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Chapter 23: The Challenger Appears. Part-2.

The old pope asked Alex anxiously,

"But Saint... you are directly chosen by the oracle of our god... This... you don't need to accept his challenge... also, Jake Schild is a powerful warrior... how-"

Alex smiled at the pope's words as he kept staring right into Jake's eyes while looking down at him.

"Don't worry about the saint title; we can hold the medallion ceremony later... hmm, how about this: we will hold the duel the day after tomorrow... the ceremony will proceed as usual right after that..."

"After all, I will be the one to win... don't make any excuses later Little Jake; if you didn't arrive on time, you will be considered a loser and a coward, you know..."

Jake, who was calm and collected until now, couldn't help but frown and feel angry at Alex's words.

He knew that Alex was just a fragile, weak prince who was good for nothing and didn't even know about combat arts in the slightest.

Jake, on the other hand, had been training his entire life!

He's a seasoned warrior who's already become the strongest among the younger generation of warriors in the entire city of Ilma!

Ethan, who's one of the strongest people in the city, has trained him since he was five years old, and he's very experienced in types of combat skills and techniques!

Alex calling him a coward and loser while himself being a weak person was a big insult to his pride as a warrior.

If it was anyone else, Jake would have already beat the sh*t out of them for insulting him like that, but he can't lay a finger on Alex right now.

He can only confront Alex in a duel; if he tries to do anything outside of it, his own reputation will take a hit.

"Hmph! I will be there the day after tomorrow at noon! Be ready!"

After saying those words, Jake walked away and left the hall immediately.

Seeing the angry look on his retreating face, Alex shook his head.

'I won... it was much easier than I expected...'

Alex had already made up an entire plan in his mind the moment Jake challenged him, and taunting Jake with trash talk was also a part of his plan, and Jake fell for it.

"Don't mind the inconvenience, everyone; you can continue your regular prayers. I hope to have a pleasant relationship with you all in the future..."

Hearing Alex's words, everyone who was still focused on the previous fight snapped out of their daze and started their prayers.

The rest of the ceremony went peacefully.

Ethan introduced Alex to everyone, and then everyone told their names to Alex in return.

The rumors about Alex being an immature brat were already known to all of them, so they didn't get too involved with Alex and only greeted him as a formality.

Most of them were curious about the duel that will happen soon, and they were in a hurry to go home and tell their friends about it so that everyone could watch it together.

After most of the people left, Alex went over to the pope's side and asked him for a spare key to the grand library of the God of Wisdom church.

As Alex wanted to know more about this world and its history, he needed to access that grand library and gather a lot of knowledge from it.

The pope was concerned about Alex and spoke.

"Your holiness, you are a precious saint of our church. I couldn't stop you from accepting that fool Jake's duel challenge, but I will not allow you to be reckless..."

"If things take a turn for the worse, I will personally stop the duel; please take care of your safety more..."

While saying that, the pope handed a spare key to the grand library to Alex with his weak and trembling hands.

He was quite old and weak, so he couldn't stay standing there too long and left right after.

Alex then looked at Ethan and ordered,

"Ethan, we are going to the library... by the way, what's the name of this other disciple of yours?"

Ethan seemed to want to say something to Alex but seemed to be hesitating; he sighed and looked at the fully armoured girl paladin before saying,

"Yes, this is my other disciple, Rosemary. She's an orphan the church accepted... she's very diligent and hardworking..."

"Rose, go ask the cooks to arrange Lord Saint's breakfast; I will take him to the library..."

The young girl, who was hiding her face and eager to leave as if she wanted to go to Jake's side, nodded her head at Ethan's order and dashed away in a hurry as if escaping.

"Why is that girl avoiding me like that?... Am I really that scary looking?"

Hearing Alex's words, Ethan smiled a bit and said,

"What are you saying, Lord Saint? You are obviously the most handsome man of the empire; it's just that she's had some bad past memories that make her fearful of strangers..."

Ethan and Alex started heading towards the grand library while talking to each other.

"Lord Saint... your holiness if you might forgive me, I want to say something that might seem a bit rude..."

Alex tilted his head in confusion and spoke.

"Hoh, that's rare. What could be so rude to speak about that you need my permission for it? Tell me..."

While walking through the spacious corridors of the church, Ethan took a deep sigh and said,

"Your holiness... why did you accept that fool's duel... that kid... I mean, Jake might seem young but... he's actually quite strong. I don't think it was a right choice to accept his challenge-"

Before Ethan could finish his sentence, Alex interjected with a smile on his face.

"You want to say that I am too weak to defeat him and I don't stand a chance against him, right?"

"Well, of course I know that much too! He's your son, Ethan! I have seen you brush off gigantic boulders without a problem; a dragon's kid will obviously be a dragon too!"

Ethan was confused how Alex could remain so calm and still smile even when he already knew that Jake was a very strong opponent.

"T-then, how-"

Before Ethan could say anything, Alex spoke out with a teasing voice.

"You will see it when the time comes... hehe... the challenger has just appeared, but I expected this much... and obviously, I will win!"

While saying those words, a villain-like grin appeared on Alex's handsome face, causing Ethan to feel a chill run down his spine.

Chapter 24: The Grand Library of Ilma.

After walking through several corridors, Alex and Ethan reached the spacious basement floor of the church.

"Lord Saint, this is the door to the grand library..."

Ethan stepped aside as he said those words, and Alex finally got to see the gigantic door in full view.

The door of the grand library was so big that Alex almost mistook it for a wall!

It was more than ten feet tall! And there were various mysterious patterns carved on it that seemed incomprehensible to Alex.

Even Ethan, who was about six feet tall, seemed short when standing near this gigantic door.

"Err... who was this door even made for? A giant? Where's the keyhole? With how big this door is, even if stand up on my toes, my hand might not reach it..."

Alex was just a 16-year-old immature kid with a small and fragile body; he wasn't much taller than 5 feet at most. Obviously the door seemed too big to him.

"Lord Saint that key doesn't need any keyholes; hold it up and think about the door opening; it will work by itself..."

Hearing Ethan's words, Alex followed the instructions, and the key suddenly started floating in air on its own while glowing with a golden light beaming out of it.

****Clank!* *Rumble!* *Rumble!****

Loud noises of various ancient mechanisms activating rang out in the spacious basement as the gigantic door started to open on its own.

Alex put the key away as he spoke.

"I see, so this is one of those magical doors; that's nice... I wonder how they made this..."

Hearing Alex's words of doubt, Ethan explained with a smile on his face,

"Lord Saint, according to the legends, the 'Grand Library of Ilma' is a gift from the God of Wisdom himself to his devout believers."

"It's said that the god of wisdom himself taught the knowledge and gave the power to his believers to create this grand and mysterious library..."

"It's said that this library holds every possible knowledge of this entire world inside it!"

"But only a select few chosen of the god of wisdom can access all that knowledge... if a random person goes inside, he might not even be able to read a single book..."

Ethan seemed quite proud while explaining about the grand library.

"This library is the greatest treasure of our church!"

Alex nodded at Ethan's words and thought to himself,

'So does that mean that due to the power of the so-called god of wisdom, this library is highly protected?'

"What would happen if some believer of the god of wisdom takes out a book from the library and never returns it? Or someone attacks the library with brute force?"

Ethan smiled at Alex's question before explaining in his usual calm and gentle voice,

"Our benevolent god himself has blessed this space; it's impossible to bring any of the books inside this library out!"

"Even if the entire church collapses the library will likely not collapse, and even if it does, all the books and knowledge inside will disappear into nothingness, making it impossible to access the library again..."

While listening to Ethan's explanation, Alex stepped inside, and he was greeted by rows and rows of bookshelves everywhere.

No matter where he looked, there were hundreds of bookshelves, and the grand library seemed almost infinite from the inside.

"Whoa~... this place is awesome!"

As a former top-level scientist, Alex loved books and knowledge; it was his goal to gather all knowledge in the world and become the most knowledgeable man in the entire world after all!

'If this library does indeed have all the knowledge about the world, doesn't that mean I will be the most knowledgeable in this entire world if read them all?'

'But this library was created by the god wisdom's help... doesn't that mean the god of wisdom is the most knowledgeable being of this world?...'

'I wonder if I will ever get the chance to meet this god of wisdom and get a chance to have a debate with him on some interesting topic...'

Alex shook his head and stopped thinking about irrelevant things as he walked forward while looking at the rows and rows of books in the library.

"I am glad you liked this place lord saint..."

Hearing Ethan's words, Alex nodded his head.

"Yeah, this is the best place I have ever seen in my life!... hmm? Why are you standing so far away?"

Alex was stunned when he saw that Ethan was still standing near the first bookshelf placed near the main door.

Hearing Alex's question, Ethan scratched the back of his neck in awkwardness as his face became a bit red from embarrassment.

"As expected of you Lord Saint, you really are a genuine chosen one of the gods of wisdom; you are able to access such deep layers of the grand library so easily..."

As if noticing Alex's confusion, Ethan rolled back the sleeves on his right hand, and Alex noticed that a golden tattoo-like mark had appeared on his wrist.

"This is the mark of the divine power that appears on your wrist when someone enters the grand library; how many books and layers of the library you get access to depends solely on this..."

"It's said that those who have a deeper connection and faith in the god of wisdom are able to access much deeper layers of grand library..."

Hearing Ethan's explanation, Alex rolled up his own sleeves, and sure enough, there was a golden tattoo on his right hand's wrist that was not present before.

But unlike Ethan's tattoo, his was more detailed and intricate, as if there was much more divine power in his mark.

"So, this is like a library permit... unless you have a higher connection with the god of wisdom you can't access books that are stored much deeper in the library..."

"That's understandable..."

Even in his previous world, there were books and documents that were top secret, and only a selected few people were allowed to read them.

It was possible that the knowledge stored in the books located in the core area of this library was too dangerous for any ordinary person.

"I see, you are free to read then, Ethan. I will look around and see if I can find something that will interest me..."

After saying those words to Ethan, Alex continued moving forward, as he wanted to test the limits of his divine mark and wanted to know how many layers of the library he could access.

And if he could find any interesting books or something like that.

'In novels and manga, the mc sometimes find powerful cheat skills when they are in a library... I wonder if I will be that lucky too...'

With an excited mood, Alex stepped forward!

Chapter 25: Pathwalker. Part-1.

Although Alex was hoping to find a cheat skill like those protagonists of novels and manga, he ended up finding something completely different.

Holding the book named 'Kreimhild Empire Founding Era Volume-1.'

It was a thick history book in which the history of how the empire of Kreimhild was founded was recorded in great detail.

'Ugh, so even I can only access two layers of the library at most...'

Although Alex didn't manage to find any cheat skills or powerful techniques, he managed to learn a lot about the library as he wandered through it for an entire hour!

The Grand Library of Ilma was built in a circular hall, and Alex found a map hanging on the side of a bookshelf that seemed to describe the structure of the entire library.

It turned out that the entire library was divided into seven layers!

The layer that Ethan was at was the first layer, which was the outermost layer, and Alex, on the other hand, could access books up to the second layer of the library.

The moment he tried to go deeper, he was obstructed by an invisible and transparent wall, and no matter how many times he tried, he could not move forward.

That situation reminded Alex of how you can't access the locked part of the map in a game before you do some kind of specific quest to unlock it.

If you try to access it without unlocking the map, you get obstructed by an invisible wall that won't let you move forward no matter what.

That's exactly how the grand library of Ilma worked.

After not being able to enter the deeper layers, Alex decided to look through the books available in the first two layers and made a lot of discoveries.

The first layer basically consisted of books that were mostly about art, philosophies, and random fictional made-up stories.

Most of the books there were focused on the mortal world, and there wasn't anything too high-level there.

The second layer, on the other hand, seemed to store a lot of history-related books everywhere.

There are hundreds of thousands of books related to random time periods and forgotten historical events of the world.

The number of books was in the thousands, and Alex could feel that space inside the giant hall was weird and distorted; no matter how much Alex tried, he kept revolving around the same fixed area.

According to the map of the library, the grand library was not only divided into layers; it was also divided into several 'zones.'

Just like how a round pizza is divided into several slices, those slices in this library were 'zones,' and Alex could only access two layers of this one zone.

Almost 99% of the library was still inaccessible to him, and yet there were already thousands of books in this single 'Zone' alone.

With no other choice, Alex decided to read the book related to the empire first; he took the book and walked over to Ethan's side.

After finding a table and chair to sit at, Alex sat down in a relaxed posture while Ethan stood not too far away from him.

"You can sit too you know..."

Ethan shook his head at Alex's words and said,

"No, my son was rude to you Lord Saint. I don't think I am worthy of your kindness-"

Alex ignored Ethan's excuses and ordered,

"Sit down; the sins of your son are not yours to bear. a parent does not become guilty if their child commits a crime..."

"Moreover, little Jake will get his due punishment soon anyway; you don't need to worry about it..."

After saying that, Alex ignored Ethan so that he couldn't argue with him and opened the first page of the book, and after reading the very first line, a look of confusion appeared on his face.

{This is the History of honour, this the tale of a warrior, this is a legend of a great 'Pathwalker'!}

Alex didn't expect the opening line to be like that, but the most confusing thing was the word 'Pathwalker'; he had never heard about this.

"Ethan, what is a '**Pathwalker**'?"

Hearing Alex's question, Ethan, who was just about to sit, was so taken aback that he almost tripped and fell on the ground!

"What!?"

Ethan barely stopped himself from falling and managed to sit down opposite Alex, but a look of shock and disbelief was painted all over his face.

"L-lord Saint... err... you can't be joking, right? There's no way you don't know what a '**Pathwalker**' is, right?..."

Ethan was so baffled by Alex's question that his eyes were wide open and his jaw hung wide open as if it would fall on the ground from sheer shock and disbelief.

Even Alex felt a bit embarrassed after being looked at like he was 'stupid' to ask a question that was very obvious and simple.

"Ahem! Did I allow you to talk back to me? Answer my questions honestly; don't question my orders, okay!"

At Alex's words, Ethan could only shake his head in helplessness and start talking honestly.

He took a deep breath and spoke in his usual calm and gentle tone.

"Okay, so I will start from the scratch..."

"A **'Pathwalker'**

is basically a person who's walked the **'Path'** of **'Ascension'** and has at least reached **'Ascension Phase 1'** in their lifetime."

As if noticing Alex's confused looks, Ethan finally figured out that Alex, who was a spoiled brat, didn't know anything at all, so he had to talk about everything in detail.

"Every person in the world is unique; every being in the world has a unique soul, aura, life force, and mental energy."

"Every person in the world has a dream, a deep desire in their heart that they want to fulfill no matter what."

Ethan's calm voice rang out in the silent library and echoed loudly as he said.

"A person's dream, ambitions, and their goals dictate their **'Path'** in life; a person's greatest ambition is their goal, and the road that leads them to that goal is their **'Path'!**"

"Every person in the world is unique, and everyone has different goals and dreams!"

"In simple words, every person has a unique **'Path'** in their life!"

"Those who are brave enough to pursue their dream and walk on this **'Path'** are called **'Pathwalkers!'**

Chapter 26: Pathwalker. Part-2.

"Every **'Path'** is bound to have **'obstacles,'** and every person is bound to face struggles in life; that's where the difference between the strong and the weak is decided..."

"Those who manage to make it through those struggles of life and are able to pass the 'obstacles' in their 'Path' reach the next 'Ascension Phase'!"

As Ethan explained, Alex listened silently without daring to miss a single word.

"According to legends and tales, it's said that there are at least five 'Ascension Phases' a person has to go through in their life..."

"When a person ascends to a higher Ascension phase, their soul, life force, mental power, aura, body, etc.—everything—receives a tremendous boost!"

"Simply speaking, every ascension phase is a new life level; the farther you go, the higher your life level becomes compared to other ordinary beings!"

According to popular belief, Ascension phases were from '**Phase 1 to Phase 5,**'

with Phase 1 being the weakest and Phase 5 being the highest!

"So, what you are trying to say is that once someone becomes a 'Pathwalker,' they basically become 'superhuman'!"

"They become higher life forms and are no longer ordinary mortals? Is that the reason why you are so strong, Ethan?"

Hearing Alex's question, Ethan nodded his head as he replied,

"Yes, that's what I am trying to say... Me? I am not really that strong Lord Saint; I am just a well-trained paladin at most..."

Ethan shook his head and said,

"Your holiness, I am currently at the '**Intermediate**' stage of '**Ascension Phase 1**' at most..."

Alex was shocked after hearing that.

"You are only at Phase 1, and you are already this strong!? D*mn!? What kind of monsters would Phase 5 people be then!?"

"Wait... there are stages to ascension phases?"

Ethan nodded his head and explained,

"Yes, there are indeed stages to ascension phases; every ascension phase has four stages: '**Early,**' '**Intermediate,**' '**Late,**' and '**Peak**'

stage."

"Just consider that your journey from phase 1 to phase 2 is divided into four portions, and these are the names of those four portions."

"Once you reach 'Peak' stage of a Phase, you become qualified to reach the next Ascension Phase..."

Ethan scratched his chin as he explained with an unsure look on his face,

"Your Holiness, I have never met anyone at Phase 3 or above, so I don't know how powerful they are and as for Phase-5..."

"I think there might not even be anyone in this entire empire who's at that level of strength..."

"But I have seen a Peak Phase-2 individual in action; that person was strong enough to change the flow of a river with just one swing of his sword..."

Hearing all these things from Ethan, Alex felt quite baffled, and he finally realized how vast and insanely dangerous this world was.

"So does that mean ordinary people are considered Phase-0 then?... How strong is your son Jake, then? Is he a Phase-1 Pathwalker?..."

At Alex's question, Ethan replied,

"Yeah, ordinary beings can be considered Phase-0 I guess but there's no such mention in any texts or anything..."

"My son Jake is a highly skilled and talented swordsman! He's only 17 years old and is already so strong that I won't be surprised if he ascends to Phase 1 in a few months or so..."

Alex frowned at those words and asked,

"Wait, didn't you say that every person's 'Path' is unique? Then how do you know how far Jake has walked on it and how close he is to reaching Phase-1?"

At Alex's question, Ethan smiled and replied in a calm voice,

"Your holiness, no matter what phase a person is in, and even if they aren't a Pathwalker at all, every person has a life force and an 'aura' unique to them."

"Aura is the embodiment of a person's life force, mental power, and soul energy. It's the proof of their very existence. as a Phase-1 ascender myself, I can easily sense a person's Aura..."

"That's how I know that Jake is not too far from ascending, as his aura is already very refined and polished... all he need is a push, I think..."

Although Ethan explained it all, Alex still had many doubts in his mind.

'What if a person never has a dream or ambition then? What if a person suddenly abandons their Path?'

'What if a person's aura and physique are weak, but they find their 'Path' in life and end up ascending directly?'

Alex had many such questions in his head and asked Ethan about it, but it turned out even he didn't know the answer to such a complicated question.

Until now, Alex didn't know what kind of power system this world followed, but now he has finally figured it all out.

'To be the best and to be the most knowledgeable person in the entire world, I need to become a Phase-5 Ascender!'

'If I manage to do that, I will also be strong and invincible! I will be able to live a long life and will have powerful abilities!'

Alex could feel that there were infinite possibilities, and he just needed to work hard and aim to go further on his own unique 'Path'.

The more he thought about his future, the more excited he felt.

Although he came to this new world for some unknown reasons, he now had a clear goal to aim for!

What he couldn't do in his previous world, he can do in this world!

'My greatest goal and desire have always been the same: I want to be the most knowledgeable person in the entire world!'

'I want to have the best mind and all the knowledge of the world at my disposal!'

Working hard for the sake of his own 'ambition' will be the same as 'walking' further on his own 'path,' which means Alex will be able to hit two birds with one stone!

He just needed time and effort, and he could make his dreams a reality!

Alex smiled as he thought to himself,

'It won't be wrong to call my path, '*The Pathway of Wisdom*'... hehe...'

Chapter 27: Pathwalker. Part-3.

Ethan had only seen people who trained all day long and walked the 'path' of hard work succeed and become 'Pathwalkers.'

Usually, all experienced and powerful knights of the nation had reached Phase 1 after years of hard work, training, and real combat experiences.

Ethan had never met anyone who had ascended without training a single day in their life, so when Alex asked him whether it was possible for non-combatants to become 'Pathwalkers,' he was not sure about it.

But Alex was able to figure out one thing from Ethan's explanation of 'Paths.'

'Paths' are nothing but a person's road to their goals; thus, it's highly possible that there might be non-combatant 'Pathwalkers' in the world too.

After all, not everyone's dream was to become a strong warrior or combatant; having your physique strengthened was just a side bonus after becoming a 'Pathwalker.' Alex's main aim was the possibilities!

If the physique and soul get enhanced, it's possible for his mind and brain to become powerful too! He can then learn and comprehend things much more easily compared to before!

That's basically as good as upgrading the old CPU of a computer with a new high-end CPU, thus enhancing its capabilities tremendously!

"Your holiness, ascending to higher phases is not just about physique and power; you also get to learn mysterious powers and skills!"

"For example, I am a paladin; I have dedicated my everything to our benevolent god of wisdom. Thus, when I ascended to phase 1..."

"I awakened abilities that suited the skills of someone who walked the 'Path' of a 'Paladin'!"

Hearing Ethan's words, Alex nodded his head and thought to himself,

'The power system of this world is very flexible it seems, and every person is unique with their own skill set that correspond to their inner true self!'

In many other novels and manga that Alex had read, there was a very rigid 'class'-based system where a person could only have skills related to a particular class like swordsman, archer, healer, etc.

But there were no such constraints in this world; you could be anyone and anything you want, and your real true self will govern what your powers will be and how far you will go in the future.

'This world is filled with mysteries and adventures, it seems...'

"By the way, what was that monster we encountered when we were near the valley of sorrows?"

"How are monsters classified? There's no way that mindless monsters can understand the concept of 'Paths' and 'Pathwalkers,' right?"

Ethan nodded at Alex's question and replied,

"Lord Saint, although I also don't know what that monster we met that day was, I am quite sure it was likely a 'Mutated Beast'...."

"Just like how our benevolent god bestows us with 'Divine Power' when we believe in him and pray to him, there also exists a force that favours monsters and beasts a lot..."

Ethan's eyes narrowed as he spoke in a solemn voice.

"Your holiness, there's a horrific power called 'Miasma,' which loves making a mockery of life and everything in existence."

"That bizarre power brings miasmatic corruption, decay, curses, diseases, and horrific mutations to whoever it touches!"

While talking about 'Miasma,' Ethan was very solemn, and even Alex could feel that Ethan was afraid of that bizarre power even when talking about it.

"Usually, wild animals and other creatures remain in forests like usual, but sometimes due to a high concentration of miasma in some places or some unnatural phenomena, they get corrupted by miasma."

"That's when they get turned into monsters and horrific, disfigured creatures... but miasma is not the only source of these creatures..."

"Sometimes, miasmatic rifts also appear in some locations and spill out monsters and miasma endlessly!"

"Miasmatic rifts and monster tides are the biggest cause of problems in our nation, and hundreds of our knights and soldiers die due to monsters every single year!"

Ethan took a deep sigh and spoke,

"Your holiness, as a paladin I have travelled to many places and I have seen several flourishing towns get reduced to ashes because of those rampaging monsters..."

"This is the reason why our nation is always lacking enough soldiers and knights; more of them die each year than we can train..."

Becoming a Pathwalker was no easy feat; even if you trained your entire life, if you couldn't get through the 'obstacle' blocking your 'Path' forward, or if you couldn't find your 'Path' in the first place, then you would never ascend!

Being a 'Pathwalker' was less about talent and physique and more about your mental and spiritual strength.

Thus, being a 'Pathwalker' is not for the weak and the cowards, only those who dare to 'walk,' only those who dare to dream, dare to find their own 'Path' in life.

'No wonder the original Alex was never able to become strong despite being the son of the royal knight commander Mariel herself!'

Having powerful parents had nothing to do with this! Even if you are born to powerful and talented parents, you can still fail if you yourself are an immature trash!

'Well, thankfully, I am not in a cultivation novel at the very least... otherwise, without a system or a grandpa in the ring, I would just be a random weak and talentless cultivator...'

'No... perhaps my family would have already sold me to some demon cultivator as food the moment they found out I was trash...' *(Disclaimer: No cultivation protagonists were harmed in the making of this Chapter...)*

Alex placed his hands on the desk in front of him and asked,

"So, the monsters and beasts are classified by their aura and the concentration and density of miasma in their bodies then?"

Ethan nodded his head at those words.

"Yes, just like how we judge other humans by sensing their aura and life force, the same goes for monsters..."

"Their aura, life force and miasma density determines if we can fight them or not; there are no strict classifications for them, but there are unofficial categories created for them according to how much damage they can do..."

"The categories are **'Beast,' 'Monster,' 'Aberration,' 'Calamity'....**"

According to Ethan, 'Beast' class monsters are those that are common and usually are in groups.

They are the weakest and attack in waves and armies.

'Monster' class ones are those that are clearly more mutated and powerful, like the one that Alex and Ethan met near the valley of sorrows.

'Aberration' class monsters are the ones that are highly corrupted and are strong enough to wipe out towns with a single attack!

Usually, you need at least 25-40 knights just to deal with this kind of monster; if there's a high-level 'Pathwalker,' then they alone would be enough.

And finally, the 'Calamity' class monsters that are strong enough to bring disasters and calamities that can topple nations themselves!

When such creatures appear, it's confirmed that a major-scale monster tide will happen, and tens of thousands of soldiers and knights will be needed to deal with it.

To kill such a level of monster, you would need powerful 'Pathwalkers,' or it's near impossible to deal with them; that's why they are called walking 'calamities.'

Chapter 28: Conspiracy Master Alex. Part-1.

By the time Alex and Ethan finished their chit-chat, the breakfast was ready, and Alex had to leave the library with Ethan, as he couldn't possibly eat breakfast inside the library.

The church was not doing well financially, so the breakfast was not luxurious or anything, but it was decent enough to fill the stomach.

"Oh~ these sandwiches are nice~"

Seeing Alex smile so happily after eating those sandwiches, Sister Melissa, who was a middle-aged lady, smiled happily.

"Lord Saint, you must be joking; in front of those royal palace chefs, my cooking skills are that of an amateur!"

Alex shook his head at Sister Melissa's words and replied with a smile,

"Only when we have tasted hardships do we learn how fortunate it is to be able to eat even this one slice of bread..."

"Compared to the dry jerky I had to eat and the bland soup Ethan made... this sandwich can be considered heavenly!"

Ethan, who was also eating sandwiches, couldn't help but give a wry smile at those words.

Even he knew his cooking skills were very bad; they were, in fact, so bad that his wife would rather not ask for his help and would tell him to stay a few dozen feet away from the kitchen lest he mess it all up.

The weird, bland soup he made for Alex was the best dish he knew!

Most of the time he was surviving while eating jerky or rations packed by his wife for him!

"Haha, Sir Ethan's wife is a very hardworking woman; if not for her... he would have still been eating uncooked stuff even now..."

Hearing Sister Melissa's words, Alex leaned his back against the tree as he took another bite of the sandwich.

The fresh morning breeze hit his face as he felt very comfortable sitting under the shade of the tree.

"So, you and little Ethan grew up together, Sister Melissa?"

Sister Melissa who was sitting on the left side of picnic mat smiled and explained,

"Your holiness, we were both orphans of war; our hometown was destroyed by monsters and we drifted from one place to another before we were taken in by the previous pope of the church..."

"I still remember that Sir Ethan used to be a big crybaby before he became a full-fledged paladin!"

"Sometimes I find it hard to believe that the same cry-baby is now a fearless warrior who can shatter boulders with bare hands and slay beasts with a single strike..."

Ethan whose dark past was being exposed felt awkward and embarrassed as he complained in an embarrassed tone,

"Sister Melissa, please don't expose my shameful past to the Saint like that.... Er..."

Alex smirked at those words of Ethan and said,

"Hehe, little Ethan, I didn't expect you to be like that before; you have really worked hard to reach your current level of strength..."

"That's some dedication..."

Alex looked at the massive garden of the church and spoke.

"The scenery here is really nice; this is the perfect kind of place to stay and study all kinds of things..."

"I regret I didn't get to come here before..."

Perhaps if the original Alex had grown up in the church of the god of wisdom and not in the royal palace, he might have been a much better person and more mature in general.

Children born in war, poverty, and troubled times mature the fastest, and they learn the cruel nature of the world from the very beginning compared to those who have only seen peace and abundance all their lives.

"Truthfully speaking, I am quite surprised that your holiness was able to adapt to his life as a saint so easily..."

"This place must be very backward compared to the royal capital and the royal palace..."

Before Sister Melissa could finish her words, Alex spoke up in a calm voice.

"Sister Melissa, no matter how sparkling and luxurious a cage is, the bird still dreams of flying in the sky freely..."

"To me, leaving that sparkling life behind was a catalyst for growth; only when facing hardships can I grow as an individual..."

Alex's eyes narrowed as he said,

"A person without dream and ambitions is just an empty husk; without any dreams and ambitions, you can never achieve anything in life..."

"I will have to walk on my own 'Path' one day or another; the journey had already started when I left the royal palace..."

Ethan's eyes widened in shock after hearing those words from Alex's mouth.

Up until now, Ethan was confused why Alex, who seemed quite immature when he was in the royal palace and refused to leave, had become so mature.

But only now did Ethan understand that Alex, who didn't even know what a 'Path' was before today, was already starting to walk on his 'Path' of life the moment he was forced to leave the palace.

As they encountered difficulty in their way and survived, and as they met people in the town and helped them, Alex also grew up as he walked forward on his 'Path' unknowingly.

Although that was just Ethan's speculation, it seemed to be the most fitting reason for his sudden changes and his confidence and determination.

'If I was not a paladin... I would have already pledged my loyalty to you, Prince Alexander...'

This was the first time Ethan considered Alex to be not just the saint; this time he was impressed enough to consider Alex as the 'Prince' of the nation!

"Phew~ the breakfast was amazing Sister Melissa, but now we have to take our leave..."

"Ethan, let's go... We have work to do now..."

Ethan was confused about what work Alex was talking about, but he didn't question it, got up, and followed behind him.

"Where shall we go next, Lord Saint?"

Hearing the question, Alex smiled and replied.

"Don't question anything; just follow me silently. It's an order of your saint and unless you want to be an obstacle in the rise of our great church, don't question me..."

At Alex's words, Ethan shut up and didn't ask a single question after that as he followed his saint silently.

...

Sister Melissa watched Alex and Ethan leave for a long while before taking a long sigh of relaxation.

She got up, tidied the place, and went back to the kitchen with a relaxed smile on her face.

"Sister Melissa, how did your meeting with Lord Saint go?"

"What was he like? Is he really a spoiled, immature person, as the rumors say?"

The moment she entered the kitchen, several sisters and others working there asked her the same question and looked at her with curiosity.

Hearing the question, Sister Melissa shook her head and replied in her usual calm voice,

"The rumors are false. Who even spread these rumors? They are complete nonsense!"

"He's won the trust of Sir Ethan, and you all know that Sir Ethan is a good judge of character, so you don't have to worry about those false rumors!"

"From now onwards, respect him the same way we respect the pope himself! Anyone who disobeys will be punished!"

Hearing Sister Melissa's words, everyone was surprised and finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Dealing with a spoiled brat with immense power and influence is a really dangerous task; everyone loved their life and didn't want to get in trouble.

It was only human to be cautious of danger; there was nothing wrong with them worrying about Alex's personality.

What they all didn't know was that letting them weaken their guard was the real motive of Alex in the first place.

Chapter 29: Conspiracy Master Alex. Part-2.

Alex first went back to his room and changed into casual clothes, putting the robes of a saint away.

These were the clothes that Ethan had prepared for him on his order; they resembled the local casual wear that all people donned in the city of Ilma.

After getting ready, Alex led Ethan outside the church.

While walking, Alex asked in a calm voice,

"By the way, how good is the security of this city? I mean, do crimes often happen here, or is there a lot of security?"

Hearing Alex's question, Ethan replied with a tone filled with pride,

"No, crimes and such things barely ever happen in this city... as you saw yesterday, there are many young soldiers training in the training fields of the city..."

"They not only train but are also given the task of patrolling the city in groups! Not only does this improve the security of the city, but it also helps them all improve their coordination capabilities..."

Alex was surprised that the security in the city was quite good; medieval cities in his previous world didn't have such tight security.

'Well, the people of this world live in constant fear of monsters and bizarre creatures attacking them...'

'Thus, their military is likely very competent... if it wasn't, this nation would have seized to exist by now...'

When there are external threats, people unite very fast, and the monsters in this world are serving as the external threats who unite people greatly.

Unlike armies of his previous world, the soldiers and knights in this world do not have the luxury to desert the army and run away in fear.

When attacked by monsters and powerful, bizarre eldritch horrors, it's near impossible to run, and it's a better choice to stick with others and slay the monsters instead of running.

'In my previous world, nations fought each other over territory and resources, but at least the civilians were not the main target...'

'But here, if the army fails, the monsters will destroy the civilians first and torture them to death with worst possible methods...'

Alex had seen that bizarre creature ripping mercenaries apart in two pieces and bathing in their blood and internal organs.

Some even watched the creature open their stomach and gouge out their organs as they screamed in pain and horror.

Monsters like that exist in this world in a very large number, and they won't distinguish between friend and foe; for them, humans will just be food and a toy at most.

'Well... the tight security in this city can be troublesome for me though...'

'If the troops are patrolling the city all the time in various shifts, then that would mean it would be more difficult for me to create a rebellion or anything like that...'

'I guess I would need to go with a more disguised plan if I want the control of this city...'

High troop movement efficiency meant that Alex could not easily create a rebellion force while avoiding the eyes of constantly patrolling troops to overthrow the ruling count.

'Even if I managed to gather some rebellion forces in secret, they will not stand a chance against the trained troops who fight beasts and monsters all year long...'

Unlike his previous world, the soldiers and knights of this world were superhuman beings!

Even Jake, who's the son of Ethan and is not a 'Pathwalker' yet, can already split boulders in two with a single attack!

Ethan himself told Alex on the way to the city that Jake was strong enough to do this.

'If even normal people can split boulders... that means that the people of this world are naturally stronger and tougher than from my previous world...'

'Well, it may be that Jake is a bit too talented, perhaps, but splitting boulders as a normal person is still quite something... I can't do something like that even in my dreams...'

Alex knew his limits; his untrained and weak body was incapable of even lifting a water bucket for too long, let alone shattering boulders.

He was not in the same league as barbarians like Ethan and Jake, but that didn't mean Alex was completely helpless.

"Aha! We are here!"

After walking for a while, Alex and Ethan reached a jewelry shop.

Looking at the jewellery shop, Alex smiled and thought to himself,

'Thanks to the tour Ethan gave me when we arrived at the city of Ilma, I got to know quite a lot of nice places... Luckily, I managed to remember this jewellery shop...'

Without wasting any time, Alex entered the big and luxurious-looking shop with Ethan in tow and went straight to the shopkeeper.

"Yo! Old man, this benevolent young master here wants to sell this to you; give me a decent amount or my knight here will cut off your head and I will feed your corpse to my lovely dogs..."

Alex didn't even bother with pleasantries, and he went straight to threats and warnings as he placed a diamond on the desk of the jeweler.

It was a bright red diamond and looked very nice; even a person who knew nothing about diamonds could tell that it was something quite precious.

'Good thing, I managed to keep those old clothes safe...'

When Alex escaped through the Valley of Sorrows with Ethan and reached the town of Leonbrave, he changed his clothes to the normal villager boy ones.

But the original clothes he was wearing when he left the royal palace were not ordinary at all.

They were not only engraved with gold and silver; there were diamonds attached to them!

This bright red diamond was one of the diamonds that was embedded in those luxurious clothes but got ripped out when he was escaping in a hurry.

Alex already knew that he couldn't possibly lose such a valuable asset, and even in that dangerous situation, he grabbed it and stuffed it in his pocket.

'There are four supreme methods to reach great heights in the world; they are **Power, Intelligence, Connections, and Money.**'...

'If you have any one of them in abundance, you can reach the pinnacle of the world easily...'

A devilish grin appeared on Alex's face, causing the jeweler to feel a chill run down his spine as he hurriedly started examining the diamond.

The shopkeeper was frightened by Ethan's sword and imposing aura, and he mistook that Alex was some noble's kid, as he was talking so arrogantly and referring to himself as the young master.

He immediately got to work without daring to ask any questions.

'The cultivation novels I read finally came in handy today... at least I got to learn how to act as an arrogant young master from them...'

With how cautious and nervous everyone was in the church while facing Alex, he easily figured out that the noble's children of this world weren't usually good people either.

They were likely infamous for being arrogant and immature, and that's why everyone was so nervous around them too.

So, Alex just had to act like an arrogant noble, and he could fool any ordinary person easily with Ethan as a knight tagging along with him.

'I wonder how much money I can loot from this guy though... I don't have much influence in the city or I would have looted his entire shop right now actually...'

'Sigh... being a villain is also quite an exhausting task...'

Chapter 30: Conspiracy Master Alex. Part-3.

The Nation of Kreimhild is heavily focused on the military and their equipment; thus, the other sectors, like mining and metal processing, are also quite advanced.

But due to geological reasons, the nation does not have gold and diamond-rich areas; thus, they are very precious objects.

Their value is extremely high.

But that also means that unlike Alex's previous world, this nation is incapable of using gold and silver as its currency due to their shortage.

Thus, the currency of the nation shifted to iron coins produced using the process of coin minting!

This coin minting procedure is overseen by the emperor's direct subordinates and is highly controlled.

Only a few selected factories are allowed to produce coins; others get punished with the death penalty if found trying to do so illegally.

The currency of the Nation of Kreimhild is called 'Avanti,' and 'a hundred thousand Avanti' is equal to a silver coin.

Ten thousand silver coins are equal to a gold coin!

{1 Silver Coin = 100,000 Avanti.}

{1 Gold Coin = 10,000 Silver Coins.}

Silver and gold coins are rarely ever used, and mostly only the royal palace and the nobles use them for major transactions between each other.

Alex had actually already talked about the currency of this nation when he was travelling with him to the city of Ilma.

At that time, Ethan had taught him a lot of common knowledge-related things, and Alex knew the general value of that red diamond beforehand.

That's the reason why he was able to act so confident that the diamond will sell for a lot of money.

The old jeweler had a big shop, and he might even have some connections to high-ranking officials of the city; he was the ideal target to sell this diamond.

The old jeweler was not too influential and not too poor; he was ideal for Alex, as Alex didn't want to bring trouble his way.

If the jeweler was too influential, he wouldn't have opened his shop in this kind of place, and threatening him would have caused trouble for Alex.

But if he was too poor to buy the diamond, Alex would have had to bear a loss.

In simple words, Alex chose the perfect target to loot as much money as he could in one go without the authorities getting involved and any trouble coming his way.

"M-my lord, this diamond is very precious! I can give you two silver coins and 50 thousand Avanti for this..."

"I only have this much right now..."

It seemed that the jeweler got really frightened by Alex's evil grin; his face went pale like a sheet of paper, and he dared not even bargain with Alex.

"Hoh... well, I am in a hurry at the moment or I wouldn't have even bothered coming to a peasant like you..."

"I am on my way to the church and I just thought of doing a random donation... well, this amount would do..."

"Aren't I quite benevolent? Hehe, why are you not smiling? Smile, smile, you are getting to do such a good deal with someone as benevolent as me... eheh"

Alex patted the old man on the shoulder, causing him to shiver in fear.

The old jeweler hurriedly brought out two silver coins and five coins with the number ten thousand minted on them.

Those were the coins that were worth ten thousand Avanti each, and there was the symbol of a sword and a shield engraved on their other side.

The coins worth ten thousand Avanti were as big as an adult's finger, while the silver coins were half the size of them.

Alex threw the silver coins to Ethan and took the rest and stuffed them in his pocket.

"Good! Good! It was a nice deal!"

Alex grinned at the old jeweler, causing him to shiver, and then left the shop with Ethan.

Ethan, who saw it all, was so shocked that he could not find words to speak, and as he was told to shut up by Alex, he dared not say anything or ask any questions.

"Good, we have secured our initial funds; next, we just need to start planning..."

"By the way, you can now take those silver coins home, Ethan. I have some other places to go; I will come back to the church in a few hours..."

Ethan frowned at Alex's words.

"But your holiness, how can I let you wander around alone... what if something bad happens to you?"

Alex shook his head and replied with a smirk,

"No, little Ethan, you yourself said that the city is very safe, and I also dressed in casual clothes just to stay low key..."

"You don't need to worry about anything; just take those precious coins back home. I brought you with me mainly because I needed you to escort that money home..."

Alex didn't want to walk around with that much money in his pockets for fear of getting robbed or discovered.

And he also needed to be alone to carry out his next plans, so he had decided to send Ethan home.

"Don't ask anymore questions; if I don't come back by evening, then you are free to look for me..."

With that said, Alex walked away, and Ethan had no other choice but to obey his orders helplessly.

After walking for a bit, Alex turned a corner and glanced back to see if Ethan had really left, and seeing that he was going away, Alex heaved a sigh of relief.

'Well, I am about to create a conspiracy against your own son, Ethan. I can't possibly bring you along when doing such dirty work...'

'Sigh, I really need a subordinate completely loyal to me who can do all the dirty work for me...'

'Ethan is too pure and disciplined for this kind of thing. I need to gather more subordinates under me or I will have run around everywhere myself like today...'

This was currently Alex's weakest moment; the person who was conspiring against him could have easily dealt with him if he were stronger.

It's a lucky thing that Alex's first enemy is an amateur and weak person who does not know much about tactics and strategy; otherwise, Alex would have long been dead by now.

'Well, once I win, I will have little Jake as my loyal pet so it doesn't matter...'

Alex shook his head and walked forward with the usual evil smirk on his face.

'Oh, little Jake, who will save you from a monster like me~, I might not be the best conspiracist out there, but I can say that I am definitely a master in this art...'

'Conspiracy Master Alex would be quite a fitting nickname for me... hehe...'