

Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 121 – Girl in the Mirror (2)

In front of the mirror, Max slowly turned around, staring at herself.

Linda was attentively following her, not wanting to miss any reactions. She gave her another dress, and a maid helped her change.

Max sent out a pleasant “oh” feeling the texture of the fabric. The maids made a fuss around whenever they wore accessories or new headdresses with long veils.

“I think this dress suits you best. What do you think of it, Madam?” asked Linda after dressing her in a pearl-white dress with a golden belt.

Max looked into the mirror. A tall woman, adorned with net-shaped diamond necklaces and topaz rings, dressed in gold-embellished shoes, stood somewhat modestly under an elegant shiny outfit. Max’s eyes shone with excitement at her appearance. She looked great like any other member of the royal family. She looked glorious.

“I-I like this one the most.”

“Then I’ll start working on your hair. I think it’s better to braid it. Shall we put a net with pearls on it?” asked Rudis.

“No, it would be much better to have two thin braids on either side and then adorn with pins!”

Rudis skillfully combed her hair as per Linda’s words, braiding it on both sides, and then poked a pin with a walnut-sized point at the top of the ear. She let her long, voluminous tresses cascade on her back.

Max stared at her red hair curling over the white dress with admiration. What kind of magic did they do? Her curly hair looks very sleek and stunning.

“Madam, you look so lovely! ”

The maids squealed in delight when they saw her dolled up.

“It’s like the Nymph of Light! I’m sure he’ll be surprised to see it, right?” one of them stated.

“I am sure he will be happy. You look better than ever.” Added another.

Max blushed up to the roots of her hair with the unfamiliar compliment. She murmured in a low voice shyly.

“Tha-tha-thank you.”

“Is there something that you don’t like or that you’re dissatisfied with?” Asked Linda, a little anxious.

””” ”

“Oh no! Oh, it’s very co-comfortable...I-I like it.”

Linda nodded in satisfaction at her answer and finally draped a dark wine-colored velvet cape over her shoulder.

Max was very much enjoying the graceful appearance at the moment. Rejoicing, she instructed the maids to take good care of the cat, then left the room.

The hall was decorated with the shadows of a dark night. Max walked along the corridor that servants had brightly lit with Rudis close behind. Riftan’s mere return seemed to have brought life to the quiet castle.

The scent of fried food and sweet liquor wafted through the cool air, and under the stairs, a loud voice echoed softly.

Max carried the horn and went down the stairs past the busy servants. She saw the knights and young soldiers who sat on the long dining table, and the maids who served them, as she walked out of the wide hall and into the dining room.

She glanced at the knights who were busy dining, drinking, and talking, standing at the door. In the audience, a candelabra released a blinding light, and the table was filled with food that was so ample that it was thought the table would split.

Among them was a boy who was carving a whole boar on the largest platter and placing the slices on a plate. Suddenly he looked at her and raised his hand. “My Lady!”

Yurixion, dressed beautifully in a white tunic, raced towards her with a cheerful smile. Max was laughing awkwardly. When she recalled what she had done yesterday with Riftan in front of him, she couldn’t lift her head. The boy continued chatting easily, as if he didn’t care at all.

“How have you been? As you already know, I went through the first civil war of my life with Sir Calypse. I spent the 10 most meaningful days of my life with my respected Sir’s side!”

He sounded as if he had been to a good place for a picnic, not a demon’s lair. Max was just embarrassed not knowing what to say.

“L-long time no see. D-did you get hurt... Are you fine?” she asked.

“It’s okay, except for a slight bruise.” Yurixion smiled awkwardly, pointing at his knees.

“I’m ashamed to say I was walking down the hillside, my foot got caught in the roots of a tree and I fell down. Fortunately, the ointment you gave me was so good that I didn’t have to bother anyone, but I was teased by Sir Nirta.”

“Lobar, talk later. Take your seat first.” A knight, who couldn’t see Max, yelled over his shoulder.

Yurixion scratched his neck abashedly and reached out to her. “Let me help you. Okay, please, this way. I’ll show you the most delicious food stacked on the tray.”

As Max placed her hand on the arm of the knight, the boy skillfully led her out of the crowd and pulled out a chair in an unexpectedly smooth move.

“I’ll take your cape.”

Max hesitated for a moment, holding the cape string. It was embarrassing to show herself in front of others.

“My Lady?”

At Yurixion’s confused gaze, she closed her eyes tightly, took off her thick cape and handed it to him.

The noisy surrounding suddenly became quiet. Max could only shrug in embarrassment at their low murmurs.

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Chapter 122 – A Drunk Beauty (1)

Moments earlier, the knights, who were carrying their glasses and making noisy noises, were now looking at her as if caught in surprise with their eyes wide open.

At the weight of their stares, Max sensed her self-esteem diminishing and she at once dropped her gaze to stare at the floor.

She thinks that they felt that this kind of fancy outfit did not suit her at all, just as she expected, which is why they were staring at her so intensely. As she felt curiously scrutinized by their gaze, she felt cold sweat running down her nape.

Max stopped in her movements and waited for the young boy to catch up with her. Yurixion greeted her with a wide smile before speaking.

“Oh My God! Your gown, it is really wonderful.” He complimented her and Max’s eyes lit up at his compliment.

“I-Is it re-really?”

Max looked at the boy with an insecure but hopeful expression on her face. As she stared into his eyes, Max concluded that Yurixion did not seem to be lying to her.

Yurixion nodded furiously, while his big shining eyes stared at her.

“You look just like an ancient Elf! The white dress goes really well on you. I used to be dazzled by beauty before, but today I am blind!” Yurixion told her excitedly and Max blushed at the exaggerated praise.

The boy proceeded to pour out his praises enthusiastically at her as she was about to return the compliment, that he too looked good in his clothes.

“You are Sir Calypse’s wife, the world’s number one knight. For a moment, I was mesmerised! Even the arrogant Nimfish would blush with jealousy at your loveliness.”

In a moment of joy, Max could feel her cheeks reddening all the way up to the nape of her neck. It seemed funny to her because it was not possible for the young boy to see beauty that never existed in the world. Yurixion did not stop giving her compliments as they walked towards their table.

Max immediately sat on the chair when they arrived, fighting back the desire to shut Yurixion’s mouth, but the boy was quite unabashed and continued talking.

Yurixion proceeded to offer her cheerful praises, perhaps not feeling any embarrassment at all, as he pulled out a chair directly beside her.

“It’s such a waste. If you had participated in the royal ball in this way, you would have entranced all the knights and their wives would gather angrily outside the palace!”

“T-Thank you....” replied Max shyly.

She looked down at the round plate in front of her, murmuring those words in a voice that she could hardly even drag out of her mouth. Around her, the silence of the knights made her feel so awkward and uncomfortable.

””” ”

She was laughing at the boy's exaggerations of her appearance to outsiders, but inside, her sweat poured secretly under her dress.

Yurixion began to give her some food in haste.

“My lady, I will be by your side to assist you. Do you have any favorite food? They're all delicious, but they're especially roasted.” Max felt relieved that the subject had become normal, sighed, and looked around the room looking for the face of her husband.

“Thank you. By the way... ..where's Sir Ca-Calypse?” Max asked.

“Sir Calypse is still in the conference room. We are still planning and are discussing the movements of the monsters with some of the knights.”

“The move-movements of m-monsters... ?” This sparked Max's interest.

“Suddenly, the monsters from the northwest started moving south.”

At the sudden sound of a voice coming from her back, Max turned her head. Sir Nirta, who was dressed in plain clothes, met her gaze. He was standing right behind her and he looked up and down at her. Max noticed that he did so with a strange expression on his face, and he soon flopped down on a chair next to her after he had done this.

“Trolls are showing signs of moving to the Anatorium, so the leader is discussing countermeasures with the wizard. First of all, they told us to have a meal together because later it's going to be a long discussion.” Nirta responded in a fore-bonding tone and immediately Max's brows suddenly furrowed.

The unexpected story clouded Max's face.

Hebaron continued his speech as Max processed the new information, while filling his glass with wine in a manner that discarded formality.

Max dropped her fork and decided to listen to his words.

“That's why the goblins were bigger than expected. I spent a lot of time exploring the mountains in the north because it seemed like something had happened to the demons' ecosystem.” Hebaron told the crowd and as knights started whispering at each other, gasps suddenly filled the room.

“De-demons in A-anatol? ... you mean they-they’re co-coming?” Max suddenly asked.

“It would be better to say that they started moving south than that they were coming here. It’s just a guess, but according to the testimony of the monsters’ hunters who came across the mountain...”

Max gave a somber look to Nirta at that moment. He abruptly shut his mouth when Nirta saw the darkening of her face and decided to end the conversation. He awkwardly scratched the back of his head and added in finality.

“I’ve said a lot of useless things. It’s nothing to worry about, ma’am. Even if the demons are coming in, Anatol is as safe as an iron can, as long as there are Knights of the Remdragon.”

Max could hardly relax even with his assurance. The horrendous images of the guards and loggers who were seriously injured in the Werewolf’s raid came to her mind. As the number of demons increases, such things will happen more often.

Max slipped a hand into the pocket of her cloak to hold on to the mana concealed in it. The resolve she had to learn magic became stronger. It would be better than nothing, if not of great help.

“Let’s focus on studying for tomorrow,” Max said firmly to herself.

Yurixion began to speak cheerfully again beside Max, as if to enliven the subdued atmosphere.

“Dear lady, don’t have such a dark face and try these delicious foods. The roast boar of the chef is really excellent. The skin is crispy and the flesh is juicy and extremely soft and moist! If you cut the meat into large pieces and dip it in a thick chamelein sauce, you’re going to be so enticed that you can’t focus on other things. I daresay you won’t even notice if one of us drops dead at this instance!”

“Thank you... Well, it looks re-really good,” Max replied.

“Right? The nutmeg-infused dove and fried cinnamon cookies are also amazing. Try them.”

Yurixion packed her plate full of food. Max pushed the food into her mouth little by little at his suggestion. It was really as good as he said. Max forgot her worries and began to indulge in her delicious meal. Nirta, who glanced at her while drinking, filled her glass with wine.

“I am going to choke drinking all this wine on my own. Let’s have a drink together.” Nirta told her as he pushed her glass towards her which was now filled with wine.

“Thank you.”

Feeling touched by his rare act of kindness, Max gulped down the wine in one shot.

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Chapter 123 – A Drunk Beauty (2)

When Nirta saw it, he raised one eyebrow and refilled the wine glass.

“You seem to enjoy drinking. Have another drink.”

Max suddenly realized how silly she looked, and told Nirta that in fact she never enjoyed drinking more than one or two drinks at a meal, but she closed her eyes and drank all at once because she didn't want to receive his disappointed glances like the one she saw earlier.

As the warmth inside her began to spread, Max felt comfortable. Max glistened lingeringly at the pleasant feeling of increasing drunkenness and continued to drink the wine Hebaron poured for her. Her drinking suddenly looked like a show and invited the onlookers to come in one by one to offer her food and alcohol.

While the way they appeared to feed her like a rare species mildly annoyed her, Max could not refuse and kept drinking.

She asked to herself how many times she tilted the glass to her lips, and gradually her eyes began to fade to the point where she felt strange. She began to let hiccups as she clasped the glass with her hands tightly. Her body felt limp and shaky, the room before her eyes was dancing.

She didn't know why, but suddenly she wanted to clear her head and sober up. Perhaps her appearance had appeared strange that a knight stepped in and blocked Nirta's hand from pouring more alcohol into her glass.

“Sir Nirta, stop filling the cup. I think the lady is already drunk enough ..”

“Well, I’m... O-o-okayy...” Max answered.

Her tongue was twisted and her pronunciation was not clear. Normally, she would have kept her mouth shut immediately because of how ashamed she was of her drunk tone, but somehow she didn’t feel so embarrassed to stutter. Trapped in her drunken state, Max decided to finish all the remaining liquor in her glass at once and bravely held out her glass towards Nirta.

“One more drink, p-please...”

“You eat very well. All right. Okay. Come on, have another drink.” Nirta complimented her.

Nirta’s tone has now become more friendly to her. It was pleasantly satisfying the way he talked to a fellow drinker, so Max drank more happily. Smiling endlessly and shaking her body left and right, thanks to the alcohol that spilled, her sleeves got damp, but everything about her felt good.

Then she heard someone burst out laughing at the sight of her.

“That’s pretty adorable. I thought you were a woman of somber and demure character.”

Max swung her head towards the side where the sound came from, and shouted back.

“I am not up-uptight! You may not be a-able to d-deny it, but...”

””” ”

She sighed as she gulped down the wine that Nirta gave her. Suddenly, her pleasant mood quickly subsided and was replaced by melancholy in an instant.

“But... that’s... It’s b-because I’m not used to d-dealing with p-people. I don’t speak v-very well and.. I don’t know what to say. A-also the-they are all g-grown up for n-nothing. It’s a li-little sca-scary when you’re fa-facing him... If you look it up, it looks more po-powerful than it needs to be. It’s all more in-intimidating, I’m not the one to b-blame, but the other to b-blame, it’s to you! E-everyone, please lo-lower your height a li-little”

The knights stared at her absurd request and incoherent words blankly. The only one who broke into laughter was Hebaron, Lord Nirta.

“Why, you think height is useless? For combat, a big body is totally beneficial. Yours is too small. What did you do when you were little that you did not grow up?” Nirta asked Max.

“Is Lord Nirta drunk?” Max answered back.

Undaunted by her sudden loud voice, her glass was filled again by the big knight.

“Now, it’s not too late. You will grow like a pine tree if you drink and eat as much as I do.” Nirta told her.

“Well, shall we? I... Oh, can I still be a li-little b-bigger, can I?” Max replied with a smile.

“If you grow taller, you may become more courageous and bold” Max looked up at him with hopeful eyes. Hebaron bragged with a big smile.

“I have been drinking since I was 13 and grown this much.”

“I didn’t know there was such a secret in Sir Nirta’s height!”

Even Yurixion, who sat next to her and put meat in his mouth, poured a lot of alcohol into the cup and began to gulp it down.

The surrounding knights who were looking at the drinking session began to cast their eyes away, as if embarrassed by them.

Max didn’t understand why they had such an awkward face. She tilted her head absentmindedly, wondering what they were going to do next, but instead she found herself bringing her mouth back to the glass. At that moment, a big hand suddenly reached out over her shoulder and snatched her glass away.

Max looked back in astonishment.

Her eyes met with Riftan who stood tall with a fearsome expression. His face turned red and his eyes were staring at her. Judging by his half-blind stare, and violently muttering at her, Max realized he was angry.

“Now... what the hell are you doing?” Riftan asked her.

“To grow ta-taller...” Max replied with a hiccup.

Riftan glanced about the room once more before opening his mouth and his fierce eyes flew towards the knights.

“Can you tell me who got my wife drunk?”

“She is pretty good at drinking, so I just... .” Hebaron answered.

Hebaron scratched the back of his head and made excuses, and Riftan’s face grew even more frosty.

“My wife has had enough of drinking.” Riftan announced.

He gritted his teeth, and laid down the glass until it banged. Then he looked menacingly around the restaurant, where silence had fallen, and announced in a cold soft voice.

“Eat well and keep drinking. Because you’re going to use a lot of energy at the aerobatics training tomorrow.”

The knights groaned low in unison.

Riftan then walked out of the restaurant, dragging Max with him and ignoring the grumbling sounds from the other knights.

Suddenly, Max’s legs felt weak, and Riftan picked her up and held her, noticing her discomfort. She obediently wrapped her arms round his neck as Riftan held her. She had been thinking about going to bed because her eyes kept closing.

Riftan attempted to lower her down when they arrived in their room, but Max buried her face deep in the nape of his neck and appeared not to hear his deep sigh as he struggled to bring her to bed. Then she felt Riftan’s body flinching and stiffening.

Max, who was happily intoxicated by the sensation of drinking and sleepiness, didn’t care a bit. She gulped down his peculiar body odor and kissed his neck impulsively on the pulsating part of his pulse.

“Hey....” Riftan breathed in surprise.

As if to soothe a sulky animal, Max smiled and smoothed his hair. She gently closed her eyes while wiggling with her hands on his chest.

“Maxy... you don’t mean to sleep, do you?”

Max moaned and buried herself deeper in his arms. Riftan looked down at the figure and fretted.

“How much did you drink?”

“...”

“D**n it, you’re not teasing anyone, but why are you dressed like this?”

He finally managed to put her body down on the bed and pulled up the skirt that had been rolled up.

Max raised herself to make it easier for him to undress her. Then as soon as he took the dress off her head, she laid her head on a pillow and began to sleep in earnest. Looking down at the figure, Riftan gritted his teeth once more..

“When morning comes... you’ll see.”

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Chapter 124 – Rare Praises (1)

Max woke up to the cries of a cat. She reluctantly opened her heavy lids and flinched at the bright light coming through the window causing her a splitting headache. She groaned painfully as she sat down, holding her throbbing head between her hands.

Her stomach felt heavy as it was full of sand, and her head had ached as if someone had been nailing her skull all night long. She frowned at the unusual discomfort and suddenly saw a cup full of water appear in front of her eyes.

Max slowly lifted her head up.

With a gloomy face, Riftan looked down at her, and she realized for the first time that there were three kittens perched on her legs that seemed to have fully regained their powers.

“Wake up, drunk lady” Riftan told her.

Max stiffened as memories of last night flooded her thoughts. Riftan handed her the glass of water which she received in shame.

“Yesterday was very worth seeing. I didn’t know my wife was such a drinker.” Riftan spoke to her in a low voice.

“Oh, no! Y-yesterday was my first time dr-drinking like that.” Max replied in a faint voice.

Riftan gave Max a doubtful look before sitting down on the bed beside her. She felt him breathing deeply, as if to calm his anger.

Max felt even more anxious by his actions. She buried her swollen face into the sheets, but somehow Riftan's soft voice went straight into her ears, more clearly than his shouts.

"I'll tell you something, Maxi, if I see you drunk among the big boys one more time, I'll make you unable to walk for a while"

Max looked up at him in astonishment.

She realized that she was more surprised by the fact that his words didn't seem to frighten her at all than from the threat itself. She believes he can't do anything to her and wasn't going to harm her.

"Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?"

He asked her, but he grumbled softly as soon as he saw that she did not show fear. He just seemed upset that she didn't take his words seriously.

"I w-wont do that a-again" Max promised.

"Seems like you are just saying that."

"" "

With dissatisfied eyes, he looked down at her miserable body, and soon gave a deep sigh of exhaustion.

"I'm going to ask the maid to bring you some herbal tea that's good for relieving hangovers, so take a rest. Let's finish talking in the evening."

"Rif-Riftan..." Max weakly called to him.

"Right now, I have some priority work to take care of," Riftan answered, slowly getting up from his seat.

He shakes the cat off his boots, puts it on the bed next to Max, and leaves the room. Max hurriedly held the cats who were bursting into tears with discontent in her arms. The high-pitched shout cry felt like a needle piercing to her brain.

While she was calming the sick cats in her arms, Rudis entered the room with a teapot tray.

"How do you feel, madam?" Rudis greeted her.

"I am o-okay. it's nothing." Max answered.

In fact, she felt terrible, but yesterday's scene felt far worse than the pathetic hangover she had. Max calmed her aching stomach by sipping hot tea while trying to maintain her dignity in front of Rudis.

"I'll have some bath water for you. You'll feel better if you wash yourself with hot water and soothe your stomach with the chef's special egg porridge." Rudis told her with a smile.

Max nodded at her consideration with appreciation, relieved by the thoughtful words of the maid.

"I will."

Rudis called Max after a while, and she was greeted by a bathtub full of hot water. Max pulled her clothes off and went to the bathtub. In the warmth of the steaming hot water, she soaked herself and washed her hair with a mixture made of herbs.

She enjoyed the hot bath until she felt the water turn lukewarm. Max later changed into a new, fluffy dress.

Rudis brought Max a thick boiled porridge with barley, potatoes, onions and eggs for the latter to enjoy while grooming.

After Max's breakfast of that savory porridge, she sat in front of the fire and opened a book to read. Herbal tea was effective at driving her hangover away, and her headache disappeared, so she was able to look at her bookshelf and chose a book to read.

"Should I take the cats out?" Rudis asked Max.

The maid must have seen her turn the pages with concentration, and was concerned about her being interrupted by the cats.

Max shook her head, and she didn't want to kick the little animals out of the room.

"Oh, no. They-they don't bother me. It doesn't re-really m-matter to me if they stay." Max responded.

Then, Rudis smiled as one of the cats purred and rubbed against her. She bent down to rub the cat's ear.

"The black cat is very calm. The white cat and the striped one, on the other hand, appear to be very playful. He will start moving around as soon as he finds his courage. I'm sure that as you get bigger, you'll be a great mouse hunter."

Rudis said to the cat, Max secretly breathed a sigh of relief at her soft expression. She was worried that Rudis's work may have increased. Rudis, however, already seemed to be obsessed with little cats as well.

"Oh, I named them yes-yesterday. The b-black one is Roy... the white is La-Laura, and the gray-striped cat is R-Ron."

She realized as Max spoke that Rudis closed her eyes as if to memorize them, and whispered the names of the cats with a happy look on her face.

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Chapter 125 – Rare Praises (2)

"I'm going to have to show them all how to catch mice. It seems they all like their new family. For them, the chef's standards are exceptionally strong. This morning, I woke up a little early and caught him cooking a special meal for these future rat catchers."

Rudis said, pointing to a flat bowl placed on the floor. Inside the round wooden bowl, white fish and milk were finely chopped and mixed like porridge together.

Max happily watched the cats eating on a plate while they dined bravely, then she concentrated on reading again.

"Now, once you are done with this one book, you will have read all the books that Ruth has given you. The training to feel mana is a topic where I didn't make much progress, but thanks to the step-by-step guide, I could understand a little bit about the magic concept and principle." Max told herself.

She took out a new piece of parchment from her leather pocket, spread it out, and opened the last page of the book while Laura, the white cat who was snuggling against her stomach, crept out and began to play tricks against her skirt.

For a while, she scratched the cat's back while watching the cute scene and as the cat began to rattle violently, the letters she was reading began to dance in her head and she could no longer comprehend what she was reading.

Max glanced at the cat with an embarrassed face. Rudis quickly picked up the cat and put it in its sleeping basket, but the heartbroken cat did not stop crying.

"I can take the cats out if you want, Madam." Rudis suggested.

"Oh, no. I was just about to go to the library. I'm sorry, but could you take care of them a little bit?"

"Don't worry. They will be calm soon after I feed them some milk."

Rudis affectionately stroked the cat, took the pot out and heated the milk in the fireplace. Max gave her a thankful smile before she put a robe over her clothes, took the book and went out.

Finally, Max found peace in the library as she entered it after she passed through the cold corridor, as soon as she settled into her seat and began reading, she heard a familiar voice greeting her.

"Hello. Madam Calypse. Have you slept all night?"

Max, who had a perplexed expression on her face, blushed at the thought of drunkenness last night.

"To me-mention a la-lady's mistake and make it this shame-shameful... It's not polite." Max snapped at Ruth.

"Which lady in the world drinks half a barrel alone?"

Max glared at him with a look of distrust.

"" "

"Don't lie to me. I could-couldn't have drunk that much."

"You only drank half a barrel of ale. When you add the wine, it'll be a lot more. You must be a natural drinker...seeing that you're fine after drinking like that. Even Nirta praised you."

"No, it can't be. My head hu-hurt this morn-morning...."

"You're looking fine."

“Be-because I drank her-herbal tea! I... I’m not a drunk-drunkard!”

Max even raised her voice and outright denied it.

For a woman, there could be no more embarrassing title than being a drinker, she figured. Fortunately, as if he had no intention of making fun of her any more, Ruth shook his shoulders and sat down at his desk.

“Well, maybe there is a second chance for you to test your capacity for drinking.”

“That chance does-doesn’t exist! I won’t drink like that a-anymore.” Max declared.

“Yes, yes, I understand, you’re here to study, right? Please sit down. I’ll stop now. How far have you read the book?”

For a moment, Max stared at him with discontented eyes, before sitting weakly on her desk.

“Now, I have only one b-book left to read. I don’t understand it all, but...”

“You’ve read quite a lot. Tell me what you don’t know, and I’ll describe it as easily as possible.”

Max pulled out a pre-arranged bundle of parchment from her pocket. Ruth picked it up and looked over it. Max noticed that as he read the pages of her notes, he had a satisfied look on his face.

“You’ve been studying hard for days. It’s great that you’re so motivated.”

”I-I just wrote down what I didn’t un-understand while reading.”

As she murmured shyly at his rare praise, Ruth coughed in vain and came back with a stern look again.

“Okay, then I’ll explain. Listen closely.”

Max quickly took out her stack of clean parchment, the quill pen and the ink bottle. Looking at her, Ruth smiled and began to explain, and every word he said was written down by Max.

With Ruth’s monotonous voice and the sound of her pen gliding against paper, they spent a long time inside the library.

Max asked the maid to prepare a simple meal and bring it to the library for them, as her study hours grew longer.

They sat face to face on the desk when their dinner arrived, eating bread and soup, and exchanging questions and answers.

Max held the bread in one hand and ate it bit by bit, while busily taking in Ruth's explanation as the latter talked.

With each new learning she had, Ruth became excited from time to time, and when she asked him to repeat the explanations, he explained them again, step by step patiently. He was kind to her unexpectedly, so she did not worry and tried her best to earn his reproach, even though she did not understand the topic all at once, Ruth had a generous attitude so she felt relaxed and able to ask questions about anything without worrying about being wrong.

"It reminds me of when I was on the world tower." Ruth suddenly muttered with a look of nostalgia on his face. His expression made Max wonder what he was thinking.

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Chapter 126 – Riftan's Envy (1)

Max gave him a puzzled look as she handed over the bookcase.

"You think I came out because I hated the World Tower, don't you?" He was able to discern her thoughts.

"I didn't like the discipline, but I didn't hate it by itself. In fact, there's no other place in the world where hundreds of great wizards can gather to hone their skills like in that place," he said in a faint longing voice.

Max's curiosity had been piqued. Nornui was an unknown island with very limited access to outsiders. Only the wizards were allowed to enter and leave the tower while the merchants from the south and west were busy at the port. To and from knowledge had to go through the proper channels.

Without a doubt, this forbidden place exuded a mysterious aura. Countless minstrels had spread songs about the mysterious Nornui all over the continent, fascinated and enchanted by its secrecy.

It's no wonder that Lady Calypse was enthralled by the tale of the runaway wizard. Since listening to the tales skillfully sung by singers, she had been lost in strange dreams about the World Tower for a long time. And now that she was in the company of someone best acquainted, she decided to learn everything she could.

"D-do all wi-wizards study at the W-World Tower?" Her eyes glimmered with curiosity as she inquired.

"What do you mean-do you want to study magic by yourself at Anatol?" Ruth shook his head as if telling her not to ask stupid questions.

"In order to master the magic's properties, you must go into the World Tower and train. However, you don't have to go too far to learn the universal magic you want to learn. Most of the wandering wizards in the mercenary corps are these non-affiliated wizards."

Ruth scratched the back of his head as she tilted her head at the unfamiliar words, wondering if he had explained it yet.

"As mentioned in the introduction to wizardry, Mana is wind, water, earth, fire, light and darkness... There are a total of 6 attributes. Mana has these six kinds of energy in perfect balance... The very pure mana accumulated in the body by extracting only one attribute is called speed mana, and the advantage of this pure mana is the "magic attribute". On the other hand, the 'universal magic' that we want to learn right now is not one attribute of mana, but an attribute of various attributes that we accumulate and use in our body."

"Wouldn't the various elements be better? I think it's better to collect all the elements in the same amount," he continued.

"No, the more unstable your mana is, the more powerful it becomes. The mana that is focused on only one attribute has 10 times the power of normal mana. Let's say you have 6 bricks here. Isn't it difficult to spread evenly on the floor? That's for sure. However, you can simply knock them down by stacking bricks. As I said earlier, magic creates these dissonances in nature. It's magic that breaks the balance and affects a well-calculated mess."

Max nodded and recalled the explanation of the difference between 'spell' and 'mana' she had heard last time. Spells were against the laws of nature, but mana followed them.

“In the past, it was thought that if the body’s accumulated mana was inclined to a certain trait, the magical power would be greater as well.” Ruth revealed the inside of his wrist by rolling up his sleeves.

She smiled wide as if she was happy to understand. On the white skin with veins, a small enchantment, drawn in red ink, was inscribed.

“In order to master the attributes of magic, you need to be awarded this by the World Tower. Me.. Through this magic, I’m accumulating pure wind-like mana in my body.”

””” ”

“Well, I-I don’t think so...” Max said, looking down at her wrist with a touch of anticipation. “Wouldn’t it be e-easier to learn ma-magic if you engraved it on your b-body?”

“The only people who can engrave this magic are the senior wizards who live atop the World Tower, and in order for them to be given the attribute magic, they have to live and be educated in the World Tower for atleast four years. They can’t get out of Nornui during that time.”

Max drooped her shoulders with a disappointed look. Ruth clicked his tongue as though he wanted to laugh as he looked down at the figure.

“What do these attributes mean for a new chick who has just started studying the theory of magic?... You’re worried about learning the basics aren’t you?”

“W-well, it’s just... ah! I only asked one question.” Max grumbled burying her nose into the book hiding her embarrassed face.

Ruth smiled and moved a few books beside Max before rising from his seat to light the fire. The sky was cloudy and a dim shadow hung over the library, despite the fact that it was still early.

With tongs, he removed small embers from the furnace and lit them on a candlestick and lamp. Max rubbed her tired eyes and kept reading before rising just in time; it was already evening.

“Are you going to the dining hall for dinner?” When he saw her packed books and parchment, Ruth asked mischievously.

Max shook her head. She couldn’t face the knights last night because she was too humiliated by her tipsy self.

“I-I’m going to e-eat in my room. I-I want to st-stay there re-reading all these books.”

“Calm down, Max. You haven’t made that big of a mistake. I don’t think you’ve ever seen a real drunkard, much less hear he gibberish they spew.” Ruth, who immediately saw through her excuse, spat out. He then went on to suggest.

“Oh, why don’t you take this chance to build friendship with the knights? Everyone seems to think it’s funny...”

“W-well.. I-I don’t want to be fu-funny...”

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 127 – Riftan’s Envy (2)

Despite the fact she said that, she was tempted inside. He really didn’t think badly about her? Suddenly, while in the midst of her musings, she heard the sound of the door opening. As she turned in the direction, she saw Riftan striding into the library without disarming himself.

“What have you been doing up to this hour?” Max was surprised by his question.

Ruth replied bluntly as he was checking to see if he was still angry. “What are you doing in the library?”

Riftan frowned and looked around the desk. Next to the messy pile of books were the dishes and trays that were emptied at lunch. He held his forehead and shook his head as if dumbfounded.

“I heard the maids have been stuck here today... Have you been reading all day?”

“Just as Lord Calypse wields a sword all day, there is a man who reads all day.” There was a faint displeasure looming over Riftan’s face at the pompous tone.

Max hurriedly packed her books, her nerves frayed by the strange environment. She said, “I... I... I... I was just about to get up.”

Riftan quickly picked up the book in her arm. "Let's go. I told them to set the table in the room."

"Don't you eat at the dining hall?"

Riftan shot a crooked look over his shoulder because of Ruth's question.

"Everyone is going to be eating at the knights' quarters. I also told the servants to bring me food because I was too busy."

"What the hell have you done to keep people from coming to the dining hall with only physical strength?" Asked Ruth, trembling.

"Aren't you being so petty about my wife being drunk?"

Max looked up at Riftan with a surprised face. Was it possible that he harshly criticized the knights for what he saw? Max shook her head feeling sorry for the knights who had been scolded because of her, but Riftan only snorted.

"When I saw the jar full of alcohol rise, again and again, I felt he had lost his discipline, so I imposed on him a hard training."

"You did?" Ruth said sarcastically and sighed.

Riftan just walked out of the library, holding Max's hand while pretending he didn't hear his comment. Max left a small greeting to Ruth and hurried down the cold corridor with the man.

"" "

"S-still-"

Max was almost running to catch up as he took long strides. But after a while he paused and looked back at her.

Max took the opportunity and spoke carefully.

"A-are you still a-angry?"

"... "

"N-now... I d-don't drink alcohol like that... I-I won't drink t-too much from now on... I-I can't believe I was so drunk, I-I didn't know."

"I'm not mad.. yet."

Riftan bluntly spat out and resumed his steps. She walked quietly with him, sometimes sneaking glances at his face every now and then. Contrary to his words, his lips were sternly pursed. He was walking down the hallway silently, but when he entered the stairwell, he spat out.

“Are you with him every time you stay in the library?”

“What?” Max looked up at him in all curiousness at the sudden question, but soon she nodded slowly.

“R-Ruth... Most of his ti-time seems to be s-spent in the l-library. We almost always run into each other.”

Max decided not to mention that he had left the tower and is now treating the library as his dwelling place. She thought she should at least maintain that level of loyalty.

Riftan frowned faintly and asked, “You behave like a saint, don’t you? ... He’s such a naughty boy, and he often tries to get others into trouble and.. he’s involved in such strange experiments too...”

“It’s m-me who is a-always bothering h-him. H-he s-seems a little strange... I d-don’t really k-know... H-he is always t-teaching me things. E-even if it hasn’t been long since he arrived... h-he has been of great assistance to me.”

Somehow Riftan’s mood seemed to worsen at her answer. Max was anxious by the strange tension surrounding him. Did Riftan hate Ruth?

It seemed to her that there was a lot of trust between them, even though it didn’t seem like it sometimes. Max rolled her eyes wondering what to do with his look of displeasure. It wasn’t until they were near the door to their chambers that Riftan asked.

“... Do you like smart men?”

At that moment she realized that Riftan was really offended by his wife mingling with another man. He had never been conscious of Ruth in that way, the way he never thought it would be pleasant for a husband. Max jumped up in blue, worried that she might be suspected of chastity.

“I-I d-don’t like it! Of c-course I-I respect-him, but.. it’s not like t-that! Ruth’s a s-stickler! H-he’s always mean and Of c-course I-I a-appreciate his help. T-There’s nothing... I d-dont know. I-I can count on him w-when you a-are in trouble, but... I.. I mean, h-he nags a lot. It’s like a n-anny... Quite nosy.. I don’t think that’s.. I don’t think Riftan should..!”

Max, who was desperately clamoring to plead innocence, shut her mouth. Riftan was staring down at her. She opened and closed her mouth like a carp with her head lowered. Without looking in the mirror, she could tell her face was flushed. Her ears

were burning, and she couldn't stand the silence any longer, so she made a gibberish remark.

"I-I mean.. H-he's reliable.. a-and he's a good r-rider.. T-the k-kind of person w-who's always nice... Y-you like it or not..."

"I mean you..."

Surprised by the thud, Max raised her head. Riftan was slamming his head against the door when he let out a deep sigh, leaning against his forehead.

"How much weirder should I make myself feel here?"

"W-what?.."

Riftan glared at her with slitted eyes, grabbed her hand and pushed open the door. Max was led into the room by his arm and he closed the door behind him. He then lifted her up and pushed her against the wall.

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 128

Max opened her mouth in shock. Without skipping a beat, Riftan kissed her lips and slipped his tongue in. Max squeezed his thick, hard arms. His soft tongue swept inside her mouth, touching everywhere it could reach. The soft hairs on the back of her neck fluffed up one by one.

His kiss was savage and unpredictable (Note: In Korean, the mouth is described as rough, but it means the kissing part was very passionate). Her b****s ached as their kiss deepened, the sensual movement inside her mouth gently sweeping over her teeth, her tongue, and the inside of her cheeks. She gasped and clung to his body, trembling.

"Haaa..."

She groaned as if she were suffering from fever and her body became hot from the pleasure, as goosebumps rose from her skin. She wrapped her arms around his neck, and at that moment, when she looked over his shoulder, she saw the maids widen their eyes. Max stared at them blankly as her heart stopped.

The three maids stood solid as stones, forgetting their task of setting the table. Their arms were still outreached as if they were still setting up plates and lighting the candlesticks. Max screamed and pounded Riftan's back with her weak fist, hiding her face near his neck.

He glanced back and moved out of the doorway, holding Max in one arm. He said calmly with no expression.

"Leave when you're done."

Max felt like she would die from shame. The maids moved slowly for a second, as if awakening from a trance from watching where their lady and lord's faces met. The maids opened the door and went outside, saying goodbye with a polite expression.

"Um, well, have a good time."

They even took the kittens sleeping in their basket in case they would disturb them. Riftan could care less about the maids' red faces. It was hard to determine if Max's face was redder than theirs. He closed the door and began to kiss Max again, but she cried out and pushed him away in disbelief.

"Nuh-now, di-did yu-you see how the maids looked!"

"What then. They're maids. You don't have worry about it."

Riftan removed her arm, annoyed that it kept her body away from his, and continued to pour a small kiss over the nape of her neck. Even though Max was heavy with embarrassment, she still enjoyed his touch. Yet she held a hand over his mouth and leaned her head back.

"Rif-Riftan, you are st-staying in the castle for only sh-short amounts of time... but I-I am always with t-them every day!

"You spend the most time with Ruth."

Max's shoulders tensed at the level in his voice. He closed the gap between their faces until she could not see his terrifying, soft smile. His black eyes shone like a savage beast's that thrilled her. Max gulped dryly.

"We-well, that is. Nuh-No. I sp-spend the longest times with the maids."

“Really?”(Note: I’m stanning him so hard rn.)

“Yeh-yes.”

“Anyway, don’t you think it’s unfair that I, your husband, spend the least time with you?”

“We-well, it’s not my fault. And not yours.”

Riftan often left the castle. As a lord and knight, Max knew that Riftan had many responsibilities. Nonetheless, she could not stop her tongue from accusing him. He noticed that she was upset. Riftan sighed and set her on the table.

“I know. I just meant since we don’t have much time together, don’t mind other people when I am with you.”

He pulled a chair next to her and sat down, taking her hands and grazing his lips over them. She could no longer blame him when she saw his sincerity, as he gazed at her intensely.

Max nodded her head up and down like a fool, her face still pink. A smile crept on his lips as he pressed her fingers, and when he laughed, she softly laughed along with him.

During the winter, Riftan stayed in the castle for longer periods of time. He went to the training grounds in the early morning and led knights regularly around the castle walls to subdue monsters. No matter his schedule, he made time to have dinner with his lady when dusk started to fade.

It was more peaceful time compared to the last autumn. During the day, Max read the books Ruth left her or trained to feel mana while holding a gemstone. In the evenings, her maids helped her dress beautifully and set the table for her sweet and relaxing meals with Riftan.

These were the moments when Max came to know her husband naturally. The first thing Max noticed was that Riftan had a simple taste in clothes. When he wasn’t armed, Riftan preferred monotone, unpatterned clothing, and refrained from wearing brooches or jeweled belts. He detested luxuries on him and other men. His lip would curl at the sight of tight-fitting silk pants worn by mannequins, or the other latest fashions, such as ornate tunics that dragged on the floor, clothes with padded shoulders, shoes with pointed toes, or hats adorned with feathers.

When a seamstress team once came to the castle, the seamstress blatantly told Max that Riftan would wear whatever his wife would give him. With a horrified look, Max hid the feathered hat she was gifted by the seamstress for her husband. Riftan valued practical clothes and tools, and hated having items without worth.

He preferred sturdy, active attire that only supported his training and was not overdemanding of his servants. Although he enjoyed alcohol and greasy food, he never complained when anything he craved was limited or unavailable, and never requested meals that were difficult to make, as common noblemen did. He was raised as a knight, and all he pursued for himself and his castle was efficiency.

However, his frugal taste did not apply to his wife. He sought out beautiful clothes and fabrics to dress her. Frequently, he pressured her to wear jewels he would buy on a whim and ordered the maids constantly to treat their mistress well.

Max came to believe that Riftan felt obligated, almost to the point of obsession, to give her the luxurious lifestyle that a Duke's daughter deserved. He had a surprisingly complex mindset. While he viewed the vanity and whimsy of nobles with contempt, he saw the aristocratic lifestyle as a birthright to his wife. Showing off her status was very important to him.

Envy and contempt for aristocratic society co-existed within him. Though she couldn't understand it all, Max dressed extravagantly to meet his expectations, and tried to imitate her younger sister's sophisticated and elegant mannerisms in her clumsy way. Fortunately, Riftan did not see her struggles when she was not herself, yet Max always fretted when he would find out when she was pretending.

When she was at her desk studying the basic theory of geometry, Max suddenly widened her eyes at the thought. When spring came, nobles would visit Anatol. When the Calypses' would host them, Riftan would be able to compare the truly elegant noble ladies and his wife.

Max tapped the desk with her fingertips and wondered if she should study etiquette for young ladies. She had no experience attending large banquets. She cringed at embarrassment from even the thought of hosting a ball.

"You seem focused."

Ruth, who was sitting across the room said sternly, cracking his knuckles and rolling his eyes with sarcasm. His gaze was still on the brass kettle he was making tea with over the furnace. Max gazed at him in reproach for talking to her rudely, but the magician didn't care.

"If you've finished that book, your study on basic theory is over. Please make sure you understand it thoroughly. In order to learn any magic formulars, it is necessary to understand the basics."

"I-I am wo-working hard today. I'm, I'm just a little tired."

When the kettle whistled, Ruth made a sweet tea of honey, ginger, and other herbs and set a cup on her desk.

“My lady, please have refreshments.”

“Th-thanks.”

Ruth smiled softly at Max, faking sincerity as he bowed. Max rolled her eyes at his sarcastic attitude.

Since Riftan seemed to detest Max and Ruth being alone together, Max only came to the library with her maids. However, the maids noticed that they made the wizard uncomfortable. To retaliate, Ruth often addressed Max politely, stressing that he should treat her well as the lady of the house in front of spying eyes. Max knew he didn't like being disturbed by the maids, but she ignored his unrest.

“Your training on sensing mana, Is it going well?”

“Yeh-yes? No, not yet.”

Max shook her head while holding her teacup with both hands. Ruth took a sip of his steaming tea before narrowing his eyes, giving serious thought.

“You were gifted with a high mana absorption rate. I thought teaching you would be a lot easier....but results will take more time, I see.”

“I-I have a high absorption rate?”

“Last time, you saw my powers enter into your palms. This means you have a high affinity to absorbing magic. Usually, it takes apprentices years of effort from a young age to absorb magic that quickly.

In a passage she read, Max remembered reading that mana was received into the body through what magicians called Ma Ryok. Although the tube was invisible and seemed nonexistent, there were only certain entrances where mana could enter the body.

“Huh-how do you us-usually de-develop this Ma Ryok?”

“The magician injects magic into his student's body periodically. As a child, I was constantly exposed to magic. Therefore, my Ma Ryok has widened well for absorbing mana.”

Max nodded in quiet understanding until her complexion hardened. Was she used to mana because the healers had repeatedly healed her after her father's beatings? She had also been constantly exposed to magic. Max stared at his palms. She could not believe that something good could have come out of her father's cruel discipline.

“You don't have to be nervous. With practice, you'll get better at absorbing mana little-by-little.”

After seeing her face occupied with dark thoughts, Ruth had tried to comfort her. Max tried to smile and tried to focus on the present. Did it matter how she became gifted to use magic? She made up her mind to study the basic theory again to practice well.

Max turned her head when the door opened loudly, making the bookshelves tremble.

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 129

Riftan had appeared again as usual. He had been coming to the library frequently to find Max, which made Ruth sigh in frustration this time.

“Don’t tell me you’ve finished training already?” Ruth told Riftan.

“Training in cold weather drains strength. The guards need a breather for today to recover properly.”

Riftan responded dryly to the question, approaching Max from behind and bowing his head closer to hers. Max’s cheeks colored as the texture of his cold lips touched her forehead. He gently rubbed her hair and whispered

“Have you been stuck here since this morning?”

“I-in the mo-morning, I stopped by the st-stables.”

Riftan appeared dissatisfied. He frowned and grumbled.

“Don’t you spend longer here than in bed with me?”

“We-well, nuh-no. About the same.”

Since Riftan’s return to the castle, he spent much longer in the bedroom. Max’s face turned red, recalling how much time she spent in his arms almost every night. Riftan groaned near her eye and hugged her shoulders tightly with both arms.

“Don’t you think I’m good enough?”

“Can you *please* be intimate when you two are alone? Where I can’t see you?” Ruth said, bored.

“Just look away.” Riftan said.

“Why don’t you go back to your room? To make me more comfortable. This atmosphere is too much for me.” Ruth told Max.

Max couldn’t lift her head. She clasped her fiery hot face. Riftan clicked his tongue and pulled on Max’s arm.

“Good. Let’s go to our room. Hold onto me.”

“Ri-Riftan.”

””” .

Max tightly gripped the edge of the desk. She was too ashamed at this point to go their bedroom.

“To-today. The-the tasks you had to-to do today. Have you finished?”

“I left my patrol duties to another knight. Why aren’t you getting up now?”

Riftan was impatient and tugged on her arm again, but Max held the desk more tightly. While she enjoyed her time with Riftan, it was too embarrassing to stay in bed during broad daylight. What if the servants gossiped badly about them? She closed her eyes and moved her eyeballs back and forth in embarrassment, waving an arm at the stacked books near her.”

“Ah-ah. I ha-haven’t finished reading.”

“Read later.”

“To-today, I pl-planned to read these.”

Riftan scrunched his eyebrows together in dissatisfaction.

“What the hell are you so obsessed with?”

He took a book from the stack on her task and looked it over. The pages were filled with all sorts of intricate figures and ancient words. He looked at Max again and frowned.

“What is this? Are you trying to learn magic?”

“Didn’t you know?” Ruth said. **“She’s been learning magic from me for weeks.”**

Riftan, who was still rifling through the pages stopped and raised his head, his eyes flashing.

“What?”

At Riftan’s reaction, Ruth glanced at Max, confused.

“Hasn’t she told you yet? Your wife may have a talent for magic, so I’m teaching her little-by-little.”

“WHO WANTS HER TO?!”

Riftan shouted fiercely, throwing the book away wildly. Max trembled. She didn’t know if she would’ve had permission, so she hadn’t asked, but she thought he would be happy if he knew she was learning magic for him.

“Having wizards at hand are an incredible resource.” Ruth countered. **“Moreover, recently, there’s been a decline in wizards, which means less people to take on apprentices.”** Riftan was still upset.

He lashed out, blaming Ruth.

“This all started when I went to take out those dn Goblins.”**

Ruth didn’t know how to react and responded, slightly ashamed.

“I don’t mean to teach her offense magic. But wouldn’t it be a great asset to Anatol if your wife could do simple defense or healing magic?”

“I don’t need the help!” Riftan burst. Max grasped fabric on her knees tightly. When Riftan saw her face turn white and scared, he swore and squeezed her shoulder, trying to calm himself.

“I didn’t bring you here to use you. I...I just want you to be comfortable. Magic is hard work and consumes a lot of strength.”

“I’m no-not trying to do so-something dangerous. I-I just want to-to be helpful.”

“I’m saying I don’t need it!”

Max looked at him in shock. Riftan hesitated and touched her face, his tone impatient.

“Don’t look sad. I’m not mad at you. You-.”

He couldn't find the words to explain and bit his lips. A strange silence fell upon the library. Riftan continued to shift his gaze between Max's discouraged face and Ruth's disapproval. He swept his hair with one hand roughly. A cold look passed over his face.

“Do whatever you like.”

He turned away and left the library. Max watched his back hopelessly.

Riftan didn't come back until dark. Max wandered the room anxiously, looking out the window constantly for him. According to Rodrigo, Riftan wasn't armed and had taken his horse to leave the castle.

Max felt like the blood was drying in her veins. The three cats, who had been sleeping comfortably near the fireplace, came out from under the bed and cried and groaned, as if expressing her feelings for her. She took one cat on her lap, petting it, then lied down on the bed and quietly closed her eyes.

She couldn't understand what had made Riftan so angry. Was he upset that she hadn't told him she was learning magic? She should have asked his permission before she had started.

She bit her nails nervously, lost in thought when she heard a rattling sound. She hastily closed her eyes and pretended to sleep. She could tell by the footsteps who was coming.

Max didn't have the courage to see Riftan in the face. Riftan approached her silently and carefully pushed the cats off the bed back into their basket.

She listened, wanting to know his mood. Riftan placed the basket near the lit fireplace, took off his cloak, and hung it off to the side. He sat down on the bed to take off his boots. Max waited for him to lie next to her.

He didn't move and just sat for a long time. Feeling rejected, Max buried her face deep into her pillow. He didn't want to lie next to her, it seemed. She had disappointed him. She had just wanted to support him. Was she too incompetent to be trusted? She bit her lips. He had said so firmly that he didn't need her help. His words had struck her painfully. She curled her back to hide the hurt on her face.

At that moment, a rough finger gently touched her cheek. Max held her breath. Riftan gently cupped her cheeks and pulled a few strands of her hair away. Even without opening her eyes, she could feel his intense gaze on her, as if her face was right next to the fireplace.

He continued to sweep her hair away and took her fingertips to his lips. Max automatically shuddered from his touch. Did it seem like she was rejecting him? Riftan

flinched and slowly returned her hand to her side and began to move away. Max hurriedly grasped his hand.

“Ri-Riftan!” But after holding onto him, she didn’t know what to say. Max looked at him cautiously. Did he know she was only pretending to be asleep? He didn’t seem surprised she was awake. Underneath his fringed hair, his eyes, dark as ink, looked at her without expression. She shivered at his look. Maybe he was angry at her. She was terrified.

“I’m, I’m sorry. I’ve done wrong,” she said recklessly, although she did not know exactly what she was apologizing for. Riftan drew in a short breath and hugged her.

“Don’t apologize. You didn’t do anything wrong. I just..”

Cold fingers penetrated her hair and touched her scalp, wrapping themselves around her small head. Max exhaled as Riftan buried his nose in her chest. Her shoulders trembled. Riftan rubbed her back and said irately.

“Don’t act so scared all the time if you can learn magic.”

“Nuh-no. I-I’m not scared. Really.”

“Don’t lie. You’re trembling. Dammit. I barely made you laugh. Now we’re starting all over.”

“Nuh-No. I’m not afraid.”

Max trembled and bit her lip. She was relieved that he was being affectionate again, but could hear the sadness in his voice. She grabbed the hem of his sleeve as Riftan held his forehead grudgingly.

“I-I don’t nuh-need to learn.”

She felt Riftan’s arm wriggling underneath his sleeve. He shook his head vigorously.

“You don’t get it” he said.

“Is muh-me he-helping you a nuisance?”

“It’s not like that.”

“I-I wuh-want to do so-something for you. I-I wish to do this.”

“Even if you don’t do anything!”

Riftan said violently. He sighed in agony and swallowed before kissing her lips hungrily. Max pressed against his face, his hard chin shaking under her hand. A small line of saliva dripped over his thick neck. Riftan pushed his tongue into her mouth and tasted her slowly, tenaciously.

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 130

Max trembled faintly as she felt Riftan's knee pushing into her skirt. He groaned, gently sucking her wet lips.

"Okay, you can do whatever you want. Please, don't look like that."

Max choked by a pleading voice.

"Ri-Riftan... y-you got angry all of a sudden."

"I'm sorry. I won't do that again."

As if soothing a small animal trembling with fear, Riftan stroked her back constantly with his big hands.

The large, rough palms felt over Max's thin clothes gradually relieved the tension from the body.

Max buried her face in his neck, she could feel a faint shiver running over Riftan's body.

"Maxi..."

"You-your body... is cold. You-you've been outside."

"I'm just trying to cool my head off for a second..."

As Max touched his chest, Riftan's voice faded like a dying candle. Max blushed as she felt her body touching his thighs harden with excitement. She was worried that she might be too bold, but he didn't seem to hate it, so she rubbed her nose into his chest.

"B-Because you're mad at me?"

"I'm not mad at you. I'm..."

Riftan's voice shook unsteadily. Max hesitated and stroked it over the hem of his clothes. His face hardened with passion.

Max felt a fever rising to the top of her head. The desire to make him more muddle soared. Max tucked her hand under his tunic and swept the slim waist covered with fine muscles. Riftan breathed in as if he had been kicked in the abdomen.

"Maxi..."

"" "

Ignoring his voice, Max felt her fingertips in the cracks of his abdomen. She could feel his strong stomach stiffening like a stone. It was fascinating, so she pressed her fingertips to see his reaction, and she held her fingers near his navel. A suppressed groan flowed out of Riftan's mouth.

"Now, do you know what you're doing?"

Max glanced up at his face distorted by desire. Riftan's forehead was deeply wrinkled, and his mouth was tense.

Max raised her head and kissed him slightly at the side of his mouth. Then the Riftan stiffened and deepened the kiss. He groaned at the soothing touch, as she pulled the hem of his clothes.

Riftan grabbed her hand wandering around his stomach and led it down. The heat in the palm of her hand made his ears red. He gasped breathlessly, pushing his body explicitly against her palm.

"Uh..."

A splitting groan ran a numb feeling behind her ear. Max hesitated and stroked his body. When she brushes her hand on his manliness, Riftan's jaw trembles. The appearance was incredibly fascinating. The man who always drove her crazy is shaking weakly like a wounded animal in her grasp.

"You're in pain...?"

“Yeah... I’m dying”

Riftan hugged her shoulder and murmured something. Max plucked up her courage and untied his waistband. Unstable breathing poured over his shoulder, but there was no sign of Riftan dissuading. After hesitation, Max moved her hand as carefully as he did when he touched her. It was so smooth and hot that she couldn’t think of it as a place that bothered her so viciously.

“Max, Maxi...”

Riftan shivered and held her shoulders tightly. Max looked at his face, blurred with enthusiasm. She could feel his body wriggling strangely with longing and breathing hot. Her eyes tingled because of the thought that she had come too far to handle. When she was just thinking at what else she could do, he gave her a rush.

“Maxi... just a little bit more....”

“Oh, what should I do....”

Riftan pressed his forehead against the back of his hand like a dizzy person in front of her, and pulled her hands down to his manliness, completely surrounding it.

“...slowly up and down... Uh... Yeah...Well, like that... Hhhhhhhhhhhhh”

Riftan’s face was completely red with excitement. Looking at his black eyes moistened by the heat, Max slowly touched his body. Her heart beat is painfully fast. Max’s body wriggling underneath the rolled-up clothes, red cheeks, intermittent trembling breaths...It was all too shallow and fascinating to handle.

Max forgot her shame and kissed him on his neck and moved her hand a little faster. As if he had reached the limit of his patience after short breaths, she hurriedly removed her hands and settled between his legs.

Max willingly opened herself up for him. At once, Riftan rolled up to his waist and his body pushed heavily in.

“Uh...”

I felt a thin shiver in contact with the body. Max exhaled an overwhelming breath. The heavy weight made it hard to breathe. Perhaps she felt that she was not prepared enough, but he slowly moved backwards.

Max is relieved from the pressure, but for a moment, his body moves back in. Max held his arm tightly and her thighs trembled. It’s hot, as if hugging a ball of fire.

“Ri, Riftan...”

The muscles around his eyes were shaking. The sweat drops on the forehead, down to his long eyelashes. A man who ran up the stairs without sweating a drop, and a man who did not lose his breath even after running on a horse without resting on a long road, is in this state because of her. A strange sense of satisfaction, which can be called evil, swelled inside her. From time to time, the wicked woman who wakes up from her inner self that greedily pokes her violently.

Max pulled her body close with tears. Then he starts to move violently, pressing her whole body with a sound of affliction. The pleasure is melting her. Max scratched his slippery back with her fingertips with a slight groan. Sweaty clothes cling unpleasantly to the skin, and the body in contact shakes viciously like a drum. She seemed to have a terrible fever.

She wiggled her back to get a more intense sense. Riftan was almost half out of his mind, more than Max. It was unbearably good. Max likes when he's muddled, it is good to fret. With a vicious need rising through her throat, she bit him on the shoulder. Riftan trembled and pulled her neck to take a fierce grip on her lips. It was a kiss as if Riftan was anxious to eat it.

“Maxi...”

Max gasped, rubbing her tongue roughly against him. Thick beads of sweat gather between the folded eyebrows. Max couldn't understand the traces of anguish on his face. Max is the one who's nervous, but why do Riftan look like that as if he is sad. She's afraid that he might turn cold one day.

“How much crazier do you think you're going to make me...”

Riftan mumbled resentfully and thrust deep enough to hurt. He fills her stomach like he doesn't get enough even though she's thoroughly full. Max could no longer understand what he said. Only the sharp pleasure of thrusting the inside flows through her brain. Max clasped her toes and wrapped her legs around his waist.

Riftan shakes his body and intertwines their wet tongue. Max felt a faint taste of blood in her mouth, but she didn't care. Max closed her eyes dimly.

Max felt her thighs opened and something cool came between her legs. Max flinched and opened her eyes, gave a trembling sigh when she saw his masculine face showing a clear outline even in the dark. Riftan was wiping her off with a wet towel. The sensation of cooling the skin gave her a languid groan.

“It's still dawn. Don't get up.”

He gently wiped the water out with a dry cloth and covered her back with a blanket. Only then did she realize that he was well prepared to go out. He swept her hair from her forehead. Max looked up at him with a look of still languidness. Riftan had a grave

face as always, as if nothing had happened. The appearance felt mysterious that Riftan seems so intact even after such intense experience. Unnervingly anxious, she hurriedly pulled herself up.

“I-I must get up, too...”

“I’m telling you to sleep more.”

With a rather coercive voice, she looked up at him with an uneasy look. Riftan had a bitter smile around his mouth.

“I said you can do whatever you wanted. Don’t make that face.”

“b-but...”

“I don’t understand why you’re trying to learn magic for nothing, but...”

Max shrugged her shoulders with a rather dry voice. He didn’t seem to be taking what she said that she wanted to be helpful. Riftan continued calmly, tying the straps of his boots tightly.

“It wouldn’t hurt to learn a defense spell. Of course, you’ll never make a situation where you must use it yourself.”

“I, I...”

Max was about to say that she wasn’t trying to protect herself, she was trying to learn magic because she wanted to help Riftan.

Max feels she didn’t have any credibility at all. In a way, it was natural that Riftan did not expect her to be a good wizard and be a reliable helper. He’s only seen her trembling with fear.

Max nodded, trying to hide her disappointment at his appearance as if he were soothing a child in a group. It is fortunate that the permission has been given. Obviously, if she builds up her skills and shows her dignity, Riftan will change his attitude. She has no choice but to try it for now. Max comforted herself like that and uttered in a calm voice.

“Uh, for the permission... tha-thank you.”

Riftan had a subtle look on his face, neither smiling nor frowning, and kissed her on the forehead and got up.

“If Ruth tries to involve you in a strange experiment, tell him immediately.”

“I-I’ll be fine. I- I guess I’ll tell him... ‘be serious, teach me’”

The words she tried to reassure him somehow made Riftan smile. Max was nervous, wondering if she made another slip of the tongue. However, Riftan opened the door without saying anything and left.

Max lay on the bed and listened quietly to Riftan's distant footsteps. The window was dimly lit by the blue light of dawn. Looking at it for a moment, she sighed and covered the sheet to the top of her head.

A strange feeling of exhaustion came upon her. She closed her tired eyes.

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