

Strongest 121

Chapter 121: Enrollment Test [Part 1]

In the plaza, beside a lake that was located on the Eastern Side of the capital, a crowd of young boys and girls could be seen. They were the aspiring students of the Royal Academy and they were patiently waiting for the registration process to begin.

William, literally stood out from the crowd because he was riding on top of a meter-and-a-half-tall Angorian Goat. Almost everyone near him was looking at him with various expressions.

Although William was wearing simple clothes, his bearing, and good looks, made him an eyesore to the boys and eye candy for the girls.

William was someone who enjoyed attention, so he made sure to get the most out of it. He waved, smiled, and winked at the pretty girls who were looking at him with starry eyes. As for the boys? He ignored them completely which made the pitiful guys curse him inside their hearts.

"Hah~ what a show off," Ian sneered from where he stood.

"I thought that William would feel out of place, but it seems like he is enjoying the attention of the pretty girls," Isaac smirked.

"He should try to be lowkey for a change," Est grumbled as he narrowed his eyes. "If this goes on, he will really be alienated if he gets accepted at the academy."

The three children were watching William from the carriage that was parked not far away from the plaza. The three of them had already enrolled at the royal academy. Due to Est's special circumstances, he and his two companions were allowed to bypass the tests for the new students and were allowed to enroll directly.

Every year, thousands of children and teenagers would gather in this very plaza to take part in the Royal Academy's selection process. Only those that had certain qualifications would be admitted into the Royal Academy of the Hellan Kingdom.

When the sun was about to reach its zenith, a middle-aged man wearing a purple robe flew above the crowd and made an announcement.

"Everyone, thank you for coming. The first test of the Royal Academy is about to begin." the middle-aged man announced. "The first test is simple. All you need to do is cross the bridge of Iron Will and you will be allowed to take the next test. Those who fail will automatically be disqualified from enrolling in the academy this school year."

As if waiting for him to finish his announcement, a majestic bridge started to magically appear from the other side of the lake. Its end curved upwards and extended towards the plaza. When the bridge had fully formed the middle-aged man raised his hand and announced the start of the first test.

Everyone who planned to enroll at the academy rushed towards the bridge. William gazed at the crowd, but he didn't seem to be in a hurry to participate. He was planning to do some observation first to see what kind of challenge the bridge imposed to those who dared to challenge it.

The first batch of children managed to travel up a fourth of the bridge, before they started to slow down. It was as if a strong pressure was pressing on their shoulders that every step seemed to be a gargantuan task.

Of course, there were others who shrugged this pressure off and walked with even steps. After waiting for five minutes, more than half of the challengers were unable to move forward. Some of them were sweating buckets, while others were gritting their teeth.

All of them were doing their best to endure, but some of them had already reached their limit.

The children who had already lost their strength and resolve, were automatically teleported back to the plaza. William watched as some of them knelt down on the ground, panting for breath. A few others started to cry, and it made the atmosphere very depressing.

William sighed and caressed his Mama Ella's neck.

"Mama, let's go."

"Meeehh."

Ella walked up to the bridge with even steps. The middle-aged-man, who was the current examiner, looked at William with an amused expression. It was not the first time he had seen someone use a spirit beast to challenge the first trial, but it was his first time seeing a domestic Angorian Goat take the challenge with its master.

There were no rules that said that Spirit Beasts, or any other form of beast, were not allowed to participate in the trial.

Ella stepped onto the bridge with confidence. Each step was at an even pace. William and her were not in a hurry. Both of them were observing the children who were ahead of them.

The number of potential students who had managed to reach the halfway mark had dwindled once again. This time, less than a hundred were able to move forward. Soon, William and Ella passed the halfway mark of the trial.

William was starting to feel a certain amount of pressure pressing down on him, but it was not a big deal. It was nothing compared to the torture that he had undergone under his Master, Celine's, hand in order to increase his resistance against curses and poison.

The struggling children raised their heads to look at William who was having it easy. Some of them felt envious, while others thought that it was unfair.

What they didn't know was that William and Ella were enduring twice the amount of pressure that these children were experiencing. The reason? The effect of the trial stacked if someone were to use a mount to help them clear it.

This was a secret that only the examiners of the Royal Academy were aware of. The middle-aged man nodded his head in appreciation as his eyes observed William.

'Looks like we got a few rough gems this year,' the examiner thought. 'I pray that they all make it through the last trial.'

When Ella finally stepped onto the other side of the lake, the trial ended as well. William was the last to take part in the trial, so naturally, the moment he cleared it marked the end of the trial.

"First of all, let me congratulate all of you," the middle-aged man said with a smile. "Out of the thousands who came this year, only fifty managed to clear the first trial. However, let me remind all of you that this is just the beginning. You still have four more trials to complete before you are eligible to enroll at the Royal Academy."

The middle-aged man waved his hand and all the students floated in the air. "I will now take all of you to the place of the second trial."

The examiner didn't say anything else and flew Eastward. The students flew behind him and each of them had determined expressions on their faces. Soon, they flew over a forest that was located outside the city.

After five more minutes of flying, the middle-aged man landed in a small clearing near the center of the forest. When everyone's feet were securely planted on the ground, the middle-aged man pointed at a flag fluttering in the distance.

"Your next test is to reach that flag within four hours," the examiner explained. "Know that this forest is inhabited by Spirit Beasts and they will attack you if you encounter them. The second trial is about having the ability to reach the goal despite the adversities."

The middle-aged-man handed a purple crystal to the children who were taking the trial.

"If you wish to give up, just crush the crystal in your hand. The staff of the school will immediately come to your rescue," the examiner stated. "You only have one life, so make sure that you treasure it well. Let's meet again at the finish line."

With that, the examiner left the children to fend for themselves. One particular young boy snorted and walked in the direction of the flag with confidence. From his body language alone, one could tell that he was not afraid of the Spirit Beasts that were lurking in the forest.

William, on the other hand, narrowed his gaze. As someone who had faced off against Centennial and Millennial Beasts, he was quite sensitive when it came to strong presences.

There was a creature in the forest that was looking at them from a distance. William couldn't see it, but he could tell that it was very strong. What perplexed the red-headed boy was that the Beast was purposely making its presence known, instead of hiding it.

However, only those with very keen senses, or those who had experienced life and death battles would be able to perceive it.

"Mama Ella, we should stay away from it," William said in a voice that only Ella could hear.

"Meeeeh." Ella nodded her head in agreement.

The Angorian Goat walked to the other side of the forest. The route William chose was not the route that would take them directly to the flag. Instead, he intended to take a detour to avoid the strong presence that was waiting along the shortest route towards their destination.

Chapter 122: Enrollment Test [Part 2]

"What a stupid test," a young man, with short-brown hair and green eyes, said as he walked towards the flag in the distance.

He was the one who chose the shortest route among the participants. During the first trial, he was the first to arrive on the other side of the lake. Because of this, his confidence was at its peak and he thought that he was the best among the latest batch of examinees that were aiming to get enrolled at the Royal Academy.

Suddenly, a boar type spirit beast appeared out of nowhere and charged at him.

"Small fry," the young boy sneered as he raised his right hand, aiming it at the boar. "Boulder Smash!"

A boulder that was at least a meter big, shot out from the boy's hand and slammed at the charging boar's head with a resounding crash. The boar squealed in pain, but the boy wasn't finished by a longshot.

After getting a clean hit, he summoned a sword in his hand and ran towards the boar. Channeling his magic into the sword, the boy made a wide strike with the intention of cleaving the boar into two.

Sensing that death was upon it, the boar gathered every bit of its strength to try and prop itself up, but it was too late. With a strike that was strong enough to crush boulders, the sword in the boy's hand sliced off the boar's head from its body, leaving a shower of blood in its wake.

"Tsk, not even a challenge," the boy clicked its teeth as he continued to travel along the path that he had chosen.

What the boy didn't know was that something was watching him from the depths of the forest.

A demonic creature with a single eye on its forehead gazed at the boy with contempt. Although it only had a single eye, it had seen everything that had happened with incredible clarity. After seeing the boy's abilities, the creature confirmed that its prey was just a little lamb walking straight into a wolves' den.

It licked its lips in anticipation as its eye glowed with greed. It was looking forward to the delicious fresh meat that it was going to have for lunch.

"Mama, did you feel that?" William asked.

"Meeeeh."

"Such a sinister creature," William frowned.

"Meeeeh."

"At least Grade B in the threat rankings?"

"Meeeeh."

"Sounds like a pain." William sighed.

Ella then stopped walking and turned back her head to look at William.

"... Meeeeeeeh."

"... Are you sure, Mama?"

"Meeeeeh!"

William scratched his head, but in the end, he still smiled and caressed Ella's neck.

"As you wish, Mama."

"Meeeeh."

Some of the students formed groups in order to clear the trial together. They knew that the forest was a dangerous place and there was strength in numbers.

One of these groups decided to follow the boy with dark-brown hair and head along the shortest route towards their destination.

Along the way, they also met several spirit beasts, but all of their ranks were quite low. The strongest threat that had barred their way was a dozen Giant Rats that were known for being territorial creatures.

As examinees who dared to enroll at the Royal Academy, and had managed to clear the first trial, these children were no pushovers.

After the gruesome battle ended, the group took a break to catch their breath. However, it was also at that moment when they heard several howling sounds in the distance. It seemed that the scent of blood had caught the attention of the wolves that were native to the forest.Â

"Forest Wolves!" a girl cried out as she hurriedly raised her staff.

The other children ground their teeth in frustration and rallied to her. She was the elected leader of the group and they promised to listen to her orders. The Wind mage immediately asked them to initiate their battle formation.

This group's lineup was quite impressive. They had a wind mage, a cleric, two swordsmen, and two archers. It was the standard party lineup when clearing out dungeons. Unfortunately, they were not only dealing with one or two forest wolves, they were dealing with a pack that consisted of thirty individuals.

Forest Wolves were also Class D creatures, but that only measured their individual strength. They were much more threatening when they fought with their pack.

The children resisted with all their might, but soon, they were overpowered by their sheer numbers. The first one to fall was the magician. Although not as smart as humans, the wolves understood who among the group of children had the greatest threat.

In order to prevent their sides from suffering losses, The Alpha Wolf in the party ordered five wolves to break through the formation and deal with the mage.

"N-No! Don't kill me!" the wind mage screamed as a wolf lunged at her. It bared its teeth in the air with the intention of biting the girl's neck until it snapped.

At this moment of life and death, the wind mage heard the whistling wind. A steel arrow appeared out of nowhere and struck the wolf's neck. The wolf that was about to end the girl's life crashed beside her, it was still alive, but it couldn't move its body.

While the mage was still trying to understand what happened, more whistling sounds echoed inside the forest. All the wolves that had aimed to kill the children dropped to the ground with steel arrows sticking out of their necks.

The Alpha Wolf immediately howled and gave the order to retreat. Although the other wolves were reluctant to leave, they had no choice but to obey their leader.

"Return..." A soft voice said as softly as a breeze.

All the arrows that had impaled the wolves floated in the air and flew towards a certain direction.

William, who was standing on a tree branch, gathered his arrows and climbed down from the tree.

"They are now safe, Mama," William reported.

"Meeeee." Ella licked the side of William's face as if praising him for a job well done.

After that brief moment of family bonding, William mounted Ella's back and left the scene. His mother asked him to prevent any of the children from dying in the forest. Although it was a tall order, William decided to grant her request.

This was the fourth group that they had saved, and they still needed to save more. Ella's sensitivity was higher than William, so she could easily sense where the children were in the forest.

As the mother and son pair were busy in preventing the loss of lives in the forest, several hidden presences were eyeing them with interest.

"Grent, even if this boy fails the test, I'm taking him in." A man with a bow strapped behind his back stared at William as if he was the most beautiful brothel girl that he had seen in his life.

"It's a shame that he doesn't have a single strand of magic power inside his body," A lady holding a staff sighed. "If not for this fact, I would have fought you for him."

"Hahaha! Why are the two of you arguing?" A man who was two-meter tall chastised his comrades.

"Even if you want him, you still need to wait until he clears the trials. Also, Andy, you are not allowed to use the backdoor to bring a failed candidate inside the Royal Academy. Rules are rules."

"Tsk!" Andy, the man with the bow on his back, clicked his tongue in annoyance. "Grent, can't you make an exception? I really like this boy."

"No means no," Grent flat out refused. "Are you a child? I'm not your mother so I won't spoil you. Just wait for a while, the main course is about to arrive. I want to see how that brown-haired kid deals with one of the lords of this forest."

"Lyla, that brown-haired boy is a magic swordsman." Andy glanced at his colleague. "Why aren't you giving him special attention? Judging by his ability, he is quite decent for a magic swordsman. That's a good catch, don't you think?"

"A good catch?" Layla brushed her hair to the side. "Are magic swordsmen that good? Oh please, I've had enough of arrogant and pompous nobles who only know how to use their power and influence to bully the pretty commoner girls that couldn't fight back."

"Ah, don't forget that they also bully other nobles who have a lower rank than them," Andy corrected her.

"That, too. This is why I hate nobles." Layla snorted. "All of them can just roll over and die for all I care!"

"You shouldn't have asked the anti-noble mage for her opinion," Grent commented. "As if you don't know that Layla hates noble brats to the bone."

Even though Grent said that, he wanted to see just how far the magic swordsman would fare against one of the Lords of the Forest.

"Let's go, I want to have front row seats while we watch the show," Grent ordered and the three of them headed towards the magic swordsman, who was about to face off against one of the most intelligent creatures that ruled over the forest.

Chapter 123: Said West Only My Perfection!

"Meeeeeeeh."

"The demonic creature started to move?"

"Meeeeeh."

"Can we kill it Mama?"

Ella pondered for a while before resolutely shaking her head. Although defeating a monster that had a Level B threat was not impossible for the two of them, killing it was another matter. If Ella's War Ibex form were to be graded, she would be at the initial stages of Class C.

If you add William to the equation, then their combined battle strength could reach up to the peak stage of Class C. Even so, each grade was separated by ten levels. Ella and William were not confident that they would be able to kill a monster who seemed to be in the middle ranks of Class B.

Of course, if William still had his magic powers then it would be a different story. Sadly, he couldn't use his skills that relied on mana right now.

"Should we go with Plan C?" William asked.

"Meeeeeh."

"Understood. Let's go Mama."

"Meeeeeh!"

Chandler, the brown-haired boy, halted his steps because he felt that something was amiss. He had just entered a clearing when suddenly, all the sounds in the forest disappeared.

He could not hear the cry of beasts or the chirping of the birds. Even the subtle sounds of the insects were gone. Chandler summoned his sword and raised his guard. He was trained as a warrior at an early age and he could tell that something was terribly wrong with his current situation.

The demonic beast that had been observing Chandler walked across the forest floor with silent steps. As one of the Lords of the Forest, the creatures were quite familiar with its aura and scent. Because of this, all of them fled for safety, leaving the clearing devoid of all life.

With a sinister smile, it decided to take the initiative and attack the brown-haired boy. Its movements were very fast, however, Chandler's heightened senses were able to sense its approach.

"Boulder Crash!" Chandler immediately fired a magic boulder in the direction he felt the threat was originating from.

It was at that moment when the boy's instincts screamed at him to block an attack from above.

"Earth Dome!" Chandler hurriedly summoned a dome of solid rock to protect him from his assailant.

The demonic beast slapped the dome of Earth where it exploded into chunks of rocks, revealing the boy that was hiding in its center.

Chandler gazed at the demonic beast who had the body of a humanoid, the legs of a horse, and a dog's head with razor sharp teeth. Its other noticeable feature was the single purple eye on its forehead.

"Peekaboo, I see you," the demonic beast said with a devilish smile on its feral face. "It's been a while since I ate the flesh of a young magic swordsman."

Chandler's body uncontrollably shuddered because in that brief exchange, he understood that the beast was several levels more powerful than him.

"W-What are you?" Chandler asked as he raised the sword in his hand with trembling hands.

"Me? A connoisseur of human flesh," the demonic beast replied with an amused expression. "Now, would you volunteer to let me eat you? Or must I... tenderize you first to bring out the flavor of your flesh? Either way is fine with me."

"M-Monster!" Chandler shrieked as he used the most powerful skill in his arsenal. "Boulder Assault!"

A three-meter boulder appeared over Chandler's head. The boy then pressed his hand over the boulder and launched it towards the demonic beast who was looking at him with amusement.

The demonic beast jumped to the side to avoid the spell. It was not in a hurry to kill Chandler. Instead, it wanted to play with him until the boy fell into despair. The doglike humanoid had a very sick hobby when dealing with its prey. It would eat its target, one limb at a time, while keeping its victim alive.

That way, it would be able to taste the victim's fear, and other negative thoughts. For the demonic creature, these negative feelings were like spices that made his meal more delicious. Only when the target had lost all hope would it deliver its Coupe de Grace, and finish its misery.

After using his strongest move, Chandler felt his body became as heavy as lead. The Boulder Assault was a move that he couldn't use too often because it placed a heavy strain on his body.

The Dome of Earth collapsed as Chandler ran away from the scene. The demonic beast chuckled and decided to enjoy this game of tag with its precious prey. It jumped onto the tree branches while hurling orbs of dark magic at Chandler.

"H-Help!" Chandler screamed. "Anyone! Someone help me!"

Chandler staggered as one of the orbs hit the back of his leg. He then fell down and rolled across the ground due to momentum.

"Is that it?" the demonic creature teased as it landed a few meters away from Chandler. "Let's continue this game of tag. Since I'm in the mood, I'll give you two minutes to run away. During that time, I will not move from this location. However, once the time limit is up, I'll hunt you down."

"Ah, before I forget... which one is your dominant arm? I don't want to accidentally eat it and make this game of cat and mouse boring."

"C-Curse you!" Chandler struggled to prop himself from the ground. "I am the son of Earl Edgard of Durin Court! You can't kill me! My family will hunt you down!"

"Oh my, a noble child," The demonic beast licks its lips. "It has been a while since I ate a noble. All of you have very delicious taste. It must be due to the noble upbringing. Being able to eat delicious food and enjoy resources to cultivate make your bodies very delectable. I can't wait to have a taste!"

"Y-You can't kill me! What do you want? Money?! Women?! I can give it to you! Just let me go!"

"Money? I don't need your human currency. As for women? Although the flesh of ladies is sublime, it still cannot compare to the nutritious meat from nobles like you. Thanks for your offer, but I'll humbly decline. By the way, you have one minute and thirty seconds remaining. Better hurry up and run, little boy."

Chandler's teeth rattled as he tried to fight back the fear that was slowly taking hold of his body. Although he wanted to run away, his body couldn't move. It was as if he had been paralyzed by the demonic creature in front of him.

"What's wrong? You only have one minute left," the demonic beast kindly reminded him. "If you don't run now then I'll be having an early lunch."

'Move! Move! Move! Please move!' Chandler screamed internally as he willed his body to run.

After forcing himself, his legs finally moved. He then ran with all of his might towards the flag fluttering in the distance. According to his estimate, the flag was only a thousand meters away. If he could only make it there then he would be safe!

"Atta boy!" the demonic creature clapped his hand with a smile. "Run as fast as you can!"

The demonic beast stood in place and leisurely counted the time before he started to run after Chandler. It wanted the boy to desperately cling to hope. When the boy thought that he had a chance for survival, that was when the demonic beast would appear and tear one of his limbs off.

That way, the enjoyment of his hunt would last a little bit longer.

Soon, the grace period that he had given Chandler had passed. It even extended it by twenty seconds to ensure that the boy had a good head start before it ran after him.

"Time's up!" the demonic beast shouted. "Ready or not, here I come!"

The demonic beast was about to continue its game of tag when suddenly it heard the sound of whistling air in the distance.

The creature lightly swayed to the side as a steel arrow passed a few inches away from its neck.

Several more whistling sounds were heard as half a dozen arrows flew in its direction.

The demonic beast moved around as if it was dancing. The arrows harmlessly passed by the side of its body and embedded themselves in the trees that surrounded the clearing.

"Hoh? And who might this little guest be?" The demonic beast asked with a grin. "You arrived at the perfect time, I was feeling a little bored chasing a cowardly little boy."

The new arrival was wearing a hooded robe, but the demonic beast could tell that it was one of the children who had entered the forest not long ago.

"I do not wish for dominion, but my Mama doesn't want the innocent to suffer," the hooded boy said softly. "Lord of the Forest, Psoglav, would you be so kind as to let all the children go unharmed?"

The smile on the demonic beast's face faded and was replaced by genuine surprise. "You know me, but I don't know who you are. Isn't it rude to call out my name without introducing yourself first?"

"My apologies, your excellency." The hooded boy nocked an arrow on his bow before introducing himself.

"Said West, only my Perfection!" the hooded boy announced. "I am one of the shepherds from Lont, William Von Ainsworth!"

Chapter 124: William Vs Psoglav [Part 1]

"A shepherd?" Psoglav, one of the rulers of the forest, propped his chin up with his fingers while appraising the boy in front of him. "Ironically, I haven't eaten a shepherd in my lifetime. I think that eating you will be more rewarding than eating that cowardly noble boy."

William didn't say anything as he aimed his bow at the demonic beast in front of him. He had already used his appraisal skill earlier and managed to learn more about his enemy.

Psoglav

-- Demonic Creature

-- Threat Level B (Mid)

-- Can be added to the herd

-- Success Rate: 2%

-- A demonic beast that has a humanoid body with horse legs, and a dog's head. The single eye on its forehead allowed it to see through illusions. This demonic beast can also see perfectly well during the night and in dark places.

-- Contrary to its looks, it has superhuman strength that can crush boulders with a single punch.

-- Excels in speed, cunning, and Dark Magic.

-- It is weak against Holy magic.

(A/N: You can read its name as Physoglav or Pisoglav. The (Mid) that you see in the description of its threat level means that it is in the Middle Stages of the B Rank. Grades of the beasts would be given classifications of Low, Mid, and High.)

After the system received an upgrade during the Trial of Courage, it had unlocked another one of its features--Herd Management.

It was one of the secret privileges of the Shepherd Job Class. It allowed William to add "herd type" creatures into his own herd to increase its size. Right now, the limit on William's herd size was fifty.

(A/N: Dogs and Herds go hand in hand. Since Psoglav was a demonic creature with the features of a dog and horse, the system determined that it could be added as a potential member of William's herd.)

However, after he rose his Shepherd Job Class to the next stage, his herd size would also increase. Once he gained the second form of the Shepherd Job Class, the size of his herd would be increased to 200.

Currently, his herd was only comprised of fourteen individuals, namely Ella and the goats he had raised in Lont.

He wasn't conceited enough to think that he could convince the Ruler of the Forest to become part of his herd. The most he could do was buy some time to allow the other children to reach the flag as he fought against the Demonic Beast in front of him.

"Sorry, I don't taste good," William said. "It would be best if you look for bigger and stronger prey."

"Bigger is not always better," Psoglav replied. "Instead of eating beasts, I'm more fond of eating humans, you know? Especially the young, courageous, ones that dare to enter my territory."

"What a coincidence, I was planning to leave your territory, your excellency."

"How kind of you, but do you think I will allow it?"

"It would be best if we settle this peacefully, your excellency," William stated. "I am just an examinee trying to enroll at the Royal Academy. It just so happens that the testing area falls under your domain. None of the children that came here were aware that we were trespassing on your territory."

"You have a way with words, little shepherd," Psoglav clapped his hands. "However, do you honestly believe that having your trial in my domain is a coincidence?"

"It's not?"

"Of course not. In order for the Royal Academy to peacefully coexist with us, they have to offer some sacrifices on a yearly basis. And these... little lambs are exactly those sacrifices."

William narrowed his eyes. He was half in doubt whether Psoglav was telling the truth or not, but the fact remained that the Ruler of the Forest was indeed serious in attacking the Magic Swordsman a while ago.

He had watched their exchange from a distance, while waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike. Sadly, the demonic beast was not an easy opponent compared to the Forest Wolves he had fought earlier.

"Does this mean that the negotiations have failed?" William asked.

"What do you think?" Psoglav asked back with a mischievous smile.

William didn't reply. Instead, he released his arrow because he could tell that the demonic beast wasn't going to back down.

Psoglav sneered as it dodged sideways. Such a simple attack couldn't possibly hit him. However, out of the corner of its eye the demonic beast saw a white blur closing in on it.

Psoglav roared as it raised its arms. Ella had circled behind the demonic beast and unleashed her Quick Attack using William's shot as a distraction.

The demonic beast grabbed the War Ibex's curved horns and skidded across the ground. Ella might not have been at full strength since she was lacking William's buffs, but the fact still remained that she was a strong beast.

Psoglav managed to grab a firm foothold as it stopped Ella's charge. However, it heard the whistling sound of the wind behind its back and immediately released the goat's horns, while jumping to the side.

The arrows passed by the sides of the demonic creature and Ella without hitting either of them.

Ella took this as an opportunity to use her Wild Charge and charged towards Psoglav who was still in mid-air.

"Dark Shield," Psoglav enclosed itself in a shield of darkness as it watched Ella's majestic horns ram against its defenses. The shield withstood the impact. Psoglav used the momentum of the strike to jump backwards and gain some distance from Ella.

The mother and son pair didn't relent their attacks, because they knew that the demonic beast was not still using its full strength to fight against them. They wanted to at least injure it before it decided to get serious.

The steel arrows harmlessly bounced off the Dark Shield as Psoglav caught its breath. The sudden sneak attack almost gave it a run for its money.

"Good! Very good!" Psoglav glared at William with its eye. "You have caught my interest, Little Shepherd. Now, it's time for me to get serious!"

"Mama!" William shouted as he jumped off the tree.

"Meeeeeh!"

William landed perfectly on Ella's back and the two bolted out of the clearing. They had no intention of fighting the Ruler of the Forest. They only want to buy some time for the kids to reach their destination.

Psoglav stared at the retreating shepherd and sneered.

"You want to play tag?" Psoglav smirked. "Playing tag is my specialty."

Psoglav ran after William like an arrow released from its bow. It immediately closed the gap by half in a span of a few seconds.

"It's faster than we thought, Mama," William said as he looked behind him.

The snarling demonic creature was closing the distance at a rapid pace. However, William and Ella didn't seem to be too worried.

'In the worst case scenario, I'll just summon Stormcaller. But, the several hidden presences that Mama Ella warned me about might be from the academy,' William thought. 'I can't let them discover that I am capable of manipulating lightning magic.'

James had warned him before that anyone that specialized in Lightning Magic was treated like a VIP.

However, this was only on the surface.

The spies of the demon race had already integrated themselves into the human's territories. Once word got out of William's existence, powerful subordinates of the Demon King would hunt him down. Of course, this was not limited to only the Demon Race. There were also humans and other races who coveted Lightning Magic.

If William fell into their hands, they might enslave him and make him do terrible things, regardless of his will.

"Hold it right there, buddy," Grent placed his hand on Andy's shoulder. "What do you think you are doing?"

"I won't let that bastard kill the boy," Andy said in a calm manner as he knocked an arrow on his bow.

"This won't do." Layla shook her head. "We have an agreement with the various rulers of the forest. If we break our part of the deal, they will never trust the academy again. You and your clan wouldn't be able to handle that kind of consequence."

Andy gritted his teeth in frustration. He had really taken a liking to William and, if possible, he didn't want the boy to die at the hands of the sadistic Psoglav. However, Layla was right. There was a contract between the Rulers of the Forest and the Royal Academy.

If one side broke the agreement, the repercussions would be dire.

"Relax, we can still do something about it." Grent knew what his friend was feeling. "At most, we can just hunt some high-grade beast and offer it in exchange for the boy's life."

Andy was about to reluctantly nod his head when he noticed something unbelievable. Grent and Layla also saw the changes and it made them look at William in disbelief.

William had unequipped his bow and was now holding a wooden staff in his hand. Ella had made a sudden turn and charged towards the incoming demonic beast.

"Mama Ella, use Rampage!" William ordered.

The size of Ella's horns doubled in size which made her look more imposing.

The sudden change in its enemy's move pattern caught Psoglav by surprise. It had no choice but to activate its Dark Shield without delay.

After the horns and the shield collided, the sound of a mirror breaking into a hundred pieces reverberated throughout the forest. Ella's horns had torn Psoglav's defenses apart and were about to ram into its chest.

The demonic creature only had enough time to cross its arms over its chest to protect itself from the goat's horns that were as hard as mithril.

A loud clap was heard as Psoglav was sent flying by Ella's most powerful attack. William then lowered his body on Ella's back and ordered her to use Quick Attack to close the distance.

Since they couldn't outrun the demonic beast, they had decided to just fight against it. Ella and William still had aces up their sleeves, so they were not afraid of a confrontation.

This sudden turn of events caught the examiners by surprise. All of them watched with bated breath as the boy, mounted on the goat's back, fought against the Ruler of the Forest head on!

Chapter 125: William Vs Psoglav [Part 2]

"You!" Psoglav roared as he tried to move his body, but it was for naught.

Ella's Skill, Rampage, had a chance to inflict short-term paralysis when she hit her target with her attack. The demonic creature could only curse internally as the goat's horns collided with his arms for the second time.

A resounding crack was heard and Psoglav felt a crushing pain in his left arm. The pain broke the paralysis effect on his body and he was able to use his darkness power to push back the second attack of the War Ibex who was going for the kill.

"We almost got him." William sighed as Ella regained her footing. His eyes focused on the demonic creature in front of him who was no longer acting like a gentleman. Psoglav's single eye glared at William with extreme hate.

The demonic creature's left arm was bent at an unnatural angle and was bleeding profusely. Psoglav used his right arm to forcefully fix the dislocated arm. He then used his dark magic to stop the bleeding.

William knew that the ruler of the forest merely did some emergency first aid treatment on its broken arm. Dark Magic was different from Light and Life magic which had the power to heal injuries. Dark Magic, on the other hand, specialized in dealing curses and dark energy on the enemy. Of course, just like other forms of magic, it could also be used as a stop-gap to prevent injuries from getting worse.

"Congratulations! You have succeeded in angering me!" Psoglav roared.

Its roar sent shockwaves through the whole forest. Spirit beasts and birds started to flee in the opposite direction in order to not be included in the aftermath of Psoglav's full powered counter-attack.

"You're welcome~" William teased. "Don't worry, it won't be the first and last injury that you will receive, your excellency. If it's a fight you want then it's a fight you'll get!"

"Meeeeeeeh!" Ella bleated as she raised her head in challenge.

"What a naive young shepherd you are," Psoglav sneered. "I'll teach you the true power of Dark Magic!"

William wanted to retort that Psoglav didn't need to teach him anything. His Master, Celine, had already taught him a lot while tormenting him with curses and dark miasma everyday. Of course, he had no intention of saying this. Using your aces in a battle of life and death could turn the tide of victory.

Psoglav raised its dominant right arm and fired a barrage of dark beams towards William and Ella.

The Angorian goat nimbly dodged to the side as it started to charge towards Psoglav in order to close the distance.

After that overbearing clash, Psoglav didn't dare to underestimate the War Ibex any longer. It used its nimbleness to jump to the branches of the trees while hurling dark obs at the young shepherd and his goat.

William and Ella ran around the clearing as they dodged the demonic creature's range attack.

'Too bad I can't use my magic,' William thought as he leaned his head to the side to avoid Psoglav's energy balls. 'If I could use it, I would just erect Ice Wall's and fight a battle of attrition.'

"Doppelganger!" Psoglav used its special move and split its body into two. Since he lost one of his arms, he was unable to effectively fire a barrage of dark magic on William and Ella. In order to overcome this weakness, he was forced to use his trump card.

As the dark magic raining down on them doubled, William decided that staying in the clearing was disadvantageous to them.

"Mama, to the forest!"

"Meeeeh!"

Ella used her agility to deftly use the trees to block Psoglav's attack. This move was quite effective because Psoglav was forced to stop its barrage and run after them.

The examiners who had been watching over the other children got attracted to the intense fluctuations happening inside the forest and proceeded to investigate as well.

Most of the children had already arrived at their destination. Chandler was among them and he was quite thankful that he managed to escape the demonic beast's pursuit alive.

Meanwhile, the one who helped the children escape was having a tough battle with one of the Rulers of the Forest.

Psoglav was very familiar with the forest and used it to its advantage. The demonic creature along with its doppelganger aimed for a pincer attack as they circled around the retreating goat.

William and Ella had repeatedly tried to run towards the flag fluttering in the distance, but the enraged Psoglav didn't give them that opportunity. Everytime Ella would attempt to break through, the doppelganger and Psoglav would rain powerful dark magic attacks on them.

This caused Ella to stop her attempts as she desperately dodged each and every attack coming from the trees above them.

William knew that the situation was critical so he decided to use one of his trump cards in battle.

'System, switch my subclass to Cavalier.'

< Switching of Subclasses Complete! >

< Host, may the odds be in your favor! >

'Thank you, but I need another favor from you, System.'

< How may I be of assistance? >

'I want you to...'

William urged Ella to make a turn as she dodged a dozen dark bullets that were shot at her right side.

"Mama, use Rampage again!" William ordered.

"Meeeeeh!"

< Rampage 10 / 10 >

(100 Mana Points)

- Release all your potential and go on a full rampage.
- Doubles the size of the user's horn to inflict massive damage to the enemy.
- Damage Dealt is equivalent to Strength Stat x 15
- Deals Double Damage against creatures that fall under the "Pack" category.
- Has a high chance to cause bleeding status to the enemy.
- Has a chance to paralyze the enemy.

The size of Ella's horns doubled, which almost made Psoglav shudder. He could still remember how close he was to dying after receiving the War Ibex's full powered attack.

"Duel Ex!" William shouted and an unbelievable thing happened.

Psoglav, who was standing on top of a tree, felt his body move unconsciously. It only had a moment to realize that the boy had used some kind of powerful taunt skill to forcefully force him to exchange blows in close combat!

"Damn!" Psoglav cursed out loud as it formed a bastard sword with its dark magic.

William's "Duel Ex" skill was a specialty of the Cavalier Job Class. Once William identified a target within a fifty meter radius around him, that target would be forced to exchange a single blow with him. The effect of the duel would immediately disappear once the single strike had been made.

William could use the skill three times a day and the good part about this skill was that it didn't require mana to activate!

Finding the true body of Psoglav was hard because its doppelganger was a perfect replica of it. However, William had the system. It was able to distinguish which was real between the two. With its help, the red-headed boy could force Psoglav to exchange blows with them as long as it was within the Duel's range.

A resounding clap, followed by a shockwave, exploded inside the forest.

"Kuhaaaaaak!" Psoglav spurted a mouthful of blood as it used a dark whip to grab onto a tree branch to pull itself up.

William and Ella were pushed back by the impact of the Bastard Sword made of pure Dark Energy. However, both were very much unharmed since Ella's horns took the brunt of the blow.

The Dark Sword had shattered upon impact, but it managed to deflect Ella's horns from landing a fatal blow.

Even so, Ella was still able to gouge a hole in the demonic creature's shoulder because it was completely caught off guard by William's forced duel.

William summoned his bow as he fired several shots at the demonic creature who had been seriously injured by their exchange.

"Curse you human boy!" Psoglav shouted in anger. "I'll kill you and feast on your flesh! I'll drink your blood and make your skull my personal wine cup!"

William didn't reply because he was waiting for the Duel Ex's cooldown to finish. Although it didn't require any mana, he could only use it once every five minutes.

The examiners who had arrived at the scene were dumbfounded at the exchange that they had witnessed with their own eyes. Aside from Grent, Andy, and Layla, there were nine other examiners who were keeping a close watch on the children.

All of the children had successfully arrived at the flag, except for one, and that one was none other than William.

Psoglav's doppelganger initiated a sneak attack and slashed William with a Bastard Sword made from Dark Magic. William was about to block the attack when he sensed another killing intent above him.

The two demonic creatures had decided to go all out and fight at close quarters. Their perfectly timed attack made it difficult for Ella and William to dodge them.

William roared and used his staff to block the attack coming from above while leaning sideways.

Psoglav's Bastard Sword was perfectly blocked because the Parry Skill activated at the crucial moment. However, the doppelganger's attack grazed the side of William's body.

Ella immediately used a Mega Kick to obliterate the enemy behind her, but the latter managed to block it with its bastard sword. Even so, it still sent the doppelganger smashing towards the trees because Ella's kick was a force to be reckoned with.

Psoglav immediately used another dark whip to escape Ella's murderous horns as she defended her baby from further attacks.

The side of William's clothes were already dyed in blood as his blood gushed out of his wound. Although the bastard sword just grazed him, it still left a centimeter-deep-wound that extended along the side of his body.

Chapter 126: William Vs Psoglav [Part 3]

"D-Don't worry, Mama. I'm fine," William said through gritted teeth as he pressed his hand against his side to put pressure on the wound. He was about to take a potion from his storage ring to help close his wound when he felt another bout of killing intent from his left and right side.

Clearly, Psoglav was well-versed in fighting humans. It knew that humans often carried healing potions with them. The demonic creature had no intention of letting William treat his wound and pressed on with its attacks.

Ella bleated in fury as it charged at the demonic creature in front of her. William firmly gripped the wooden staff in his hand, while pressing down on his wound. He couldn't afford to lose his concentration at this point in time.

One mistake and it would be over for them.

The "Union of Man and Beast" skill from the Cavalier Job Class allowed William to remain seated on Ella's back even though he wasn't using any reins or holding onto her body. This gave him the freedom to use both his hands to battle while riding on her back.

Ella clashed against the doppelganger and sent it flying into the air. Psoglav, on the other hand, used a darkness whip to wrap around William's body. It then tried to pull William off Ella's back, but the skill of the Cavalier Class prevented the demonic creature from dismounting him.

The only time this skill would be broken was when either the rider or the mount died. As long as both of them drew breath, none could separate them!

Since its plan didn't work, the demonic creature jumped into a tree and used a tree branch to hoist William's body by force.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" William screamed as he felt his body being stretched to the limit. The wound on his side worsened and blood once again drenched his clothes.

Hearing her baby cry in pain, Ella opened her mouth and used her one and only ranged skill "Benevolent Burst".

< Benevolent Burst >

-- Fires a concentrated ball of energy towards the enemy

-- Damage dealt is equivalent to Intelligence x 3

-- Deals double damage against undead, spectres, and dark type creatures.

The energy ball the size of a basketball ball obliterated the tree branch and the dark whip that bound William's body.

Ella fired two more shots. The first shot destroyed the tree, while the second hit Psoglav squarely in the chest, sending him slamming towards several trees while howling in pain.

William spat a mouthful of blood after he was released from his torment. The searing pain in his upper body would have driven any normal fourteen-year-old to their knees, but William was no ordinary boy.

He gritted his teeth as he ordered Ella to charge forward.

"Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!"

Ella initiated her Wild Charge as it attempted to murder the creature who dared to hurt William.

However, Psoglav and his doppelganger already had a plan in mind. Both demonic creatures shot out red beams of light from the single eye in their foreheads, while their hands conjured two Void Arrows.

The first beam of light landed on Ella causing her to stop her charge, the second one landed on William's back causing the boy's body to lurch forward.

"Graaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!"

Two screams of madness reverberated in the forest as the "Confuse Rays" hit their target. William and Ella entered a berserked state due to their enemy's curse.

The two void arrows also hit their designated targets. Dark mists oozed out of William's eye as his world plunged into darkness. Ella, on the other hand, was able to resist the blind spell, but it wouldn't change the fact that she was still in a berserk state.

Ella attempted to dismount William from her back as the berserk spell overwhelmed her rationality. The boy, on the other hand, swayed dangerously back and forth on her back, but the skill "Union of Man and Beast" prevented him from being tossed away.

Psoglav howled in fury as it lunged forward for the kill. Its eyes had locked on William's neck as it raised its bastard sword high up in the air.

Andy wasn't able to endure any longer and he jumped forward to assist the boy. However, a gust of wind pushed him back as a Winged Lion blocked his path.

"Human, we have an agreement," the Winged Lion said with a sneer. "Are you planning to break it?"

"F*ck your mother!" Andy cursed out loud.

The Winged Lion ignored him and looked at Grent. Since he was the leader of the examiners, the Winged Lion gave him the "Do your job properly or else" glare.

Grent had no choice but to knock Andy unconscious to prevent him from breaking the agreement. Both sides didn't want to escalate the issue and watched as the final clash between the two was about to draw to a close.

When Psoglav was only ten meters away from William, Ella's horns suddenly doubled in size. The War Ibex locked her bloodshot eyes on the demonic creature and gave a deafening war cry as it charged forward.

"Damn!" Psoglav was about to use his darkness whip to escape when a voice, that was filled with determination, reached his ears.

"Duel Ex!" William, who was supposed to be under the Berserk and Blind Spells, sneered.

As a disciple of a Dark Sorceress, it would be very shameful if he allowed himself to be affected by curses. Yes, the spells did indeed take effect. But, Celine had already taught William how to use these curses to his advantage.

It was also a very effective way to trick the enemy into thinking that they had succeeded. Naturally, this was a gamble. However, this was a gamble that they had won.

Due to Ella entering a berserk state, all of her stats were multiplied by 3.

This was a boon to Ella who was unable to receive William's buffs. Ella had learned how to harness this overwhelming power while under the effects of the Berserk Spell. Everything she did earlier was just an act.

Now, Psoglav was facing Ella's Rampage. It was her most powerful skill that brought out every bit of her power in a single strike. Now, that same full-powered-attack was now multiplied by three. It was more than enough to send the demonic creature to the afterlife!

"Die!" William roared as he raised his staff to block the doppelganger's attack behind him.

Ella's horns were about to pierce through Psoglav's chest and end its life when an overwhelming presence grabbed Psoglav and threw him to the side.

A giant hand then pressed down on Ella, holding her charge at bay, but it didn't make any move to hurt her.

William's eyes widened in shock as he looked up on the monstrous creature in front of him. It seemed to be a Giant Ape with two protruding horns on its head. It also had a tail, but this tail was a serpent who looked down on William as if wanting to take a bite of him.

"What's the meaning of this?!" Grent roared as he dropped down from the sky. "I thought we had an agreement?!"

The creature scoffed and removed its hand from Ella's horns.

William gulped his saliva as he used his appraisal skill to identify this creature in front of him.

Diabolical Hell Ape

-- Underworld Creature

-- Threat Level: SS (High)

-- Millennial Beast

-- Cannot be added to the herd

-- This creature was born from the underworld and it has reached its rank through constant battles.

-- According to legend, the Diabolical Hell Ape was a creature that could crush mountains with a single punch. The strength it possesses is stronger than its counterpart the Oroubro (Golden Ape). Another major difference between the two was that the Diabolical Hell Ape focuses on offense, unlike the Oroubro that is an all rounder.

-- The horns on its head are able to generate the fires of hell which can then be used to coat its body in flames, making it a very tough opponent to fight in close combat.

-- Its tail, that has earned the moniker "Inferno Serpent", can spit out fire blasts, and poison sprays, that are capable of incinerating a level A creature with a single strike.

-- This creature has no known weakness.

As if feeling William's stare, the Diabolical Hell Ape glanced at the boy which sent shivers down William's spine.

A few seconds later, its eyes glowed like burning embers that lasted only for a brief moment.

William's body swayed as he lost consciousness. Ella, too, had been affected by the Diabolical Ape's eyes and was about to fall to the side when the giant's hand prevented her from falling completely.

Grent rushed out to take hold of the boy mounted on the War Ibex's back, so that he wouldn't be crushed by his own mount as it fell. Surprisingly, after both William and Ella were knocked unconscious, the skill "Union of Man and Beast" also lost its effect.

"I demand an explanation," Grent said as he passed the unconscious William over to Layla. "Why did you interfere?"

The ape gently supported Ella's body as it laid her sideways on the forest floor. It gave William a side-long glance before looking at the leader of the examiners.

"Since we were the first ones to break the agreement, I will personally give the boy compensation," The Diabolical Hell Ape replied using telepathy. It made sure that its answer was heard by everyone, men and beast alike.

It was the true Sovereign of the Forest, and all the rulers were his subordinates. It would not allow any of them to die. This was its duty as the Guardian. Even the Principal of the Royal Academy had no choice but to give it face in order to prevent full-blown hostilities from happening.

"This matter ends here." The Diabolical Hell Ape made a gesture and the other Rulers of the Forest returned to their territories. It then grabbed the seriously injured Psoglav before walking into the depths of the forest.

Grent stood there, gnashing his teeth as he watched the Sovereign of the Forest leave. He would like to nag at it for a while to vent out his frustrations, but the creature paid him no mind.

"What do we do now?" Layla asked. "The third trial is about to start, but I doubt that this boy will be in any condition to participate in it."

Grent pondered for a while before giving his order.

"The other examiners, return to your duties and conduct the third trial," Grent ordered. "As for this boy, I will let the Dean of the Royal Academy decide his fate."

Chapter 127: Did I Fail?

What Grent, and the other examiners didn't know was that inside the Dean's Office, two men sat side by side, while looking at a viewing crystal in front of them.

Both of them had witnessed the battle between William and Psoglav. Although this battle didn't mean much to men of their level, they still weren't able to stop themselves from being impressed with how things ended.

"So, what do you think, Headmaster?"

"I think it would be a shame for the Royal Academy to fail such an interesting boy. It's not everyday that a fourteen-year-old can hold his ground against one of the Rulers of the Forest and live to tell the tale."

The man wearing simple clothes stood up from his seat and walked towards the door. "Keep an eye on him for me, will you?"

"As you wish, Your Majesty." The Dean briefly nodded his head in acknowledgement.

After the man left the room, a dozen guards appeared out of nowhere and flanked the man on both sides. The man kept on walking as he remembered the words that Est had said a few years ago.

"Father, I would have failed the Trial if I didn't receive the help of a boy whom I met on my journey towards the temple," Est said with a gentle smile. "His name is Wiliam, William Von Ainsworth."

"What kind of boy is he?" the man asked as he listened to Est's explanation.

"Narcissistic, but kind," Est replied. "A very mysterious boy who saved my life twice. Once from the Mountain Troll, the second from the Cyclops. We wouldn't have received the blessing of Lady Astrid if not for his sacrifice."

"Sounds like an interesting boy." The man chuckled. "I'll think of an appropriate reward when I meet him. For now, maintain your connection with him, do you understand?"

"Yes, Father."

"Mmm."

The man left the academy through the secret passageway that was meant for people of his rank.

A middle-aged-man wearing butler's clothes bowed and welcomed him with a smile as his Master exited the passageway.

The butler then guided the man towards a simple carriage. No words were spoken between them because the butler already understood where the man wanted to go. As the man climbed into the carriage, the guards accompanying him dispersed.

They didn't go away. Instead, they guarded the man from the shadows.

As the man propped his head by the carriage window, he remembered William's unwavering determination. He also saw how the boy helped the other children pass the second trial, while maintaining his secrecy.

That alone made the man understand that William wasn't aiming for any kind of praise or recognition. He just did what he wanted to do then left, as if he was just a stranger passing by.

'What an interesting fellow,' the man thought as he looked at the scenery outside the carriage. 'You've met someone quite capable, Est.'

When William opened his eyes he found himself in an unfamiliar place. He was no longer inside the forest, but lying on a comfortable bed in a room that smelled of roses.

His hand unconsciously moved towards his waist where he received the wound from Psoglav. He could no longer feel any pain in that area, which meant that his wound had been healed.

William heaved a sigh of relief as he propped himself up from the bed. The sky outside the window was already dark, signifying that night had come.Â

'What happened during the trial? Did I fail?' William frowned because he couldn't remember anything that followed after he stared at the Diabolic Hell Ape. It was then when William remembered something, something very important.

'Wait, where is Mama?!' William scanned the room and didn't see his beloved mother. He was about to stand up and go towards the door when it opened on its own.

"You're finally awake?" Est said with a smile. "I thought that you would remain unconscious for a few days. It seems that the healers of the Royal Academy are quite competent."

"Est. Where is Mama Ella? " William stared at the familiar boy in front of him. "Where did the academy take her?"

"Relax," Est replied as he moved towards his bed. "Ella woke up two hours ago. Ian is watching over her at the academy's stable. She has already healed from her injuries and, from what I could tell by her actions, she was very worried about you."

Est stared at the red-headed boy who seemed to have regained his calm. He felt quite envious because the first question he asked was the whereabouts of his Mama Goat, instead of asking why he was there.

"That's good to hear, please, take me to her," William pleaded. "Mama will continue to feel anxious if she doesn't see me as soon as possible."

"Is Ella the one feeling anxious, or is it you who is feeling anxious?"

"It's me feeling anxious."

"Hah~" Est sighed. "Fine, come with me. I'll take you to the stables."

"Thank you, Est." William smiled.

His smile was so bright that it made Est's heart skip a beat. In order to hide his embarrassment, he walked straight toward the door without looking back. William hurriedly followed behind him.

The two walked in a vast hallway without speaking a word to each other. Ten minutes later, they arrived at their destination.

William immediately sensed his Mama's presence and the latter sensed him as well. Ella bolted up from where she laid and ran towards William.

William laughed as he, too, ran with open arms. The red-headed boy wrapped his arms around Ella's neck as he kissed the side of her face. Ella returned her baby's affection by licking the side of his face as well.

Est, Ian, and Isaac watched this touching reunion with smiles on their faces. The three knew that William and Ella were close, but none of them knew the extent of how much William and Ella cared for each other.

Five minutes had passed and the two were still locked in each other's embrace. Est had no choice but to clear his throat to get William's attention.

"You look so carefree and yet you don't know whether you failed the enrollment exams or not," Est teased.

"Ah!" William turned his head to look at Est. "Did I fail?"

"What do you think?" Est raised an eyebrow.

"I think you will give me an answer if I say please?" William scratched his head out of embarrassment.

"Well, congratulations. You didn't fail," Est answered. However, before William could feel relieved, Est added another sentence. "But, you didn't pass either."

"Eh?" William frowned. "How can it be that I didn't fail, yet didn't pass at the same time?"

Est stared at William with admiration. Although he had briefly heard about what happened from one of the examiners, he still couldn't believe that William was able to go head to head with a Ruler of the Forest that specialized in Dark Magic.

"Your case is a bit special, so the academy decided to give you one last chance to pass the enrollment exams," Est continued his explanation. "After all, the other examinees might think that the academy is showing favoritism if you passed just like that."

"Well, I guess you have a point." William nodded his head in agreement. "So, do you have any idea about what kind of test I will be participating in?"

"Sorry, but I don't," Est replied. "You will know when morning comes. I have already informed the Head Examiner that you have woken up. He will be the one handling your trial."

"Mmm," William hummed as he caressed his Mama's neck.

"Are you worried about your test tomorrow?"

"Not really."

"You're quite confident." Ian snorted. "You think that passing the test of the Royal Academy is easy?"

William gave Ian a side-long glance before giving him a refreshing smile. "By myself, I am not confident. However, since my Mama is with me, everything will be Daijoubu."

(A/N: To those who don't know Japanese, William said that everything will be fine.)

"Die jo bu?" Ian asked. "What does that mean?"

"It means that a snot-nosed pansy like you needs to see a physician," William sneered. "Something might be wrong with your brain."

Contrary to William's expectations, Ian didn't get angry. Instead, he looked at him with a mischievous smile which made William feel that something was wrong.

"Ah, I forgot to tell you. Ian will be the one to decide whether you fail or not in your test tomorrow." Est smirked.

"What?! This sno-- good looking boy that is approaching my level of handsomeness will be tomorrow's judge?" William almost bit his tongue after he forced himself to praise Ian. "Ahem, such a gentleman who is proficient with both the sword and the pen is truly suited to become a judge. I can already see all the girls in the academy screaming his name whenever he goes to his classroom."

William's liver started to itch with every word of praise he sang for Ian.

The three boys looked at him with amusement as William tried to flatter his mortal enemy.

"See you tomorrow," Ian winked as he left the stables. He was doing his best to hold back the laughter that was bubbling up inside his chest. William's reaction was priceless.

"Not good, I can't wait to see his reaction tomorrow when he discovers...", Ian chuckled as he walked towards his room in a good mood. He was looking forward to seeing what kind of face William would be making when morning came.

Chapter 128: You Tricked Me!

"I am too lazy to eat. Feed me."

"Yes, Sir!"

"My shoulders are feeling stiff."

"No problem! I'm very good at giving shoulder massages!"

William massaged Ian's shoulder after they had eaten breakfast. Ian had a satisfied expression on his face, while Est was feeling envious. Isaac was doing his best to stop himself from laughing. Clearly, his twin was taking advantage of William's current situation.

"How is it?" William asked with a refreshing smile.

"Not bad," Ian replied. "You're quite skilled. How did you learn to give massages?"

"It's because my Master would ask me to give her a massage before she went to sleep from time to time," William answered. "At least, once a month, she would also ask me to give her a full body massage."

"Um?" Ian turned to look back at him with a frown. "A full body massage?"

"Yes."

"... With her clothes on?"

"Are you an idio-- Ahem!" William forcefully coughed in order to prevent himself from calling Ian an idiot. "Answering Sir's question, of course without any clothes. It would be very hard to give someone a full body massage if they are wearing clothes."

Est and Ian exchanged a glance before glaring at William.

"Why do you need to give her a full body massage?" Ian questioned. "Isn't it enough to give her a shoulder massage?"

Est also joined the interrogation and threw a few questions of his own. "Did she force you to give her a massage by using the slave collar?"

Their penetrating stares locked onto William. It was as if he was a pig that was about to be slaughtered if he didn't give the right answer.

"Why can't I give her a full body massage?" William asked back in confusion. "She's my Master, so it's only natural that I make her happy. Also, I wasn't forced. I did it voluntarily when I saw that she was looking exhausted."

"Are you just dumb or acting dumb?" Ian scoffed. "How can a boy like you give a full body massage to a beautiful woman as if it was nothing?!"

"Ah, you're talking about THAT." William nodded his head in understanding. "First of all, when I give Master a full body massage, she would order me to put on a special eye mask. While wearing that special eye mask, I would only see a skeleton instead of a person's body."

"But you're still touching her body directly." Est pointed out with an edge to his voice. "Don't tell me that you don't feel anything when touching a beautiful woman's body?"

"Ah about that... It's really a shame that she strips me of my sense of touch when I give her a massage." William sighed. "Although I am touching her body directly, I can only feel that I am touching a metallic surface."

Seeing William's expression of loss, Est and Ian felt a bit better. Even so, they were still feeling envious of Celine's relationship with William.

"H-How about you give me a full body massage later?" Ian stuttered. "While you're at it, you can also give my Young Master a full body massage."

"Sorry, I have no interest in giving body massages to anyone aside from my Master," William replied in a heartbeat.

"Tsk!"

"Tsk!"

Est and Ian clicked their tongue when they heard William's firm answer.

"Ah, Sir, isn't it about time for the trial to start?" William smiled as he lightly patted Ian's shoulder.

"Hmm? Oh, you're right," Ian looked at the clock on the wall. "Let's go to the training grounds. Instructor Grent might already be there."

William happily followed behind Ian as they walked towards the training grounds. Est and Isaac shared a knowing smile and was looking forward to William's reaction once he knew the truth.

"So, you're finally here," Grent said as soon as William and his entourage entered the training ground. "Your name is William, right?"

"Yes, Sir!" William stood straight as he looked at the imposing man in front of him.

Grent wasn't alone. There were eleven more people standing behind him. All of them were looking at William with interest.

"Very well, we will conduct the test," Grent stated as he motioned for William to come closer. "Do you see that stone platform over there? Place both of your hands over the round stone. It is a magic tool to measure your aptitude."

"Understood!" William replied and walked towards the platform. He then obediently placed both of his hands on the magic tool and waited in anticipation.

Rows of magic words appeared in the air as William's information was shown to everyone in the training field.

Name: William Von Ainsworth

Race: Half-Elf

Age: 14

Magic Power: None

Spiritual Power: None

Physical Fitness: A

Potential: A

Assessment overview: Excellent Physical Prowess, but no Magic Power. Recommended to be placed under the Martial Class Division.

William looked at the information above him and sighed. He didn't know if he should be happy or not because his Magic was unusable at this point in time. As for Spirit Power, this was the first time he had heard of it.

'I'd better ask the system about Spiritual Power later,' William thought as he removed his hands from the appraisal stone.

"I was hoping that I made a mistake in my assessment, but the results showed that my hunch was correct." Layla sighed. She was hoping that William had some affinity with magic, but the appraisal stone had already confirmed her initial probe on the red-headed boy.

Andy, on the other hand, was all smiles. He was looking at William as if he couldn't wait to drag him to his side and personally cultivate him to become a powerful archer.

The other professors had mixed emotions as well. Some of them sighed, while some had smiles on their faces. They were the representatives of the First Year Martial Class, Spirit Class, and the Magic Class of the Royal Academy.

William had been a candidate that they had set their eyes on after his stellar performance in the battle against the Ruler of the Forest.

Grent patted William's shoulder with a smile. "From now on, you will be a first year in the Martial Class Division. Classes will start a week from now. Make sure to fill out the form in the registration office, so that you will receive the academy's uniform.

"Your lodging will be located in the Solaris Dormitory. This is the lodging for all the first years of the Martial Class. Also, do you intend to become the Head Prefect of the Solaris Dormitory?"

"Head Prefect?" William inquired. "What is that?"

Grent nodded his head in understanding. It was impossible for William to know how the hierarchy works inside the Royal Academy since he just became a First Year.

"Although we call it Head Prefect, it's more like the Commander of all the First Years belonging to the Martial Class," Grent replied. "Every year, the competition for that position is very intense. Being the commander of a Division is a prestigious honor to any student in the Royal Academy."

"Sounds troublesome." William sighed. "Can I pass?"

"Of course you can. However, the Head Prefect's orders are absolute within the Division. You have to obey them whether you like it or not."

"... What a pain."

William didn't mind taking orders from the Head Prefect as long as it doesn't break his bottomline. However, he had complicated feelings about taking orders from a stranger whom he barely knew.

"Welcome to the Royal Academy." Grent chuckled as he patted William's shoulders. "I have high hopes for you."

After saying those words, Grent and the rest of the instructors left the training field. William felt very happy because he had been accepted inside the Royal Academy. However, he had a feeling that he was forgetting something important.

William propped his chin with his fingers as he pondered that fleeting feeling inside his head. His gaze then landed on Est then on Isaac, and finally on Ian who was looking at him with a smug expression.

"Ah!" William exclaimed. He finally realized that he had been tricked!

Ian laughed out loud and ran away. Since William had already realized that they had worked together to trick him, he was sure that the shepherd would retaliate because he was treated like a personal maid.

"You!" William roared as he ran after Ian. "You tricked me!"

"I did, so what of it?" Ian chuckled as he kept his pace. "I didn't know that you were so gullible!"

"Damn you! Don't let me catch you!"

"Don't worry, someone as slow as you wouldn't be able to catch me!"

Est and Isaac watched the enraged William, who had gone all out to flatter Ian so that he would pass the test, continue to chase Ian around. The shepherd was so angry that his face had completely turned beet red. Ian on the other hand circled around the training ground with a smile.

He even shot a few sprays of water magic to cool the enraged red-headed boy down. Soon, William was drenched from head to toe. The boy finally understood that he had no chance of catching the trickster who tricked him.

"This is not over," William gave Ian the middle finger. "Just you wait. I'll pay you back tenfold!"

After making his threat known, William left the training room while gnashing his teeth. Ian watched him go with his arms crossed over his chest.

"Maybe we went too far with our joke," Isaac whispered to Est.

"The deed is already done." Est sighed. "It's no use crying over spilt milk."

"What if William blames us as well?" Isaac inquired. "We can be considered accomplices."

Est's eyes widened in surprise. He had completely forgotten that William was the type that kept grudges!

Chapter 129: The Lance that Shines to the Ends of the World

After filling out his registration form, William officially became a student in the Royal Academy. The staff gave him his uniform as well as the key to his dormitory room. Of course, the dormitory room in the Royal Academy was shared by two people.

This meant that William had a roommate whom he would be spending time with for a whole school year.

Right after getting his key, William had locked himself inside his room in the Solaris Dormitory. Est, Ian, and Isaac weren't able to see him because they lived in a different dormitory belonging to the Magic Division.

Est was still worried that William would hate him because he had chosen to become Ian's accomplice in tricking him. The Young Master was feeling down and even Ian, who had a smug expression a few hours ago, looked at him anxiously.

"I-If there is a need to apologize then I will apologize to him," Ian said after thinking things through. "Knowing William, he won't really hate the Young Master. At most, he will just hate me and think of a way to make me suffer for the things I did to him."

Est sighed and nodded his head. He knew that he couldn't do anything right now. He intended to give William some time to cool down before going to find him so he could give him a proper apology.

What Est didn't know was that William wasn't thinking of them at all at the moment. He was busy checking the "God Shop" inside his system and looking for things to buy with the God Points that he had accumulated.

The red-headed boy had received a mission to save the Merchant Group while he was traveling towards the capital of the Hellan Kingdom. This act of heroism had given him 500 God Points.

Also, he acquired two hidden quests during the Academy's entrance exams. One was to save as many children as possible and help them reach their destination. The points for this mission were calculated by the number of survivors multiplied by 10.

All fifty students had survived thanks to William's help, which netted him another 500 God Points.

The one that gave William a pleasant surprise was the hidden quest "Beat the Ruler of the Forest".

< Hidden Quest >

< Defeat the Ruler of the Forest >

< Reward: 1000 God Points >

This unexpected surprise made William very happy. With 2,000 God Points in hand, he immediately went to open the God Shop to see what interesting things he could buy.

Over the past four years, he had received God Points through the completion of his training and additional points that the system treated as "Bonus" God Points for William's performance. All in all, he managed to accumulate 5,000 God Points.

Back then, he jokingly asked the system to give him a recommendation on the first thing that he needed to buy. Naturally, the system complied and the item that appeared in the God Shop was something that William wasn't able to pass up.

The system had recommended a weapon that cost 50,000 God Points and it was none other than Rhongomyniad, The Lance that Shines to the Ends of the World.

It was the Holy Lance that belonged to King Arthur according to the legends. However, this particular lance was forged by a God. For some reason, the weapon was also able to bestow the Cavalier Class on other people, if the right conditions were met, and if William allowed it.

Another good feature of the lance was that it was imbued with the Holy Property. After the fight with the Cyclops, William realized that he was severely lacking in Elemental weapons against certain types of creatures.

The original cost of this lance was 50,000 God Points. However, since William received a special discount coupon from the God Shop, he could buy one item with a 90% discount.

William could have ignored the system's recommendation, but after seeing the information on the Holy Lance, the red-headed boy bought it right away.

His reason for buying it?

Because there was a special class attached to it and it was none other than the Cavalier Class.

The Cavalier Class gave him the ability to fight side by side with Ella while mounted on her back. Another good feature of this Job Class was that it didn't rely heavily on Mana. Most of the skills in the Cavalier Class were passive skills, which made William very happy.

As for why he didn't use Rhongomyniad during the battle against Psoglav, it was due to the many "spectators" that were watching the battle. Rhongomyniad was a weapon forged by a God. It would be stupid to show it off in front of others while William was in a weakened state.

Now that he had 2,000 God Points in his possession, William scrolled through the God Shop in search of any items that he could buy with his current funds.

It didn't take long for him to realize that there were very few things that he could buy with 2,000 God Points. Most of the items that William wanted were priced at 10,000 God Points at the minimum.

In the end, William decided to use his trump card in order to get the best deals in the God Shop.

"System, can you give me any recommendations on what to buy with my current funds?"

< Certainly. Please, wait for a while as I search the God Shop for possible items that you might need. >

< Search Completed. Here is the list of Items that might be useful to the host at this point in time. >

< Elemental Arrows forged by the God of the Hunt >

< Holy Arrow >

-- An arrow forged by the God of the Hunt.

-- Very effective against Dark Type Creatures

-- Very effective against Evil Type creatures.

-- Very effective against Undead Type Creatures

-- 500 God Points per Arrow.

-- Additional 100 God Points for Auto Maintenance.

-- Additional 400 God Points for Auto Retrieval Spell

-- Total: 1000 God Points.

< Adamantium Arrow >

-- An arrow forged by the God of the Hunt. Has a strong piercing power that is able to pierce through the scales of Dragons.

-- Very effective against Dragon Type Monsters

-- Very effective against Construct Type Creatures like Golems and Gargoyles.

-- Very effective against Armored Type Creatures

-- 500 God Points per Arrow.

-- Additional 100 God Points for Auto Maintenance.

-- Additional 400 God Points for Auto Retrieval Spell

-- Total: 1000 God Points.

'... System, I got to admit that you are good at sucking all my God Points dry.'

< Thank you for your praise. Please, leave a five-star review after you make your purchase. Thank you for your patronage~ >

William sighed and purchased the two arrows and added them to his quiver. With this, he would be able to increase the trump cards in his arsenal. Even if he used these two arrows in public, no one would think that it was strange.

There were plenty of elemental arrows sold in the market and William having a few of them wouldn't make other's eyes go green with greed.

The only difference between the elemental arrows sold on the market and William's was that the red-headed boy's arrows were forged by a God. Naturally, their efficiency couldn't be compared to those that were forged by mortals.

While William was admiring his two arrows, a soft knock was heard on the door. The red-headed boy hurriedly returned his items inside his storage ring and went to answer the door.

When William opened the door, he saw a delicate silver-gray-haired boy wearing glasses. He was holding a small backpack on his back and wearing expensive clothing.

"H-Hello, is this room 401?" the young boy asked in a timid voice. "I have just arrived today and the registrar's office told me to go to this room after I finished my registration."

"Yes, this is indeed room 401," William replied with a smile. "Please come in."

"Thank you." the young boy bowed and entered the room.

When William closed the door, he smelled a faint scent of herbs. He didn't think much about it and sat down on his bed while looking at his roommate. William had a feeling that his roommate and him would get along well during their first year inside the Royal Academy.

Chapter 130: William's Roommate

"Um, my name is Kenneth Xin Ashleigh," the delicate boy with silver-gray hair and blue eyes said timidly.

"The name is William," William replied. "William Von Ainsworth. Feel free to call me Will."

William looked at his new roommate and gave him a thumbs up in his heart. He never thought that his roommate would be this cute!

"Will, you have a good name," Kenneth said with a smile. "Are you also a first year?"

"Yes." William nodded. "Why? Do I look old?"

Kenneth resolutely shook his head. "It's just that, you give me a very mature feeling."

William scratched his cheek as he looked at his roommate with approval. He was quite happy that his roommate was Kenneth. With just a glance, William could tell that the gray-haired boy was someone that was raised as a noble.

Even so, Kenneth didn't have the arrogance like that most nobles did. For some reason, William felt like Est and Kenneth had something in common. Perhaps it was their aura, or presence, but William didn't dislike being together with them.

"Well then, may you take care of me this school year, Kenneth," William said as he extended his hand for a handshake.

Kenneth looked at William's hand before slowly raising his own hand to accept his handshake. The gray-haired-boy's countenance changed when his hand touched William's hand. His body instinctively flinched as the rough hand touched his own.

"Sorry." William apologized as he reluctantly let go of Kenneth's soft hands. "Did my hand hurt you? It's pretty rough, right?"

"N-No," Kenneth stuttered. "I was just surprised. Your hand, although rough, feels sturdy and strong."

William chuckled due to Kenneth's timid response. He then explained to his new roommate that he was a shepherd and was used to handling goats and performing manual labor. Also, William's lifestyle in Lont was not easy. Because of this, he had developed calluses on his hands and it made his palms rougher compared to boys his age.

When William woke up in the morning, he would chop firewood then cook something for his Master, Celine. After that, he would feed the goats before taking a bath. After breakfast, he would go and spar against his Grandpa or other people in Lont to become more proficient in the Martial Arts he had learned from his Job Classes.

Since there were plenty of strong people in Lont, William was able to increase his proficiency and learn a few tricks from them as well.

After sparring, he would take a bath and return to Celine's house to prepare her lunch. When afternoon arrived he would spend it with his cute cousin Eve. Once night came, it would be the start of Celine's Hellish Training of curses, poison, and more curses.

"A Shepherd..." Kenneth eyed William curiously. "Did you take the entrance test of the Royal Academy?"

"Of course."

"Was it hard?"

"A little bit." William had no intention of telling Kenneth about his battle with the Ruler of the Forest.

"I see," Kenneth replied as his blue eyes appraised William from head to toe. 'Since he passed the entrance test, he must be quite capable despite how he looks.'

Being stared at by an angelic looking boy made William feel like a kitten was scratching his heart. "Am I that handsome? Why are you staring at me like that?"

"Yes," Kenneth replied unconsciously. "You are very handsome."

Kenneth paused as his face became beet red when he realized that he had said his thoughts out loud. The sudden change in his reaction made William grin.

'Seriously, my roommate is too cute!' William thought. 'I better not tease him too often. I don't want him to hate me.'

An awkward silence descended upon the room. Kenneth busied himself in arranging the items in his magic bag. He placed several robes in his closet and even took out a pillow for his bed. He then placed an incense burner on the small table beside his bed.

A soothing fragrance permeated the room as soon as Kenneth lit the incense burner.

"This smells good," William praised. "This reminds me of the smell of Gardenias."

"It is a scent made from the Gardenias of my hometown." Kenneth gave William a sincere and genuine smile. "I'm glad you like it."

William felt his body become very relaxed as the fragrance assaulted his senses. Before he knew it, he had already laid on the bed and had fallen asleep.

Although he had rested properly last night, it seemed that he still hadn't fully recovered from his long journey and his recent battle against Psoglav.

Kenneth looked at his roommate who had slept in an awkward sleeping position. With a sigh, he stood up from his bed and supported William's body into a proper sleeping position. As he covered him with a blanket, he heard William's sigh of pleasure.

"Thank you," William said as if he was talking to someone in his dream.

Kenneth gazed at his peaceful sleeping expression for a full minute before returning into his own bed to rest. For some reason, he also felt like sleeping. As he laid in the bed, facing his new roommate, Kenneth felt thankful.

He was thankful that his roommate wasn't one of those arrogant nobles whom he hated to the bone.

Soon, the silver-gray-haired boy fell asleep as well.

A few hours later, both of them were woken up by the resounding tolling of a bell.

William drowsily opened his eyes as he looked at the magic clock that hung on the wall of his dormitory room. It was twelve noon, and it also signaled that the time for lunch was at hand.

William yawned as he stood up from the bed. He did some stretching to help circulate the blood in his body and remove the drowsiness he was feeling.

Kenneth had stood up from his bed as well and watched William with amusement. His impression of William was already good, but seeing him act like this made him like the shepherd even more.

After William finished his short stretching exercise, he glanced at his roommate.

"Do you want to have lunch together?" William asked.

"Yes," Kenneth replied. "Do you know where the dining room is?"

"... I don't know," William answered with embarrassment. "I also just arrived today. However, don't worry. We can just ask around. I'm sure that we will find it sooner or later."

"You have a point." Kenneth nodded.

The two boys left their room, but they didn't forget to lock it. Although they were inside the Solaris Dormitory, it would be safer to lock the doors in order to prevent theft.

Sure enough, it didn't take long for William and Kenneth to find the location of the Dining Hall. When they arrived, they immediately noticed six long tables that were at least 14 meters in length. Aside from that, there was also one long table, on an elevated platform, placed horizontally facing the students where the Instructors of the Martial Classes ate together.

Several dishes had already been placed on top of the tables resembling a feast that was meant to be partaken of by the students of the First Year Martial Classes.

William and Kenneth glanced at each other before picking a less crowded table. They sat near the end, and happily filled their plates with meats, fruits, and other dishes that looked delicious. William had started to eat meat again, but in much smaller quantities.

When lunch ended, several adult men and women appeared and cleared the table. One of the instructors had mentioned that there was an important announcement waiting for all of them after lunch.

Because of this, none of the students left the dining hall. All of their gazes were focused on a handsome man with short light-brown hair and green eyes. A bow was strapped behind his back, so William assumed that he was in one of the advanced classes of the archer profession.

"Good day, everyone," the man said with a smile. "My name is Andy and I am the instructor for the Hunter Classes. As the school year is only about to begin, you should all know that we need to have officers that will manage the first years."

Some of the children nodded their heads in understanding because they had already been briefed by their families about this. Others were looking at Andy with determined expressions because they were aiming for the prestigious position that would bring honor to their name as they advanced into the upper years in the academy.

"Right, I'm talking about the position of Head Prefect for the entire Freshman Class during this school year," Andy grinned as his feral eyes briefly glanced at William before looking at the other expectant faces who were looking at him.

"Naturally, this position holds considerable power. Since that is the case, only those with power are allowed to wield it," Andy explained with a serious expression.

"An all out battle royale will be conducted in the Enchanted Forest four days from now. The one who is left standing in the end will become the Head Prefect and everyone is duty bound to follow his orders. Do I make myself clear?"

""Yes!"" the students replied in unison.

"Good, may the best man or woman win!" Andy raised his fist and all of the students cheered at the same time.

The bloody battle for the position of Head Prefect was about to begin, and William was still on the fence about whether he should participate in it or not.