

Strongest 111

Chapter 111: Hate Cannot Drive Out Hate, Only Love Can Do That.

Within that blood-stained world, William laid on Celine's lap. He was sleeping very deeply. His body, heart, and soul were very tired. The young boy hadn't slept much during those six months that he had been away from Lont and it had taken its toll on his body.

Celine had a feeling that William had just wanted to return to Lont before he closed himself off from the world. Right now, she had a vague feeling that the boy had no intention of ever waking up from his slumber.

It was as if he had gone into a self-inflicted coma without knowing when he would open his eyes again.

"Did we make a mistake?" Celine muttered as she gently caressed the side of William's face. "Did we push you too much? Did it hurt you that deeply?"

She wanted to know the answers to her questions, but no answer came. William's sleeping face, that used to look peaceful and attractive, was now pale and rigid. She could even see the slight frown that creased the corners of his face, and it made her wonder if the boy was still in pain even in his comatose state.

James sighed for the umpteenth time as he stood on the hill overlooking Lont. His gaze was turned to the South where Celine's house was located.

He had already received a message from Celine about William's current condition and it filled him with endless worry.

A week had already passed since William had entered a catatonic state, and only Owen's nutritional potions were maintaining the functions of his body.

The old man wracked his brains to find an answer to his problem, but all of the solutions he thought up came to a dead end. He didn't dare to try and forcefully wake his grandson from his current state, because it might cause his consciousness to be wiped out completely.

'I should have waited until he was older.' James blamed himself for his stupidity. 'Everything was going smoothly and I ruined it all.'

While James was in the midst of his self blame, the sound of a bell reached his ears.

The old man raised his head to look behind him and saw Ella walking in his direction. For a brief moment, James thought that he saw a look of disapproval on the goat's face. When the goat was only a meter away from him, she turned her back and... kicked him!

James was completely caught by surprise and didn't have time to defend himself. He never thought that the goat that he had raised since she was a young kid, would attempt to kick him when he was feeling down and depressed.

Ella snorted at the stupid old man who was sprawled on the ground before walking towards the South. She had just arrived a few hours ago and learned the cause of William's current condition from Oliver. Knowing the perpetrator for her baby's suffering, Ella was very keen to give him a good beating.

However, after giving the old man a full-powered kick, she didn't have the heart to do any follow up attacks. After all, she could tell with a glance that James was also suffering.

After arriving at Celine's house, Ella conversed with Oliver and asked him to help move the sleeping William to the goat pen. Although Celine was reluctant to move her disciple from her bed, she still agreed to Ella's condition.

She had already done everything in her power to help the boy wake up, but it all ended in failure. The beautiful elf thought that, perhaps, Ella would be able to pull William out from his deep sleep because the two of them had been together for a very long time.

With her help, William laid comfortably in a pile of hay inside the goat pen.

"I'll leave him in your care, Ella," Celine said after making sure that the boy was sleeping comfortably.

"Meeeh." Ella nodded in response.

Celine gave her one and only disciple one last glance before leaving the goat shed along with Oliver. Although they didn't show it on their faces, they hoped that Ella would be able to create a miracle.

Ella laid beside William and looked at his sleeping face with gentle eyes. Five minutes later, she pressed her forehead against William's and closed her eyes.

A young lady with long, light-blue hair that reached down to her waist walked towards the center of the blood-stained world. From all angles, her proportions were perfect and even more curvaceous than Celine.

She wore a sleeveless fairy-like dress that fluttered gently as if a soft breeze was moving past her body. The weapons that were present in the background made her look like a Valkyrie that had come to pick up the soul of a brave warrior to bring to Valhalla.

Her light-purple eyes, that were as bright as William's when he was still a baby, stared in the distance where a floating figure could be seen. The silver bell on her neck rang softly, as if to announce her arrival.

The two purple horns on her head glowed faintly as she neared the sleeping boy whom she had raised since he arrived in Lont.

The young lady, who seemed to be around nineteen-years-old, made a gesture with her hand, and faint ripples started to appear under her feet.

If William could see the lady who had intruded inside his world, there was a high chance that he would go in a daze even in his apathetic state due to her incredible beauty.

As if pulled by an invisible string, William's body slowly floated towards the lady with light-blue hair. When he arrived in front of her, the first thing the lady did was to take off the hood that covered his head.

Ella gazed down at William with a gentle expression. She felt sad that the young boy had ended up this way and regretted the fact that she hadn't given James another kick earlier.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only Light can do that," Ella said softly as she held William in a loving embrace. "Hate cannot drive out hate, only Love can do that."

A celestial throne appeared in the air above her that glittered like the stars in the sky. Ella floated in the air, carrying William, and sat on the throne like an Empress.

With a gentle tug, she unclasped the lock of her fairy-like dress that was located on the back of her neck. Her beautiful upper body was laid bare for the world to see; but in this world, only one person existed and he was currently unconscious.

Ella gently raised William's head as she caressed the side of his face. "You still haven't lived your life to the fullest, so why are you so eager to cross to the other side?"

"Do you think that I, will allow you to go? If you want to give a message to the world, let it be simple. As simple as the life of a shepherd!"

William's lips parted as they had done countless times in the past. The beautiful lady didn't need to do anything and simply watched with a loving gaze as her baby moved by instinct to receive what was rightfully his.

< Daily Quest: Drink Milk has been completed! >

< Rewards: 5,000 Exp Points. >

< Bonus Rewards: 10 God Points >

< Soul Healing currently in effect >

< Host's consciousness will slowly recover over time >

A series of notifications flashed across William's status page, but the boy was unable to see them because he was still unconscious. However, these messages only flashed briefly before disappearing from the message logs completely.

The system made an arbitrary decision to delete all records of Ella's actions. Even though the messages were deleted, the rewards and healing effects remained.

Currently, the System was in the process of brainstorming a made-up story to explain where the additional experience points and God Points came from.

Ella, who had remembered the memories of the Goddess Amaltheia, was able to use her power for a short period of time. However, there was only one downside. She wouldn't remember anything that happened while she was in her Celestial Form.

Even so, she didn't care. The only thing that mattered to her right now was to pull William out of the darkness and slowly bring him back to his lively self, whom she loved with all her heart.

Chapter 112: Final Heaven [Part 1]

'What am I doing here?' William thought as he gazed at the familiar ceiling of the goat pen.

His memory was a bit hazy and he couldn't remember much of what happened after he had talked with Celine inside his Sea of Consciousness. The only thing he remembered was closing his eyes to sleep.

Just as he was trying to understand how he ended up in the goat pen, a fluffy Angorian Goat arrived at the entrance carrying a basket in her mouth.

Ella walked towards William and dropped the basket by his side. She was very happy that the young boy was finally awake.

William blinked once, as he looked at the Angorian Goat that he hadn't seen for more than half a year. His hands slowly reached out to her, but stopped midway.

His instinct prevented him from completing the motion because he felt that if he touched her, he would be staining something pure with his blood-soaked hands.

As if sensing his thoughts, Ella pressed the side of her face against one of William's hands while bleating softly.

"Meeeeeh."

"..."

Ella moved closer and rested her head on William's shoulder. She didn't say anything else and simply wanted to be close to William.

The red-headed boy, on the other hand, pressed his cheek against Ella's face as he lowered his hands to the ground. He wanted to hug his second mother, like he always did, but he was afraid that he would make a mistake and accidentally...

William lifted his head. Ella reluctantly stepped back and bleated.

"Meeeeeh."

"Un. Thank you, Mama."

"Meeeh."

William opened the basket and saw some pancakes and a small bottle of honey. The moment he saw the food, his stomach started to grumble, but he didn't eat right away. He left the goat pen to draw some water from the well in order to wash his hands.

The boy had always been strict with himself when it came to cleanliness. He would always wash his hands before he ate, and even his pang of hunger wouldn't stop him from performing basic hygiene.

When he was done washing his hands, he returned to the goat pen and began to eat. Ella sat on the hay beside him, and simply watched her baby eat the first breakfast he'd had after a week of sleeping.

William had just finished eating his food when Celine entered the goat pen.

"It's good to see that you are finally awake," Celine said. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine, Master," William replied. "Do you need me for something?"

Celine shook her head and appraised the young boy that was sitting on the hay. He still had that "standoffish" mood, but it was much better compared to how it was when he arrived in Lont a week ago.

"Since you just woke up, it would be best for you to take it easy for the time being," Celine stated. "Do you have any plans for today?"

"I don't," William answered.

"Why don't you go back home for a while? I'm sure that your Uncle, Aunt, and Grandfather are worried about you."

"... Can't I stay here for a few more days?"

William didn't really want to return to the Ainsworth Residence at this time. Although he didn't hate his grandfather, he didn't want to be around other people right now.

He didn't want to hear laughter.

He didn't want to hear kind words.

He didn't want to feel the warmth of humans.

Seeing his determined stance, Celine had no choice but to give him some space.

"Okay. You can stay here for as long as you want, but you must eat on time," Celine reminded him.
"Understand?"

"Yes." William nodded. "Should I cook for you later, Master?"

"No." Celine shook her head. "Sick people should just rest and recover."

William understood the hidden meaning behind his Master's words. Celine was indirectly telling him to keep his salad to himself.

Honestly, the boy was also not in the mood to cook anything. The reason why he offered to cook was just to show respect to Celine since she was his Master.

After the beautiful elf left William alone, the young boy laid down once more on the stack of hay. Like he said earlier, he had no intention of going anywhere. What he wanted was to be left alone. He placed his hands on the back of his head as he stared at the ceiling.

For some reason, ever since he woke up, he felt more calm and at peace. This was the first time that he had felt like this since he left Lont to accompany Ezio on his mission.

Suddenly, he felt a slight pressure on his stomach. Ella had laid beside William and used the boy's tummy as her pillow. The boy's hand moved unconsciously to brush her head, but it stopped halfway before dropping to his side.

'Sorry, Mama,' William thought. 'I'm afraid that I might accidentally hurt you if I touch you.'

In order to clear his thoughts, he started the breathing exercises that Ezio had told him to calm his senses. William inhaled slowly through his nose, and exhaled just as slowly using his mouth. Ten minutes later, he finally regained his calm and closed his eyes to dive into his Sea of Consciousness.

When William opened his eyes, he was surprised to see that at the center of his world, there was a patch of blue sky. Aside from that, he also sensed that the thick scent of blood in the air had also lessened.

As he was wondering what was going on, he sensed someone entering his Mindscape.

William immediately summoned Stormcaller and took a fighting stance. Lightning crackled on its purple blade as the image of the intruder slowly materialized in front of him.

"I didn't come here to fight, but I guess this is good as well," an almost musical voice said as it stopped a few meters away from William. "I'm curious to know how far you have come in your training. If the two of us are going to fight together, I will need to know your current fighting ability."

William could hear himself drawing a deep breath as his gaze locked on the beautiful lady in front of him. He had thought that his Master was already very beautiful, but the intruder who had entered his world made his heart tremble.

It took all of his willpower to break out from his daze and force himself to ask her a question.

"Who are you?" William asked as he pointed his spear towards the lady with light-blue hair who was making his heart beat wildly inside his chest. "How did you manage to enter my Sea of Consciousness?"

Although he didn't sense any malicious intent coming from her, the young boy had developed a mild sense of paranoia after everything that he had experienced on his journey outside of Lont.

"I will tell you the answer after you beat me," The beautiful lady smiled as she summoned a bow made up of crystals. "Come. Fight me with everything you have."

With her declaration, she fired a magical arrow aimed at William's chest. The boy used his movement technique, Heavenly Phantasm to dodge and, at the same time, charge in her direction.

Ella smiled because this was the first time that she was fighting against William. She couldn't possibly do this in the real world because she was afraid that he would receive a serious injury. However, since they were inside his Sea of Consciousness, she could fight to her heart's content.

After all, she wanted William's killing intent to diminish and for that to happen, he needed to fight against someone without holding back.

Seeing that the red-headed boy managed to cross the distance in an instant, Ella unsummoned her bow and clenched her fists.

"Taste the fury of the Celestial Heavens," Ella said with an enchanting smile on her face. "Final Heaven!"

Chapter 113: Final Heaven [Part 2]

William made a full thrust with his spear as Stormcaller's full power burst forth from its enchanted blade. Just like a lightning bolt, the young boy drove his spear forward without mercy.

However, what happened next blew his breath away.

The beautiful lady didn't move and calmly received his strike. For a brief moment, William had the urge to pull back his attack because the person in front of him felt strangely familiar. However, this feeling disappeared just as quickly as it arrived. William put all of his attention on the opponent in front of him and put more force behind his attack.

When the tip of the spear was merely a meter away from Ella's face, her fist moved and casually deflected the blow upwards. The boy calmly executed a downward slash to regain his momentum, but Ella was a step faster than him.

The two exchanged blows a couple of times within the Sea of Consciousness. No matter what William did, he couldn't get the upper hand. No. It was more like his opponent was matching his current level of strength.

"Stormcaller! Annihilate my enemy!" William threw Stormcaller towards the blue-haired girl and let it attack autonomously. He then summoned his bow and quiver and unleashed a barrage of arrows that left no paths of escape.

"Very good," Ella said with approval. "But, not enough."

She grabbed Stormcaller after it tried to attack her and used it to deflect the arrows that William had fired. She then charged forward and wielded the spear who was struggling hard to escape her grasp.

The spear emitted powerful lightning currents in order to injure the person who tried to forcefully wield it, but it was to no avail. The lightning flowed harmlessly through Ella's body as if it was just a passing breeze.

William narrowed his eyes because he finally understood that his opponent was only taking it easy on him.

"Lightning God War Art, Eight Form," William muttered as he aimed his bow at the approaching figure in front of him. "Exterminate, Khryselakatos!"

The arrow that was nocked on the bow glowed with an eerie green light. When William released the string, a subtle hiss that was similar to that of a viper's reverberated in the battlefield.

Ella was about to deflect William's attack, but immediately changed her plan because she felt something ominous from the arrow that William had shot towards her.

She stopped her charge just in time to see the arrow multiply into hundreds of copies.

The lightning God War Art, Khryselakatos, was a special move that William could use when he was wielding a bow. Its ability was to imbue an arrow with a very potent poison that was especially deadly against women.

To make things worse, the arrow shot by this skill would multiply in the hundreds. Each arrow had the same attributes as the original, which made this skill the perfect attack for a group of enemies.

Even if the arrows just grazed them, the poison would immediately render them unable to continue fighting.

"You've learned quite a nasty trick," Ella said calmly as she threw the struggling spear in her hands. She then smiled and extended her slender hand above her head. "Cryo Fortress."

Massive walls of ice surrounded her in all sides, and a giant fortress appeared inside William's Sea of Consciousness. All the arrows that William had shot embedded themselves within the fortress walls, while Ella stood at above it, smiling at William.

"Play time's over," Ella announced.

With just a single step forward, she appeared right in front of William before casually delivering a simple punch.

Before the boy could even react to the unbelievable move by his opponent, Ella's blow had already reached him. Ella's fist embedded itself on William's chest and sent him flying a hundred meters away from where she stood.

William's face contorted in pain when he received the unbelievable attack from the blue-haired beauty. Everything happened so fast that he didn't even have the time to understand how she was able to land a blow on him in that short period of time.

"It's dangerous to let your mind wander during a fight," A voice whispered in his ear. "Make sure to stay focused on your opponent at all times."

Before William could even say or do anything, he found himself slamming into the ground face first. If he thought that his current situation couldn't get worse, he was greatly mistaken.

The moment his face slammed on the ground, a foot stepped on his back and delivered another powerful blow that made the ocean ripple under William's body.

Unlike his Master, Celine, the beautiful lady with light-blue hair and purple eyes, didn't give William time to recover and made him experience a world of pain.

With each punch, William felt the core of his soul shudder. With each kick, the boy's thoughts scattered.

Ella delivered blow, after blow, after blow, and didn't stop hitting William until the boy had loosened his hold on his weapon. Stormcaller fell on the ocean and the light from its blade disappeared completely.

William was about to hit the ground as well, but a pair of slender arms caught him and held him in a protective embrace.

"You've gotten a bit stronger," Ella whispered in the unconscious boy's ears. "Well done."

Ella floated into the air. A second later, a Celestial throne appeared and she sat there while cradling the unconscious boy in her arms. She unclasped the lock on the back of her neck that supported her upper clothes.

It will not be easy to return William to his former self, and Ella understood that a consistent and gradual recovery was the most optimal choice. Because of that, she was willing to give her baby her full support, and nourish both of his body and soul in order to aid in the healing process.

< Soul Healing currently in effect >

< Host's consciousness will slowly recover over time >

When William woke up he found himself inside the familiar goat pen. The interior of the pen was bathed in an orange light, for the sun was just about to set. The young boy fell into a daze as an elusive memory briefly passed through his mind before disappearing completely.

'I think I'm forgetting something very important,' William frowned as he propped himself to a sitting position. He closed his eyes and thought for a long time, but he couldn't grasp the fleeting memory that momentarily appeared after waking up.

When the feeling finally subsided, the boy scratched his head in confusion. "If I forget it then it's not important."

Just as he was about to stand up to go to Celine's house, a shadow appeared at the entrance of the goat pen. Ella walked towards William carrying a basket in her mouth.

She placed it beside the boy and bleated.

"Thank you, Mama," William said.

"Meeeeh."

William hadn't noticed it, but Ella did. When the boy said thank you to her, the corner of his lips lifted a little. It was as if his body was remembering how to smile, but it was still rusty, and needed more "maintenance" for it to work properly.

Ella's eyes softened because she knew that the old William was starting to rise up to the surface once again.

During the next few days, Anna would visit William with her daughter, Eve, to check on his condition.

She would even place Eve beside William in order for her daughter to get to know her older cousin better.

William was afraid to touch the baby, but he was also afraid that rejecting Anna's advances would break her Aunt's heart. That's why he did what he could do to the best of his abilities and sat straight without moving an inch.

He allowed his little cousin to crawl all over him, stick her fingers up his nose, pull his hair a bit, and sometimes, Eve would even sleep on his lap.

Whenever he had reached his limit, he would give his Aunt a pleading gaze and Anna would take that as a sign that their "family" bonding time was up. Anna would then take Eve away and thank William for playing with her daughter.

With the help of Ella's nourishment, William was starting to open his heart again. This was also why the red-headed boy did his best to endure the presence of his adorable cousin who seemed to be hell bent on getting a reaction from him.

Days passed...

Weeks passed...

Months passed...

Finally, in the fourth month, the young boy stepped out of the goat pen and walked towards the hill overlooking Lont.

He breathed in the fresh morning air and stared at the darkness. The sky was slowly brightening in the East, but the sun had still not risen. His left arm was hugging Ella's body, who was sharing her warmth with him, as both of them waited for the sunrise.

When the sun finally poked its head above the horizon, the first rays of light illuminated the world. William's light-green eyes, that had regained their clarity, shone like emeralds as he took in the sights and sounds of the beautiful world where he was born.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only Light can do that," William muttered. "Hate cannot drive out hate, only Love can do that."

For some reason, these words would come to his mind from time to time. He had a nagging feeling that someone had told him these words before, someone very close to him. However, no matter how much he tried to seek the owner of these words, only an elusive figure with light-blue hair appeared inside his head.

"Meeeeeeeh."

"Yes, Mama. It's a beautiful sunrise."

"Meeeh."

William softly caressed the side of Ella's body as he looked at the town of Lont. A small town in the countryside, where everyone was living a peaceful life and away from the horrors of the world.

A small piece of paradise in a land ravaged by strife.

"Master, do you like it?" William asked. "I made sure to use all my skills in cooking it."

"It's not bad, but can you please add some meat next time?" Celine replied. "Although I am an elf, I am not a vegetarian."

"Master, vegetables are good for your body," William countered Celine's argument. "It keeps the skin smooth and makes you look young and healthy."

After the meal, William left to return to the Ainsworth Residence. When the boy was no longer in their sights, the beautiful elf smiled as she gave Oliver a side-long glance. The Parrot Monkey rolled his eyes to the side before flying to the kitchen in order to prepare some meat dishes for Celine.

Both of them didn't want William to go into a relapse so they didn't dare to cook any meat when he was around. Although it was a hassle, the two endured for the sake of their disciple.

Chapter 114: The Choice Is Up To You To Make

Feeling bolstered by the sunrise, William soon found himself facing off against a powerful foe that was twice as strong as a Terrorhand.

"Why don't you hold her?" Anna asked.

A pair of clear blue eyes looked up at him, and William could feel his heart beating wildly inside his chest.

"Eyah!" Eve said as she gazed at her "Big Brother" with renewed excitement.

"Hello, Eve," William replied with a stiff smile on his face.

The two-year-old girl had crawled up to William the moment he'd returned to the Ainsworth Residence, which created this awkward scene.

William lightly coughed because he didn't know how to respond to his Aunt Anna's request. If it was the William of a year ago, he would definitely hug, squish, and kiss Eve to oblivion. However, right now, he was afraid to hold the delicate baby for fear that he would not be able to control his strength and accidentally hurt her.

Seeing this scene, James came to the rescue and picked his cute granddaughter up from the floor.

"William is still unable to control his strength due to his training," James explained. "He's just worried that he might harm his cousin, so he is not in a hurry to hold her."

Anna frowned as she gazed at her nephew, "Is that why you're not playing with her?"

"Yes." William nodded. "Sorry, Aunt. I really want to play with Eve, but I don't want to hurt her."

Eve giggled and grabbed a fistful of William's hair. It was as if the little girl was challenging her "Big Brother" to hurt her.

The young boy could only smile helplessly as the little baby tugged on his hair while laughing.

While this was happening, James whispered to Helen and asked her to cook something nice to celebrate William's return. However, he also added to make the dishes void of any meat. The head maid nodded her head in agreement and headed towards the kitchen.

James looked at his grandson who was getting bullied by his granddaughter with a smile. After having her fill of playing with her older cousin, Eve felt sleepy, so Anna decided to return her to their bedroom to sleep.

"Come with me, William," James said as he walked towards the conference room without even waiting for the young boy's reply.

William followed behind his Grandpa with a calm expression. Ella decided to stay in the living room to give the two some privacy. Although she was curious about what James was planning to tell William, she knew that it would be better if she gave both of them some space.

Inside the conference room...

"Do you hate me?" James asked.

"No," William answered. "In fact I am very thankful. Thank you, Grandpa, for letting me see the dark side of the world."

William bowed respectfully to his grandfather. During his four months of recovery, he had time to think about many things. Among those things was why James decided to let him accompany Ezio on his missions.

What William experienced was a culture shock. Although he had heard and imagined that such things were happening in the Southern Continent. Seeing them personally made him question the knowledge he had about the world he was currently living in.

It was a painful lesson that brought William to despair. Fortunately, there were people who cared about him and pulled him out from the Darkness that he had trapped himself in.

James didn't say anything and just looked at his grandson. He was already old and understood that some words need not be spoken between men.

"I'm very happy that you had shaken off the fetters that bound you, but the current you is no good," James said with a serious expression. "You can't live your life being unable to trust and touch people again, so a new round of training must be done in order to fix this issue. This time, I will give you two options."

William stayed silent as he listened to his Grandfather. He also knew that his current state was not ideal because it prevented him from being able to interact with people. If possible, he wanted to hug his cute cousin and play with her as well.

"The first option is that you need to train with Jekyll," James said. "He will teach you about etiquette and how to act like a proper gentleman. The second option is to learn from Feyright. He will teach you how to become a bard, and help you release your negative emotions as well as residual killing intent. The choice is up to you to make."

"I'll choose the second option," William answered in a heartbeat. "Being a gentleman is not my style. My character will become inconsistent if I force myself to act that way. I'm fine with being a narcissist."

There was another reason why William chose Feyright instead of Jekyll. Due to his heightened perception, he had grasped the ability to tell who among the people he had met were the most dangerous.

The sole dentist, who always had a smile on his face, was on the very top of his list. Even Ezio's killing intent was not able to make William cower. But, when facing Jekyll, the boy always felt as if he was a pig that was about to be slaughtered.

"Feyright? This is not a bad idea." James nodded. "You can also use this skill to court the beautiful ladies that you see on your journey."

William just smiled at his grandpa's never-ending attempt to make him bring home potential bride candidates.

"Very well, I will arrange for him to teach you by afternoon tomorrow. He's always asleep till noon because he performs at the tavern during the evenings."

"Thank you, Grandpa."

"You're welcome."

After eating lunch, William returned to his room that he hadn't visited for a long time. Everything was in order and the young boy could tell that his Aunt Helen had cleaned his room in regular intervals.

On his desk, several books with information about the Silvermoon Continent could be seen piled up on top of each other. However, the one pile that caught William's attention was the neatly stacked letters on the right side of his desk.

The young boy's eyes widened in surprise as he immediately took the letters in his hand.

Just as he expected, all of the letters belonged to his Mother Arwen. William felt a slight ache in his heart at the thought of not being able to reply to her letters. It made him feel bad that several years had passed and their exchanges came to a halt.

"Sorry, Mother," William muttered as he opened the first letter according to the date that they arrived. He planned to read all of them and write a reply letter as soon as possible.

As he read the letters one by one, Ella laid beside him with her eyes closed. She was planning to take a nap to recover her strength. The months that she had spent beside William had also taken a toll on her soul as she used the power of the Bell of Anthanasia.

Since William was already feeling better, she decided to catch up on her much needed rest and read Arwen's letter at a later time.

A few hours passed before the boy finished reading all the letters that Arwen had sent to him. Complicated emotions rose from his chest as he went to his desk to write a reply to his mother.

It seems that James had written a few letters to Arwen and explained that William was currently in training. Even so, that didn't stop Arwen from sending a letter once every month. She hoped that one of her letters would arrive during her son's in-between-breaks so he would be able to reply to her.

Unfortunately, Skyla always arrived at a bad time and wasn't able to meet William. The crane also didn't want to disturb the boy's training, so she simply asked James to give Arwen a monthly report on William's training.

As William focused on writing his letter, he didn't notice that the sun had already set. If not for the knock on his door that broke his concentration, he would still be writing his letter.

"Young Master, it's time for dinner," Helen said with a smile.

"Thank you, Aunt Helen," William replied. "I'll be in the dining room in a minute."

After dinner, William was about to return to his room when he heard the familiar cry of a crane come from outside the house. The boy immediately ran out of the door and was just in time to see Skyla land down a few meters from the main door of the house.

The Silvermoon Crane gave William the "finally you're here gaze", as it uttered a soft cry in greeting.

"Big Sister!" William ran towards the two-meter-tall crane and was about to hug her, but stopped midway. He had still not fully recovered from his mental shackles that prevented him from being intimate with anyone aside from Ella.

Just an hour ago, he was thinking of a way to send his letter to the Silvermoon Continent. He didn't want Arwen to wait for a second longer and was about to ask his Grandfather for an alternative way to deliver the letter.

Fortunately, an express carrier had arrived to answer his prayers.

William respectfully invited Skyla to the garden and brought her food. He then waited patiently for her to finish eating before he started to ask questions about his mother and what she had been doing over the past few years.

Although the crane was exhausted from her journey, she still talked to William and shared quite a bit of gossip about the Silvermoon Continent. The crane also noticed something different about William.

As a very intelligent beast, it was quite easy for her to spot these changes. However, she didn't pry because she also understood that this was part of William's growth. The two talked until midnight before the crane left the boy to hunt for more food.

Skyla planned to rest for an entire day before her return trip to the Holy City of Nytfæ Aethel. Deep inside she was very happy after finally seeing William. After a very long time, she would finally be able to deliver William's handwritten letter to Arwen who had been missing him terribly for years.

Chapter 115: Breaking Free From The Shackles

The next day, Ella, Anna, Eve, and Skyla sat in the garden while listening to the songs that William was singing. He was in the middle of recording songs using a high-grade recording crystal that had been given to him by James at his request.

Since he was always stuck inside a hospital room back on Earth, William had decided to have a few hobbies like playing the guitar to pass time. He was quite good at it, so when he had obtained the Bard Job Class, he decided to record a few songs for Arwen. This way, his mother would always hear his voice and not miss him too much.

Due to the power of the Job Class, William's playing skills were enhanced to another level. Not only that, his voice was smoother and more captivating.

The songs he recorded were Disknee Songs that he had loved since he was a child. Songs like, Do You Feel the Love Tonight, Fly the Distance, My Whole You World, and Beauty and the Bestie.

Anna was quite curious about how William learned these songs because she had never heard them before. The young boy only said that he had heard the songs during his travels outside of Lont.

The songs were like a lullaby for Eve and the little girl slept peacefully while William was doing his one man concert.

That night, Skyla spread her wings and embarked on her journey towards the Silvermoon Continent. She was quite in a hurry to return back home and let Arwen listen to her son's performance. The crane knew that her partner would cry tears of joy the moment she heard William's songs.

And it made her determination to return as soon as possible burn brighter.

The next day, Feyright sat beside William as he taught him the proper way to perform in front of people.

"When you sing a song, you should smile," Feyright said while holding his lute. "You might not believe it but when you are smiling, your heart smiles as well. This will empower our songs because us bards must always sing from our heart. The stronger the emotion, the stronger the power of our songs.

"With a song, we can raise the morale of an army, or make them weep bitter tears. We can make the hearts of ladies swoon, or make the children dance to our tune. This is the power of music, and I dare say that it is one of the most wonderful gifts that the Gods have given us mortal creatures."

William nodded in agreement. Music had been one of his constant companions during the hard times of his life.

"Well, since both of us are already handsome, we don't need to fix our faces," Feyright smiled. "However, we need to always look presentable, especially when performing in front of people. Those shabby shepherd clothes of yours just won't do."

Feyright shook his head because although William looked good, his fashion sense was a disaster. As a fashionista, he couldn't accept the young man's taste in clothing.

"Listen. Although I understand that you are a shepherd, while we are together I expect you to dress up as a performer," Feyright ordered.

"I don't want my colleagues to spread gossip that my student is a crude boy who doesn't even have an ounce of professionalism in his bones. The moment I hear that you performed wearing shepherd's clothes, I swear I will whack you until you forget your name. Do I make myself clear?"

William nodded his head once more. Although he didn't think that playing a song while wearing shepherds clothes was a big deal, he didn't want to offend his current instructor.

The young boy was currently holding a lute similar to the one in Feyright's hands. The only difference was that William's was more beautiful. James had rummaged through his treasures and found several musical instruments like the Harp, flute, mandolin, lyre, and several others that he had taken from the Bandit Camps that he had raided.

After pondering for a while, William decided to just... take them all! Since he was a bard, he could play all the instruments with the help of his Job Class. Since that was the case, taking these "treasures" from his Grandpa was the most ideal choice.

Feyright and William did their lessons in the garden, because the Elf wanted to be surrounded by beautiful things when he performed.

William didn't expect Feyright to be very skilled in his craft. The boy thought that his songs were already good enough, but when he heard the Elf sing, he felt his soul being forcefully taken to places that he had never been before.

To glorious battlefields, to beautiful valleys, hidden abodes, and to peeping in on romantic trysts. Feyright did it all, and he did it so naturally that William felt envious of his musical talent.

"You can praise me, you know?" Feyright gave him a teasing smile. "I will not charge extra for overtime."

"You're amazing, Maestro," William praised from the heart. "I wish I could perform like you."

"Don't worry, when I'm done with you, you'll be able to perform in front of Kings and Emperors." Feywright flipped his hair like the narcissist he was. "Sometimes, all you need to do is let your heart do the talking when you play. Remember this, my dear student, music is the universal language of mankind. Spirits don't usually talk to anyone, but when you play them a tune, they will start to dance."

With Feywright's personal teachings, William was able to let go of all the pent up emotions inside his heart. Every time he sang a song, he could feel himself letting go of all of his worries, and it made him feel at peace.

Ella, Anna, Eve, and Helen were his avid fans. They would always find time to listen to him singing in the garden, and William liked their company. Although singing by himself was good every now and then, singing for others made him happier.

Sometimes, Eve would crawl towards William and tug on his clothes. Other times, she would grab his lute and touch the strings. These precious incidents helped William gain better control of his emotions which greatly helped in his recovery.

Almost half a year had passed since William started his Bard Training with Feywright.

The exchange of letters between him and Arwen continued without fail. With each letter he opened, he felt closer to his mother who was hundreds of miles away from him. The two had grown very close through these exchanges, and the young boy's love for his mother grew with each passing day.

William gave Skyla a big hug, and the latter nuzzled him before soaring to the sky. In his last letter, the young boy sent his Mother a recording crystal with the songs he sang. Arwen loved William's gift and played them everyday.

"Big Sister, have a safe trip and tell my Mother I love her!" William shouted as he waved at the crane in the sky.

Skyla replied with a cry of affirmation and circled William once before flying in the direction of the Silvermoon Continent.

With the Maestro's help, the red-headed boy was able to break free from the shackles that prevented him from being intimate with other people.

Sometimes, the Half-Elf wondered if things would have ended differently if he had chosen Jekyll instead of Feyright. He had a feeling that he might have lost something very important to him if he had chosen the dentist as his instructor instead of the lively bard who taught him the power of music.

"Twinkle twinkle, little star... how I wonder where you are?" William sang while Eve sat on his lap. "Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky..."

Eve was making random baby sounds as she tried to sing along with William. The two of them had gotten close after her "Big Brother" had started to open up his heart to people again. Deep inside, William was very happy because he loved spending his time with children.

He was now in full control of his emotions, and held Eve in a protective embrace.

"The two of you have really become close," Anna said with a smile as she walked towards them. "I'm starting to feel jealous."

"Mama!" Eve clapped her hands as she called out to her mother.

Anna scooped up her daughter and kissed her cheeks. "Have you been a good girl?"

Eve kissed her cheeks in reply and Anna nuzzled her beloved daughter.

William watched this scene with a smile on his face as he stood up from the ground. Although he wanted to stay, there were still a few things he needed to do. He bid his Aunt goodbye and headed towards the valley where the herds were grazing.

Yesterday, he bought the weapon that the system had recommended to him from the God Shop. This weapon contained a Job Class that William had wanted for a very long time.

Thanks to the 90% discount coupon, the God Points he had earned during his missions, and the bonus God Points that he earned through overcoming his weakness, he was able to purchase this weapon from the shop.

The system had thought long and hard for a proper excuse to give William for the extra god Points he had received out of nowhere, and decided to just say that it was the bonus points that was awarded to him after being able to recover from his previous state.

After acquiring the Job Class from the weapon, William understood that it worked the same as the other professions that he had mastered so far. Since that was the case, he wanted a master to teach him on how to utilize this new power to its fullest potential.

He believed that if he mastered this Job Class, he would be able to work with Ella to overcome most adversities.

"Just a few more months and I'll be leaving Lont," William muttered as he looked in the direction of the capital of the Hellan Kingdom. "I'll be seeing you again soon, Est."

William knew that he couldn't stay inside this safe haven forever for he had to meet his mother and father in the Silvermoon Continent. However, this time, he was no longer afraid.

He had regained his purpose and the light in his heart was now brighter than before. It would not lose so easily to the darkness that had taken hold of him not long ago.

The young boy knew that right now, he couldn't change the world and make it a better place.

He was not strong enough to do that.

William understood that he had to venture outside of Lont in order to make his mark to the world. Although he would encounter hardships, challenges, and people stronger than him along his journey, he would still walk the path he had chosen.

For he was not alone.

He was not the same boy he was back on Earth. Stuck inside a hospital room, waiting for the day when he would draw his last breath.

There were people who loved him, cared for him, and supported him. He also had his herd that would stand with him when he faced the inevitable battles that he couldn't escape from. Naturally, he didn't plan on losing any of these battles.

He would face them with everything he had. If he couldn't win then he would just run away and call his Grandpa!

Calling reinforcements was not against the rules and William was perfectly fine with sitting on the shoulder of giants! He would just get his revenge when he had leveled up and became stronger.

William chuckled as he thought of these stupid thoughts. The image of him hiding behind James back as the old man punched the living lights out of his enemies made him laugh out loud.

Ella stood beside William and looked at the happy expression on his face.

"Let's go, Mama." William grinned as he pointed at the sun in the distance. "In this world of Swords and Magic, where adventure runs wild and free. Our Legend is about to begin!"

"Meeeeeeeh!"

Chapter 116: Forever Loving You

Four years had passed since William lost his powers during the Trial of Courage.

Many things happened in the Hellan Kingdom during this time.

Just like James predicted, after the King had settled the aftermath of the Beast Tide, he sent those who had performed meritorious service to reclaim the lands that had lost their owners.

Due to James' immediate action, Fushia and Xynnar fell under the control of Lont. The nobles made a ruckus, but the king quieted them down with the merits that James had acquired during the battle at Windkeep Citadel.

Of course, that was only the King's excuse. He knew that dealing with James was a pain, so he decided to just turn a blind eye to his actions.

Also, the Oroubro was not just for show. It was a one man army that could easily match a Flood Dragon in a life and death battle. The nobles that had reclaimed the lands near the borders of Lont decided to send James plenty of gifts in order to show that they wished to coexist in peace.

Cedric had also accepted the fact that there was no way he could rebuild Fushia with the remaining survivors. He would be lying if he said that he didn't feel sad about the current situation, but Leah convinced him that this was for the best.

In order to forget his heartache, Cedric asked James to help him go to the Central Continent, so that he could enroll in one of their academies. James agreed to his request and gave him the funds he needed.

The king also gave orders for Fort Windermere to be rebuilt, and even drafted a plan to make a fortress that would face the Forbidden Land directly. He knew that if another Beast Tide occurred, the newly built towns and villages would once again be wiped out from the face of the map.

The nobles who had laid claims to the Western Region supported this plan and even donated a few thousand gold from their own treasury to hasten the building of the fortress.

On a hill overlooking Lont, a fourteen-year-old boy sat on top of an Angorian goat. He was cradling a three-year-old girl in his arms, while waiting for the sun to rise. The little girl in his embrace was sleeping peacefully without a care in the world.

She was the treasure of the Ainsworth Family, Eve Von Ainsworth.

"Meeeeeeh." Ella bleated softly.

"Eve, time to wake up," William said as he lightly poked his little cousin's cheeks. "The sun is about to rise."

The little girl's eyelids fluttered. A pair of innocent blue eyes, that were more beautiful than sapphires, drowsily looked up at William.

"Good morning, Eve." William smiled at the cute little girl.

Eve gazed at him for a few seconds before she closed her eyes to go back to sleep. Her lips moved in a pout for having been disturbed in her slumber.

William could only helplessly shake his head as he gazed at the sunrise. He couldn't possibly force her adorable cousin to enjoy the sunrise with him. While taking in the morning light, he heard footsteps coming from behind him. Judging from the weight of every step, William judged that it was none other than his grandpa, James.

"Our little darling is still sleeping?" James asked as he stood beside Ella and William.

"Yes," William replied. "She woke up a minute ago, but decided to go back to sleep."

"Then let her sleep," James said fondly. "Girls need their beauty sleep."

"Indeed," William agreed.

"The two of you spoil Eve too much."

Anna made her way towards her Father-in-law and nephew with a smile on her face. "I'm afraid that no one would dare to court Eve when she comes of age with the two of you guarding the front door."

"Hmp, If anyone dares to court my darling granddaughter I'll break their legs," James snorted.

"Only their legs? It would be best if we break their arms as well," William proposed. "My cute cousin is too precious. What if those bastards try to touch her with their filthy hands?"

"Indeed, we should break their arms as well."

"Right?"

"No!" Anna glared at the over protective duo. "The two of you better not get in the way of her lovelife."

"Okay."

"Fine."

The two men glanced at each other. Clearly, they only agreed on the surface, and would definitely cripple anyone who dared to lay their hands on Eve when she grew up.

The silence of the early morning was broken by the cry of a white crane. William raised his head and saw the familiar Spirit Beast that had first visited Lont when he was ten years old. A minute later, the two-meter-tall crane landed beside Ella and looked at William with a gentle gaze.

"Thank you for your hard work, Big Sister Skyla," William greeted with a smile. "How is mother? Is she doing well?"

The white crane nodded her head.

William returned the sleeping Eve to Anna and dismounted Ella's back. He then caressed the head of the white crane before retrieving the parcel tied to her leg.

James and Anna shared a knowing glance and returned to the residence together. They wanted to give William some privacy to read his mother's letter.

"Big Sister, there are a few things that I need to do today, so I can only write the reply letter around noon," William said in an apologetic tone.

The white crane nuzzled the side of William's face before giving him the "I understand" look. It then opened its wings to fly towards the river where it would catch some fish and rest, while waiting for William to write his letter.

William opened the letter in his hands, while Ella rested her head on his shoulder. It was as if she wanted to read the letter that was sent by her baby's mother. Just like always, William read the letter out loud so that Ella could also hear its contents.

To my beloved William,

Spring has arrived in Nytfæ Aethel and the silvermoon flowers have started to bloom. I wish that you could see them, but that will have to wait until you are old enough to travel to the Silvermoon Continent.

Your Grandfather and Grandmother are doing well and they loved the gifts that you sent them last time. They were still enamored by the recording that you sent as well. They even make sure to play it whenever we have guests in our house.

My two disciples also loved your singing and were quite curious about who composed the songs that you sang. I know that it might be a hassle, but can you send more recorded songs in your next letters? I promise to treat them better than our own family heirlooms.

Since they all know that I am currently writing a letter, they are expecting you to send another batch of gifts when Skyla returns to my side. I know it is a bit troublesome, but do your best, okay?

William chuckled as he read the part about his Grandparents. He had also exchanged letters with them in the past and he found out that they were more eccentric than his grandfather James.

Due to Ella's nudging, he once again focused his attention on reading the letter in his hands.

If I remember correctly, by the time this letter arrives in Lont, you will be preparing for your journey towards the capital of the Hellan Kingdom to enroll at the Royal Academy.

I am not familiar with the quality of education in the Human Kingdoms, but I pray that you learn a lot during your stay at the academy. Remember, go there to study and not to fool around with girls.

You are still too young for that, so you should focus on your studies. Don't be like your father who attracted all sorts of ladies left and right!

Skyla is more familiar with the Hellan Kingdom than me, so I'm sure that she will be able to deliver my letters to you at regular intervals.

My beloved, I miss you, and I look forward to the day that I will be able to hold you into my arms. Until then, keep yourself safe and make sure to stay away from harm.

Also, pass my love to Ella. I am forever grateful for the love that she has given you all these years. Please, bring her with you when you visit me in Nytfe Aethel. I look forward to thanking her personally.

May the blessing of the Moon Goddesses shine on you every night.

Forever loving you,

Arwen Aenarion Ainsworth

William kissed the letter after reading it. His eyes were moist as he carefully folded the letter before placing it inside the Ring of Conquest.

"Mama, after a few years, we will go to the Silvermoon Continent to visit Mother," William said softly.

"Meeeeeh." Ella nodded her head. She was also looking forward to her meeting with William's birth mother. If Ella could talk to Arwen in private, she would thank her for bringing William into her life.

Without her baby, she would have lived her life as an ordinary Angorian Goat and would never have gotten the chance to experience the things that she had experienced during the time that she had stayed by William's side.

Chapter 117: March Towards The Capital

"William."

"Master."

Celine caressed the side of William's face. It had been four years, and the effect of the slave collar had finally lost its hold over the red-head boy.

"Do you hate me?" Celine asked. She stared at the handsome boy in front of her and waited for his answer.

"I would be lying if I said no, Master," William replied honestly. "Although I feel some resentment towards you, I will not forget that you treated me well over the past few years. I am very grateful to have become your disciple."

Celine smiled and patted the boy's head. "I will remove the collar now. You must be sick and tired of wearing it this entire time."

The beautiful elf was about to remove the collar from William's neck, when the boy held her hands and firmly shook his head.

"Leave it as it is, Master." William gave Celine a mischievous smile. "Didn't you tell me that this is your gift to me? Since it is a gift, you shouldn't take it back."

"Oh? You like being my slave that much?" Celine raised an eyebrow.

"It is the first gift I received from you, Master. Naturally, it is very precious to me," William answered.

"Hmp! You've become a sweet talker after growing up."

"Thank you for the praise. Please, praise me more, Master."

Celine flicked William's forehead, but it didn't have much force in it. The boy only smiled at his Master's attempt to act cute.

"Have you prepared everything for your journey?" Celine inquired. "The journey to the capital will take at least ten days from Lont. Make sure to pack extra food and water. Although you can hunt and find water along the way, it will be best to have food and water in stock in case of emergency."

"I already have, Master," William answered. "Aunt Helen gave me enough food and water to last me half a month."

"Good." Celine nodded her head. "The Royal Academy is a good place to learn. Just make sure to stay out of trouble, do you understand?"

"Don't worry, Master. Even if I don't go looking for trouble, trouble will definitely look for me."

"That is what I am afraid of."

Celine sighed helplessly. To be honest, she was very satisfied to have William as her disciple. Although he had lost his magic power, he never stopped doing his best to strengthen himself. Over the past few years, she made sure that he developed a very strong resistance against curses and poison to the best of her ability.

After all, Celine would become a big joke if her acquaintances were to find out that her disciple was easily affected by curses, which was the specialty of Dark Magicians.

"I hate goodbyes, so I won't follow you to the gate of Lont," Celine gave William a hug. "Come back after you've come of age. There is something that I need to teach you."

"Is it a new spell?" William asked in curiosity.

"Yes. A powerful spell that will allow you to surpass your limits," Celine replied with a smirk. "So, make sure to return after you feel that the Royal Academy can no longer teach you anything."

"For some reason, I'm looking forward to learning this spell that you are going to teach me, Master."

"Mmm. Look forward to it."

William waved goodbye to his Master as he mounted Ella's back. The enrollment for the Royal Academy would be starting soon. This was why he needed to go to the capital before the registration ended.

Celine and James both knew that they couldn't keep William in a small town like Lont forever. If they did, they would only hinder his growth and that was not a good thing. Although William was only fourteen-years-old, Celine and James both agreed that it was time for the boy to see the world.

Since that was the case, going to the Royal Academy of the Hellan Kingdom would be the best place to teach him another side of how the world worked outside the borders of Lont.

"Mistress, did you already know?" Oliver, the Parrot Monkey inquired.

"It's still too early to tell, Oliver," Celine replied as she watched her only disciple disappear in the distance. "Perhaps, when he returns in a few years, we will finally know the answer."

"... Understood, My Lady." Oliver nodded. He looked forward to the day when William returned to Lont. 'I hope that he is the one that is mentioned in the Prophecy.'

Oliver had watched William grow up and he could vouch for the boy's character. However, just like his Mistress, Celine, said, it was still too early to tell whether the red-headed boy was the one that would fulfill the Elven Prophecy.

Helen tidied William's clothes and wrapped a traveling cloak over his shoulders. When she thought that everything was in order, she gave William a kiss on the cheeks before taking a step back.

James, Mordred, and Anna said their goodbyes which almost made William tear up. Theo, and the rest of William's friends in Lont also gave him a hug and wished him a safe journey towards the capital.

Although Eve was only three years old, she was a very smart girl. She felt that her "Big Brother Will" was leaving her so she grabbed onto William's clothes and cried.

"Why is our little princess crying?" William asked as he carried the little girl in his arms.

"Wuwuwuwuwu, Will, Wuwuwuwuwu," Eve latched onto him like a leech as she covered William's traveling clothes with her tears and snot.

(A/N: Yes, Wuwuwuwu is the substitute word I used for Eve's crying.)

William kissed her cheeks as his hand softly rubbed the back of her head. If he still had his powers, he might have used a sleeping spell to put his cousin to sleep.

"Will. Wuwuwuwuwu. Leave?"

"Yes."

"Wuwuwuwuwu. Don't."

"Aunt Anna," William said with a pleading expression.

Anna stepped forward and coaxed Eve to let go of William. "Don't worry, your Big Brother will return soon. He's just going away for a while to study."

"Wuwuwuwuwu."

Eve grabbed hold of William's clothes, but Anna pried her fingers off him. The little girl bawled her eyes out as she tried to reach for her "Big Brother Will".

Seeing Eve's sad expression, William's heart ached so much that he decided to use one of his secret weapons in order to coax the crying girl.

William activated Lily's divinity and a lollipop appeared in his hand. He took the wrapper off the candy and presented it to Eve.

"Here you go. It's your favorite candy," William said like a kind uncle who liked to give candies to little children.

Eve's eyes locked onto the lollipop and reached for it. William handed it to her and her crying immediately stopped.

"Good girl," William patted her head. "When I come back, I'll bring you a lot of candies from the capital. Be a good girl until I return, okay?"

Eve reluctantly nodded her head as she started to lick the lollipop.

Lily's divinity was the ultimate weapon against little girls. No, it was an ultimate weapon for girls of all ages. As long as their height doesn't surpass 125 centimeters (4.11 feet) they would be unable to resist the lollipop's charms.

William mounted Ella's back and urged her to move forward. He was afraid that his tears would start to fall if he stayed any longer. Ella understood William's feelings so she started to run as fast as she could, leaving the town of Lont behind.

Only when they were a mile away from Lont did she stop. William turned his head to look back at the small town in the distance. It was the place where he grew up. A place filled with happiness, warmth, and love.

'I'm only a mile away and I'm already starting to feel homesick.' William sighed. He then hardened his heart and looked forward. "Mama, let's go. Let's march towards the capital of the Hellan Kingdom!"

"Meeeeeh!"

(A/N: Don't feed three-year-old children lollipops in real life. They might choke on it.)

Chapter 118: I Wish Not For Dominion, But I Can't Let The Innocent Suffer

Screams reverberated in the air as a merchant caravan was being attacked by bandits.

"No, please don't hurt my daughter!" a woman grabbed the bandit's leg while pleading.

The bandit was holding a little girl in his arms, as he sneered at the girl's mother. Clearly, he was unwilling to let her go.

"Scram! I don't like used goods!!" The bandit roared as he kicked the woman away.

"Nooooo! Mama!" the little girl wailed as he saw her mother's body crash on the ground.

"Men! Take the treasure and all the good looking girls. As for the rest, kill them all!" The bandit leader ordered as he chopped off the head of one of the caravan's guards.

""Yes!"" the bandits simultaneously replied as they looked at the carriages with greed.

The woman painfully propped her body on the ground, but the injury she received made her unable to stand.

"Lucy!" the woman cried out her daughter's name as tears streamed down the side of her face.

"Mama!" Lucy called out to her mother.

"Sorry, little girl, but you're not going anywhere."

"Let me go! Let me go! I want my Mama! Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

The little one struggled, but it was all for naught. The bandit was way stronger than her and the only thing she could do was cry and call out to her mother.

The merchant group had descended into chaos as the bandits looted and killed to their heart's content. The guards were hard pressed to fight them off because the bandits had the number advantage.

Over a hundred bandits had appeared out of nowhere and ambushed them.

The leader of the Merchant Group, Benjamin, led his men and fought off against the bandits with everything he had. However, their enemies were simply more powerful and more experienced in battle than them.

When hope seemed lost, and the end was at hand, the whistling sound of an arrow pierced the air. It landed in the forehead of the man who was holding a little girl in his arms, who hadn't stopped struggling to run to her mother's side.

Everything happened so fast that the bandit fell to the ground, not knowing how he died.

"I wish not for dominion, but I cannot let the innocent suffer," the voice of a young boy spread over the chaotic battlefield.

The Bandit Leader glared at the direction of the voice and saw what seemed to be a boy, wearing a hooded robe, seated on top of an Angorian goat holding a bow and arrow.

"Gate Open..." William muttered as he nocked another arrow on his bow and took aim.

Behind his back, a portal appeared and a herd of Angorian War Ibexes' charged towards the Bandits with fury.

William's arrow flew straight and true as it pierced through the neck of a bandit that was carrying a little boy on his shoulder.

"Mama, use War Cry!" William ordered.

"Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!"

Ella's War Cry resounded in the battlefield which strengthened the capabilities of William's herd by 30%

"W-Why are these goats so strong?! Arghhh!" A bandit cried in alarm as a glistening blue horn pierced his chest.

"T-This can't be! This is not possible!" The Bandit Leader backed away when the War Ibexes made their appearance. "How have these war beasts from the Northern Regions appeared here?!"

Benjamin, the leader of the merchant group, felt that the tide of battle had shifted in their favor. He immediately ordered his men to support the Angorian War Ibexes that had appeared and fought against the bandits with renewed vigor.

Benjamin had never seen these beasts before, but the Bandit Leader's words were laced with shock and disbelief. As a merchant, he was well aware of the tribes in the North, but they had never gone there to trade. Even so, it was not something that he needed to worry about right now.

What mattered most was that the newcomer was on their side!

"Men! Kill them all!" Benjamin roared as he led his men to battle.

William kept on shooting his arrows at the fleeing bandits. The arrows he was using were not ordinary arrows. They were steel arrows forged by the greatest blacksmith of Lont, Barbatos. Aside from their piercing power, it also had a paralyzing venom that was taken from the Millennial Beast, Amphisbaena.

Anyone who got pierced by William's arrow would become paralyzed and unable to move for a few hours. That was how strong the Millennial Beast's venom was.

"Return," William ordered and the arrows that had pierced the bandits flew into the air and returned to the quiver on his back. Some of them were still stained by blood, but William didn't care. He didn't have that many arrows in his possession and each of them was precious.

"Who are you?!" The bandit leader roared as he charged at William with his War Axe.

"Just a shepherd," William answered as he deposited his bow and arrows inside his Ring of Conquest.
"Come forth... Stormcaller!"

A purple flash of light burst forth from the ring. William grabbed the two-meter-long spear in a firm grip as tendrils of lightning traveled along its blade.

Ella then took that as a hint and charged towards the bandit leader. William was like a cavalier riding a warhorse to battle. His spear was poised to strike as the bandit leader closed the distance.

"Lightning God War Art, Thirteenth Form!" William roared. "Go for the kill, Gae Bolg!"

William threw Stormcaller and the body of the spear crackled with lightning bolts. The Bandit Leader knew that he couldn't face the attack head-on, so he jumped to the side to dodge. He succeeded and the spear passed by his side by mere centimeters.

The Bandit Leader then immediately propped himself up on the ground and prepared to clash with William. At the same time, a string of words drifted through his ears.

"Omae wa mou..."

The Bandit Leader didn't understand these words because it was said in a language that he was not familiar with. It was at that moment when his face grew lax and his legs collapsed under him.

As the Bandit Leader fell, his body skidded across the ground, due to the momentum, and only stopped in front of Ella's hooves.

Like the bandit that William had shot with his arrow, the Bandit Leader had died not knowing how he died.

William didn't even give the corpse under Ella's hooves a second glance as he waved his hand to control Stormcaller. The family heirloom of the Ainsworth Family snaked across the battlefield as it reaped the bandits' lives like the God of Death.

When the last bandit fell dead on the ground, Benjamin and his men cheered and raised the weapons in their hands to proclaim their victory.

Everyone in the merchant group breathed a sigh of relief because they had survived from being wiped out by the bandits.

Benjamin was about to thank their benefactor, when he noticed that the young boy wearing a hood had disappeared. Even the Angorian War Ibexes who had trampled and impaled the bandits were nowhere to be seen.

An eerie silence fell upon them as Benjamin and his guards glanced at each other with dumbfounded expressions.

"D-Did we just get rescued by a ghost?" One of the guards asked in a stuttering voice.

"That can't be possible, right?" another guard offered his opinion.

This was the same opinion of everyone in the merchant group, but the fact remained that they couldn't find their benefactor. Just like a ghost, he had appeared and disappeared like a passing breeze.

"He was real!" the little girl who was supporting her mother from the ground shouted. "He's not a ghost. He saved me and Mother from those bad bandits!"

Everyone looked at the girl and nodded their heads. They had seen the young boy with their own two eyes, so it was impossible for them to say that he wasn't real.

"Yes, he was real. As real as you and me," Benjamin replied. "We will properly thank him if we cross paths with him again in the future."

This was the only thing that Benjamin could say to pacify his people. Even so, deep in his heart, he wished that he would once again meet the mysterious boy who had saved all of their lives without asking for any reward.

After this merchant group arrived at their destination, the story of a young shepherd leading a herd of Angorian War Ibexes spread across the land. By the time this happened, William had already arrived at the capital of the Hellan Kingdom and had successfully enrolled at the Royal Academy.

End of Volume 1: The Shepherd of Lont

Chapter 119: Gladiolus, The Capital City Of The Hellan Kingdom

"Mama, I finally see it!"

"Meeeee!"

William and Ella were currently on the mountainside admiring the capital city of the Hellan Kingdom, Gladiolus.

The high city walls made William remember the cities in the fantasy movies that he had watched back on Earth. Gladiolus looked like an impenetrable fortress that could easily endure a siege from a Beast Tide.

The sword and shield emblem of the Royal Family were emblazoned on the flags on the city ramparts fluttered in the breeze. It was as if they were welcoming William's arrival and urging him to enter the city gates as soon as possible.

"Let's go, Mama," William patted his Mama's neck. "Let's go visit Est first before we enroll at the Royal Academy."

"Meeeeh."

Est had sent him a letter four months ago, asking if he was going to enter the Royal Academy this year. After getting William's positive reply, Est immediately made preparations to welcome him at the capital.

The young boy gave William the address of their manor and told him to drop by as soon as he arrived in the city.

There were still a few days before the start of the enrollment, so William was not in a hurry to visit the academy. He had exchanged plenty of letters with Est, Ian, and Isaac over the past four years and their relationship had deepened since then.

When William and Ella finally reached the gate, they noticed that they needed to fall in line to participate in an inspection. According to procedure, William should have also lined up along with the others, but Est explicitly told him to go to the special entrance that was allocated for noble families.

Est had given him a special insignia that would allow him to pass through the special gate without getting inspected.

William led Ella to the gate located near the main entrance of the city. The guards manning the entrance looked at William with interest.

When the boy was just a few meters from entering the gate, a chubby guardsman blocked his way.

"Boy, is this your first time visiting the capital?" A chubby guardsman asked with a smile. He had already dealt with countless people trying to enter the gates meant for nobles in order to find a faster way to enter the city.

"Yes, Mr. Guard." William nodded his head. "This is my first time visiting the capital. It looks so majestic from afar and I'm looking forward to seeing what is inside the city."

The chubby guard appraised the young boy who was seated on top of an Angorian goat. The red-headed boy was wearing decent clothes, which didn't make him look like a peasant. Even the traveling cloak he was wearing didn't look too shabby.

Because of this, the chubby guard decided to ask questions first before telling William to line up at the main entrance to enter the city.

"This gate is only meant for the nobles of the Kingdom," the chubby man said in a clear and crisp manner. "Do you have any form of identification?"

William smiled and raised the insignia that was given to him by Est. When the chubby guard and the rest of his comrades saw the insignia, all of them stood straight and looked at William in a different light.

"Um, can I now pass?" William asked.

"Y-Yes," the chubby guard stuttered as he stepped aside to allow William to go through.

"Thank you, Mr. Guard."

"No need to thank me. I'm just doing my duty, Sir."

William nodded. He was still doubting whether or not the insignia that Est had given him had actually worked. Fortunately, it was the real deal and he was able to enter the gate without any problems.

"Wow." William stared wide-eyed at the medieval city in front of him. The cobblestone streets, and the buildings made William's heart beat wildly inside his chest. For some reason, he could hear the "background music" of a big battle that was about to take place inside his head.

Several people noticed William's starry-eyed gaze and immediately labeled him as a country bumpkin. There were also others who looked at him with amused expressions. They found it funny that a little boy was riding on top of a goat.

Although it was not unheard of, it was still their first time in seeing such a scene in the city of Gladiolus

"Meeeee!"

"Sorry, Mama. I got carried away."

"Meeeh."

Ella broke William out of his daze because she could sense that the people were looking at her baby with amusement and ridicule. If William hadn't told her to behave before entering the city, she might have already charged at those people and kicked their faces.

After William regained his composure, he decided to ask around in order to find Est's Manor in the city. Surprisingly, none of the people he had asked knew the location of Lilac Lane. Since that was the case, William decided to ask a patrolling guard he saw in the distance.

At first the patrol guards snubbed him, but William came prepared. He took out the insignia from his storage ring and showed it to the Guard Captain. Just like what had happened at the gates of the city, the patrol guards suddenly had a 180 degree change in the way they treated William.

"Lilac Lane?" the Guard Captain whom William asked pondered. "The name sounds familiar, but I can't remember where it is."

"Captain, isn't that lane located in the second level of the city?" the Guard Captain's companion commented. "I've been tasked to patrol that area a few times in the past, so I'm very sure that Lilac Lane is found on the second level of Gladiolus."

"Then, can you please tell me how to get to the second level?" William pleaded. "I am visiting a friend and his residence is located on Lilac Lane."

"It can't be helped." The Guard Captain nodded. "Since you are familiar with the place, take this boy to the checkpoint of the second level. Make sure to return after accomplishing your duty."

"Yes, Captain." The patrol guard smirked at William, "Let's go, boy. It's not everyday I escort a shepherd in Gladiolus."

"Thank you, everyone." William bowed.

"It's nothing. We're just doing our duties," the Guard Captain replied with a smile. "If you encounter any other difficulties, feel free to find me. My name is Eren."

"Thank you, Sir Eren." William nodded his head and bid them goodbye.

When William was finally out of earshot, Eren breathed a sigh of relief. He was surprised that a little kid was carrying the insignia of the Knight Order of Gladiolus.

The Knight Order had the highest authority in the city. Only people who had outstanding skills and talent could enter its ranks. Not even nobles could use their money and influence to send their family members to become a part of the Knight Order.

Of course, there are also exceptions. Those who performed meritorious service for the Kingdom could also join their ranks, with the King's permission.

Each Knight that belonged to the order was treated like a celebrity in Gladiolus. It was the position that every citizen in the Hellan Kingdom strived to reach.

'Just how did that boy gain that insignia?' Eren thought. 'Did he steal it?'

Eren immediately rejected this idea because it was impossible to do so. After all, the members of the Knight Order were insanely strong. Each of them were capable of dealing with "S-Level" threats on their own.

That only left one other possibility. The young boy had to have done something well, since no one in the Knight Order would be foolish enough to give their insignia to just anyone.

Chapter 120: Reunion After Four Years

"This is the place that you are looking for," the patrol guard said as he looked at the address that William had given him. "Come with me."

The patrol guard walked towards the gates, while William and Ella followed behind him.

Before the guard and William could even introduce themselves, the gates opened and a familiar old man walked out with a smile.

"It has been a while, William," Herman greeted the boy in an easy going tone.Â

"Uncle Herman, it's good to see you again," William replied with a smile.

"Well, it seems that the two of you are already acquainted," the patrol guard commented. "I will now return to my duties. See you around, William."

"Thank you, Sir, Braun." William waved goodbye to the kind man who helped him along the way.

When the patrol guard was no longer in sight, Herman led William inside the manor. The smile on William's face stiffened when a pretty boy stood in front of the main entrance with his arms crossed over his chest.

"You still look as dumb as you were when you were ten years old." Ian snorted.

"It has already been four years since then and you are still on your period?" William asked. "You should really see a physician. Having a period for so long might mean that you are suffering from a serious illness. Perhaps it has something to do with your brain?"

"You're still as eloquent as ever."

"And you're still as annoying as ever."

Both boys snorted at the same time. Clearly, although both of them had grown closer, they were still unable to stop their urge to mock each other whenever they met.

"Hah~ why can't the two of you get along?" Est sighed as he appeared behind Ian. "William, welcome to Gladiolus. I will be your host until you have successfully enrolled at the Royal Academy."

"I am looking forward to your hospitality," William walked forward and stretched out his hand for a handshake.

Est held his hand in a firm grip and shook it twice before letting go.

"Let's go in, I know that you are tired from your journey," Est said as he made a welcoming gesture. "We've also prepared the best hay for Ella."

"Meeeee." "

"You're welcome, Ella."

Est would always do his best to communicate with Ella even though he couldn't understand her language like William. This was one of the reasons why William thought that Est was an interesting person.

Besides, Ella was a good judge of character. She had already told William long ago that Est was a good person. Naturally, William trusted his Mama's judgement so he was quite happy to have Est as his friend.

Est led them to the living room where a beautiful lady, with long-blond hair and green eyes, was waiting for them. She was seated on a chair and was looking at William with kind eyes.

"William, I would like to introduce you to my mother, Elizabeth Wells Newmont. Mother, this is my good friend William, William Von Ainsworth."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, My Lady." William bowed his head respectfully.

"The pleasure is all mine, William," Elizabeth said with a smile. "I've heard a lot of things about you from Est. Ah, feel free to call me Mother from now on."

"Mother!" Est pouted as he clung to Elizabeth's dress.

William found Est's reaction really cute, but he kept a neutral expression on his face. He didn't want to leave a bad first impression on Est's mother.

"What a fine young man you are," Elizabeth praised. "You would be the perfect husband for my daughter... If I ever have a daughter."Â

Elizabeth gave Est a sidelong glance before focusing her attention to William. The expression on Est's face was priceless and Elizabeth was finding it hard to hold back the laughter that was bubbling up inside her chest.

"I would definitely marry your daughter, if you have one, My Lady," William replied with a shameless grin.

"Well, you'd better remember your words, Little Will," Elizabeth chuckled. "Who knows what the future will bring?"

"Of course." William nodded. "Good looking men must know how to keep their promises."

"I'm liking you more and more." Elizabeth was quite satisfied with William's attitude. He wasn't like those noble heirs who were arrogant and stuck up. Est's mother admired William's boldness and his sense of humor.

'Well, I can't force this issue,' Elizabeth thought. 'It would be best to let nature take its course.'

William and Ella were treated as VIP's in the Newmont residence. Even Ian did his best not to taunt William in front of Elizabeth. The hours passed by as Elizabeth listened to William's tales about Lont and life in the countryside.

Elizabeth had been born a noble and lived by the side of her young lady after she came of age. After they were sent to the Hellan Kingdom, a few things happened and she was forced to leave her best friend's side.

Even so, the two of them still held deep feelings for each other and their sisterhood had remained strong over the years.

William's tale was like a refreshing breeze that reminded her of her younger years.

"One of these days, I'll go and visit Lont," Elizabeth said after hearing William's tale. "Perhaps the fresh air of the countryside will revitalize my monotonous lifestyle."

"The life in Lont is crude, but it has a rustic charm that you wouldn't find in the city," William was like a salesman that was about to close a deal. "It's the perfect place to retire and live your days in peace."

"Sounds like heaven."

"It is a piece of heaven that is nestled at the Western Edge of the Kingdom. I'm sure that you will love it, Lady Elizabeth."

"I wish for that as well, Little Will."

"My Grandpa might be stingy to pests, but he treats guests like old friends. Perhaps, the two of you will get along, My Lady."

"Oh my~ I'm really looking forward to meeting your Grandpa." Elizabeth chuckled. 'It would be best if I lay the foundations for a good relationship between our families.'

William didn't know what Elizabeth was thinking because he was very happy at the moment. He could tell that the beautiful woman before him was really interested in visiting his hometown.

After an early dinner, William and Ella retired to the room that was specially prepared for them. It was very spacious and had a large bed. The moment William laid his head on the pillow, he immediately fell asleep. He had been camping for the past few days and sleeping outside was not as comfortable as sleeping on a bed that seemed to be made from a marshmallow.

Ella laid by his side because the bed was more than big enough to accommodate the two of them. She, too, was tired from their travels. The sound of light snores echoed along the walls of the room as the two guests slept with a dreamless sleep.

"Est, William is exactly how you described him to be," Elizabeth said as she patted her son's head. "A very interesting, yet mysterious, boy. It's a pity that his magic power has been sealed."

"I'm worried about the treatment that he will receive from the academy." Est sighed. "Most likely, he will be sent to the Martial Classes since he's unable to use magic."

"You don't need to worry about him," Elizabeth replied. "Someone who has stepped forward to hold the falling sky for you will not be affected by the petty system in the Royal Academy. In fact, I am looking forward to the mischief that he will cause."

Elizabeth chuckled despite herself. "I already feel sorry for the Dean of the Royal Academy. He is going to get one troublesome freshman this year."

Est imagined William doing something mischievous and couldn't help but laugh as well. He also felt that William was not someone who would take things lying down. He had already seen how he handled the situation with the disciples of the Misty Sect back in Lont.

'Besides... I trust him,' Est thought as a blush appeared on his face. 'He will definitely create waves the moment he enters the Royal Academy. I am also looking forward to seeing how much he has improved over the four years that we haven't seen each other.'