

Strongest 81

Chapter 81: Following The Script

The air stilled after Kingsley made his challenge. Everyone looked at William and waited for his answer.

William sneered in his heart because he had already anticipated this outcome. His years of reading novels didn't amount to nothing! Naturally, he also knew how to downplay this challenge, so he went along that route.

"Why should I fight you?" William snorted. "I don't have any reason to accept your challenge."

"So, you admit that you are a coward?" Kingsley asked in disdain. "I guess the only thing you have going for you is your face."

"Are you jealous of my face?" William asked back. "It's not my fault that I am more handsome than you. If you want to complain, complain to your parents for not being good looking enough!"

William's words made everyone's teeth itch. It was a very blatant provocation, but it was super effective.

Kingsley's face contorted in rage, but that only lasted for a brief moment. He then collected himself and ridiculed William. "I didn't expect that a Shepherd like you would, also, be a master of words. Did you learn that from tending to your goats?"

"Thank you for your praise, feel free to praise me more." William raised his chin in arrogance.

'I'm not praising you!' Kingsley wanted to shout out loud, but reigned in his words. "I guess the Ainsworth family only amounts to this much. A family of cowards."

'Hah~ what a low blow,' William thought. 'I knew he was going to bring this up. I guess I'll follow the script for now and accept his challenge.'

"Since you are so persistent then I guess I have no choice but to accept this challenge," William said with a serious expression.

"Good." Kingsley narrowed his eyes. "I've been longing to see the ability of the man who was paired up with junior sister."

"Prepare to be disappointed." William summoned his wooden staff. "I'm currently not in my peak condition."

"Heh, we haven't even started our duel and you're already making up an excuse?" Kingsley sneered. "Well, I have to admire your strategy. This way, even if you lose, you won't look too bad in front of everyone."

James stood up and clapped his hands. "If the two of you are going to fight, let's change locations." He then turned around and walked towards the training field that was a hundred meters away from the garden.

William and Kingsley followed behind him.

The rest of the peanut gallery also followed suit. They were very curious about what kind of ability William possessed. Est, and his entourage, on the other hand, were feeling a bit anxious. They knew that William wasn't lying when he said that he wasn't in his peak condition.

They had heard of the name Kingsley before. Just like Rebecca, the boy was considered as one of the prodigies of the Kingdom. He was a magic swordsman, and Kingsley was quite proficient with both sword and magic.

William wasn't able to use his magic right now, so he was at a disadvantage.

The two combatants stood ten meters away from each other. William was holding his wooden staff, while Kingsley held a wooden sword.

This was a friendly duel so Eleanor didn't permit Kingsley to use his magic sword to fight William. She also didn't want to provoke James, because the old man might do something reckless if William got seriously hurt.

Rebecca stood beside Lawrence. She had a calm expression on her face, but her eyes were looking at William with anticipation. Since Kingsley was in the same sect as her, she was well aware of his fighting abilities. She was very curious about how a shepherd boy would be able to match a prodigy of the Misty Sect.

"None of you are allowed to hit each other in the face," James said. "The battle will end if one of you surrenders or is unable to continue to battle. This is a friendly match so fatal blows are not allowed, do I make myself clear?"

"Yes."

"Understood."

James nodded his head and raised his hand. "Fight!"

As soon as the signal was given, Kingsley activated his movement technique "Misty Steps". It was the trademark of the Misty Sect and was hailed as one of the fastest movement arts in the Southern Continent.

The disciples of the Misty Sect cheered when they saw their "senior brother" display their sect's special move.

Kingsley moved like a blur and appeared two meters in front of William. He then lowered his body and slashed forward.

"First Phase, Phoenix Strike!"

Kingsley was confident that this single strike would be enough to end the duel. Frankly, he felt that it was beneath him to get serious fighting against a Shepherd who tended sheep and goats. If not for his

plan to leave a good impression on his junior sister's family, he wouldn't even bother to challenge William to a duel.

The deadly strike was aimed at William's shoulder with the intention of breaking his bones. Although he couldn't deliver a lethal strike to his rival, there was no rule that said that he couldn't cripple his opponent.

A loud clap reverberated in the air as the two wooden weapons clashed against each other. William was unable to follow Kingsley's movement, but his passive skill, Parry, activated automatically.

< Parry 10 / 10 >

(Passive)

-- Increase the chances of parrying an attack by 30%.

Requirement: Only works for staff, spear, and pole-type weapons

Although William couldn't use any offensive skills, his passive skills were still in effect. Right after William parried the blow, he immediately used his staff to counter-attack. Although Kingsley was surprised that his attack was blocked, he was still a prodigy and managed to jump back to avoid William's strike.

The short exchange silenced the crowd, and their gazes became serious. Kingsley also took a proper stance as he prepared for his next attack.

After taking another step forward, Kingsley disappeared from William's sight and appeared behind the red-head boy.

"Second Phase, Phoenix Crossing!"

Kingsley unleashed two consecutive slashes at high speed to form a cross. William's battle instinct, that had been honed in the Goblin Crypt, kicked in as he immediately used his staff to receive the blow.

With a loud shout, William swung his wooden staff behind him. A few seconds later, William skidded backwards as the power of the Phoenix Crossing passed through his staff's defenses.

William was somehow able to block the first strike, but the second strike connected with his right chest. A searing pain wracked his senses, but he forced himself to pretend that it didn't hurt him much.

'Good thing, It didn't break my ribs,' William thought as he stood his ground. 'That really hurt!'

Kingsley's expression became more serious when he saw William's calm expression. He clearly felt that one of his blows connected, but the latter was acting as if nothing had happened.

Both combatants glared at each other as they prepared for their next clash.

Chapter 82: It's Fine If No One Sees

Soon the two engaged in close quarter combat.

Kingsley's movement and attacks were graceful and deadly. Clearly, his technique had reached a high level, while William had no technique at all. His battle style was crude and all over the place.

One could easily tell the disparity between the two boys. The members of the Misty Sect started cheering as they saw their senior brother getting the upper hand.

Kingsley executed another killer move that was aimed at William's leg. However, the Parry Skill activated and blocked his attack.

William's strategy was simple. He would hold his ground and defend. If the Parry Skill activated, he would immediately follow up with a counter-attack. Although Kingsley was fast, Ella was faster when she used her Quick Attack.

William was gradually able to follow his opponent's movements and block him at every turn. His Strength stat allowed him to threaten Kingsley from time to time with a powerful blow. The only problem was that none of these blows connected.

After their initial clash, Kingsley discovered that William was a level stronger than him, so he didn't dare to receive his blows and focused on dodging them.

William's Dexterity and Agility Stat coupled with the Parry Skill gave him the ability to swiftly block his opponent's attacks which led to their current situation.

The bruises on William's body were piling up because there were times when Kingsley's sharp attacks grazed him.

'I relied too much on magic and didn't focus on my foundations.' William regretted that he hadn't paid any attention to learning any martial arts. He knew that it was only a matter of time before he got defeated.

What William didn't know was that Kingsley was starting to feel anxious. His confidence at the beginning was being chipped away by William's uncanny ability to block his deadly strikes.

'This can't go on!' Kingsley thought. 'I will have to resort to that...'

Kingsley took a deep breath as he charged towards William for the umpteenth time.

"First Phase, Phoenix Strike!"

William's staff moved automatically as the Parry Skill activated.

However, instead of backing away like he always did, Kingsley actually took a step forward as the wooden staff and sword collided against each other.

"Ice Bullet!" Kingsley muttered as he fired an Ice Bullet at point blank range.

William's eyes widened because he didn't expect Kingsley to use magic. Eleanor had already mentioned that he wasn't allowed to use his magic in this duel, but Kingsley still used it!

The concentrated bullet that was as large as a baseball ball connected squarely with William's chest.

William felt that he was hit by a bowling ball that was thrown at full power. The impact took his breath away, which created an opening for Kingsley to unleash a powerful move.

"Second Phase, Phoenix Crossing!"

A loud cracking sound was heard as Kingsley's attack connected with William's chest.

The red-head boy spat a mouthful of blood as he was blown off his feet. Est covered his mouth as he watched William's body crash heavily on the ground.

Kingsley stepped forward to deliver another strike at the fallen boy. He was determined to cripple William and make sure that he wouldn't even think about challenging Rebecca in the future.

It was at that moment when he saw a white blur appear in front of his eyes.

"Meeeeeeh!"

Ella transformed into an Angorian War Ibex and blocked Kingsley's path. Her horns and hooves shone in a blue light and her bloodshot eyes stared at the boy as if she was looking at something that was about to die.

Kingsley's body uncontrollably shuddered the moment he laid his eyes on the beast in front of him. For the first time in his life, he felt the hands of death had firmly wrapped around his body, and had no intention of letting go.

His breathing became heavy as his instinct screamed for him to run away.

However, there was no time to run away. Ella didn't give him that opportunity. With a shout of fury, Ella activated her Quick Attack. The only thing in her mind was to kill this boy who tried to hurt his baby.

As the horns of death were about to impale the pitiful boy, James finally made his move.

He casually grabbed the boy's collar and tossed him to the side. He then used his free hand to grab Ella's horn and held her in place.

"Let's end it here, Ella," James said as he held the furious goat at bay. "What is more important? Killing that brat or taking William to Owen's place?"

Reason finally returned to the furious goat as she stopped her charge. Ella gave James an annoyed look, and the latter let go of her horn.

"Helen, I'll leave William in your care," James ordered.

"Yes, Sir," Helen wrapped her threads around William and gently lifted him off the ground. Ella nudged her to hurry, and the maid of the Ainsworth Family mounted the War Ibex's back.

As soon as Helen was firmly secured on her back, Ella immediately sprinted towards the house of the Life Magus. She decided to have her baby healed first before she returned to dispose of the brat that dared to harm William.

Everyone watched the War Ibex go with various expressions on their faces. Eleanor was checking Kingsley for injuries. She was responsible for the safety of the children, and Ella's sudden appearance gave her a scare.

If not for James' timely assistance, the prodigy of the Misty Sect would have been impaled by the War Ibex, and died a dog's death in a small town in the countryside.

"Since when did you raise a War Ibex?" Lawrence asked James who was looking in the direction of Owen's house.

"War Ibex?" James answered with a sidelong glance. "What War Ibex? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Hoh~" Lawrence smiled in understanding.

James sighed as he patted the shoulder of his good friend. "It would be best if you take that boy away from Lont. I'm afraid that Ella will immediately attempt to kill him again once she returns."

"Fine," Lawrence agreed. "I'll come back at a later time to talk more about your grandson."

"Just make sure that you don't bring uninvited pests with you next time." James snorted. "I almost lost control and squashed that boy's head."

"Adults shouldn't interfere in the affairs of the young generation. This is the unwritten rule in our world, no?"

"It's fine if no one sees." James smiled. "Although this rule exists, you and I know that there are plenty of loopholes that people use to bypass this rule."

"True." Lawrence admitted. He then looked at the members of the Misty Sect and gave out an order. "Return to the carriages in an orderly manner. We will be departing soon."

Although he wanted to know more about William and the War Ibex, Lawrence knew that now was not the time for it. He could only endure his curiosity as he led his entourage to where their carriages were waiting for them.

"So, what do you think?" Lawrence asked his granddaughter who was seated beside him in the carriage.

They had just left Lont five minutes ago and were currently returning to their duties of surveying the destruction caused by the Beast Tide.

"He lacks grace," Rebecca answered.

"That's it? He lacks grace?" Lawrence had a smile on his face as he looked at his beloved granddaughter.

"Grandpa, I don't know what you're thinking, but I don't like him," Rebecca pouted. "I have no intention of marrying him."

Lawrence chuckled but didn't say anything else. He was already looking forward to the duel that would happen seven years in the future.

Chapter 83: A Blessing In Disguise

Owen's treatment ended quickly and the injury that William received was healed completely. Even so, the Life Magus advised the red-headed boy to take it easy for the time being and to avoid doing any strenuous activities.

"I got too complacent," William muttered as he unconsciously rubbed his chest. Although he didn't expect that Kingsley would use magic in their duel, he should have considered this possibility.

His opponent was a Magic Swordsman. Someone who could wield both sword and magic. William understood that the main reason why Kingsley didn't use magic earlier in their duel was due to his pride.

Because of this, William thought that his opponent would only use martial skills and not resort to using his Ice Magic.

"Young Master, I hope you learned something from this lesson," Helen said as she walked beside Ella who was currently carrying William on her back.

"I did, Aunt Helen." William sighed. "I learned a very painful lesson."

"It's good that you learned this lesson early, Young Master," Helen patted William's leg. "If that happened in a real battle then you would have lost your life."

'Perhaps losing my magic was a blessing in disguise.' William sighed for the second time. 'It made me realize how lacking I truly was. I better properly build my foundations and learn some martial arts.'

"Meeeeeeehh."

"You're right, Mama. I will strive to be stronger."

"Meeeeehh."

Meanwhile back at the Ainsworth Residence...

"If not for William, Lont might have suffered the same fate as the other villages and towns in the Western Region," James said with a smile. "You should have seen how amazing he was when he fought against the Strathmore Thunder Horned Wolf."

James bragged about William's amazing feats to his guest while he was getting his treatment. He was not worried about his grandson's injury because Owen was the best healer he knew. Even though William broke a few of his ribs during the duel, it was not a life threatening injury.

As long as he still had breath in him, Owen could easily patch him up and make him as good as new.

Est listened to James' story with interest. After the old man finished his tale, it was the young man's turn to tell the Lord of Lont how William saved his life from the Mountain Troll. Est also told James about William's sacrifice in the trial of courage.

"If he could still use his magic, that disciple from the Misty Sect wouldn't have been able to even touch a strand of his hair," Est commented with a wry smile.

"I see..." James frowned. "So that's the reason why he seems different compared to the time he left the residence. He lost his magic power."

"I'm sorry, it was my fault that William ended up that way." Est lowered his head in shame. "Because I was too weak, he had to use a Forbidden Spell in order to give us a chance of winning."

"Est, you don't have to worry about William." James commented with a smile. "That boy is always doing something dangerous. Perhaps, this incident will help bring him down a peg and make him less reckless. Sometimes, I worry about him because he is getting stronger at a very fast rate."

"Isn't getting strong a good thing?" Est asked.

"Of course, getting stronger is a good thing." James agreed. "But, getting strong using a shortcut will lead to instability. William should start training from the basics. Since he is my grandson, I believe that he also realized this point."

James paused and looked at Est with praise. "Unlike my stupid grandson, I can tell that you are someone who trained at a very young age. Your surname is Newmont, correct?"

"... Yes," Est replied. He wanted to tell James his full name, but he resisted the urge to do so. There were some things that he was unable to share with other people.

"If I'm not mistaken, that is the surname of a noble that came from the Kingdom of Valeria," James gave Est an appraising look. "Did you perhaps come from Valeria?"

"... My mother came from Valeria," Est replied. "Right now, I'm living in the Hellan Kingdom."

James nodded and decided to not pry any further. "Still, you guys actually defeated a Terrorhand? That's simply amazing. If news of this gets out, you will definitely be treated in high regard by the Royal Family."

"I-I don't need such treatment," Est stuttered. "Lord Ainsworth, please, don't tell anyone about this."

Herman who was standing behind Est bowed his head, "I also ask Lord Ainsworth to not tell anyone about this. The Young Master is someone who doesn't like being in the limelight."

James gave Est a knowing glance and nodded his head in acknowledgement. He was about to talk about William's embarrassing moments during his childhood when he felt his grandson's presence near the residence.

"Gramps, I'm back!" William walked inside the living room with a smile.

"Welcome back, how is your injury?" James asked.

"Already healed, but I'm not allowed to do anything strenuous for a few days," William answered as he sat beside his grandpa.

Ella laid on the floor beside William and rested her head on her baby's lap. William lovingly brushed her head, while his Mama closed her eyes in satisfaction.

"You two are really close," Est teased. "I've never seen someone treat a goat like you do, William."

"Mama Ella is not an ordinary goat," William corrected her. "She is my Mama. The one who raised me since I was a wee old babe. I've been drinking her milk for as long as I can remember."

"Meeeeeeh." Ella bleated as if reminiscing the time she took care of William.

"Ah that reminds me, how long will you be staying in Lont?" William asked. "I still haven't given you a tour of the countryside."

"Well..." Est glanced at Herman and Nana. The truth was, they couldn't stay for long. They already delayed their return to the capital by escorting William back to Lont. Even so, Est didn't want to leave just like this.

"Young Master," Nana gave Est an encouraging smile. "It's fine to be a little selfish. We can stay for two days."

"Thank you, Nana," Est smiled. His smile was so dazzling that, for a moment, William thought that he was actually very beautiful and not handsome. Of course, this thought only lasted for a brief moment.

"Since all of you are William's friends then you will be treated as honored guests. Helen, please prepare the guest rooms for Est and his entourage," James ordered.

"By your will," Helen respectfully bowed her head and left the living room to attend to James' order.

While waiting for their rooms to be prepared, James continued to tell stories about William's childhood. At first, the stories were about William's amazing feats in Lont. However, that didn't last long and James started to tell William's embarrassing moments.

The red-headed boy pleaded to his grandfather to stop embarrassing him in front of the guests, but James didn't care about his feelings. Because of this, Est and Ian continuously teased the pitiful boy until William ran out of the living room out of embarrassment, followed by his Mama Ella, who was hot in his heels.

Chapter 84: Would You Like William To Become Your Exclusive Slave?

Est and Ian stared at the beautiful woman in front of them as if they had met their nemesis.

Celine, William's Master, was lying on the couch in a lazy manner. Her dress, although conservative, wasn't able to hide the wonderful curves of her body. The two boys stared at them and felt their confidence suffer a major blow.

"So, you are William's new friends," Celine said in a teasing manner. "I'm surprised that my disciple managed to make friends and even brought them back here in Lont. Oh, where are my manners? Allow me to introduce myself. I am William's master, you may call me Miss or Lady Celine."

When William arrived in Lont, Celine had watched him from afar using her crystal ball. She didn't come to see him right away because he was with guests. During the battle, Celine noticed right away that the red-headed boy was unable to use magic.

Since she was the one that taught William the forbidden spell, she was able to connect the dots easily. When William got injured, she almost used a long range curse to cripple the Kingsley boy for life.

However, she resisted the urge because she knew that Owen would be able to patch William up without any problems. After the Ainsworth family had dinner, she sent Oliver, the Parrot Monkey, to pass his message to William.

Her message was simple.

"Stupid Disciple, why didn't you visit your Master to announce your arrival? However, since I'm a kind and understanding lady, I will permit you to spend the night with your family. Even so, I expect you to visit me before noon tomorrow.

Ah, before I forget, make sure to bring your three little guests with you. I would like to have a long talk with them."

When William arrived the next day, Celine chased him away by ordering him to buy some ingredients for lunch. She wanted to know more about William's new friends and check if they had hidden agendas in their decision to visit Lont.

Celine always thought of William as an overly trusting person. So, she took it upon herself to check whether these people bore him ill will.

"It's an honor to meet you, Lady Celine," Est replied with a smile. "If possible, I would like to request that you free him from the slave collar on his neck."

"Oh?" Celine raised an eyebrow. "And why should I do that?"

"Because William is our benefactor and it is the right thing to do," Est replied. "Also, he doesn't deserve to be your slave."

"Est, right? I would like to remind you that whatever I do with my disciple is none of your business."

"A True Master would never enslave their own disciple."

The lady and the boy stared at each other. Neither of them were willing to back down. Even Ian, who was seated beside Est, also, joined his Young Master in glaring at the beautiful woman in front of him.

Est and Ian couldn't accept the fact that William was Celine's slave.

"That's too bad, because I can't remove the slave magic that was placed in the collar," Celine lied with a smile. "Of course, even though I can't remove the slave magic, I can pass it to others. So, who among the three of you would like William to become their exclusive slave?"

Est was taken aback by Celine's words. For a brief moment, he thought about William wearing a butler suit and hand feeding him a plate of grapes.

Ian, on the other hand, imagined that William was fanning him with a feathered fan, while he took his afternoon nap.

Est and Ian wavered, and Celine could easily guess that they didn't dislike the idea of William becoming their slave.

The only one who shook his head was Isaac. For him, William was a good person. He didn't want to treat him as a slave.

"How much?" Est asked. "How much will it take for you to pass the ownership of William's slave magic?"

Ian stared at Celine with a serious expression. His thoughts were quite simple, if William became Est's slave then that also meant that William would become his slave. Since that was the case, it would be best if his Young Master was able to buy William's slave contract from his current Master, Celine.

Celine covered her lips and chuckled. "I was just joking with you. How can I possibly relinquish ownership of a handsome Half-Elf? Also, he is my disciple. How can I possibly surrender him to two boys who still haven't grown their hair? Boys who couldn't even beat a Cyclops on their own."

Est's face reddened and Ian scowled. Both of them were thinking of the same thing.

'I hate this woman.'

While the two boys glared at Celine, the door opened and William entered with a smile on his face. Ella followed behind him like a tail. She was William's personal mother and bodyguard in one whole package.

"Master, I bought everything," William announced. "Should I start to cook lunch?"

"Mmm, take the meat of the Golden Scaled Crocodile and make a stew," Celine ordered. "Make sure to put your heart into your cooking. Let your guest have a taste of your culinary skills."

"Understood," William replied. He then glanced at his three friends and gave them a wink. "I don't want to brag, but I'm a good cook. Expect to eat something delicious for lunch."

"I look forward to the dish that you will cook," Est smiled. "I'm very hard to please, so make sure to do our best."

"I'm not picky with food," Isaac commented. "I will eat anything."

"I don't have many expectations, but I'll force myself to eat your cooking," Ian replied. "Just make sure to not add anything funny to the dish or I'll break your bones."

"Hmp! If you were a girl, I'm sure that you would fall head over heels for me after you taste my cooking!" William glared at the irritating boy before he went to the kitchen.

Celine watched this exchange with amusement. The reactions of Est and Ian were clear for her eyes to see. 'These two boys are interesting.'

While Celine was deep in her thoughts, Est decided to ask her another question.

"Why did you teach William Dark Magic?" Est asked. "Do you know that it's the one magic that was banned in the Southern Continent? If people were to see him use it, his life would become miserable."

Celine rolled her eyes at the naive boy who didn't understand what he was talking about. Instead of answering Est's question, she shot back a question of her own.

"Do you know that the first founder of the Hellan Kingdom was a Sovereign of Darkness?" Celine sneered. "If not for Dark Magic then this kingdom would have never come to existence."

"So? What of it?" Est countered. "What happened in the past belongs to the past. Now, Dark Magic is banned from the Southern Continent. Anyone who was caught using it could be sent to prison. Do you want William to suffer such a fate?"

"You don't have to worry about William," Celine replied in a lazy manner. "He won't be staying in the Southern Continent. I will send him to the Central Continent once he comes of age."

"Y-You can't do that!" Est raised his voice. "Why should he leave the Southern Continent?!"

"And why should he stay here?" Celine narrowed her gaze. "You already know that those who practice Dark Magic are not welcome here in the Hellan Kingdom. Since that is the case, the Central Continent is the only place for him to go."

Est felt at a loss, but still decided to refute Celine's words. "He still has Ice Magic. As long as he only uses Ice Magic then no one will know that he also has an affinity for Dark Magic."

Celine had confirmed that Est had really taken a liking to William. Even so, William's journey to the Central Continent was inevitable. Just like the sun would rise from the East, the red-headed boy was bound to go to where the major powers of the world diverged.

The corner of the beautiful woman's lips lifted into a smirk. "Why are you acting like you are his wife? I'm very sure that William is a straight person. He only likes girls."

"I don't see anything wrong with William liking girls," Est stated.

Celine tilted her head as she eyed the handsome boy in front of her. 'Perhaps I'm overthinking things.'

The beautiful lady could tell that Est had a good relationship with William. However, she kept on thinking that something was off. In the end, she decided to ask for Est's opinion about William's fiancée, Rebecca.

"Have you seen William's fiancée?" Celine inquired. "I've heard that she was a born genius. She must be very pretty, no?"

"She's just so~so," Est replied with a pout.

Est felt uncomfortable whenever he remembered the genius girl that was forced to become William's fiancée. Although he could tell that William wasn't interested in Rebecca, the fact still remained that James and Lawrence recognized their arranged marriage.

As long as the 7 year duel agreement existed, the chances of the two of them to really become a couple remained a possibility.

Chapter 85: William's Dilemma

Meetings and partings were both important cycles of life.

Two days had passed and it was now time for Est and his entourage to return to the capital of the Hellan Kingdom. William, James, and Ella stood beside their carriage at the Northern Gate of Lont.

"Thank you for your hospitality," Est said with a sad smile. "I wish I could stay longer, but I have important matters to attend to at the capital."

"Don't be sad," William replied as he held Est's hand. "We're not parting forever. You can send me letters when you get back to the capital. Isn't that why grandpa prepared a messenger hawk for you? Even if it's the capital, the hawk will always find its way back to Lont."

Est nodded his head and faced the Lord of Lont, James, "Thank you for the messenger Hawk, Lord Ainsworth. If I get the opportunity, I will return to visit Lont."

"We will be waiting," James chuckled as he patted Est's shoulder. "You and your entourage are always welcome here in Lont."

"Isaac, take care of Est," William said as he shook Isaac's hand.

"It is my duty to serve the Young Master," Isaac replied. "If you have time, visit us in the capital."

William nodded his head and shook hands with Herman and Nana. He completely ignored Ian, which made the latter look at him in disdain.

Seeing that William was hell bent on ignoring him, Ian decided to take a step back and compliment him. "You are a good cook, the dishes you made were the most delicious foods that I tasted in my life. If you need to find a job, just visit the Young Master's residence in the capital. You will be paid generously to be our chief cook."

"Me? A chief cook? Sorry, but I only want to cook for beautiful girls," William raised his chin arrogantly. "If you were a beautiful girl then I might have considered it. However, since you're not then you can only eat my cooking in your dreams."

"... So, if I was a girl, you would cook for me?" Ian asked.

"If you were a Beautiful Girl then I will cook for you." William nodded his head. "Why? You plan to change your gender?"

William crossed his arms over his chest and looked at Ian from head to toe. "Well, since you're not half bad looking, maybe you can really become a beauty if you turned into a girl. However, since that's not happening then don't even think about mooching off my cooking."

"How about me?" Est inquired. "Will you cook for me if I asked?"

"Of course," William replied in a heartbeat. "You're my friend, so it's only normal for me to let you have a taste. As for this... snot-nosed pansy, he can just go ahead and suck an egg."

"Who are you calling snot-nosed pansy?!" Ian lunged at William.

The two boys wrestled on the ground until their clothes were covered in dirt. Everyone pretended that they didn't know them and moved near the carriage.

"Hmp! Without your magic, you're no match for me!" Ian said in a triumphant manner as he sat on William's back.

"Just you wait until my power returns to me, I will let you know your place!" William struggled to stand, but Ian had pinned him securely on the ground.

Est lightly cleared his throat and Ian released William from his hold. The snot-nosed pansy returned to Est's side with a smug expression as he looked at the pitiful shepherd who was busy dusting his clothes.

"See you later, William," Est waved his hand as he entered the carriage.

"Yes, see you later." William smiled as he waved back.

Nana, Isaac, and Ian boarded the carriage. Herman, on the other hand, gave William and Est a respectful bow before sitting in the coachman's seat.

"Let's meet again at the capital, Little Will." Herman winked at him as he urged the horses to move forward.

"Mama Ella."

"Meeeeeeh!"

William mounted Ella's back and the two ran after the carriage. James watched all of this with a satisfied expression as he placed his hand behind his back.

"Don't forget about me, okay?" Est pleaded as he looked at William from the carriage window.

"How can I forget you?" William grinned. "You still owe me for saving your life. You better prepare the payment for the next time we see each other."

Est smiled and nodded his head.

William and Ella followed the carriage until they reached the border of Lont. with a final wave of his hand, he bid his newfound friends goodbye as they journeyed back to the capital of the Hellan Kingdom.

After dinner, William went to see his Master and told her everything that happened during his journey to the Holy Temple. Although Celine had already heard the simplified version of the story, she wanted to know the full details of the battle.

"The difficulty of the quest was truly hard," Celine had to admit that William had a close call when he fought against the Terrorhand. Even if Celine swapped places with William, the chances of victory were slim.

The Cyclops only had one weakness and that was Holy Magic. Even if Celine used her ultimate move, Finger of Death, the chances of killing the Cyclops was almost non-existent. It was truly a miracle that two children with different powers, One Holy, and one Dark, were in the right place at the right time.

If either one of them were not present inside the Trial of Courage then it would have been a suicide mission instead of a trial.

"What are your plans now?" Celine asked. She wanted to know how her disciple would act in this time now that he was at his weakest state.

"The battle against Kingsley taught me that I can't always rely on magic to fight against strong opponents," William answered. "I need to build my foundation and learn from scratch."

Celine was satisfied with William's answer, so she decided to end their meeting and allow William to think about which method he wanted to use in order to acquire martial techniques on which to build his foundation.

She could tell that William already had a plan in mind, so it would only be a bother if she tried to spoon feed him at this point in time.

Celine was right. William already had a plan in mind and he immediately put it into action.

After saying goodbye to his Master, William headed to the goat pen that was just outside his Master's Manor. Chronos, Aslan, and the rest of the goats were already waiting for him. They had already properly rested and were looking forward to their dungeon expedition.

"System, change my Subclass to Disciple of Thunder," William ordered.

< Subclass has been successfully changed. Should I also pool all experience points to this Job Class? >

"Yes."

< Experience settings have been updated. >

"Thank you." After thanking the system, William looked at his herd with a smile on his face. "Are all of you ready?"

""Meeeeeeeh!""

"Good." William nodded his head and activated the ring on his finger. "Gate Open!"

A few seconds passed, but nothing happened.

"Um?" William looked at his surroundings in surprise. "I think I'm getting rusty. Okay, this time is the real deal. Gate Open!"

William raised his hand as he tried to activate the Ring of Conquest. However, the ring remained dormant.

"System! What is going on?" William asked anxiously. "Why is the ring not working? Did it get damaged during the battle against the Cyclops?"

< Host, please, wait a minute as I troubleshoot the problem.>

< Identifying the root of the problem... >

< Finding the root problem successful! >

William looked at the notifications with an anxious expression. He hoped that the system would find the problem and offer him a solution on how to fix it.

< To answer the Host's question, there is no problem with the Ring of Conquest. It was undamaged during the fight against the Cyclops. >

"No problem? Then how come I can't activate it?" William asked.

< Host, did you forget? You are unable to use your Mana. It is disabled right now. The Ring of Conquest can only be activated by using magic power. Since the host is unable to use even a drop of magic, the ring will not be able to take you to the Goblin Crypt."

William swayed on his feet. He felt like fainting when he heard the System's report. If not for Ella supporting his body, he might have already collapsed on the ground due to the bad news he had just received.

The Goblin Crypt was his main source of experience points. If he couldn't enter the dungeon then what was he supposed to do to level up his Job Classes?

Chapter 86: The Last Nail In The Coffin

"System, is there really no other way?" William asked. His heart was currently aching from the consecutive disappointments that he had encountered since his magic power had been sealed.

< Well, it's not like there isn't a way... but I'm not sure if it's going to work. >

"Anything will do! Just make the ring work!"

< Host, even if we do succeed in activating the Ring of Conquest, the default setting of the Goblin Crypt might get affected. Are you sure you wish to continue? >

"What do you mean when you say that the default setting of the Goblin Crypt might get affected?" William inquired. "Is there even a default setting for the Goblin Crypt?"

< The Ring of Conquest is a Unique Item that was forged by using the fires of the Demonic Lands, and metal that came from another world. The techniques that were used in crafting it don't belong to this world. In order to make the ring work in this realm, it had to adhere to the laws of this world. >

"System, can you simplify things in layman's terms?"

< Host, in short, even if you managed to enter the Goblin Crypt, it might become bugged. >

William contemplated, but still decided to go ahead with the forceful activation of the Ring of Conquest.

"Even if it's bugged, go ahead and activate the ring. This is an order!"

< Understood. Accepting the order... >

< Borrowing the powers of the three divinities present inside the host's soul... >

< Ding! >

< Congratulations! You are now able to activate the Ring of Conquest (Bugged Version) >

"Bugged Version?" William muttered. "Well, as long as it's usable then it's fine. System, are you sure that the ring is now usable?"

< Yes. The ring is usable, but the settings of the dungeon might have changed. Host, please prepare yourself for the worst. >

"Don't raise any flags!"

< ... Just don't blame me later if anything happens. >

William breathed deeply in order to compose himself. He knew that the system was doing its best to help him, and he was truly thankful for its help. The only problem was that its ominous warning was giving him a feeling of restlessness.

'It's of no use worrying about this stuff,' William thought as he clenched his fist. "Gate Open!"

A blinding flash of light enveloped everyone inside the goatshed. When William regained his vision, he found himself on the Eleventh Floor of the Goblin Crypt.

"Good, it worked!" William pumped his fist. He then immediately checked his herd to see if everyone had arrived safely.

"Is everyone here?"

""Meeeeeh!""

"Okay, let's do a headcount!"

"Meeeeeh!"

"Meeeeeh!"

"Meeeeeh!"

The goats counted one by one and William was relieved that everyone was present.

"Mama Ella, do you feel anything weird?"

Ella pondered for a while before shaking her head.

"How about you guys? Do you feel anything strange?"

Chronos, Aslan, and the other goats also shook their heads.

William looked at them seriously as he gave out his instruction. "There might be some changes inside the dungeon. Do not act recklessly and always follow your team leaders. Do I make myself clear?"

""Meeeeeh!""

"Ok, let's go!"

Five minutes later...

< Exp Gained: 2 >

< Exp Gained: 2 >

"Um?" William looked at the notifications appearing on his screen. For a moment, he thought that his eyes were playing tricks with him. However, the consecutive notifications proved that everything he was seeing was real.

< Exp Gained: 2 >

< Exp Gained: 2 >

< Exp Gained: 2 >

"... Are you for real?" William rubbed his eyes. Seeing that the numbers didn't change after rubbing his eyes, he immediately cursed inwardly. "Damn it is real!"

The goats were not able to see the notifications like William. They were busy fighting against the Hobgoblins in front of them using their teamwork. After the group vanquished their foes, William immediately ordered them to rush towards the Fourteenth Floor.

He wanted to know if all the floors had been affected by this "Bug".

Along the way, he discovered that the monster population inside the dungeon was denser than normal. It was as if the spawn rate of the dungeon had increased by 4 to 5 times the normal spawn rate.

If this was during the time when the ring was still working perfectly, William would have laughed out loud because more monsters means more experience points. However, right now, he didn't find the situation funny.

Even if the number of monsters increased, so what? It wouldn't change the fact that the experience points he would gain from killing them was terrible.

Ten minutes later...

William watched as the Hobgoblin Shaman disappeared into particles of light after being defeated by Aslan and his team.

The red-headed boy's eyes became as dead as a fish when saw the notification that appeared in front of him.

< Exp Gained: 10 >

'It's over,' William thought as his suspicions were confirmed. The Ring of Conquest was working like it used to. However, the "Bug" had affected the amount of experience points that could be gained inside the Goblin Crypt.

William had been used to seeing experience points in the hundreds, but now, it didn't even exceed the number 10.

The red-headed boy gritted his teeth as he ordered his herd to go to the Eighteenth Floor. William wasn't in the mood to farm experience points and led the goats to the stairs leading to the unexplored floor.

However, on the stairs that led to the Eighteenth Floor, a barrier blocked his way. The goats tried to forcefully break it by using everything in their arsenal. Even Ella stepped in to help destroy the barrier, but it was all in vain.

The barrier stood without a scratch as if mocking their forceful attempts to bypass the law of the dungeon.

"Enough," William ordered with a sigh. "Let's go back. I need to think things through."

William activated the Ring of Conquest and left the dungeon with his herd. The first thing he did when they returned to the real world was to get some fresh air. He went outside the goat shed while dragging a stack of hay. The red-headed boy laid down on top of it as he looked up in the heavens.

While gazing at the countless stars that were shining in the sky, William finally regained his calm. Although he didn't show it, he felt really frustrated at the setbacks that he had encountered as of late.

The loss of his magic power had crippled him in more ways than he imagined and he was struggling to accept his new reality.

It was at that moment when he felt something wet touch the side of his face.

"Mama Ella." William pulled his Mama close to him as he buried his face in her neck.

Ella felt something wet and warm soak her coat. Not long after, she heard William's choked sobs as his body shuddered from time to time.

William had been bottling up the pain and frustration of his loss deep inside his heart. He thought that he would be able to endure it all, but the helplessness he felt inside the Goblin Crypt drove the last nail into the coffin.

The negative feelings that he had been holding back inside his heart flowed like a raging river. The floodgates that had been holding it back had burst open and William's tears fell like rain.

He felt despair. He felt helplessness, and most of all, he felt that he had lost all hope.

Since he was someone who had been reincarnated in a new world, William hadn't had the chance to "act his age". He was an eighteen-year-old boy stuck inside the body of a ten-year-old.

Everyone said that he was "mature for his age", but the truth was, he was still a kid at heart. He was not an adult. When he died, he was just a teenager that was suffering from a terminal disease. A teenager that had made a deal with the Hospital Director to donate his heart at the time of his death.

William did his best to live his second life to the fullest. He gave it everything, challenged anything. With three divinities, and a system that guaranteed that he would stand above the rest, William would be lying if he said that he didn't feel special.

He would be lying if he said that he wasn't a chosen one. After receiving so many blessings, and a cheat that broke the balance of the world, how could he possibly fail?

Yet, here he was, crying his heart out, like a child who had lost his favorite toy. Ella closed her eyes and allowed William to vent out his pent-up feelings.

William rarely cried. He cried when Ella almost died inside the dungeon. He cried when Celine made him her slave, and he cried more when they were being tortured with curses that almost drove him insane.

Ella didn't know how long William cried that night. When she felt his body become lax, Ella instinctively knew that her baby had cried himself to sleep. She then helped him lay down in a more comfortable position, before looking for another stack of hay.

Ella pushed the stack of hay beside the sleeping boy and laid down on top of it. She moved her body closer to her baby, and the latter instinctively positioned himself within her soft embrace.

William's second mother looked down on her son with a gentle gaze. She only hoped for William to be happy. Ella knew that William was currently feeling frustrated, but she believed that he would be able to overcome this hurdle.

After all, she was the one that raised him. She knew more than anyone else, how amazing her little baby could be when he became serious.

Chapter 87: Rankings And Professions [Part 1]

When William opened his eyes, he found himself buried within Ella's embrace. He felt so comfortable, and warm that he didn't feel like getting up. Since that was the case, he decided to start the day like he always did.

< Daily Quest: Drink Milk has been completed! >

< Rewards: 6 Exp Points. >

Everyday since he had arrived in Lont, he never failed to drink his Mama's milk. It had already become a habit. After having his fill, Ella licked the side of his face like she always did to bid him a good morning.

"Good Morning, Mama."

"Meeeeh."

William kissed the side of Ella's face as he reluctantly sat up. He then raised his hands, to do a bit of stretching, before looking at the sunrise that was slowly basking the land with its light.

After crying for an entire night, William felt lighter. Although the problem he was facing was still there, it didn't feel as heavy as it used to.

William bid Ella goodbye as he entered his Master's house. As her disciple, Celine had tasked the red-headed boy to do the house chores and cook for her. William didn't mind because he was used to doing these kinds of things.

Back in the orphanage, he would also wake up early to help in the kitchen. He would assist the aunties in cooking breakfast for his little brothers and sisters because they were short handed.

An hour later, Celine lazily came down the stairs and plopped herself in a chair at the dining table. The smell of William's cooking had woken her up from her sleep.

"Breakfast will be ready in five minutes, Master."

"Mmm."

Celine watched William as he busied himself in the kitchen. When she had just taken him as her disciple, she decided to ask him to cook for her because she was feeling lazy. She never thought that William's cooking was on such a high level.

Since then, William had officially become her personal cook. The food that William made were dishes he was familiar with back on Earth. Although he was lacking in ingredients like soy sauce, vinegar, and other condiments, he was still able to bring out the delicious flavors on the food.

Celine was even tempted to find an artifact that would help William gain a Cooking Job Class. Her thoughts were quite simple. If William could already make something this delicious, wouldn't it become more delicious if he got some skills that would boost his culinary skills?

Unfortunately, there was no such artifact in Lont, so Celine had to put her dreams of turning her disciple into a Professional Chef that would cook exclusively for her on hold.

Five minutes later, the table was filled with the dishes that William had cooked.

"Our breakfast for today is William's special fried rice, William's pancakes, William's sunny side up, William's sandwiches, and William's honey-cured bacon," William said with a smile. "Master, what kind of accompanying drinks would you like to have? Coffee or tea?"

"Just plain water will do," Celine replied as she piled up some bacon and eggs on her plate. Unlike other people, Celine liked to eat meat during breakfast.

William nodded his head and fetched a glass and pitcher of water for Celine. After making sure that she had everything that she needed, William sat on his chair and began to eat as well.

The two ate their meal in peace because Celine didn't like to talk while eating. When they finished their breakfast, Celine went back upstairs, while William cleaned up the table, and washed the dishes.

When his chores were done, he returned to the goat shed and took the goats to the river to take a bath. As he floated on the water, William thought of the things that he must do for the day.

His first priority was to find a way to increase his job levels. William had already decided to brush up on his martial skills and focus on the basic job classes like, swordsman, archer, spearman, monk, and fighter.

Among the non-magic Job Classes, these five professions were the foundations of all martial arts in the Southern Continent. The battle against Kingsley made William realize that he was lacking in battle techniques.

The battle style he had been using had evolved in fighting against monsters. However, fighting against humans was trickier. They were more intelligent and their means of fighting was vastly different from wild beasts.

"System, can you tell me how the people of this world become stronger?" William asked.

< To answer the host's question, would you like the simplified version or the detailed version? >

"The simplified version, please."

< Understood. >

< There are two ways on how people grow stronger in this world. One is through cultivation, the other through repetition. >

< In the path of Cultivation, the way to get stronger is to gather as many resources as you can. Host, do you know that everyone born in this world had a Talent Grade? >

"Yes," William replied. "Talent Grades are E, D, C, B, A, S, and Perfect Grade."

< Correct. I will be giving an example first. For a magician, the fastest way to raise their magic power is to use Magic Crystals. The power rankings of magicians are called Circles. The lowest is the First Circle, while the highest is the Tenth Circle. >

< Each Circle has ten stages. Only after the magician has managed to breakthrough to the tenth stage would they advance to a higher circle. Host, are you following me so far? >

"Yes," William replied. "Bring on the info dump."

(A/N: Kekeke)

< The lowest talent Grade E, allows a magician to reach up to the peak of the First Circle. Unless they find a way to raise their grade, they wouldn't be able to advance to the Second Circle for the rest of their lives. >

< Grade D talent allows the magician to break through up to the Second Circle, Grade C talent allows them to break through to the Third Circle. Grade B talent is a little different because it allows them to breakthrough up to the Fifth Circle. >

< Grade A gives them a chance to break through the Seventh Circle, While S, allows them to reach up to the Ninth Circle. As for Perfect Grade Talent allows them to break through to the 10th Circle. >

'Wow, doesn't that make my Ex-Fiance a lucky girl?' William thought.

< Of course, the speed of breaking through the ranks will depend on resources. If you have a steady supply of High-Grade Magic Crystals then becoming a top-tier magician is within reach.

Sadly, not everyone has this opportunity. Only the members of royal families, the nobility, and Sects who have vast resources have the ability to groom future Archmages and Archons. >

"Where do you get Magic Crystals?" William asked.

< Magic Crystals are mined from the Earth. Some of these mines appear near Ley Lines where magic and spirit power are concentrated. >

< Now, let's talk about the basic Job Classes like swordsman, and archers. These Job Classes can also grow through cultivation, but they rely more on repetition. An archer will only become an expert if they practice shooting their arrows everyday. As their experience accumulates, they also gain Skills. >

< These skills gain a level or improve the more the archer uses them. It is similar to gaining a higher proficiency as your master a skill or technique. Most Martial Classes get stronger in this manner. >

< The same could be said for the swordsman. In order to become an expert, they needed to continuously hone their techniques and gain experience through battle in order to become stronger. Cultivation is more like a secondary support to them to make their bodies stronger. >

< Unlike Magicians, Swordsmen and the other Martial Classes doesn't rely on Magic Crystals in order to strengthen their bodies. They rely on Beast Cores that are taken from the monsters that they have slain. >

"Um? Beast Cores?" William remembered the two Millennial-Grade Beastcores in his possession after slaying the Thunder Horned Wolf and Terrorhand.

< The Power Rankings for Martial Classes are different from Magicians, their ranks are measured by the Adventurer's guild, Hunter's Guild, and other corresponding organizations, like the Holy Temples, scattered around the continent. >

< The rankings for the martial classes are Copper, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Mithril, Adamantium, Black, and Saint. >

"How do they determine the rankings?" William asked. "Do they increase their rank if they finish missions like the ones in games?"

< Yes and No. Unlike magicians who have a proper measuring tool to check their magic power, the power level of Martial Classes varies from individual to individual. Just like the Host, those who specialize in Martial Skills are able to upgrade their profession once they meet its requirement. >

< For example, an archer could choose to become a ranger, hunter, or a sniper. In order to do so, they must undergo a trial in a temple like what the Host experienced in the Pantheon of Courage. Only by succeeding will they be able to upgrade their professions. >

< An Archer of the Gold rank would always be inferior to a Sniper or Ranger of the same Rank. Host, do you know why this happens? >

"Is it because of Skills?"

< Yes. >

< Also, once a person decides to upgrade their profession, they have the option to choose a deity to follow. For example, a ranger that worship a deity would gain additional boost to their strength. They could either worship the God of the Hunt, God of Marksmanship, God of Nature, and other Gods that align with their profession. >

< Each God has different blessings and specialties. >

"So temples are also used as places to change someone's profession."

< Yes. Some temples only worship a specific God, while others allow the worship of multiple Gods. This is why there are several temples scattered not only in the Hellan Kingdom, but in all continents of the world. However, there are some individuals that also chose not to worship any Gods, and just advance their rank as they see fit. >

William wanted to know more about the world, so he decided to learn more information from the system. He believed that understanding how the professions work in this world would allow him to gain some insights on the path he had to choose.

Chapter 88: Rankings And Professions [Part 2]

"Okay, so Martial Job Classes get stronger by repetition and cultivation. Can I also become proficient in a Job Class if I train myself like shooting arrows at a target?" William asked.

< It's possible. If the Host Practice shooting arrows then your shooting proficiency will increase. However, it would be much easier if the Host just acquired the Shooting Proficiency Skill. This is the difference between the host and other people. What others need to train for years, the host can easily learn in half a day. >

"Isn't that cheating?"

< Host, you have been cheating since Day 1. >

"It's not cheating, it's called plot progression!"

< Sure. Whatever you say. >

"Ok, let's go back a bit," William said as he tried to change the subject. "You said Martial Job Classes can get stronger by using Beast Cores. Can I also use them?"

< Yes. >

"Really?"

< Definitely. If the Host were to choose to consume the Millennial-Grade Beast Core that you received from the Terrorhand, you will instantly gain 2 Million Experience Points. If you choose to consume the Millennial-Grade Beast Core from the Thunder Horned Wolf, you will get 1.2 Million Experience Points. >

'T-This is it!' William became excited at the prospect of using Beast Cores to level up his Job Classes. Right now, he had two Millennial-Grade Beast Cores in his possession. If he used it, he could easily raise his Disciple of Thunder to its Max level.

"Can I use any kind of Beast Core?" William was planning to ask his Grandpa to help him find or purchase Beast Cores to level up his Job Classes.

< Yes. However, there is a restriction. Host can only consume the Beast Cores that you had personally acquired. The System will not accept Beast Cores that have been outsourced from other places. >

"Tsk, what is this discrimination?" William nagged at the system. "Why are you preventing me from cheating my way to get stronger? Whose side are you on?"

< I will always be on the Host's side. However, I must also follow the laws of this world. Host, just do your best to gather your own Beast Cores and grow stronger. >

William grumbled, but he still felt happy about the information he received from the system. Now he had more options to increase his Job Levels while waiting for the Five-Year Seal to disappear from his body.

After returning to the goat shed, William meditated in order to clear his mind. He now had two options in front of him.

The first one was to use the Millennial-Grade Beast Cores to upgrade his Prestige Class, Disciple of Thunder.

The second one was to just focus on the Basic Job Classes and become proficient in them through repetition and training. Although the experience points he would gain from the Goblin Crypt was abysmal, it was still a good place to farm experience points.

'Even a mosquito has meat,' William thought as he looked at his Job Classes. 'If I farmed experience points for a year, I can probably raise one Job Class to level 20.'

The System told William that the Martial Job Classes he had acquired have their own War Techniques that were tailor made to match his proficiency. The good news was that, after learning them, the technique would be embedded in his memory permanently.

The only thing he needed to do was to practice it regularly, or use it to battle to become proficient.

His Swordsman Class had the skill < Swift Blade Sword Art (Basic) >.

His Archer Class had the skill < Wind Breaker Bow Art (Basic) >.

His Spearman Class had the skill < Relentless Dragon Spear Art (Basic) >

His Fighter Class had the skill < Executioner War Art (Basic) >

His Monk Class had the skill < Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon War Art (Basic) >

As William gazed at these Martial Arts, he felt that he was getting closer to becoming a Jack of All Trades, Master of None.

After a brief struggle, William opened his Disciple of Thunder Skill Tree and checked to see if this was a Job Class that heavily relied on Mana.

'As expected, this Job Class relies heavily on magic power,' William sighed as he read all the skills of the Prestige Class. 'Still, the passive skills it possesses are quite interesting.'

William's gaze landed on the four skills that belonged to the Disciple of Thunder that didn't require any Mana.

< Lightning God War Art (Basic) >

(Requires 10 Skill Points to Unlock)

-- The Martial Art of the God of Thunder.

-- Very effective against Demons, Spirit Beasts, Elementals, Evil Spirits, Undead, and Devils.

< Lightning Reflexes 10 / 10 >

-- Increase Agility Stat +30

-- The user's reflexes are faster than normal

-- Increase reaction rate by 100%

< Child of Thunder >

(Requires 5 Skill Points to Unlock)

-- Able to manipulate Lightning from any source to do your bidding.

< Heavenly Phantasm Movement Technique (Basic) >

(Requires 5 Skill Points to Unlock)

-- The movement Technique of the God of Thunder

If William used his Millennial-Grade Beast Core, he would be able to raise the Disciple of Thunder to its Max Level. Although he wouldn't be able to use the powerful offensive skills of this Job Class, the four passive skills still caught William's interest.

William was very keen in acquiring the Lightning God War Art and the Heavenly Phantasm Movement Technique. With these two skills in his possession, he would be able to raise their proficiency inside the Goblin Crypt until he mastered them to perfection.

Even if he had to switch to other Job Classes, his mastery of these two skills would remain with him for life.

Also, he could freely assign the skill Lightning Reflexes, and Child of Thunder to his permanent skill slot. These two skills are interchangeable depending on the situation. The cool thing about the Child of Thunder was that William could harness the power of lightning using any source.

What did this mean? It meant that he could manipulate a Lightning Storm and use it to hurl lightning bolts at his enemies. This was a very tempting opportunity for the pitiful William who had lost his magic powers!

Three hours passed before William finalized his decision.

"System, I would like to consume the Millennial-Grade Beast Core of the Terrorhand. Place all experience points in the Disciple of Thunder!"

< Acknowledged. >

< Consuming Millennial-Grade Beast Core. >

< Transferring Experience Points... >

< Ding! >

< The prestige class Disciple of Thunder had reached its Max Level! >

< Would you like to Advance to the next Job Class? Yes / No >

"Advance to the next Job Class!" William ordered.

< Ding! >

-- You had successfully ascended to Prince of Thunder

-- A Prince that was born to wield the power of thunder and lightning.

-- Lightning Magic effectiveness increased by 50%

-- Host has learned skill: Thunder God's Wrath

William could immediately feel the effect of his ascension. The sensation felt so good that he couldn't help but close his eyes in order to immerse himself in that euphoric sensation. It was as if all the pain and frustration that were still lingering inside his heart were washed away by his newfound powers.

When William opened his eyes, a lightning bolt flashed briefly inside his pupils. He was like a new person that had been baptized by the power of lightning. William laughed. He laughed out loud.

Ella who was standing by his side, looked at him with a gentle gaze. She could tell that her baby had finally found his path, and pulled himself out of his depression.

William wanted to share the happiness he was feeling at the moment, so he hurriedly gave his Mama a Hug. He then kissed her repeatedly on her cheeks before he ran towards the other goats to shower them with hugs and kisses.

On that day, in the small town of Lont, William's true training was about to begin.

Chapter 89: The Dungeon Conqueror [Part 1]

"Gramps, I want to be stronger," William said with a serious expression. "Please, help me."

William had thought long and hard and finally came to the decision to ask James for help in order to build his foundations in Martial Combat. He believed that with the help of his passive skills, he would be able to fill the gap that was left when he lost his magic powers.

"You want to be stronger?" James asked. "Getting stronger is always good, but what is your purpose for wanting to get stronger?"

"Purpose to get stronger?"

"Everyone must have a reason to become strong. Imagine yourself as the sharpest sword. Sure, you are sharp and powerful, but if there is no reason for your wielder to use you, you're just nothing but a sword. A weapon that serves no purpose is nothing compared to a kitchen knife that is used to cook food."

William was dumbfounded by his grandfather's explanation. He had long thought of his Grandpa as a battle junkie. A man with brawns, but no brains. For James to speak such scholarly words made the red-headed boy realize that he still didn't know the true character of his happy-go-lucky grandfather.

'Purpose? What is my purpose for getting stronger?' William was at a loss. He hadn't thought that far when he decided to ask his Grandpa for help. He thought that the reason people sought strength was just to become stronger. The young boy didn't think of the reasons behind their desire to gain power.

James nodded in satisfaction when he saw William's reaction. He had seen many youths who desired to get stronger, but they didn't have any goals in life. Without a destination in mind, these youths were then led astray by others who used their strength for their own convenience.

James didn't want his grandson to become someone else's chess piece. He wanted William to control his own destiny and trudge down the path that would allow him to reach his own goals in life.

"Come back to me when you have found your answer," James patted William's shoulder. "When you finally find your purpose, I promise that I will do everything in my power to help you gain the power you seek. Until then, think carefully."

William nodded his head and left his Grandpa's room without a destination in mind. Soon, he found himself on the hill overlooking Lont.

When he left his hometown to go to the temple, he met Est, Ian, Isaac, Herman, and Nana. They reminded him that Lont was only a small speck of dust within the Southern Continent. Out there, in the vast world of Hestia, many kingdoms and empires could be found.

It made William feel so small. Like he was just an insignificant boy in a world filled with billions of people. Like a grain of sand found on the beach, and a star within the starry skies. What can a small boy like him achieve, in this vast world that is filled with geniuses and experts that look down upon the mortal realm like Gods?

It was at that moment when William's gaze landed on the ring on his finger.

"The Ring of Conquest," William muttered absentmindedly at the ring that started it all. If not for this ring, William wouldn't have entered the Goblin Crypt and unlocked the Shepherd Job Class. He might have lived his life differently compared to the life he had lived up to now.

Suddenly it dawned on him. The ring belonged to his father. Because his father died, his mother had no choice but to send him away from the Silvermoon Continent in order to protect him.

She wanted to protect him from whom? What are the circumstances behind his father's death? Why was there a need for him to separate from his mother?

William had thought about these questions before when he was younger. However, he had set them aside with the excuse of "I'll find the answer when I get older". He didn't think much about it, but now that he was thinking of what he really wanted to do in his life, his focus had locked onto this mystery that had plagued his childhood.

The red-headed boy hurriedly left the hill and returned to the residence. His purpose was to ask his Grandpa, James, to tell him about the events that had happened in the past. He wanted to know the truth about his true identity and the identity of his parents.

He went directly to his Grandpa's room, but it was empty.

"Will? Are you looking for your grandpa?" Helen asked as she walked behind him, carrying a broom.

"Aunt, do you know where Grandpa is?" William asked.

"The Master went to Owen's house to discuss a few things," Helen answered.

"Thank you!" William gave Helen a quick hug before heading towards Owen's house.

Ella and the rest of William's herd were currently in the valley with the other goats and sheep of Lont. It had been a while since the goats had returned to their grazing area and William decided to allow them to head to the valley to feed on the fresh grass that had grown in abundance since the time of the Beast Tide.

Ella was there in order to supervise them, just in case something unexpected happened.

Just as Helen told him, James was indeed inside Owen's house. The two old men were sharing a bottle of red wine that Owen had been keeping in his wine cellar for many years. William felt a bit awkward as he sat between the two men who were drinking red wine and munching on lamb sausages.

"Have you found your purpose for getting stronger?" James asked. "You can talk freely. Owen is someone who knows how to keep secrets. Also, my purpose for coming here is to convince this old bugger to help with your training."

"Who are you calling an old bugger?" Owen snapped. "You come here to drink my wine, and eat my sausages, and you dare to call me old bugger? Do you want me to whack you?"

James laughed awkwardly as he returned his attention to his grandson.

William gave Owen a brief glance before clearing his throat. "Gramps, I want to know the truth about me and my parents."

The lively atmosphere in the room immediately cooled down as James and Owen stared at William with a serious expression.

"Should I leave?" Owen asked. "I think it is better if the two of you speak in private."

"Sorry for the trouble," James replied with an apologetic gaze.

"It's fine." Owen stood up and patted William's shoulder before leaving the room. He made sure to properly lock the door behind him and cast a soundproof barrier to ensure that his wife wouldn't accidentally overhear their conversation.

The grandfather and grandson pair stared at each other for a few minutes before James sighed and broke the silence.

"I was planning to tell you this when you were a little older, but I guess now is also a good time for it," James said as he emptied the wine in his glass. "Do you want the long version or the short version?"

"The short version please," William replied.

James nodded his head. "Your father, Maxwell, was a great man. Before you were born, he was hailed as the most powerful man in the Southern Continent. He rose up like a firework and burned brightly like a comet."

James sighed as he remembered William's father. "Your father was a Dungeon Conqueror. He had the ability to fuse the dungeon cores with his body. Once he conquered a dungeon, he could summon the monsters that 'belonged' to that dungeon. Basically, he was a one man army that has thousands of monsters under his command. Isn't that cool?"

"That's so OP..." William gulped.

"OP?"

"It means Overpowered, Gramps."

"Yes. Your father was OP." James chuckled and nodded his head. "Perhaps due to how strong his profession was, the Gods themselves placed a limit on it. There can only exist one Dungeon Conqueror in every generation. As long as that person still lives, no one else can acquire this incredibly rare profession."

William imagined himself sitting on the head of a dragon as legions of monsters conquered the land under his command. The sight was similar to the grand battles in the fantasy movies that he had watched on Earth. William was half-tempted to ask the system about the requirements necessary in order to obtain the Dungeon Conqueror Job Class.

James didn't know what William was thinking as he continued his tale. "Your father was indeed very strong, but he has one weakness and that was... he was very weak against beautiful women. Back then, the elves were losing the battle against the Demon Lord who was hell bent on conquering the Silvermoon Continent.

Out of desperation, they conceived a plan in order to turn the tables. That plan was to use a 'Honey Trap' in order to lure your father to the Silvermoon Continent."

James gave William a teasing grin as his eyes twinkled in delight. "Guess who was the lady that they used to honey trap your father?"

"Of course it would be none other than the most beautiful lady in the Silvermoon Continent," William raised his chin in an arrogant manner. "My Mother."

"You're right, and the Elven Council has regretted their decision to this day." James' laughter boomed inside the room as if to ridicule the long eared bastards who thought that they could one-up his son with their schemes.

Chapter 90: The Dungeon Conqueror [Part 2]

"Your Mother, Arwen, is the Saintess of the Elven Race," James said with a smile. "She is the Guardian of the World Tree and her authority is equal to the Elven Council's. When the Council begged her to seduce your father, she agreed. However, Arwen had no intention of marrying your father.

"Their plan was to only use your father to resist the Demon Invasion then give him ample rewards after the invaders were repelled from the Elven Lands. What they didn't expect was that your father, Maxwell, was not only an expert in conquering dungeons. He was also an expert in conquering the hearts of women."

James paused as another chuckle escaped his lips. "Even though your mother was a High-Elf and a strong-willed woman, she was still a maiden that had never known what love was. Maxwell was no fool. He knew what the elves were planning.

"However, he had also fallen helplessly in love with your mother. Like I said, my son had a weakness for beautiful women and your mother was the most beautiful woman that he had seen in his life."

William was captivated with James' storytelling skills and waited in anticipation for the continuation of the story.

"Three days before the elves planned to counter-attack the invading Demon Army, Maxwell snuck inside the Sacred Grove where the World Tree and your mother resided. What the Elven Council didn't know was that Arwen had already fallen for your father's charms and had secretly told him the hidden path that would allow him to enter the Sacred Grove without the guards noticing him.

"There, the two shared a night of passion. Arwen had surrendered herself to Maxwell, and the latter took responsibility for making her fall in love with him. In the original plan, this was not supposed to happen. The Saintess should only devote herself to the World Tree for the rest of her life. Of course, this doesn't mean that the Saintess couldn't get married and have children.

"She can, but like I said this is not part of the Elven Council's plan because a Saintess is bound by a very strict rule. The man who takes her chastity will be her one and only lover for the rest of her life. Not even the Elven Council could overturn this rule that the First Guardian had decreed since the World Tree was born.

"Back then, the Head of the Elven Council was planning to marry his son to Arwen. Unfortunately for him, your father was a step faster and the rest was history. Your father went to war and drove the invaders back to the Demon Lands.

"The Elders thought that they had succeeded in their schemes, but lo and behold, your father got your mother pregnant in that one night of passion.

"The Head of the Council was livid and his son almost went crazy when they heard the news. They initially planned to have your father assassinated, but who was your father? He was a Dungeon Conqueror. When he summoned all the Dungeon Monsters under his command, the entire Elven Council had no choice but to begrudgingly allow their marriage.

"Not only that, your father brute forced his way and had the Head of the Council resign from his position and placed Arwen's father, Theoden Aenarion, as the new Head. Naturally, the elves had no choice but to agree to his demand and thus, the bastard schemer was kicked out of his position."

It was then when James heaved a long and deep sigh. "I thought that your father and mother would have a happy ending, but it was just wishful thinking. The Ex-Head of the Council, along with his entire Clan, rebelled and concocted a plan to help the Demon Race bring their Elite Forces into the Sacred Grove by using long distance teleportation.

"Their plan was to use the World Tree as a hostage in order to make the Elves submit to the Demon Lord. Their plan succeeded, but the result was far from their expectations. Although the World Tree was sacred to the elves, it didn't mean anything to Maxwell.

"He summoned his army and fought the Demon Lords and his Elite Demons inside the Sacred Grove. The battle was so fierce, that the Demon Lord was severely wounded and the World Tree was cut in half. It was also during this battle that your father acquired the ring of Conquest from the Demon Lord's severed arm.

"If not for the sacrifices of his subordinates, the Demon Lord's life might have ended then and there. He managed to escape back to the Demon Realm, losing his army of elites, and his arm in the process.

"The Elders of the Clan that had betrayed the Elven Race were executed, and the rest were exiled. Even so, one major problem still remained and that was the World Tree. it was on the verge of dying."

James refilled the cup with wine and drank slowly as if trying to wash away the bitterness that was stuck inside his soul.

"If the World Tree dies, the elves will no longer be able to give birth and their race will lose their blessings. For the sake of his wife, and the child that was growing inside her body, your father decided to make a sacrifice.

"He used the power of the Dungeon Conqueror and fused with the World Tree. The tree recovered its vitality due to the immense power of the Dungeon Conqueror. You have to understand that your father, Maxwell, had conquered many dungeons. The magic power of Dungeons is almost limitless and they only grow stronger with time.

"It was more than enough to revive the World Tree. The elves survived the disaster, but many still held a grudge towards your father. Although we had told you that your father was dead, this wasn't entirely true. He had merged with the World Tree, so basically, he is the World Tree. However, in doing so, he has also lost sentience.

"Even your mother, the Guardian of the World Tree, was unable to communicate with him. The only thing that remained of him was that ring on your finger. If my hunch is right, he stored the power of the Dungeon Conqueror within the ring. He did this to prevent another conqueror from being born.

"Perhaps he prepared the ring for you, perhaps not. I don't really know. All I know is that your father has now turned into a tree, and your mother accompanies him everyday," James said with a sigh.

"Perhaps Arwen felt that the old bastards were starting to scheme again so she decided to send you here to Lont. She was afraid that the Elders of the Council would use you as a hostage in order to force her to obey their command.

"Your mother is truly pitiful," James lamented. "She lost her husband and her son. Like a caged bird, she can't leave the Elven Continent and hold you in her arms. The only reason why they didn't attempt to lay their hands on you, and your mother, is because of the tiny chance that your father might regain his consciousness inside the World Tree."

What James didn't tell William was that the elves were also dealing with another threat to their existence and that was due to the Elven Prophecy by the Rayleigh Family.

"Will, I believe that there is a way for your father to return to this world," James said with a serious expression. "However, I don't know what method it is. Also, the way you are now, you can't go to the Elven Continent.

"If you go, you will not only endanger yourself, but endanger your mother as well. If you want to see her then you must become as strong as your father. That is the only way for the two of you to reunite."

William clenched his fists in determination. He had felt his Mother's sadness through her letters. The young boy could feel the deep longing in her written words. There were times when William wanted to travel to the Silvermoon Continent just to hug her tight.

"Grandpa, I want to meet her," William said as he stared at his grandfather's eyes. "I want to hug her. I want to kiss her and wipe the tears from her eyes. I want her to know how much I miss her."

James didn't say anything, instead he just looked at William with a calm expression.

"Have you found your purpose?"

"Yes."

"And that is?"

William closed his eyes and pressed his right hand on his chest. "To reunite with my mother and find a way to make our family whole again. Also, I want to return a favor to the people who are looking after me from the heavens. For that, I will need your help, Grandpa."

James was confused about the part about the people looking after William from the heavens. Even so, he still placed his hand on William's shoulder and looked at him with solemn gaze.

"And you shall have it. Starting tomorrow, your training will begin. I will talk to the rest of the boys. However, William, remember this. I will not interfere with their training methods. No matter what happens, you are on your own. Do I make myself clear?"

William nodded his head. He finally found his reason to become stronger. He would reunite with his mother, save his father, and spread Gavin's name to the entire world. Lily had secretly told him via telepathy that aside from him, Gavin had only one other believer.

A God who didn't have any followers would cease to exist.

William wouldn't allow this to happen. He was determined to spread Gavin's name throughout the world and unlock the power of the Jack of All Trades, that hadn't been seen for thousands of years.

Somewhere in the Temple of the Ten Thousand Gods, in a small hut that stood in the outskirts, a chubby man covered his face with both hands. Tears were streaming down his face as he bawled his eyes out.

Gavin, the God of All Trades, heard William's words that came straight from his heart. He felt so happy that all the pent up frustrations, anxieties, sadness, and fear that he had kept deep inside for thousands of years finally burst forth.

That day, in that lonely hut, a God who was at the end of his rope, finally found a ray of light.