

Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 131

After that day, Riftan made no comment on her learning magic. In addition, he stopped visiting the library from time to time. However, Max felt uneasy about the change in his attitude. Riftan appeared to be attempting to ignore the fact that she was learning magic.

She didn't understand why he didn't like it so much, but Max was optimistic that he would naturally change his attitude if she could do even one magic that is useful. That's why no monarch in the world would not welcome the increase in the number of wizards under his command, even the royal princess worked hard as a wizard and was recognized for her talent.

Even if she is not as great wizard as the Princess Agnes, if she can do the magic of healing properly, she will surely be able to help Anatol a lot. Then Riftan will recognize her.

Max nervously turned over the pages with wrinkled brows. She wanted to learn magic as soon as possible, but she felt impatient because there was little progress in studying.

"Don't be so nervous. You've only just learned the basic theory. It takes a lot of time to learn magic."

Ruth, who was sitting across from him and recording something on the map, suddenly opened his mouth. Max looked at him with a dutiful look at him. 'Does he have an eye at the top of his head?' The wizard immediately noticed and warned her in this way, even if her concentration was a little distracted.

She grumbled with discontent, putting her hair flowing down her forehead behind her ears.

"B-but... still, y-you know how to do it, even if you..you know nothing."

"I can't help it. Learning a theory doesn't mean you can use magic. If you don't collect enough mana, it's no use."

Max shut her mouth when he pointed out where she was lacking. As he said, she had not yet been able to gather enough mana. Rather than gathering mana, she was struggling even in training to detect mana. 'In what time will I be able to do magic?' Max drooped her shoulders in a mood that seemed to wear out her confidence.

"Every day, I'm practicing, holding a mana stone. Well, it didn't work out..."

"Maybe it's because the Mana Stone of Fire and the Mana of Nature are not very good."

Ruth narrowed his eyes, fiddling with the git pen as if he was lost in thought. Max gave an anticipated look that he might find a solution. Ruth opened his mouth after a long time.

“Why don’t you change the location? There is a difference in concentration depending on the location of Manna. It could be much better just by practicing somewhere else.”

Sounds like a lame suggestion, Max squinted.

“Oh, w-where do you like?”

“It doesn’t make a big difference. Manna’s concentration is high in places where vegetation, wind, soil and water are abundant.”

””” . ”

At his words, Max turned his head and stared out the window. A pale winter sky unfolded over the mahogany window frame, which is jolting in the wind. Max had an unwilling look on her face in the chilly sky light that made her feel creepy just by looking at it.

“Hey, i-it’s cold. You want me to go outside?”

“You don’t freeze to death just because you’re out for a while. Think of it as a walk-in support. In fact, you’ve only been in the castle lately.”

“Ru- I don’t want to hear that from Ruth.”

Ruth was more stuck in the library than she was. At least Max toured the castle once a day to supervise the servants, while he was really stuck in the library all day. He doesn’t know if he even walks 20 steps a day.

As she narrowed her eyes looking at his slender limbs, Ruth frowned and defensively crossed his arms against his chest.

“I can’t leave the room even if I want to. I want to split my body into two to work on the elemental weapons protecting the walls, as well as to investigate the migration of the beasts.”

“Again, y-you are m-making e-elemental weapons?”

“That’s right. The creatures climbed through the walls of the castle, taking advantage of the previous foggy dawn. To prevent that from happening again, we would like to build elemental weapons in a place where the spells often appear. We’re still in the planning stage, but...”

He squeezed the back of his neck and yawned until his mouth was torn. Only then did Max look sorry when she found the black shade under Ruth's eyes. Because she was anxious to learn magic, she couldn't check his situation.

"T-This time, I, I don't have to help you? I-if it's enough to organize the formula, I, uh...."

"I feel like a chimney, but I'm afraid not this time. I am under the eye of Lord Calypse for teaching you magic at will. And if you're going to be an assistant, he will not let me go."

She shuddered as if he was horrible just imagining it. Max felt uneasy again about the exaggerated response. As expected, Riftan seem to be displeased with her learning magic with others. She became depressed for nothing and felt awkward, but Ruth continued with a lighter tone.

"Anyway, thank you for your words. But please focus on learning magic now. You're much more helpful than helping me with my work."

"Oh, I got it."

She no longer said anything and picked up the magic book she was studying. Ruth, who sat a little away and was sewing quietly followed, and picked up his luggage. Max glanced back at him as he walked to the door with his maid.

"Well, then... Tha-thank you."

Ruth shook his hand dryly.

"Yes, I want you to enjoy my share of the refreshing feeling."

"We're going to gather mana."

Max grumbled out of the library. Rudis followed and quickly put a cape around her shoulder.

"Oh, thank you."

"Would you like to stop by your room and change into thicker clothes before you go outside?"

"Oh, no. This is enough. I'd like to go out like this, but can you bring the book to my room, please?"

"I'll take it with me."

"Well, you don't have to. I, I'm just going to walk along the promenade."

“But...”

“And when I’m alone, I can concentrate well.”

When she spoke more strongly, Rudis took the book and bowed her head as if there was no other choice.

Max turned quickly and walked out of the hallway. Bright sunlight was pouring in on the wide stairs with red rugs. She gazed up at the white shining window with her squinted eyes as she ran down the stairs. The castle was several times colder than usual, perhaps because of the ventilation.

Max turned to the kitchen because she thought she would enjoy the heat of the fireplace. It will be less cold if she sits in front of the fire, warm her body, and go outside. Curled up to her knees, she walked past the hall with quick steps.

However, when she stepped into the heated kitchen, the idea of resting for a while and leaving, faded. Max stood at the entrance and looked through the crowded kitchen. Usually, double servants were working frantically, grooming food ingredients, setting fires, and moving water bottles from place to place.

“Are you trying to turn all the bread into a lump of charcoal?! Come on. What are you doing?”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry!”

Two red-faced boys received a loud roar from the chef who pulled out a brown bread the size of a pumpkin from the oven with a large flipper. At the opposite table, eight maids sat around the table, filling the white dough with minced onions, chopped sausages, and various spices to form a small half-moon-shaped pie, while they piled up the bread on a clean woodblock.

Five pots were boiling inside the fireplace, and the servants continued to make meat on the charcoal fire, make turnips salad, boil potatoes and eggs, and fill it with a large wooden bowl.

As the meal time approached, the kitchen was always hectic, but today, the kitchen seemed to be busier than usual. Looking at the chef with a half-sick face, Max sneaked up to the chef and asked.

“D- do you happen to have a job that the Lord ordered you to do?”

“Oh my God. You’re here? I’m sorry My Lady, I couldn’t say hello in advance.”

Then the chef bent down hurriedly as if he had noticed her existence. Max waved his hand in the sense that she was okay.

“Oh, no. You...you look busier today.”

“Yes, the lord said he would train cavalry this morning and ordered us to prepare more food than usual.”

“Ca-cavalry training...?”

“All the knights will gather in the field, ride horses, and do mock combat training. It’s a magnificent sight.”

The chef, who had a bright smile on his wide face, pulled out a crispy fried pie from the oil cooker with a loud noise. Then he quickly looked back at her with a sorry look, spraying cinnamon powder and molasses syrup on top of it.

“I’m sorry about that, My Lady. If we make a little delay, we won’t be able to use precious ingredients because it will burn black, so I can’t stand still for a moment.”

“Oh, no. I’m sorry to talk to you while you’re busy. D-don’t mind me. Y-you should continue.”

“Are you here for business?”

“Oh, no, just...just passing by.”

In a hectic time, Max went straight out through the back door because she didn’t want to bother him while they’re busy. In the open garden, five or six workers took axes and split firewood into small pieces and piled them up on carts. They took off their hats and bowed their heads then Max waved one hand to respond and began walking straight down the promenade.

As she walked a little from the Great Hall, a calm air surrounded her. Max looked around, raised her head, and inhaled deeply into her nose. The pale sunlight of winter was pouring through the branches of the trees. The wind was so cool that her skin was sore, but the day was rarely sunny.

After only smelling the quizzical wood in the gloomy library for a while, she enjoyed the chilly winter air and felt refreshed.

[◀Previous Chapter](#)

[Next Chapter▶](#)

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 132

'I didn't feel like it, but... I'm glad I came out.'

She was buried in a book every day, so she stopped practicing horseback riding with Rem for a while. Believing it was a good idea to follow Ruth's suggestion, she slowly moved towards the location.

Usually, at this time of the day, the chanting of the knight apprentices is heard, but seeing the quietness, all the boys seemed to have participated in the cavalry training. Max stood in a sunny place, relieved that she could participate in the training without worrying about encountering others.

'Will it be a little different this time?'

She rummaged through her pocket and pulled out a mana stone. The surface seemed to shine transparently under the bright sunlight. Max was rolling the mana stone around with her fingertips and grabbed it tightly with her palm.

There was no change, either way, as they were waiting for the heat to flow on the surface of the mana stone with her eyes closed. Max repeatedly looked up at the sky with a sigh.

'Maybe I'm not talented....'

Ruth may have been mistaken. She may not have had the qualities of a wizard in the first place. Suddenly, she was so irritated that she kicked the floor violently. It was a waste to study books that were difficult to understand and to do nothing was pathetic. Max tried to throw the mana stone on the floor, but managed to restrain herself and squat down helplessly.

From afar, she could hear blacksmiths knocking on the iron. She could hear firewood being pounded. Max was deeply depressed because she felt like she was the only one who was stuck in a dynamic group. Max buried her face sullenly on her lap. At that moment, a sharp voice came from behind.

"What are you doing here?"

Max looked back in surprise. Three or four steps away, Riftan stood tall in armor as if he had just finished training. 'How could he come so close in such a costume without a sound? She was blinking her eyes in surprise, and Riftan came in front of her.

“Are you sick or something?”

“Oh, no. Well, just relax...”

Max hurriedly got up from her seat, embarrassed. Then Riftan frowned.

“When I went to the Great Hall, they said you went out without an attendant. Why are you alone out here without a maid?”

“Just, just to get some fresh air....” Max said

“I think I’ll get even angrier if you come out for magic training.” Then, Riftan’s face hardens.

””” ”

“A castle isn’t absolutely safe. If you’re in a distant place like this and have an accident...!”

Max shrugged her shoulders at the increasingly harsh voice. When he saw it, Riftan immediately stopped talking. At first glance, he looked nervous on his face.

“This is a castle where hundreds of people stay. Some of them might have a bad heart. Don’t you know that Lord’s wife shouldn’t be alone in such a deserted place?”

“I-I’m sorry....”

Max answered back obediently, not being able to say the right words. Then, Riftan’s stiff mouth was loosened a little smoothly. He pulled her arm, sweeping her hair out of the wind with one hand.

“Don’t worry me too much.”

Then he starts to walk one step ahead. Max followed him in a sullen manner, like a dog getting scolded.

Is he angry? He was walking a little faster, one step ahead of her, unlike usual. Max, who glanced at the blunt side of the face, suddenly realized that Riftan was moving in the opposite direction of the road to the entrance of the Great Hall.

“Are you going to the castle or not?”

“I heard you came out to get some fresh air.”

He replied bluntly and moved straight to the stable.

“I said I’d take you to the lake the other day. It’s a sunny day, so let’s go outside to get some fresh air.”

A welcome smile on the words and Max looked worried as he looked over him in his armor.

“Oh, I heard you had a hard training today. W-wouldn’t it be nice to take a break?”

“Hey, you still don’t know how strong I am? I’m a man who can march three days and nights without a break.”

Riftan shook his head as if he were amazing and went into the stable. Max secretly blushed as she recalled his passion until dawn. Clearly, Riftan’s physical strength was phenomenal. Fanning her face, she followed him into the somber stable, and the workers who swept the floor rushed to bow.

“My Lord, you’re here.”

Riftan gestured roughly to the servants, then walked straight to Talon’s compartment and put up the saddle by himself. She walked to the place where Rem was. As she approached, a mare sticking her head out was pleased, stamping her feet. Max made a sorry face and caressed the horse by the neck.

“Well, how are you?”

Rem rumbled and rubbed her nose against her shoulder. She smiled and soothed Rem’s rich mane. Kunel, who was entering the stable with a straw band on his shoulder, quickly ran to see it.

“Good morning, My Lady. I think you two are going out together.”

“W-We’re going to the lake.”

“Do you want me to saddle you up?”

As she nodded, the stableman quickly put a saddle on Rem’s back. Max was handed a rein and led Rem out of the stable. Riftan, who was outside, grabbed her and sat her on the horse.

“The wind is cold, so don’t go too fast today.”

Then he jumped onto Talon and drove ahead towards the rear gate. Max looked as excited as she chased after him. The other day, she remembered riding a horse to the hill with him, and my heart was pounding hard. Max rode the horse cheerfully, feeling his depressed mood clearing up.

“t-the lake, uh, where is it?”

“It’s just a little west along this road.”

Earlier, Riftan, who stepped out of the gate, pointed to a winding forest path. The narrow road, which is lined with bare trees from side to side, seemed difficult to ride a horse.

Max hesitated a little, then carefully drove the Rem onto the bumpy road, where the roots of the trees were intertwined. Whether her riding practice has been fruitful, she was able to stay stable. Riftan smiled at the sight.

“You’ve become much better than before.”

“I- I’ve been practicing.”

“I’m proud you, of course.”

Max blushed at the praise he would give to the little boy. Riftan carefully watched how many times she was following her well and soon became relieved, speeding up a little bit. She clung to his horse’s tail and ran out of the narrow road.

How long would it have gone so far, the road got wider and wider, and soon a huge silver-lit lake appeared. Max looked down the open hill and exclaimed. A reddish-brown peak and a blue sky were clearly reflected on the mirror-like round lake.

Around the water, pines pointed like spears rose densely like fences, and the dense branches were thickly covered with pine needles that looked black. Max smiled happily at the place she hadn’t seen in a long time. Winter birds and wild animals that came to drink water between the trees were seen at first glance.

As Riftan dragged his horse close to the surface, the stag which was poking his head out from behind the bushes, ran away like the wind. Surprised by the sound, birds flapped up and the forest became noisy for a moment.

“I thought the water might have frozen, but it’s fine.”

He kicked Talon’s waist lightly and approached the lake. Max chased and asked in a surprised tone.

“t-this big lake... Oh, it’s freezing?”

“In the north, even a bigger lake freezes in winter. You can walk through it.”

At Riftan’s words, Max opened her eyes wide as if she could not believe it.

All she saw was a thin layer of ice on a bucket of water outside in the cold winter. She couldn't imagine that a lake this big could freeze and walk on it. She glared suspiciously at him, wondering if he was making fun of her who didn't know the world.

"Uh, h-how can I walk on a lake? The ice could break and fall into the water."

"Some people actually fall to death while crossing."

Riftan replied as if he were telling a trivial fact. Max frowned and shook her head in a ridiculous way.

"Well, then i-if you go up there, oh, you can't."

"If you make sure the ice is thick enough to support your weight, it's no problem if you move. It's much colder in the north than here, so ice doesn't break unless there's a big animal like Hydra underneath it."

Max opened her eyes wide at the words that seemed to have experience.

"Ri-Riftan, did you walk on the lake?"

"Not a lake, but I've crossed something like that. When I was a mercenary, I used to do a magic in Balto, and I walked for three days on a giant frozen glacier to pass through the Tranoia Plateau."

"What's rain glacier...?"

"A chunk of ice bigger than that mountain."

Over and over again, Max had a dim look on her face. 'How many things has he experienced in his 28 years of life?' The most ferocious and powerful demon on the whole continent, the Red Dragon, has gone through the ice bigger than the mountains....

It was unimaginable for Max, who had lived her entire life in her father's castle and moved to Anatol, which was all she had experienced in her life. How colorful and magnificent the world is perceived by Riftan. He felt like a completely different person compared to her, who was struggling with organizing the house of Calypse and learning a healing magic.

"Rif-Riftan, all seven countries... Have you been there?"

"I've never been to Arex and Suikan. When I joined the mercenaries, I moved to Rivadon and spent about two years there. I was commissioned to work at random, and I ended up going up to Balto... I made a lot of money there, but I came down to Osiria because I thought it was not a place to live. I stayed in the capital of Osiria for about a

month or three to attend a swordsmanship competition hosted by the Central Temple, and I was offered to join the Knights.”

He tilted his head slightly as if he were reminiscing about the past and calmly recited his history calmly.

“After returning home and being formally knighted, I spent most of my time in Anatol and Dristan.”

◀ Previous Chapter

Next Chapter ▶

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 133

“Dristan, W-What about Dristan?” Max asked.

“Because of the conflict between the Duke of Croix and the southern part of Dristan” Riftan replied.

The City of Croix was located at the south eastern most point of Whedon, and covered extensively as far as Dristan. As a result, there were frequent military disputes with Dristan in the eastern part of the Duchy, where knights were frequently dispatched from the Whedon royal family and from the central temple of Osiria to mediate them. The move was aimed at preventing disputes from escalating and shaking the seven-nation peace treaty. Was Riftan one of them?

“C-Croix is a conflict state.. so you f-frequently visit to arbitrate.”

She suddenly felt Riftan’s strange gaze when she tried to combine the stories she picked up when she was young in her head. Max looked at him with a curious look.

“W-why?”

“No... I wonder if I’ve been there so often.”

“Well, at least two months... s-sometimes o-once a month. Didn’t you visit?”

Riftan, who was staring at her, turned his head again, thinking it was like that. Max glanced at his expression just in case she made a slip of the tongue.

When he was in silence alone, Riftan seemed to be alone in a distance place. 'Why doesn't he tell me everything he thinks about? Maybe being with me is boring.' She was anxious because he looked away for a moment, and suddenly something cold fell on the nose bridge.

Max rubbed his nose with one hand in surprise. Water droplets were formed. It was so sunny just a while ago, but is it going to rain in winter? Max, who raised her head frowning, opened her eyes wide the next minute. Fluffy things were falling from the white faded sky.

"It's a nice day, and it's going to snow."

She heard Riftan kicking his tongue. Max looked back at him with a puzzled look.

"I-Is this snow?"

"...is this your first-time seeing snow?"

"I- I've seen sleet falling, but... This, like this close, I've never seen this before."

She stared blankly at the snowflakes that were slowly falling like petals and extended her hand forward. Riftan frowned at the sight.

"" "

"Straighten up. What if you fall off the horse?"

"I- it's okay. My lord, I'm paying attention."

Max answered and held the snowflake in her palm. The unpleasant thing melted away as soon as it reached the skin and became a small drop of water. 'How on earth does a dandelion seed-like thing become a droplet?' She looked down at her wet palm with a curious glance and kicked Rem lightly around the waist and began to run around in the fluttering snow.

Rem was also excited and hopped his feet, probably because he had been in the stable for weeks. She was getting excited by the cheerful rhythm between her thighs. Max burst into laughter and looked at the wind like a child with no worries.

The snowflakes, which had fallen gently one by one, gradually increased and filled the view with faint colors. An ecstasy came to the beautiful scene she saw for the first time in her life.

She raised her head and enjoyed the sensation of the cold snowflakes gently brushing her face. The snow glistened with a faint silver lining in the sun that leaked through the thin clouds, and the lake regained its deep color and fluttered in silence. A couple of winter birds plummeted onto the dark surface and flew away into the forest.

Max stared at all the sights as if she were going to capture them in her eyes and turned her head toward Riftan. Max was going to say thank you for bringing her to a nice place. However, when she saw his face, she was speechless. Max looked at his sharp face with a strange thrill.

Riftan's large body was visibly tense. His forehead was wrinkled, as if it contained deep agony, and the black eyes shook violently like the sea in which the wind and waves met. Max pulled the reins tightly in confusion. She couldn't figure out why he was looking at her like that. Feeling faint fear and faltering back, Riftan, who was clapping his lips as if he were trying to say something, shut his mouth tightly. There was a lonely look on his face.

"The clouds are coming. Let us go back to castle before it snows more."

But he quickly went back to being a determined, outspoken man. Riftan said, turning his head with a grave face.

"When I'm hit by snow, my body temperature drops quickly. We'd better hurry."

Then he slowly started going back the way he had come. Max hurried after him. A strange silence fell between them. 'What was that just now?' She looked at his wide back with a confused look, then turned to the calm lake.

Her face was dimly reflected on the dark blue wave. Somehow it looked precarious and lonely, and Max felt a corner of her chest cool.

'That's ridiculous....'

There is only one thing in the world that puts the strongest and bold knight at risk. She quickly dispelled the strange feeling. Just in time, the wind blew his black hair, poked her in the eye and flew eastward.

Max frowned and turned her head toward the distant mountains along the wind. White snow was scattered like fog all over the mountain. The season of rest was getting so deep.

Snow, which began to fall in the late afternoon, covered the whole world white until evening. Rudis was surprised that it had been almost 10 years since the Anatol had snowed like this.

Max exclaimed that the whole white world was just amazing, but Riftan didn't enjoy it. He led the knight out of the castle early in the morning to see if there was any damage caused by snow in the compound.

Even servants were busy cleaning up the snow. They meticulously swept the snow piled up on the stairs with broomsticks, covered it in layers to prevent firewood and other water from getting wet, and cleaned up the snow piled up in the backyard and garden to prevent the ground from freezing. The guards were busy clearing snow from the patrol route from the morning.

Max, who was pacing the garden and looking around in the snow, saw them working and ordered Rodrigo to distribute more firewood than usual before returning to the room. She thought about going to the library, but she was discouraged by yesterday and didn't feel like looking into the book.

Max sat on a rug in front of the fireplace and played with the cats after a long time. Ron, Laura, and Roy, who have been loved by maids for the past few days, have been rolling on the floor cheerfully.

Max tickled her plump stomach with the busy running cats on her lap one by one. Laura and Ron whined away from their knees, but Roy, the black cat, seemed to like what she touched, lay still, grumbling and shaking. The lovely figure made her laugh.

"Madam, would you like me to warm you up?"

Rudis, who was putting firewood in the fireplace and bellowing, turned her head and asked. With a welcome smile and nod, Rudis put a kettle in the fireplace to warm up the milk. The cat crept up on her skirt, smelling the savory milk that was spreading secretly.

Even Laura, who pretended not to know even if she called her, smiled as she approached.

"Hey, hey... Didn't you eat earlier, Ron?"

"He ate a plate of porridge made with minced meat. All three of them are very gluttonous and eat endlessly."

Rudis shook her head, but cooled the goat's milk lukewarmly and poured it into the cats' exclusive bowls. The cats put their noses in the bowl and soaked their whiskers and drank milk.

The small ones were so hungry that the bowl quickly revealed its bottom. Max found out that the milk had cooled down enough and poured her own into the cat's bowl. The cats ate up the rest of the milk. Watching the scene with joy, she was in a peaceful mood, and suddenly I heard a knock.

“Excuse me, My Lady.”

“What’s going on?”

“The Wizard has come. Would you like to meet him?”

The maid’s words from beyond the door clouded Max’s face. Did he come here himself because she didn’t come to the library? Or did something happen again?

Max got up from her seat with a nervous face and opened the door. Then she saw Ruth yawning with a disheveled look. The relaxed appearance of Ruth drained her shoulder. Apparently, something happened again.

“What-what, what’s going on?”

“Oh, good morning, My Lady.”

It was well past the morning, but Max didn’t bother to correct it. Ruth yawned once again, stretching all the way, and said what she had to do.

“I came here because I thought of a good training method. Can you come outside for a moment?”

“G-good... training method?”

Max opened her eyes round. Ruth nodded vigorously with a childlike innocent face. Yesterday, even though she was disappointed, she quickly put on a robe as she felt expectations creeping up again.

“Oh, what h-how?”

“I’m trying to induce Mana myself. You have a weak magnetic force, but you have good absorption, so I’m sure this will work.”

She looked a little worried. She doesn’t know how to inject mana directly. She was also reminded of Riftan’s request to be careful around Ruth because he made people around him get involved in a strange experiment. She asked with a suspicious face.

“Oh, it’s safe, right?”

“Of course! Don’t worry. It’s absolutely safe.”

[◀ Previous Chapter](#)

[Next Chapter ▶](#)

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 134

Though she was not relieved, Max calmly followed him out. Ruth looked around, settled down in one of the vacant lots where the snow was cleaned up, and drew something on the ground with branches. Max approached aesthetically and looked down at it. On the ground, there was a basic magic trick that she had learnt yesterday.

“From now on, I’m going to use this basic magic formula to run mana. I’m sure you’ve memorized it. Here... we’re going to rotate the mana through this path.”

He continued his explanation by moving the end of the branch along the magic design.

“And at this point, I’m going to turn the path and inject Mana into your Ma Ryok. Then, Mana will go through the palm of your hand to the heart, and discharge through the other side. And then we’re going to circle around this magic clock again. In a word! I’m putting you in as part of the magic.”

Max rolled her eyes at the strange explanation.

“Well, C-Can I do it?”

“Your Ma Ryok is well developed, so it won’t hurt your body. In fact, it’s an expedient approach, but... I’ll sure it’ll work. You’ll learn how to operate mana at a fast pace.”

She put her head in front of him, saying, “You can make the calculation so complicated that you can get a cramp on your head.” She doesn’t trust him. However, Max finally nodded as she was tired of holding and groaning stones that had no effect.

Ruth smiled confidently and held out his hands.

“Now, hold out your hands like this.”

“L-like this?”

When Max held out her hands, Ruth put them on top of it with a span of distance. She was wondering what he was going to do, but a strange heat began to come down from her palm. Max flinched her shoulders in surprise.

“Focus. We’re artificially creating a flow in Mana. You have to be familiar with this feeling.”

“Oh, I got it.”

With Ruth’s sincere voice, Max was nervous and paid attention to the itchy heat of the palm of her hand.

It felt like he was dipping her hand in the warm water that was flowing. Focused on the soft wave for so long, Max shuddered at the sensation of a thin thread that was soon invisible, crawling through the skin and into the body.

“Don’t lose focus.”

””” .”

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Ruth immediately warned. Max pouted her cold sweat and paid attention to Mana’s flow. The thin thread, which flowed smoothly through the forearm, wrapped the heart roundly past the elbows and armpits, then went out again on the arm and began to flow along the complicated magic hour.

If Magic was a finely woven fabric, Mana was a thread. Magic was similar to the process of unwinding a few strands of thread called mana from a fabric, rolling them round in the body, and pulling them out as necessary and squeezing them into new patterns.

It was only then that Ruth’s repeated explanations were finally understood. Max looked down at her palms with awe-inspiring eyes. Mana began to spin at high speed in the hand, emitting strong heat, and soon created a small ray of light.

“The first thing God created was light.”

Ruth smiled, looking down at the faintest light than the fireflies.

“Remember that. This is the magic that underlies all magic.”

“M-my hands are hot... I- I’m a little out of breath.”

“You can’t cry with this much. High magic rotates mana at the speed of this.”

Max gave a short breath and nodded. She could see why he looked so tired every time he used magic.

“I’m going to take my time to get out of here. You try to keep this pace and rotate your mana.”

Ruth slowly took her hand off. Max was at a loss as she didn't know what to do, but she tried to use her magic spell.

At first, however, the flow of mana, which had been maintained at a certain speed, became disorganized over time, and the heat in her hands escaped like sand. She tried hard to keep it somehow, but even the small ray of light went out helplessly. She drooped her shoulders with discouragement.

"Don't be so disappointed. You did a good job at first."

"R-Really?"

"Am I some kind of empty talker? I would have told you right away that it's terrible if it's terrible."

It's definitely left for this guy. Max laughed bitterly because she was relieved by his rudeness. Ruth smiled face to face and rolled up his sleeves curiously.

"Well, let's do this one more time. If you repeat it a few times, you'll get the hang of it."

"Oh, I got it."

Max continued to focus on the energy as Ruth induced. After seven such attempts, Max was able to keep the small light on her own for about a minute. When she showed Ruth proudly with joy, he applauded as if he was proud.

It was a little embarrassing but it is an achievement, the feeling of pride and excitement was rarely calmed down. Her heart was overflowing as if she had created a moon ball, even though she had only created a very small light that could not reveal a single small room properly.

"I'll teach you healing magic when you get used to it. Please practice the basic magic repeatedly until then. If you keep going, you'll have more mana in your body."

"I-I don't think I can do it alone."

"If it doesn't work, I'll induce you a few more times, so give it a try."

He said, rubbing his red nose. Come to think of it, she's been out for quite a while. She didn't even know my body cooled down because she was concentrating.

"Let's go inside now. You're going to catch a cold. I've been having a runny nose since before. It's unusual."

"W- why don't we go to the kitchen and get some warm soup?"

“That’s a good idea. I haven’t even had breakfast, so I’m almost stuck on my back.”

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Ruth swung the robe to the entrance of the Great Hall, raising it to his chin. Max grinned as she walked along. Even though her body was cold and shaking, her feet were as light as flying away.

Max diligently practiced Mana energy as Ruth instructed. At first, Ruth had to induce two more times because she couldn’t get the hang of it, but after that, she was able to create a small light on her own. As it was repeated, the light stem became clearer and became more and more clear enough to be used as a substitute for candles.

Although she was as slow as an ant, Max had steadily improved her skills. There was a time when she passed out on her bed before the sun set because she enjoyed gathering mana slowly and her body absorbed too much since she was so focused on her practice.

At that point, Riftan threatened to withdraw his words with a scary face saying, “If this happens again the next morning, you can’t learn magic.”

From that day on, she also tried to measure her physical strength and practice. Usually during the day, she was confined to the library to study magic history, and after eating lunch late, she supervised servants, wrote a diary, and practiced magic until evening when Riftan returned. Fatigue piled up day by day on such a tight schedule, but she endured it firmly.

Recently, Riftan was busy building weapons and training knights to prepare for the migration of the demons near the Anatomy Mountain.

More than 20 Doves visited the windows of Riftan’s office a day to gather information from all parts of the continent, and the knights and apprentices trained hard until the sun fell even in the cold weather. She couldn’t stay comfortable and relax on her own.

Max worked hard to memorize and study the complicated magic written in the wizard, chasing the rush of sleepiness. Ruth, who had been watching such a scene quietly, made an unexpected suggestion.

“Shall we do some practice today?”

Max looked up at him with a surprised look.

“Practice?”

“You’ve never used magic on a person yet. You must have learned the healing magic, let’s give it a try.”

“B-but... I’m still nervous about controlling the energy. I-if I try and fail...”

“Even if we fail, there is no harm to the human body. It is important to repeat magic several times. The more you master, the more speed and accuracy you gain.”

At Ruth’s strong recommendation, Max nodded as if she could not win. To be honest, she wanted to do magic at least once.

“B-but... Who do you want me to test?”

“Usually, the teacher makes a small wound on the body and helps the student practice... I hate being sick.”

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Ruth spat out naturally and got up from her seat and opened the robe tightly.

“But fortunately, the castle is full of humans who are willing to get hurt, so you won’t have any problems practicing. Let’s go outside.”

Max immediately noticed that he was going to the smoke field and looked nervous. Riftan still didn’t like her learning magic. He doesn’t trust me, but what if she fails? As she blurred his face with anxiety, Ruth quickly added.

“Don’t worry. Lord Calypse is guiding the Knight Apprentices. He won’t be at the training ground.”

Max stood up from her seat, surprised a little, wondering if he could see her inner feelings so clearly. Rudis, who was sewing by the brazier, quickly picked up her coat when she saw Max. Max prevented her from chasing her and came out of the library with Ruth.

As she went down the stairs and stepped out of the gate, the sparkling sunlight poked her eyes.

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 135

She squinted down the lifeless garden. In the flower bed, the snow that had fallen infrequently for several days had frozen white and was shining like a diamond, and the dry branches were shaking pitifully with a rustling sound of the wind.

She quickly crossed the desolated landscape with Ruth. As they passed through an empty garden and through a gate, she heard the sharp sound of the sword hitting, the sound of horses' hooves, and the loud chanting.

"We'll have to wait a little bit."

Ruth, standing at the entrance of the training center, mumbled, kicking his tongue lightly. Max held out her head and looked down.

Inside the huge training ground of the stadium hall, hundreds of knights sat on their horses and stood facing each other in eight long rows. They were all dressed in full-body metal armor and had a spear longer than their height in their hands.

Max caught her breath without realizing it as the scene of tension. When the knight standing in the middle of them raised the red flag high, the knights shouted and rushed toward each other.

Max screamed and covered her eyes with both hands. The loud sounds of metal hitting, the cries of horses, and thunderous shouts echoed for a long time. It was such a fierce training that a slight vibration was delivered through the underlying stone floor.

"It's violent today."

Ruth whistled softly. Finally, as the surrounding area became quiet, Max slowly opened her eyes. The knights, standing in line again, came down from their horses one by one and were throwing off their helmets. Ruth pulled her arm.

"Now, let's go down. I don't think there are many people."

Max scrambled down the stairs, embarrassed. One of the knights who was organizing the spears and helmets looked suspicious when he saw them.

"Mr. Ruth, what are you doing here in the training ground?"

"I'm here to see if anyone got hurt during training."

"What's up with that? Didn't you tell me not to call you unless it's a crippling wound?"

Hebaron, who took off his helmet and threw it randomly on the floor, said loud and sarcastically. His face looked more rugged than usual, perhaps because he was still heated. Under the vivid pressure of the knight, Max sneaked behind Ruth. However, Ruth pushed Max relentlessly to the front of the knights.

“Of course, I wouldn’t volunteer to do that. Mrs. Calypse will treat you.”

Only then did the knights open their eyes wide, realizing that it was the wife of the lord who was standing behind him with a robe.

””” ”

Max gave an awkward smile at their shaky eyes. Recently, Max thought she had almost overcome it, but her fingertips were shaking with tension as she stood in front of large, armed men. Max pulled her Rob’s sleeve, quickly hid it, and took her mouth off with difficulty.

“I’m not good enough, but...I can t-try treating you-your wounds....”

The knights exchanged glances with embarrassed faces at the murmur. After a long awkward silence, Elliot Caron, who was standing in the front, stepped out.

“Thank you My Lady, but we can treat the simple wounds on our own. You don’t have to mind.”

A well-known knight refused so firmly. When she couldn’t answer back, Ruth stepped in.

“Lord’s Wife is learning magic right now. I need someone for us to practice healing magic, so I want you to cooperate.”

“Magic?”

Hebaron, who was gulping down water from the water bottle, looked back with a surprised look. Other knights glanced at Max as if it was unexpected.

“Does Lord’s wife know how to do magic?”

“I-I am learning... b-but I-I can’t do complicated magic yet”

The knights turned their eyes again, as if the story seemed incredible. Even Hebaron looked embarrassed, scratching his curly hair with sweat.

“Magician? that’s a good idea. It’s hard to fail and it might cause side effects. The training is intense these days....”

“Even if you fail, healing magic has no side effects. It’s a useless worry.”

Still, the knights only looked at each other as if Ruth and Max are untrustworthy. Then Ruth glared at the knights' faces one by one, crossing his arms to his chest.

"I don't have to explain to you how helpful a healer is. Now I'm teaching you magic, depriving my sleeping time for the Anatol and the Knights of Remdragon! But you're not going to give me a little bit of help? Oh my god, great knights have a nerve!"

With a rattling voice, Hebaron blocked his ears and made a sharp impression.

"Oh, you keep nagging. Who the hell said we wouldn't help? It's just because I didn't have any scratch from head to toe! Hey, is anybody hurt?"

"She doesn't have enough mana yet, so it's hard to cure a major injury. If so, I would like someone with a minor injury to volunteer."

"Why so tricky?"

Hebaron, who was grumbling, suddenly slapped his hand as if something had come to mind, and called a knight quietly watering a horse from a distance.

"Hey, Ricardo! You got a scratch on your cheek during the battle, right? Why don't you be the subject of the experiment?"

The knight frowned at Hebaron's loud voice and threw a sharp look. Max shrugged her shoulders without realizing it. Uslin Ricardo, the blonde knight who was most hostile to her. He looked through the vein with a dry look and shouted bluntly at Hebaron.

"Be the subject of their experiment. You must have black and blue bruises on your stomach because of the blow I gave you earlier."

"What kind of bruise is that? It's just as itchy like a mosquito bite. I'm sorry, but I'm fine."

"Don't brag. You stumbled like a scarecrow on a horse."

"He's gone to the eye! My Lady, I think you need to treat his child in every corner."

Max glanced at Uslin's cold face with an embarrassing look. Ruth approached him with a deep sigh as if he was fed up with the two's verbal fights.

"You have a scar on your cheek. I think Lord's wife will be able to treat it with this much. It won't take long, so please cooperate."

"No need. You can leave this alone."

"It's better if you get better right away. What if there's a scar on your handsome face?"

“I’d rather have a scar than leave my face to an ice wizard.” – Uslin, u little s**t!

The cold horse crept into Max mind. Even if she fails, there are no side effects, but he doesn’t have to refuse so stubbornly. Max swallowed and uttered a trembling voice.

“Well, I-I p-practice a lot, you’ll be fine... I-It’s not going to fail. ju-just give me a try...”

She couldn’t keep her mouth shut. Disgust clearly emerged on the cold face of the knight. He looked at her with disapproval and spouted coldly.

“Are you sure you can just memorize the order of spells?” – that was rude!

Max was red-hot from head to toe with shame. The fever went up so high that all her ears were burning and my eyelids were tingling. Max wanted to shout at him sharply, but she couldn’t move as if my tongue had frozen.

Max could not bear the embarrassment and bowed her head while only her lips were trembling. She wanted to be faithful to protecting her pride, but she couldn’t face the knight’s eyes.

“T-T-The order is....”

She managed to attract calmness and retort that she could do magic without casting a spell, but suddenly, a big hand grabbed her shoulder.

Max looked back in surprise. When the hell did, he come? Riftan stood staring at the knight with scary eyes. Riftan pushed Max aside lightly and grabbed Uslin by the collar with one hand.

“Don’t dare you talk to my wife like that.”

Riftan almost lifted Uslin’s body and roared like an angry hound with evil-door gums. The knight pushed his hand out to escape, but Riftan didn’t budge.

The knight’s face quickly turned red because he was strangled at the foot of the cape. When they saw the scene, the knights panicked and hurriedly dissuaded Riftan.

“Calm down, Lord!”

He didn’t budge even though the two generals tried to stick together and tear it off. Riftan shook Uslin’s body threateningly and let him go as if he were throwing it away. Other knights quickly helped him as he coughed out with a puffy face.

Watching the scene with cold eyes, Riftan turned around and pulled Maxi’s arm.

“Come on, let’s go back to the castle.”

Max, who was standing in a daze, was led by Riftan's hand and moved. At that moment, Uslin's harsh voice echoed behind his back.

"Don't you have any pride?"

Riftan stopped his towering steps and looked back at him. The knight rubbed his sleepy neck with one hand and wore an ax.

"Don't you even get angry! Who the hell made you suffer...How could you cover for a Croix daughter like that? What he did...!"

Without anyone to stop him, Riftan rushed in and punched Uslin in the face. The knight's big body fluttered back. Max screamed in surprise. Riftan raised his fist again as if his anger was still lingering. The knights grabbed him by the arm in a panic.

"L-Lord... hang in there!"

"Jesus.... Let's stop them!"

"Don't do that! It's going too far!"

Riftan glared at Uslin, who was stealing a torn mouth with his fist. Uslin's forehead, which seemed to be pressed by the brutal spirit, also broke out in a cold sweat. Riftan approached him as if he were overpowering him, and he chewed every word.

"If you talk about my wife like that one more time, I'll cut you from the mouth to the crotch." – I'm stanning him hard rn!

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 136

Even if it wasn't for her, Max shook her back as it was frightening. After staring at Uslin's face for some time, Riftan shook off the hands of the knights holding him and grabbed her arm again and began to walk.

Max glanced embarrassingly at the people left behind and hurried up the stairs following him. Riftan who walks so fast compared to her, quickly passed through the gate. Max had to almost run to chase him across the garden.

“Ri-Riftan...”

When she called him with a trembling voice, breathing heavily to her chin, Riftan barely stopped walking.

Max didn't know what to say, her surprised heart calmed down a little, she felt ashamed and embarrassed. Of all things, at least for Riftan... Max wanted to show him a noble and dignified appearance of her.

Tears welled up all of a sudden, and she lowered her head hurriedly. Riftan was looking down at the scene of Max bursting into tears.

“So why would you say and do something unnecessary...!”

Max shrugged her shoulders. As if swallowing a ball of fire, as Riftan's throat rang loudly. Sweeping his face roughly with his palm, Riftan uttered in a tight voice.

“I'm sorry...you had to hear that.”

On an unexpected apology, Max looked up at him with wet eyes. Riftan murmured a small swear word and held her cheek.

“I'm sorry. So, don't cry.”

Then Riftan lowered his head and rubbed his forehead against hers. Max gulped down her tears and grabbed his clothes tightly. Riftan wiped her tears, wondering what to do.

“I won't let them talk like that again. So, don't cry.”

It was not Riftan's fault that the knight spoke that way. It was her fault, Max just despised herself for what she was, who's always hesitating, stuttering, and had no ability. (TL – you're more than what you think max T.T)

Her heart throbbed. If she were a respectable lady, he would not have fought with his knight. If Riftan had only married Princess Agnes, he would have received more respect than now. (TL- Oh, Jesus maxi, don't say that.)

Max felt so embarrassed. She always hated herself, but she has never felt as terrible as she does now. Max buried her forehead in his chest and closed her eyes tightly.

“Well, I-I'm fine now... Ri-Riftan, you can go back to work.”

“Your eyes are red and bloodshot.”

“I-I can wipe it... y-you don’t have to worry about it, I-I’m okay...”

“How can I not worry?”

Max gave Riftan a perplexing look, unable to step away from the door. Long after returning to the room and being in his arms, she was embarrassed to face him because Riftan has to see her sniffle like a child. She was relieved by the butler’s call to find Riftan.

“I-it’s just...a l-little embarrassing b-but nu-now I’m really okay.”

“I’ll be very careful not to let you take that attitude again.”

Riftan spoke again in a strong tone. Max shook her head with a perplexing look.

“Well, you don’t have to c-care about it... b-because it’s part of m-my job.”

“Of course I will.”

He spoke in a rather nervous voice.

“You’re the one I care most in the world. I know you’re offended, but don’t talk like that.”

Max looked at his stiff face with a perplexing look. It was not her intention for Riftan to argue with his knights, but Riftan seemed to feel offended and want her to take a rest from her work.

Looking into his shady eyes, Max smiled bitterly inside. Clearly, any proud noblewoman might have been whining to make any man pay for insulting a Lady. But Max knew well that she wasn’t worth it. She tried to speak calmly with a faint smile. (TL – you’re worth it!)

“I-I’m sorry... I-I won’t.”

“...I’ll be right back, take a rest.”

“Oh, I-I got it.”

Riftan looked at her pale face for a long time to see if she was relieved, and barely opened the door and went outside.

Max sat in front of the fireplace and stared blankly at the scene of the sparks popping up. The cats, who were playing with the seam of the rug, crept up on her lap and pressed their heads into her stomach. She gave a deep sigh, stroking the cat's back.

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The shame stuck to her heart like oil scraps and made her heart stifling. Leaving Croix Castle and pretending to be a well lady did not change her fundamentals. She was still a stuttering Maximilian. Embarrassed by helplessness, she crouched her back. She was depressed and sad, the next moment, she was very anxious. There was a strong impatience, as if the sand castle that had been piled up would collapse right away.

Doesn't Riftan really feel ashamed? Wouldn't he be really shaken by his subordinates' humiliation? Won't he get sick of it someday? Max thought

She was deeply ashamed of herself because she hated herself for having such doubts about the person that had given for her so much. The judgment in her was more embarrassing than anything else.

When she went outside, the servants who were lighting the hallway quickly bowed to her. Max jumped up two floors of stairs in a heartbeat, receiving their greetings. Ruth is in the library, who she thought was still at the training grounds. She ran in front of him quickly. Ruth looked surprised at the sight.

"Today, I didn't expect you to come back. Is there a problem?"

Max shook her head and took a breath. It was good to have run in high spirits, but when she is in front of him, she didn't know what to say. Seeing the sloppy figure, Ruth smiled bitterly and pointed to the opposite seat.

"Sit down for now. I was hesitating to go after you. Lord Calypse sure he'd be at the door, but..."

He blurted out the end of his speech and gave a long sigh.

"Lady Calypse, are you relieved?"

"A little..."

Ruth smiled bitterly at Max's insecure reply.

"That's understandable."

"Is t-the knight b-badly hurt?"

“He’s good. If it was me, my jawbone would have been crushed. I think they controlled it in their own way, considering that it was just a b****y bruise.”

A strange silence fell at the end of the remark. Max turned her eyes and looked at the sky, which was turning red, and moved her eyes one after another to the wizard’s thin face and the desk where the books were piled up dizzy.

What Max wanted to ask him didn’t come out of her throat like a thorn. Finally, Ruth opened her mouth first.

“First, I’m sorry to make you hear something bad. It came to my mind that I should have explained to the Knights in advance and asked for their cooperation, rather than taking Lord’s Wife with me so impulsively. I think it was too simple for me to think that the attitude of the knights towards Lord’s wife has softened a lot recently.”

“Oh, no. I-It’s not your fault.”

Max was embarrassed and waved at the unexpected apology.

“Well, I-I’m fine. I-I’ve known all a-along... that the knights d-doesn’t like me... and I-I don’t also think I am trustworthy...”

“Even so, Lord Ricardo’s attitude was rude. He was criticized by the other knights for publicly insulting the Lord’s wife. Lord Ricardo will regret that he has gone too far.”

Max smiled awkwardly. Ruth’s last words did not sound credible at all, considering the attitude of the knights, staring at her with a face full of hostility. Ruth had a bitter smile on his mind, perhaps he knew she was bitter.

“You may not believe it, but Uslin not a tough guy. He’s a picky person, but he’s a consistent and faithful knight. His loyalty to Lord Calypse is so great that he has never fought like that before. Rather, he followed Lord Calypse more blindly than anyone else. But after that, he’s been trying to protest everything....”

“p-protest?”

When she asked back with a curious face, Ruth’s face briefly reminded her of hesitation. The wizard hesitated for a long time and then sighed.

“Lord Calypse refused to marry Princess Agnes.”

Max hardened her spine after the unfamiliar name. Ruth looked at her expression for a moment and continued to speak in a grave tone.

“Sir Uslin Ricardo is a child of a noble family. He has been in and out of the Dracium Palace since he was a child, building friendships with the royal family. Therefore, Lord

Ricardo is the most loyal member of the Order of Remdragon. On the day of the knight's appointment, he immediately offered a Land to Princess Agnes."

Land was a sign of the best reverence, respect, and admiration that a knight could offer once in a lifetime. Max had a confused face. If Uslin had given the Royal Princess a Land, it would be unreasonable to be so hostile to her.

"I-Is w-why they wanted Princess Agnes and R-Riftan to get married?"

"To be honest, yes. In fact, now that I'm telling you, all the Knights of Remdragon thought that would happen. Those two had great chemistry in combat and they looked great on the outside. But Lord Riftan doesn't speak his mind very well... Everyone talked about whether there would be good news after the punishment. Everyone thought it was almost a given, so they were surprised when Lord Calypse refused to the princess."

Ruth said so far, glanced at her.

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 137

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Max wanted to pretend to be calm, but she couldn't help her stiff facial muscles. Ruth hurriedly turned away his face and coughed as if he saw nothing.

"The story was leaked to the point of no use. What I want to say is... There's a reason why Lord Ricardo is being hostile to you. The knight blindly believed and followed Lord Calypse, who rejected the lady that was given to him and chose the daughter of the man he despised the most, so it's impossible to not be upset and get angry."

"I-I see."

Max nodded her head gloomily. She had been depressed before, thinking that marrying Princess Agnes would have been more beneficial to Riftan, and now Ruth's words confirmed that fact again and her heart sank infinitely. Because of his marriage with her, he created a feud with the royal family and even antagonized the knights.

While staring at the edge of the desk, Max barely spat out her trembling voice.

"J-just in case... b-because of me, division w-within the knights will..."

"You don't have to worry about that. The solidarity of the Knights of Remdragon is much stronger than what you believe. I don't think any of the knights, except Lord Ricardo, are particularly hostile to you."

Max was a little relieved hearing his words, she was sure he was right since Ruth was the kind of person who says out loud what's on his mind.

"But if it's possible... I want you to be comfortable... I don't like the gloomy atmosphere that there's right now."

"Alright... I-I'll do it."

Max replied in an unconfident tone. Ruth also sighed hearing it, as if he had not high expectations.

Glancing at his tired face, Max recalled the things that had happened earlier. Her mouth was dry, so she swallowed and managed to open her lips, which felt as if they were glued.

"W-Well..."

Ruth gave her a curious look. Max pretended to look away and opened a book. Her heart was thumping unsteadily.

"J-just in case... I-I'm asking because I want to know..."

"What is it?"

"" "

Now, when asked, she frowned as if she was hesitating. Max drew courage and spoke.

"W-With Ruth's magic... C-Can you... uh... f-fix me?"

"What do you mean with fix you?"

Max's face flushed as she blinked back. Ruth, who seemed to get what she was saying only after seeing this scene, said "Oh!" and gave a short sigh.

"Healing magic has no effect on disorders."

That was a fact she already knew: if magic could have solved it, her father would have used it before. However, she recently learned that there are many magicians in the world who create new kind of magic. Max has never been able to ask because she was afraid of being disappointed, but she had an expectation that Ruth could create a magic for her. She blushed and talked as if she was clinging to him.

"W-Well I-I know, b-but... Ru-Ruth can develop new m-magic right? ... Y-You just need to do a re-research."

"If I do the research as you say, one day I could find a solution. In fact, many people study magic tricks to fix disorders such as dwarfism, deafness and lameness. However, no magic has been found so far to permanently repair defects in the body. Even if I work hard on my research, it will take decades to come."

"I-I see..."

Max tried not to show disappointment, but her shoulders dropped. She pretended to be calm, smoothing her messy hair.

"Th-that's what I thought... I, I just wanted to ask."

"..."

An uncomfortable silence fell again. Feeling restless, Max stood up.

"W-well then, I'm going back. Ri-Riftan said he'd be back soon."

"Come on now, wait a minute..."

Ruth hurriedly caught her trying to turn around before she could go outside. Max opened her eyes wide at the embarrassment. He let out a low groan and uttered in a discouraged tone.

"If you go like this, I'll feel like I've done something bad, My Lady."

"I-I'm fine..."

"Don't say that. Sit down for a second, let's think about it."

After rolling her eyes around, Max faltered and sat back on the chair. Ruth sat with his arms folded as if he didn't know what to say, looking up at the ceiling for a long time.

“Have you ever tried to fix your own stuttering?”

It was a very insensitive question to ask. Max blushed and looked at him.

“Jesus, I’m... I’m not doing this on purpose. Do you think I like to ask this?”

Max was beaten to the point where her skin was swollen and then healed, but as the days went by, the symptoms of stuttering only got worse. Ruth saw that Max’s face was distorted with embarrassment and raised both hands defensively.

“I didn’t mean to insult you. I’m asking you if your pronunciation and speech habits can be corrected to a certain extent by training.”

“C-Correction training... Uh, w-when I was a kid... I-I trained! B-but I didn’t feel any better...”

“What kind of training did you take?”

Max trembled slightly, recalling the terrible memory of reading a book in front of her father. Whenever she stuttered, her father would slap her on the back with a riding whip. She tried hard to erase the frightening memory from her head, shedding only a fraction of the truth.

“Po-Poetry, or... re-read the Bible... Ro-Roem’s literature....”

“Oh, my God, what’s the point of practicing a conversation when you practice reciting old words?”

Max’s face got almost purple with discomfort. She had always covered it up and ignored it, but whenever the topic of conversation was mentioned, she just wanted to immediately run away from the spot. Max thought she had brought up a useless issue and looked anxiously at the door with regret, but Ruth was not ready to free her.

“Wouldn’t it be better to practice a routine conversation over and over again?”

“Th-that’s... I-I already d-did practice! Bu-but... My tongue is stiff, i-it doesn’t m-move.”

“You seem to have improved a lot lately.”

Max blinked her big eyes with surprise and Ruth smiled bitterly at her puzzled expression.

“Didn’t you realize that? You speak more comfortably these days, except when you’re very embarrassed or nervous. If you practice speaking slowly and clearly in a comfortable atmosphere, wouldn’t it be easy to fix it perfectly? I think it’ll be much faster doing that, than solving it by magic...”

“D-Don’t say it’s e-easy! I t-tried so h-hard b-but it didn’t work out so far!”

Ruth frowned at her rough tone. Max shrugged her shoulders, she was embarrassed that she overreacted to what he said: he was only giving her some advice.

“W-Well, whatever happens... t-thank you for your advice. I-I’ll think about i-it.”

Ruth parted his lips as if he was about to say something more, but then just closed his mouth. Max got up from her seat and left the library as if she was running away.

However, while she was running out like that, Max had a faint doubt in her mind: there really wasn’t any hope of fixing it? Didn’t she think, talking to herself from time to time, that it seemed to be better than before? Max, who was moving quickly across the hall, stopped in front of the stairs.

Her father hated her opening her mouth in public: because of this, Max was confined to her room with a tutor. Even after her liberation from such a harsh education, she did not open her mouth unless it was necessary. It was because of the embarrassing look in people’s eyes, she was uncomfortable with their look of frustration.

Max even thought of wanting to die if someone asked her to repeat what she said, since it was hard to understand. Getting older, she did not say a single word for months. Recalling it, Max suddenly realized that speaking recently didn’t feel so terrible. Sometimes it was fun to have a conversation. It was an unbelievable change.

“Maybe the symptoms get worse when I am silent.”

She didn’t know. Her memory was so distorted that she couldn’t even tell if she was the same woman who acted as the hostess of Calypse Castle. Max bit her lips. Perhaps while she was with her father, she had crushed all her possibilities. Max told Ruth that she tried, but she wasn’t sure if she really did. In fact, she’s had given up for a long time.

“But... I can’t believe I-I can fix it on my own n-now.”

She hesitated because she was afraid of fretting over useless hopes. Then suddenly Riftan’s face came to her mind. When she remembered his fierce anger because of her, Max heart tightened painfully. She couldn’t let Riftan punch people whenever she was insulted. Among the arrogant aristocrats, some may mock him for having a stuttering wife.

Max stared dimly under the railing with a cloudy look and grabbed her skirt.

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 138

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The next day, after some hesitation, Max headed back to the library. Fortunately, Ruth greeted her with an air of relief, acting like nothing had happened. She sat with the magic book opened and stared at it for a while. After getting so angry the day before, she was embarrassed to talk again. For a long time, Max struggled to open her mouth, only looking blurrily at the letters in the book.

“Uh, what I said yesterday... I m-mean...”

“What?”

Ruth, who in the meanwhile was focused on his job, looked at her. Max swallowed and continued awkwardly.

“Y-You told me i-if I practice m-my way of speaking, I’ll get better. H-How should I d-do it?”

Ruth nodded, “Oh, about that,” and soon responded in a sour way.

“Well, if you’d like, I’ll look for an efficient calibration. But first, wouldn’t it be helpful to talk as much as possible in a comfortable environment?”

“Talk as much as possible...?”

“The more you do, the better you get. You should stay calm and talk as much as you can. When you’re excited your speech gets faster and you stutter get worse. In that case, remaining calm seems more important than anything else.”

Being criticized so directly, she lowered her eyes with embarrassment.

“Oh, I-I got it. And... w-well, what should I do?”

“Well... wouldn't it be helpful to practice talking slowly and clearly? It's okay if it's slow. The purpose is to master the pronunciation, you can do that practicing your speaking over and over again.”

Max uncomfortably rolled her eyes around, blushed and slowly spoke, loosening her stiff tongue.

“I... got it... Like this?”

“Yes, like that. You should be patient and slowly say what you want to say.”

“I should?”

””” ”

“If this doesn't work, I'll look for another way to correct it. Let's try one way or another.”

Max, who thought there might be a special way to correct it, looked slightly disappointed. Well, no matter how smart Ruth was, he was not omniscient. In the end there wasn't an easy way to fix it, so Max buried her face in the book again, holding in her disappointment. Ruth, who stared at this scene and stroked his chin as if he was thinking about something, opened his mouth again.

“Well, in the end you didn't get to practice yesterday.”

Max hardened her face by Ruth's easy-going words.

“If I... go... There might be c-chaos once again...”

“We're not going to the training ground. Isn't this castle full of people besides knights? If we go to the kitchen, there might be at least one or two servants who cut their hands while cutting or cooking in front of the fire.”

“I'm sure there might be, but...”

When Max hesitated, Ruth spoke in a rather strong tone.

“It's really important to master magic. No matter how many brilliant magic theories and sophisticated magic histories you put into your head, it's useless if you don't develop your ability to implement them.”

“I-I know... I j-just thought they wo-would hate it”

“The servants won't hate it. They won't be able to take care of minor injuries because they're busy working all day, so they'd rather like it if you give them treatment.”

After hesitating, Max finally got up from her shabby seat. As he said, she couldn't avoid it forever, however she barely had the courage to ask since she had suffered a bitter rejection the day before. Max chased Ruth like a goat being dragged to the slaughterhouse.

What if she failed to test the magic in front of the servants? In that case, Max thought she was going to be ridiculed because of it. With a grim imagination like a habit, Max pushed her feet into the kitchen. Fortunately or unfortunately, the kitchen, which was always crowded, was quiet on that day.

"Good morning, My Lady."

The chef, whistling and stirring in the pot with a ladle, smiled cheerfully at her.

"Is there anything you need?"

"I-In particular, I'm here for business..."

At her mumbling words, Ruth held out like a watchman behind her and pushed her back with his shoulder. Max, who was frowning, sighed.

"J- just in case... I-Is there s-someone with a w-wound on the body or that has b-been hurt?"

"Hurt?"

The chef scratched his big head with a puzzled look on his face. Ruth pushed her back one more time, as if suggesting her to explain it properly. Max, irritated by his behavior, glared at him and opened her mouth again.

"I-Is there someone who was c-cut with a knife... Burnt by fire... wrist or leg folded...?"

"That's what happens every day! Especially that Chrome guy over there, he's usually clumsy so his hands are all covered with wounds. Just a moment ago, he burned his palms while taking the bread out of the oven."

Max turned her head and looked at the servant named Chrome. He was a small, thin boy with a face blackened by soot, maybe sixteen years old, and he was cutting something with a cloth wrapped around his palms. Max took a deep breath and then talked.

"Well, that boy... C-Can you call him for me?"

The chef, who had a curious look on his face, immediately called the boy.

"Hey! Chrome! Come here, My Lady is looking for you."

At the loud shout of the chef, the boy flinched his back as if he had been struck by a lightning and ran like an arrow from a bow.

“What’s the matter, My Lady?”

Thinking he had made some mistake, the boy bent down with his face dyed black, while the chef gave a weird look, as if he was curious about what their Lady was looking for. Max spoke in a dignified manner after a bad, bad cough.

“I-I heard you got hurt... Can you s-show me?”

“You mean my hand, My Lady?”

Chrome, who was blinking his eyes with a puzzled face, unwrapped the cloth around his hand in a hurry: the red burn made his soft palms look very harsh. Max ignored his anxious eyes and took a deep breath, with her hand slightly resting on the wound, making the boy’s shoulders tremble because of the faint pain. Max felt sorry for him because she didn’t even explain anything of what she was doing. However, she thought it would make her more anxious if she explained it to him, so Max slowly boosted her mana without saying anything until a hot feeling gathered in the palm of her hand and began to permeate the boy’s wound smoothly. The servant also opened his eyes wide as he felt the pain slowly going away. Max slowly took her hand off after injecting enough mana only to see that the boy’s hands were healed cleanly.

“Oh, my God...!”

There was an exclamation everywhere. However, the person who was most surprised was Max. She didn’t know that she would succeed on her first attempt. Max, who stared blankly at the boy’s hand with a surprised face, suddenly jumped around Ruth.

“Ruth, it’s a success! I-I-I succeeded!”

“You did a great job! That’s great for being the first time!”

Ruth smiled broadly and patted her on the back. Encouraged by the success of the first spell, Max looked back at the servants and shouted confidently.

“I-I’ve been learning h-healing magic for weeks now. I-I need someone to p-practice with. Is there a-anyone else who has a s-scratch on their body?”

“Can we volunteer?”

Max looked back with surprise at the sudden sound of the voice. At the entrance of the kitchen stood Lord Hebaron and Lord Caron, with a young knight whose face she barely recognized. It was rare to run into knights at this time, unless they went to the

blacksmith, so Max was embarrassed as if she had been caught red-handed. Lord Caron politely said to her: "I'm sorry if we surprised you."

"Oh, no..."

"I didn't know you were this good, and we were disrespectful yesterday."

"I- I understand..."

Max waved awkwardly at Hebaron who was deeply bowing to her, he then came inside scratching the back of his head awkwardly.

"I got hurt during the battle... Can I get treatment now?"

He showed her a small scratch on the back of his hand. Max's eyes alternated between his face and the back of his hand with a puzzled face, she couldn't really get a grasp on the sudden change in attitude of the knight. When she didn't answer back, Hebaron's face looked bitter.

"As expected, the behavior of yesterday made you feel... offended?"

"Oh, no! It's just... I'm a little surprised. Come on, sit here. I'm going to..."

The servants quickly brought chairs for them to sit down and the knights lined up in front of her, pretending in an exaggerated way to be in pain. Max swallowed. If she failed because she was nervous... Max felt a lot of pressure on her shoulders because she thought it would be a disgrace. Ruth, who was watching the scene from behind, laughed.

"You don't have to be too nervous. Everyone was worried about what happened yesterday, so they came here with an excuse."

"What are you talking about? I'm bleeding like this!"

Hebaron's word impressed her and then she didn't even notice anything else, starting to focus. Pointing to the visible wound she said: "I'm afraid it'll be a fail, but..."

Ruth clicked his tongue as if it were absurd and she inadvertently smiled at the large, distracted knight. Suddenly, she felt much lighter. Max relaxed and put a healing spell on the knight's hand. Seeing the scar disappearing in a blink of an eye, Hebaron poured out enthusiastic praise as if he had never witnessed even greater magic, so Max finally burst into laughter at the ridiculous exaggerated attitude. When he saw it, Hebaron smiled along.

"Don't mind what Uslyn said yesterday, he just likes to say whatever comes to his mind."

“I-I don’t mind.”

“That’s a relief.”

Hebaron smiled and got up from his seat, Max then proceeded to cast healing spells on the knights one after another. Once she had healed all the knights, she even treated the minor wounds of her servants. Except for the boy whose hands were burned, all those injuries were good enough to be left alone, but Max quickly became exhausted anyway, due to her little amount of mana. However, her heart was full of energy and she smiled proudly as she wiped her sweaty forehead. Even if it wasn’t that great, she was so happy to be able to help someone. It was a meaningful development for her, who had always been told that she was a useless human being: she seemed to have gained value for the first time in her life.

“If you don’t mind, please feel free to make us a test subject. I’ll tell the other knights.”

Hebaron looked back at the lady just before he went outside. Max nodded with a shy smile.

TL – way to go Maxx!

◀ Previous Chapter

Next Chapter ▶

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 139

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After that day, Max often went down to the kitchen to cast healing spells on her servants. Sometimes, she treated the injuries of the knights too. Sitting in the kitchen every day and repeating the healing magic five or six times a day, her skills were improving steadily and she was able to treat pretty big wounds too. However, the stuttering showed no signs of getting better. Every day, she locked herself in a room alone and practiced speaking clearly or tried to talk to people she encountered sitting in front of the fireplace in the restaurant, but her tongue only felt dull.

Max continued to practice memorizing pronunciation symbols in order or reciting the words of a minstrel in the air every day, trying not to be frustrated. It was not as easy as Max thought because she had to do it in secret, when she was alone, since she didn't want to show such a pathetic figure to Riftan or to the servants. Max couldn't neglect studying magic and organizing the castle either. Furthermore, the garden had to be landscaped as soon as the winter season was over, so Max was already racking her brain having to deal with the planning and the budget with Rodrigo and merchant Aderon. As she approached the end of winter, there were so many things to do that she wanted to double the day.

"Your face seems to have become emaciated recently."

Riftan said as he changed into a new outfit after taking a bath, stroking Max's cheek. She smiled awkwardly. Trying to do unfamiliar things at once was naturally too much for her, she had been waking up at dawn the last few weeks and falling asleep when he did. After following the energetic knight's lifestyle, there was even a dark shade under her eyes. Max frowned as he swept her eyes lightly with his thumb.

"As expected, you're overdoing your magic, aren't you? I think you've been practicing a healing spell lately, and that's why..."

"I w-want to practice... I have to do it c-consistently f-for me to improve...everyone's c-cooperating with me. I'm doing it for you. I- I don't use up that much mana... I'll treat you if got hurt"

She carefully examined his expression as she tried to speak calmly. Riftan was working three or four times harder than her, but his face showed no signs of exhaustion.

How can he not yawn even though he sleeps for three to four hours and not just for a day or two, but everyday? She looked at him, a little curious.

Riftan discussed and supervised the daily production of new weapons in the blacksmiths, trained guards and apprentices, and recently began to plan the groundbreaking of road construction that would begin in the coming water season.

Even if she split her body into two or three, Max wouldn't be able to handle half of what he was doing. Nevertheless, Riftan's face had a good complexion and his muscular body was full of energy. Riftan held her with warm arms, placed her on his lap, and gently caressed her ears and the back of her neck.

"Is there no one being rude to you?"

"Uh, no."

"...What's the hard work?"

“I-It’s not hard work...”

There was a slight crease between Riftan’s eyebrows and he talked with a little nervousness.

“You’ve never used to talk about anything, but lately I’ve only heard that kind of answer.”

””” ”

“W-Well, really... everyone’s nice to me. There’s no one rude...”

Unable to figure out what kind of answer he wanted, Max blurted out the end of her sentence and then remained silent. Riftan sat with his back against the cushion and looked down at Max for a long time.

“I heard you started planning your garden landscaping.”

“W-when spring comes... The visitors will c-come and I think we should d-decorate it before then...”

“Isn’t that too much work? It must be hard to supervise the servants...”

Max smiled bitterly at his worried voice, who was saying that there was a lot of work?

“Compared to Ri-Riftan... It’s nothing.”

“Hey, who the hell are you comparing me to? I’ve been training all my life. My physical strength is superior to other knights. On the other hand, you’re weaker than normal women.”

“I- I’m not weak. I-I’m healthy.”

Max rarely fainted when her father whipped her back to bleed, therefore she thought she was healthier than those ladies who screamed and fainted just because they saw a little mouse. However, Riftan snorted as if he had heard something ridiculous.

“What are you saying, a lady who’s been inside the castle all her life?”

He grabbed her waist with his big tan hand and frowned anxiously.

“Look, you’re not even a handful. You’re as thin as half my body.”

“Ri-Riftan... you’re just too big... Well, I’m normal.”

Riftan crinkled his nose.

“There is no woman I know who is as thin as you. I get nervous when I watch you.”

Hearing his words, Max looked a little puzzled. She wasn't very tall and she was skinny, but she wasn't as thin as he was painting her. Yet, he looked genuinely worried. Was there a woman who was tall and well-built enough to be around Riftan? Surely, Princess Agnes was strong and energetic enough to participate in the expedition. Max imagined an imposing and beautiful woman standing next to him and just by drawing in her head such a pair that looked as good as a picture, her heart ached as if she was being stabbed.

At that point, Max couldn't understand why she was comparing herself to a woman she had never seen before.

“You're exaggerating. Like that... you know, to the point of worrying...”

When she spoke in a slightly stronger tone with a tearful feeling, Riftan's hand, which was caressing her back, flinched a bit. He distorted his mouth and spoke in a concerned voice.

“But I'm worried about you standing in front of the wind.”

Then Riftan hugged her body a little and pressed his chin firmly against the top of her head. Max leaned her head against his thick chest and listened quietly to his beating heart. Outside the window, sleet was flying like a ghost.

Max was aware of the strange tension that flowed in the silence: at some point there began to be subtle cracks in between them. Riftan struggled to be affectionate to her and cared excessively, but he just couldn't tell her. Sometimes he felt like he didn't want to share more than a bedroom with Max, but it wasn't right to blame his attitude alone. She was the same, in fact she could not easily open herself to him either, could not stay natural in front of him and never wanted to show him a lowly appearance. Max was more nervous when she spoke in front of Riftan than in front of anyone else and was afraid that he would be discouraged with her. Ironically, the bigger Max thought of him, the thicker the wall she faced him with. Because of that wall, their relationship was at a certain point failing to deepen.

Max wanted to believe that her idea was just an excessive delusion. There was no such thing as a deeper relationship in the world, they already shared the same bed, and he kept her safe and supported her without lacking. She was overseeing the household of Calypse Castle for him, and one day she would give a successor to him. As far as she knew, it was enough for any couple. Furthermore, they were forced into a relationship by her father's selfishness, it may even be impudent to hope for more than that. With those thoughts, Max drove out a sense of incompatibility in her heart.

“I won't do anything today, I know you're tired, so relax.”

Riftan said as he suddenly touched her stiff shoulders. He seemed to have guessed that she was nervous because she didn't want to work in the bedroom. Max tried to say something, but she just closed her mouth. She wanted to be in his arms, but she was actually very tired and she was embarrassed to reach out first. Riftan rubbed his lips on her forehead and whispered in a serious voice.

"You need a break."

He laid her on the bed and turned off the bedside lamp. Then naturally lying next to her, Riftan pushed one arm under her head. Max dug into his side and wiggled. His body smelled sweet and masculine and as she inhaled it deeply into her heart, Riftan tossed and turned a little uncomfortable, sighing softly and patting her shoulder. Max savored his touch with satisfaction. She felt his body firm against her thighs, but no further contact was made with Riftan. In the comfort and tranquility of his wide arms, she slowly fell asleep.

The next day, winter rain began to fall. As a result, the training seemed to have ended early and, as Max was reading the magic book while eating a late lunch, soaked knights rushed into the kitchen.

Max greeted them cautiously. Recently, the knights that had been bluntly ignoring her, gladly began to speak to her thanks to her frequent talking and healing magic. She was so happy about the change. The knights grabbed the food she had given them and started to talk about stories as the bread that was just baked melted in their mouth. While exchanging such lame stories, Max was smiling. Suddenly she saw Yulysion approaching the kitchen and she ran to him in surprise. The boy's face was covered in blood.

"W-What's going on? W-What happened...?"

TL – My heart sank when Maxi mentioned his father whipping her... poor baby! Also Riftan was struggling here, poor baby to him too, but in a different way lmao

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Under The Oak Tree

Chapter 140

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Note: The two young knights who appeared in chapter 65 were named Yurixion Lobar and Garow Livacon, we're now changing their names to Yulysion Rovar and Garrow Livakion since we think it's a more accurate translation.

"Greetings, My Lady."

The boy gave her a casual greeting that didn't suit his terrible condition. Max looked coldly at the boy's ruined face and told the servants to prepare a clean cloth and hot water. Sir Gabel, who followed him into the kitchen, saw the scene and sighed deeply.

"Winter rain made the field all wet, and today was the day these young men were supposed to be trained in horseback riding. He was riding a horse and rolled on the ground just like that."

"It wasn't just me who rolled and got injured..."

Sir Caron groaned as he rubbed his hair. Yulysion scraped his blood-soaked hair with a distant face.

"Because of me... I'm really sorry, Sir Caron."

"You're the third person to put me on the ground, kid."

Lord Caron grumbled and stood in front of the fireplace, drying his wet body. Max frowned a little angry at the boy's appearance, who showed no signs of concern even though he was covered in blood.

"Y-Yulysion, don't touch your h-head! There's blood, it's still b-bleeding. Come on... sit down. I'll t-treat you with the h-healing magic"

"It just looks like this but it's not that serious My Lady. The blood already stopped, I can't burden you..."

"D-Don't be silly... sit down."

Max pulled his arm a bit roughly and sat him on a chair near the fire. The boy opened his eyes wide, surprised by her actions, but Max was genuinely worried about Yulysion, who looked like a wounded wild dog.

Max bent over his head and looked carefully at the wound. Lord Gabel handed her a clean towel soaked in hot water.

“I think my scalp was torn when I fell because I used a saddle that didn’t fit. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with the bone, but... I’ve a pretty long wound, would that be okay?”

“I-if you’re hurt like this... with m-my magic, I-I can cure it.”

””” ”

Max carefully wiped the blood with a towel and examined the injury. A long wound was seen between the silver hair stained with blood. She put her hand on it and used the magic to control the mana. Thanks to her steady accumulation of mana, she was now able to perform healing magic at a pace similar to Ruth’s. She checked from his hair to his forehead and carefully examined the wound’s healing.

“W-Where else... are you okay now?”

“I am alright, My Lady.”

He said with a red glow on his white, freckled cheeks. Max pulled off her hand awkwardly because she thought she touched him too casually. Yulysion was a boy with a slender frame and a face as pretty as that of a woman, but he was also scheduled to soon become a member of the Remdragon Knights. It would not be appropriate to treat him as if he was still a child. She smiled awkwardly and handed him a clean new towel.

“Uh, the b-blood on your face... you n-need to wipe it all.”

“Oh! Thank you, My Lady.”

Yulysion wiped his face with a wrinkled smile.

“I have a lump in my head, can you take a look?”

Lord Caron, who was still standing in front of the fire, asked her to check around the back of his head. Max immediately cast a healing spell on him, too. In the meantime, the knights who were drying themselves with towels sat down in front of the table and began to eat the food brought by the maids. At that point, Max could only have a meal with them. It was unusual to sit in front of the same table at that time because the knights usually settled their lunch in the knight’s quarters, next to the training center, and she was nearly confined to the library. She scooped up the almost cold stew and looked around the long table, packed with big, distracting knights.

“I-Is the Lord... out of t-the castle...?”

“He’s in the Oval Office in a meeting with Lord Hebaron, Lord Uslin, Lord Lombardo... And the wizard too.”

“Meeting...?”

“It’s about planning for the coming season of water.”

Sir Gabel, who was sitting across from her and eating the steaming soup, burst out.

“There is a hierarchy within the Knights. The better the knight, the stronger the voice. At the end of winter, the leader often meets with them to discuss their future plans. Recently, monsters from the north are moving closer, so we also need to make a barrier against them.”

“Can I take part in the next round of corrective action?”

Yulysion, who was eating food in a hurry, joined the conversation with his eyes shining. Sir Caron was blatantly fed up with him.

“If we look at today’s big mistake, we’ll have to postpone your knight’s appointment until next year.”

“I agree. You rolled in the mountains during the Goblin siege, didn’t you? You’re so careless that you won’t pass the initiation ceremony properly. You look like you’re having a hard time catching a bull lizard, let alone a half dragon.”

Gabel’s sarcasm made Yulysionangry, and he shouted.

“I will never make this mistake again! Not one-half dragon, but two! I can catch even three of them!”

Max couldn’t keep up with the back-and-forth conversation and Lord Caron, who was having a decent meal beside her, explained it in a polite tone, as if he noticed what she was curious about.

“Remdragon’s initiation is to hunt down the dragon’s subspecies. We can only be recognized as a member of our team if we have acquired the Dragon Mana Stone before the ceremony. It’s a ceremony of the Knights of Remdragon.”

“In fact, it doesn’t matter if it’s a demon with a mana stone. But Banryong is perfect for beginners.”

A young knight with dark brown hair intervened and enthusiastically helped explain.

“Catching a bulldozer would be a laughingstock, and it would be hard for a new knight to hunt high-quality creatures like Wyvern, Hydra or Vasilisk.”

“Ban-Banryong... What k-kind of... devil?”

“It’s a demon that looks very much like a dragon. The average size is 20 to 30 cubic feet, covered with hard scales, sharp fangs and claws. But unlike dragons, they don’t have wings, and they can’t use the breath.”

“But they’re not easy ones. To compensate for their inability to fly, they’re agile and have fast legs, so if they start to chase you, you can’t run away even if you’re riding a horse and running at full speed. They have a very good sense of smell too, so they can find any place you’re hiding in.”

“They have a strong grip, so most magic doesn’t work.”

The knights began to help each other one by one as if they were trying to scare the apprentice.

“The most troubling thing is that they live in groups: they’re not that smart, but they have excellent cooperative skills. When they find a prey, they send signals to each other and persistently track it down. A green knight is not a beast that can hunt three or four of them.”

“Ah! I can see the future. It’s a terrible ending for Rovar, the clumsy guy, to rush into a Banryong only to become its lunch!”

“Are you going to have lunch? There’s nothing left for a little guy like you to chew on.”

But it was Max’s face that got blue because of their teasing. She looked anxiously at the boy, who had an innocent face and a slender figure. It was a terrible ordeal for a young man who was only seventeen years old.

“Come on, y-you can’t go to the hunt...r-right?”

Garrow, who was silently eating in the corner until now, opened his mouth.

“He’ll do it with me. Yulysion and I are the only two knights to hold the ceremony this year.”

Max parted her lips in disbelief. Garrow was only a year older than Yulysion, he was taller and had a better physique, but he did not completely throw off the immature boy’s appearance. She was more and more ashamed of herself.

“Y-you two are going? Isn’t it t-too dangerous?”

“If you can’t take that risk, you don’t deserve to be a member of the Knights of Remdragon.”

Lord Caron said firmly.

“And the skills of Rovar and Livakion are enough, as long as they don’t make stupid mistakes like today.”

“He’ll have to bring in the biggest one to restore his reputation.”

Yulysion lifted his chin high and nodded.

“You’ll see. I will make new boots for you with the scales of the Banryong I’ve caught.”

“Oh, just don’t be a Banryong’s toothpick.”

The knights giggled and burst into laughter. Max was stunned by their casual, vicious jokes.

Are they not worried about these innocent boys jumping into danger?

As she frowned and stared disapprovingly at them, Sir Gabel, who was giggling, suddenly grabbed his stomach and laughed from across the room, saying: “Hey, don’t talk dirty in front of My Lady.”

The word “dirty” was also part of the harsh words that should not be said in front of a lady, but instead of pointing it out, Max continued to express concern about the apprenticeship knights.

“It’s not like y-you’re doing it, aren’t you? Yulysion and Garrowy-you’re young, you’ll be in danger, w-what if you’ll g-get hurt? S-Someone should help you...”

“We are not children to take care of, My Lady. We don’t need a guardian for a test to be recognized as a decent knight!”

“Yes, that’s insulting.”

Yulysion and Garrow protested at her words with a sulky look on their faces and Max stared at them with a puzzled look.

Are they not afraid to die or get hurt?

The boys didn’t look a bit frightened or intimidated by the trials ahead, instead they had a confidence which was close to arrogance that made Max even more astonished. She had lived four or five years more than them, but she didn’t have half the courage they had.

“I... I-I didn’t mean to i-insult you. I’m just... w-worried...”

“There’s nothing to worry about since they both have a special talent for swordsmanship.”

Suddenly, Max looked up at the sudden sound and saw Hebaron and Riftan walking into the kitchen.

TL – I love seeing Maxi so friendly with the knights, they all laughing and talking with her... if this isn't character development! And I'm sure there's still much to come <3

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