC.' The king said.

'YES, YES, THEY NEED TO BE KILLED!' The public did its thing. Suddenly, a poor man spoke his mind.

'THEY DID NOTHING WRONG!' Many started to stop making noise until all of them got quiet.

'Huh?' another man had a question mark.

'THEY DID NOTHING WRONG!' a poor man repeated.

'Huh? Are you nuts? Didn't you see what he did?

'Who got hurt?'

'Ahh, I—I don't know. Why are you asking me?'

'No one got hurt; he did that to save his own skin. You can't blame him.'

Everyone started saying, 'The madman is right; that small thing didn't hurt anyone.' They called him mad because he was all dirty.

The king added salt to the healing wound by saying, 'THEY NEED TO BE KILLED.'

The wound got the salt, and the crowd started their thing again.

'YES, YES, THEY NEED TO BE KILLED!'

The unit (RPU) appeared, and they started searching for Akirion, but they failed to locate him.

'Sir, Sir?' Mika went to Mr. Haruto's office.

'Thank you for coming; give me some good news!'

'Ahh, okay. There was a man who was taken into custody by our team, he said that he found a child lying in the middle of nowhere, and that nowhere place, I guess, is where I suspected the previous hero's heir's house to be. I hope you understood that?'

'Yeah sure, the heirs who got attacked by the monsters a day or two ago.'

'Yes'

'Okay, I remembered the story. What are you trying to say? There was a survivor!?'

'Yes, sir...' Haruto's eyes were filled with happiness; his face changed from sadness to happiness, and he looked up to Mika and asked her,

'So, where's the kid?

'Bad news, alert!'

'What?'

'The Kid escaped from the wagon...'

'...and also escaped from the soldiers in front of the castle.' Haruto and Mika looked at the door and saw another soldier (or reporter) of Haruto. The 2 said, 'What?' at the same time, and the reporter continued.

'Yes, I believe it's the same kid. He got super powers; he escaped the whole crowd using smoke, and no one saw his identity.'

'Ohh, that's totally boring, great. So the kid is in the capital?'

'Yes, if he's the same kid you are talking about, he's around the Elysian city!' the reporter positively replied.

'Mika, check out the whole city, every corner and every small place that fits only the air. We need to find that kid before he gets killed by anyone, including the unit.'

'Okay, sir, but how and where are we going to raise the k...?'

'Go and find the kid; as for the other complicated things, we will think about them once we see the kid.' Haruto replied with a lot of hope into the climax of the mission.

The two reporters went outside, and Haruto started smiling fiercely, saying,

'We got you now; now we will have our weapon, we will be unstoppable, hahahaha (evil laugh).' He then heard a sound from the door. 'Who's there?' He got no response and went to the door and found no one; he only felt the wind breeze. And then he concluded by saying; 'Stupid wind,' He went back to his chair and continued his work.

Meanwhile, the runaway Akirion continued running until he saw a place with a lot of children training with swords.

'Wow,' he said, with a glimpse of happiness in his eyes.

He went to the place and saw the master of the place training his students. He bravely tried to approach the master, but suddenly, a wagon of the city (either the underground,

the unit, or any soldier) He quickly hid from the wagon drivers; after they passed, he continued his bravery and went straight to the master of the place.

'Hello everyone.' Everyone stopped what they were doing and stared at Akirion. The master went to Akirion slowly, with a scary face. Akirion shivered as if it were wintertime. The master stopped in front of him and said,

'Who are you!?'