# Incomprehensible Fear (Interlude)

Anyway, it seemed like everyone had gotten a chance to grow while I wasn't paying attention, so if anything, it was a good thing. There was no reason for things to get worse from here.

I didn't know exactly what Evan was going through, but… Who knows?

Maybe while I was resting like this, everyone would come back even stronger than they were now…

As time passed and my body recovered to some extent, I exclaimed, "Hoo!"

I'm fully revived! "Haaa…"

That was so long.

How long was I lying down? I don't really remember… 'Hmm…'

To be honest, it wasn't that serious of an injury, so I could have gotten up sooner, but I didn't.

You might say it would be better to get up early since other people would be worried.

Hah… Since when did I start caring about that?

Actually, putting everything else aside, if I got up here just because my body was fine, I would have to go back to those boring academy classes and live my days as a nun, so why would I get up just because I was fine?

I didn't particularly want to go back to that life.

The best thing to do was to play around moderately while feeling a subtle, pleasant sensation in this injured state, and then return to the academy.

After all, all I do when I go back is offer prayers to God.

If there was anything enjoyable, it would be healing other people…

Unfortunately, it seems that most of the academy, including everyone who was there at the time, knows that I came back injured, so they won't bother to come to me for treatment.

In the first place, I have to think about whether I should even be doing treatment.

The Saintess returned seriously injured after subjugating a very dangerous Demon King Army executive under the academy's training grounds.

Wouldn't everyone try not to make me do something like that?

Even if someone's conscience exploded and they tried to make me work, most people would try to stop them.

'Hmm… I think this has happened before.'

Now that I think about it, it seems like this happens every time I face a strong enemy.

Well… This is all I can do, so it's only natural. "[But it's about time to stop faking it.]"

I should go back.

I got up from my seat.

When Demonic energy was trying to take over my body, I felt like my body wasn't my own, but I don't feel that much anymore.

It's okay to be in pain or be restrained, but it's really uncomfortable when my body doesn't move the way I want it to, even in normal times.

This is something to be happy about.

"Are you okay?! Shouldn't you rest more?" Uriel asked me in shock.

It's understandable that she would react like that since I, who had been staggering around until recently, suddenly said that I was fully recovered and would return to the academy.

"[I'm fine. I've already recovered completely.]" "B-But still, you can't! Going back…"

Uriel, who was fidgeting, tried to take me back to the hospital room as if she couldn't help it…

"Eek…" "Hehe…"

I dodged it so easily~

I had anticipated Uriel's approach, so dodging the moment she tried to reach out was a piece of cake.

I smiled inwardly at Uriel's blank expression as she looked at me. That's when it happened.

"Pfft… Puhuhu…"

Uriel suddenly started laughing.

I didn't expect her to laugh at all, so I stared blankly at Uriel, who rubbed her eyes and said,

"I was worried about what would happen back then. I'm so glad you seem healthy."

"[Ah… Yes…]"

It feels like I'm the bad guy for teasing her.

She's so radiant that I can't even look her in the eyes…

"But the others haven't come yet. Stella said she was going to learn magic from Argent, so that's understandable."

"[Huh?]"

"Ah, Aria doesn't know. Argent accepted Stella as his disciple. I don't know why, though."

Uriel said that, but she seemed somewhat disappointed.

I don't know what she's so disappointed about, but that's not what's important right now.

The fact that Argent had taken on a disciple. 'A disciple… that guy?'

It's hard to imagine.

As someone who knows Argen Isis's background well, I found it amazing that he had taken on a disciple.

Of course, it's not impossible to become his disciple in the game, but it's quite difficult because of the conditions.

But the fact that he accepted Stella as his disciple means that… probably, because of what happened this time, he decided that he needed to quickly train a talented person and had no choice but to accept Stella as his disciple.

In the game, whether you do the quests well or not, the quests and routes to become Argent's disciple completely depend on the talent you have from the beginning.

It also means that if you have enough talent, it's enough to become Argent's disciple, but if you think about what you have to do to get that level of talent, the answer comes out…

Anyway… Argent's disciple…?

'If it's the disciple of a centuries-old loli grandma, it's the kind of material that would come out in anime.'

Unfortunately, this is reality…

She looks like she's our age, so it's a bit of a cognitive dissonance to call her a centuries-old loli grandma.

Until two years ago, I didn't want to accept that this place I'm in now was reality.

Maybe that's why I acted the way I wanted without thinking about the people around me.

Now, there are too many people who worry about me to act that way.

Even Uriel right in front of me is doing this because she's worried about me.

I sighed inwardly, but smiled and took Uriel's hand that was reaching out to me.

Huh? Hand?

But why is she suddenly reaching out to me… Grip

"Aria…"

"[… U, Uriel… ?]" Griiip

Uh oh. Uh oooh. "Aria…?"

Uh… uh oh…

"Where do you think you're going to run off to?" "[U, Uriel… ?]"

Uh…

Uriel suddenly reached out and grabbed me, then squeezed my hand tightly.

I wondered why she was suddenly doing this, but it was impossible to escape from the grip of a trained knight.

The fact that she was considerate enough to not hurt me while squeezing is even more legendary.

"[What…]"

"Let's go back, Aria?" "[Uh oh…]"

It seems like I'll have to take a day off from the academy.

At first, I thought I wasn't going to the academy, but it turns out I was being blocked from going.

I really didn't know…

Anyway, I couldn't just be dragged away like this. I did my best to not be dragged away by Uriel, grabbing her hand and dragging her along.

"[Ugh, no… I have to go back…]"

"W-Where is this strength coming from…?!" If I don't go back here, they'll think I'm lazy!!

Actually, I kind of want to go back more because Uriel is stopping me, and I'm getting restless from just being here, but anyway!

I can't be dragged away like this. I have to regain my freedom… "What's going on?"

Wh-What.

I heard a familiar voice from somewhere, and when I turned to look, Evan, who seemed to be visiting, was looking at me in confusion.

No… What…

"Ah, you came at the right time, Evan! Aria keeps trying to run away!" "Run away…?"

Evan tilted his head for a moment, then looked at me and widened his eyes. "Why are you out here? Are you okay, Aria?"

"[I… I'm really okay, but…]"

Seriously, what's with these guys.

I said I'm okay, but why do they keep coming and asking if I'm okay, worrying about me, and being so eager to take me inside?

I can't believe it.

I said I was really okay, so let me go, but they weren't the kind of people who would let me go.

"Okay! Let's go back!"

"You might not have recovered enough yet… huh?" Why are you guys thinking that on your own, aack!! I can't even run away even if I want to!!

In the meantime, they grabbed my hands so tightly that I could feel their determination to never let go this time, and started walking towards the hospital room.

Uriel was trying to minimize the force so I wouldn't get hurt, but there was no way I could escape with Evan joining in.

As I watched my body slowly being dragged back towards the hospital room, I laughed hollowly.

"Eueee…"

Along with a timid scream that I didn't want to be dragged away. I mean, who would have known that I would be grabbed by the hair by someone I knew as soon as I came out and be dragged back?

If I had known I would be dragged back to the hospital room like this, I wouldn't have come out.

Help me~

# 1 - Small Happiness

Now I'm truly free...!

After being pushed around by the kids, and resting for a few more days, the two of them finally let me go, only after confirming that my condition had improved significantly. I don't understand why everyone is so overly concerned about me.

Considering that I had to spend most of my time spacing out in the hospital, it's a miracle I didn't go crazy.

I wonder if they even know how I feel. "[Haa... Finally getting out here...]"

Even if I can't feel other senses, I can definitely feel the wind. I may not have ears and eyes, but my nose is perfectly fine.

They should at least let me feel the wind. "[Don't you think so, Evan?]"

"...S-Sorry..."

When I called him with a hint of that emotion, Evan seemed to think I was sulking and apologized cautiously, stammering.

Even if they're worried about me, being overly concerned to the point of being blinded by it turns worry into torture.

How painful must it be for the person involved? Well... it wasn't exactly a bad feeling.

It's not like they neglected me; they kept watching over me. More than that, there's something I need to take care of first. "[Do you know... where Stella is?]"

Evan's expression stiffened slightly at my question.

He seemed to be debating whether to tell me or not, then sighed deeply and said,

"Um... I think she's probably busy solving the magical conundrums that the Headmaster is giving her... I'm not a mage, so I don't know, but I heard they're incredibly difficult."

What.

Actually, I was awake at the time, so I knew that she had become Argent's disciple, so I wasn't that surprised, but...

'Just how much of a monster are they planning to make?'

To have her solving magical conundrums, of all things, means they must be very determined.

Hmm...

"[Um... Can I go see her too?]"

Evan looked like he was debating whether he should take me.

I mean, I'm just going to see a friend, why is there so much to think about...?

Anyway, he must have decided it was okay, because he nodded and guided me.

We arrived at the place where Stella was continuing her magical studies.

"[Is this where Stella is studying magic...]" I'll know once I go inside.

Thinking that, I followed Evan into the building. At least, until everything suddenly went dark. 'Oh...'

As soon as I stepped inside the building, everything around me started to disappear as if blocked by something.

No...

I called out to Evan with a slightly dumbfounded feeling. "[I can't see anything...?]"

What on earth is in here?

Well, there must be something, but I didn't like the fact that I was just blocked from seeing anything, so I vented my frustration on Evan, who seemed flustered and shouted, sweating,

"Ah, you can't see anything...?!" Yes, I can't see anything, you idiot. I chuckled and replied,

"[Yes. It seems Argent has cast a Barrier on this building.]"

I'm not a mage either, but how tightly are they trying to control things?

It's not just blocking magic power, it's definitely creating an area that stagnates any great power from coming and going.

What a crazy bitch...

A uniquely frustrating method that only a great mage can pull off... Since I couldn't see anything, it was difficult to walk forward.

No, since I didn't even know where Evan was, it seemed like the best thing to do for now was to just stand still.

While I was standing still, Evan hurriedly ran inside to call Argent. That's my guess, anyway.

A little later, a familiar Thought-form reached me. "I see your body has recovered."

It was Argent.

"Ah, sorry, I forgot you can't see anything. That's probably because of me. I put up a Barrier to prevent Stella from using tricks."

Yeah, it seemed like it.

"R-Really... I can't use my magic... Estel? Estel!"

Evan seemed amazed that he couldn't use his magic, and even called out to Estel, but there was no response from Estel.

It seemed that Evan's magic itself was not connected to Estel, so it was completely cut off.

Hmm...?

But something's strange.

"[Then how can I see and hear with Thought-form?]"

"There's no need to block such insignificant Holy Power. Blocking that would also take my magic power."

I nodded at Argent's words.

Well, it wouldn't be easy to completely stagnate everything.

It's practically like creating absolute zero, and even though it's easier than stopping time, if you think about maintaining it for a long time...

"Well, seeing how eagerly she's trying to learn, I don't think she'll use tricks... but when people are cornered, they'll try anything. There's always a 'what if'."

Wow, she's a devil.

She throws her in there, tells her to solve difficult problems...

"Evan, take Aria and follow me. Well... you can just hold her hand, right?" "M-Me?!"

Evan replied in a flustered voice at Argent's words.

"What, is there a problem? Aria doesn't seem to dislike it either, does she?" But Argent replied as if there was no problem.

Hmm.

I don't particularly dislike it. I don't, but...

'How does she know that when I can't even open my eyes.' I was just standing still.

Ah, does she think I'm okay with it because I'm standing still? "Um... th-that's..."

Evan started to stammer, glancing at me, as if he was tempted by Argent's words.

Seeing this kind of thing makes him seem pathetic. He's usually such an amazing guy.

I had no choice but to reach out my hand to Evan first. "[Here's my hand.]"

Um? Ah.

"[Um... but is this the right way?]"

I was worried that I might be reaching out my hand in the wrong place because I didn't know where Evan was.

But...

"...Yeah, this is the right way." What.

What's with the pause?

There was a moment of silence, but then Evan grabbed my hand and said that.

I hate to say this, but that silence felt strange to me. Did I reach out my hand in a weird place?

Since there's such a big difference in our physiques, there's a good chance of that.

Or maybe I reached out my hand in a weird place and he suddenly realized that I can't see and became solemn...

I'd rather it be the latter, but even if it was, it wouldn't be a good feeling.

'In my past life, when I saw disabled people, I felt a strange sense of solemnity and guilt.'

Now that I'm disabled myself, I feel even worse when my presence creates that kind of atmosphere, so I guess those people probably felt the same way.

'Well... maybe not.'

Gaining a new realization, I decided to just accept it.

Anyway, following Argent's words, I took Evan's hand and started walking. "You two look good together."

"Wh-What do you mean..."

Evan stammered in a flustered voice at Argent's playful words. Um...

'Do we look good together...?'

To be honest, I still don't know if Evan and I look good together.

It's not that Evan is ugly, but the height difference is so big that I can't help but think that.

That's probably why Argent's words about us looking good together don't resonate with me.

"Hmm, we've arrived."

While I was thinking, I heard Argent say that we had arrived, so I tried to spread my Holy Power widely, but...

"[...I still can't see anything.]"

Is she making fun of me? "Open your eyes." "[My... eyes?]"

I think she's really making fun of me. Where are my eyes?

I'll open them because she told me to, but I won't be able to see anyway... "...Huh?"

I can see...? Not only that. "Ah... What...?"

I can even talk?

I looked around in confusion. My eyes shouldn't be visible.

I should either be speaking my native language, or this world's language, so it shouldn't be working.

But...

"[What is this...]"

"It's simple. I'm using illusion magic to convert the scenery, visual images, and sounds of this room into Thought-form that you can understand and sending it to you. It's a bit difficult and cumbersome, so I can only show you this much for now."

Argent said, scratching her head awkwardly.

"How is it? The gift."

I stared blankly at Argent's question. Is she serious?

I don't know much about magic, but converting real-time images and sounds with this level of accuracy, and even considering my brain's inability to process visuals, and sending it in the form of Thought-form that I can "see" is definitely not an easy task.

I walked to the window as if possessed and looked outside.

The scenery of the academy, so identical that it gave me goosebumps, unfolded before my eyes.

It's an ordinary scene. But why...

"Ah..."

I'm happy.

I never thought I'd get to see the real world like this.

That's why I'm even happier and overwhelmed with emotion. "...Thank... you..."

Really.

I was so grateful.

Really...

# 2 - Small Happiness

I never imagined I'd see the 'real' world in this way.

Unfortunately, it's still limited, but the fact that I can feel the sensation of seeing with my own eyes is unbelievable.

Frankly, I thought the only way I'd see this world with my own eyes was by defeating the Demon King and wishing for all my senses back.

"Well… thank me to my disciple over there, who's working hard, or rather, studying hard. All the ideas and a lot of help for this magic came from that kid."

Argent said, pointing at Stella.

Even Stella was real to my eyes, not some unrendered 3D form, and I could see her directly with my own eyes.

However, it seems she can't see this side, which is a shame… but I'm satisfied just being able to see.

Just a moment ago, it was so dark that I couldn't see anything, so I was even more surprised.

I even wondered if he deliberately made it invisible at first to surprise me even more by setting up this Barrier.

More than that… I don't know much about magic, but even I can tell that this is probably space-related magic.

So, I thought Stella, who mainly uses space magic, might have helped, but I never thought it would be true.

What's more, not only did she help, but the fact that she came up with the idea to create this magic so that I could see and hear the world with my own

eyes filled me with endless gratitude towards Stella. "Stella…"

I looked down at Stella, who was over there, clutching her head and solving problems, and was overcome with a strange feeling.

When I first met her, she had given up on everything in the world and was just lazing around, living without any attachment, but I felt proud to see how much she had grown.

The fact that she not only created such magic but is now solving magical challenges is unbelievable…!

'Sniff…'

Stella… this mom is so happy… I never knew you would grow so much… Or was I originally a dad…?

I started to get confused for a moment, but I decided to just let it go. I'll just be a mom… I'm a woman now, so what does it matter?

Besides, I'm just thinking this to myself.

Smiling at Stella, I turned my head and looked at Argen Headmaster.

Then, I carefully approached and gently reached out to touch Argen Headmaster's face.

"So, this is what Argen Headmaster looks like."

“… I'm only allowing this because it's you. But shouldn't you usually look at your boyfriend first…?"

Argen Headmaster asked, as if he was dumbfounded. Ah, right, there was Evan.

No, wait, I think I said he wasn't my boyfriend, but I don't know why he keeps trying to pair me up with Evan.

Of course… it's not like I dislike it or anything, but Evan… 'No, how could I possibly dislike it…?'

Come to think of it, Evan did like me, didn't he?

I turned to look at Evan and saw that he looked no different from the Evan I saw in the Trial of Wisdom before… no, not exactly the same.

I could tell that he had become a bit more dignified and mature compared to then.

Is it because he's been through more since then? People grow, after all.

I chuckled and said.

"I've already seen Evan's face once."

Of course, if you say it doesn't count because I didn't see it in reality, I have nothing to say, but the feeling of seeing with colorful and beautiful vision is on a completely different level from seeing a 3D map. Even if it was a virtual world.

"Where did you see it?"

"The Trial of Wisdom… do you know about it?" "I wouldn't know."

Yeah, you wouldn't know…

It would be weirder if you did know…

"Well, you don't have to tell me where you saw it. You finally got your eyes back, right? Enjoy it a bit more. For example…"

Argen Headmaster, with a troubled expression as he looked around, approached me with a sly look and whispered.

"How about facing Evan with your own eyes and touching his face? Just to check if your sense of touch and limited vision match well."

Huh…

It seems this old woman is losing it.

The latter reason is probably all an excuse, and the former reason is probably the biggest.

No, I'm sure of it.

Well, whatever…

I turned to look at Evan.

I could have looked back using Holy Power, but I can't use Holy Power to look around right now.

I can only see if I look directly…

I approached Evan and looked up at him, who had become more dignified and grown in the past year, and carefully reached out my hand.

'She said I can only see this much for now…' I'm happy enough with just this.

In fact, it meant that I could be in this area as a normal person, not someone with a disability.

Anyway, I felt strangely moved by Evan, so I called out to him in a slightly trembling voice.

"Evan…"

At that, Evan stood stiffly with a rigid expression and posture.

The moment my hand, raised on tiptoe, was about to touch Evan's face… Bang!

"It's OVERRRRR!!!"

"Eek!"

Stella, who had solved all the problems, suddenly opened the door and ran inside, waving the paper with the solved problems wildly as she ran towards us.

How can the timing be so perfect… it's quite amazing.

Stella, who had been expressing her joy as she ran inside, seemed to notice that the atmosphere was strange, and her voice gradually became smaller.

And then… "Uh…"

I, who was about to reach out and touch Evan's face, and Stella, who turned to look at Evan standing still, froze on the spot.

Solving the problems was definitely a happy thing, but… Argen Headmaster was probably looking forward to this moment the most.

And the one who ruined the moment was her own disciple… "Sigh…"

Argen Headmaster, who had been quietly watching the scene, sighed deeply and smacked her forehead.

In that situation where I was frozen, Evan was frozen, Stella was frozen, and Argen Headmaster was sighing, I quickly lowered my hand that was about to touch Evan's face.

"Ah…!"

Stella, who seemed to have come to her senses at my actions, looked back and forth between me, Evan, and Argen Headmaster, as if she was trying to read the room…

“… I'm sorry.”

Leaving only those words, she went back inside. 'Uh… I wasn't planning on chasing her out…'

She must have thought we were angry and left without even coming in after solving the problems.

…

…

…

"I ran away because I thought I might have interrupted a good time… um… right?"

I could only give Stella an awkward smile in response to her question.

I had barely come to my senses and stopped because of Stella's appearance, but now that I think about it, I wondered why I did that to Evan.

So, I was more grateful to Stella than resentful.

However, that's just how I felt, and it was obvious that both Evan and Argen Headmaster, one an avid supporter of our relationship and the other in love with me, were disappointed.

I, on the other hand, felt embarrassed and moved away from Evan to stand next to Stella.

Evan made a sound of disappointment as I moved away from him. But I'm not going back, so keep dreaming.

However, Stella, who looked at me and Evan as we started to distance ourselves, must have thought the atmosphere was falling apart, because she couldn't stand it and shouted.

"So, it was my fault after all, wasn't it?!" No, really, it wasn't.

Well, Evan might give her a look of resentment, but only a little, or maybe a lot.

Anyway… I have something to say now.

"More than that, Stella, I have something to tell you." "Oh… it feels so strange to just hear you talk… hehe…" Please listen to what I'm saying properly.

"I heard that Stella helped a lot with the magic cast here… I wanted to thank you."

I should thank her for what I'm grateful for, right?

Honestly, before experiencing this magic, I thought the only way to truly see this world was to defeat the Demon King and wish for my eyes and ears back, as I said before… or just die. But I was so happy to be able to see colors, even in a limited way.

I approached Stella, took her hand, and shook it as I said. "Thank you so much, Stella."

I was truly… so grateful to Stella.

For giving me the opportunity to see this world with my own eyes.

# 3 - Small Happiness

“Ah… um…”

Stella, slightly flustered by my gratitude, glanced around before taking a breath and smiling at me.

“I’m glad it helped. I was so worried it wouldn’t work when I was making it.”

Stella said it as if she was genuinely relieved.

Honestly, even if this magic hadn’t worked, the fact that she even thought of creating such magic for me was touching.

Even if it had failed, I would have sincerely thanked Stella.

Whether it succeeded or failed, the fact that my friend went this far for me wouldn’t change.

But…

‘The magic is even perfect…’

I would have been touched even if it had failed, but the fact that it was perfect only amplified my emotions.

‘Really… should I call this fortunate…’

It feels a bit awkward to say it myself, but I think it's fortunate that I've grown this much from a half-dead person on the verge of dying.

And… it seems like I’m growing well enough to defeat the Demon King. ‘It’ll be soon.’

If I can solve the difficult problems little by little, it’s safe to say I’m quite close.

No… in the first place, they are called difficult problems because they cannot be solved… Of course, these are problems that have already been solved, but knowing the answer is incomparable to proving it all over again from the beginning.

In short, Stella is solving problems that magicians all over the world are struggling to solve quickly, problems that they are solving with collective intelligence, all by herself.

Usually, magic emphasizes enlightenment, so I wonder if she can become a great magician by doing this…

‘But… Argent Headmaster is teaching her directly, so it would be stranger if I said anything…’

I can’t exactly, as a Saintess ignorant of magic, start saying that’s not how you do it.

Anyway…

I should ask.

“How is your progress with magic?”

“Ooh… it feels new to hear that directly from Aria…” “Me too.”

Stella and I looked at each other and smiled bashfully. Me too.

Honestly, I thought this would be impossible without defeating the Demon King.

“So?”

Stella, who had been giggling at my continued question, scratched her head, looking troubled, before letting out a deep sigh.

“Don’t even mention it… the problems Argen Headmaster gives me are all difficult problems. It’s hard enough just to understand them, but trying to prove them all over again from the beginning is driving me crazy…”

Stella said, handing me the test paper.

I would normally think that I wouldn’t be able to see it anyway, but now I can see perfectly well, so there’s no need for that.

I chuckled inwardly and examined the test paper. “Hmm…”

It seems to be a large circle with metaphysical shapes and strange letters that I can’t understand… but I don’t understand the content at all.

“I’m sorry… I don’t understand any of this…”

If I had focused on magic power and intelligence instead of faith, it might have been different, but unfortunately, I’m a Saintess who poured everything into faith, a faith-only Saintess.

There’s a reason why I’m the strongest Saintess in history when it comes to Holy Power…

I’m terrible at everything else.

“Tsk tsk… a foolish disciple… how can you become a great magician if you can’t even solve that?”

Stella looked dumbfounded at Argen’s clicking his tongue.

“Hey… these are all difficult problems, you know! Isn’t it amazing that I solved them?!”

“With that much arrogance, you can forget about becoming a great magician, just give up, you rascal.”

“…”

Stella looked up at Argen, speechless at his words. “What, you got a problem?”

Stella turned her head, saying it was nothing as Argen glared sharply. “You got a complaint or something?”

“Well… I do have one…” “What is it?”

“Well… shouldn’t a great magician… achieve something like a dramatic enlightenment? At first, I thought you would provide some clues about it, but what is this, just making me solve problems over and over again…”

“What are you talking about? You’re mistaken.” What.

Stella looked up at Argen with a surprised expression. “What do you mean…”

“You just solve problems, and one day you’ll get a sudden feeling. Then you become a great magician.”

“…”

“So, I just make you solve problems, what else is there?” “Ha…”

Stella sighed deeply and then closed her mouth.

She seemed to want to say something, but she couldn’t say anything because the experienced person was saying it directly. In the end, Stella, unable to bear her anger, scratched her head wildly and screamed before stomping back into the room.

“Tsk tsk tsk… can’t even endure that much…” ‘It’s just torture.’

Each one is continuing to prove abstruse theories that ordinary people can’t even understand…

It’s definitely amazing, but why is it?

Looking at the two of them, it doesn’t feel like much…

I don’t know much because I’m not a magician, but I don’t think you can become a great magician like that…

‘There was a job change quest…’

In the game, if you reached a certain level, a job change quest would automatically appear, and you could become a great magician.

In reality, it’s possible to become a magician with your own authority, but if you rolled those things randomly in the game, the skills would get messed up, so it couldn’t be helped.

So, the developer made it so that the authority you awaken differs depending on the player’s skills and tendencies, or in the style of a hidden job…

Honestly, I don’t know.

I’ve raised a magician character before, but as I said before, the great magician itself is just a job you can get if you meet the conditions.

There are ways to become a special great magician, but I can’t possibly know all of them…

Looking at the magic Stella is researching now, she seems like she will become a great magician of space, but that’s a kind of great magician I’ve never heard of.

Stella helped me, so I want to help her too, but there’s nothing I can do. “Enlightenment…”

I really don’t know…

.

.

.

When I came outside, everything I could see disappeared.

It’s a shame, but I was grateful that I could still see and hear, and even speak.

“[Will I ever be able to see the whole world with magic?]”

Even though it was for this much talent for Holy Power, the demerit of being blind and deaf was too great for me now that it had become a reality.

Evan turned to me at my words filled with regret. And then he gave an unexpected answer.

“… No, magic is good, but still, compared to seeing and hearing directly… it’s different, right.”

“[That’s… true…]” He’s right.

Compared to seeing and hearing directly, seeing with magic is a bit different.

To put it simply, it’s like the difference between looking around with a camera and seeing with your own eyes.

However…

“[But I was happy anyway. Because I was able to see the real world after all.]”

Even so, the fact that I saw the real world I wanted to see… with my own eyes, that fact doesn’t change.

‘More than that, he doesn’t seem like the type to say something like this…’ “… I will definitely…”

I focused on the Thought-form Evan was muttering, wondering what it was, but I couldn’t hear anything more.

I don’t know what he was thinking, but… maybe he has complicated feelings too.

I decided to let it go.

“Why did you leave me out!” “S, sorry…”

Come to think of it, I forgot to take Uriel with me.

Thanks to that, I got scolded a lot, but the good thing is that it wasn’t me who got scolded, but Evan who was being scolded by Uriel.

Of course, I forgot too, but I think it’s more Evan’s fault. Anyway, that’s it.

“Isn’t Stella coming out?”

“[She probably won’t be coming out for a while. She’s working hard.]”

I almost think she has no intention of coming out until she becomes a great magician in there.

“Ugh… hearing that makes me feel like I can’t lose either. Okay, Evan! Let’s go train right away!”

“H, huh? Now?”

“Come on! We have to be diligent to defeat the Demon King, right!” “W, wait a minute…!!”

Um… actually, he’s not the kind of guy you can catch just by being diligent…

Still, the more you train your basic physical strength, the better, so it’s not a bad thing.

Evan, being dragged away by Uriel, asked me for help, but I ignored him cheerfully.

‘Then now…’

Is it time to go back to the Theology Department? Somehow… I don’t want to go.

But I have to go, don’t I?

I headed towards the Theology Department with slightly sluggish steps.

As a matter of course, after being hospitalized for two weeks and finally being discharged, there was nothing for me to do this time either.

# 4 - Small Happiness

Even after that, everyday life continued.

Everyone was doing well, except for Stella, who was receiving separate training from Argent, unlike us who were being directly educated at the academy.

Stella? Well… as you know, she's busy proving magical theories all day, so I don't know if she's doing well.

Looking at her, she seems to be doing okay, but I don't know what she's really thinking…

Plus, she comes back to the dormitory every day, agonizing over difficult problems, so I often heal her and cast blessings on her.

I even brought her a lot of sweets with Uriel's help, so I think she's doing well.

Well, becoming a great mage is the most important thing anyway… 'For some reason, Stella seems desperate to become a great mage too…'

She wasn't usually like this, but she's been working hard as if a fire has been lit under her.

It's a good thing if she's working hard, but something feels off… Anyway, time passed like that…

"[It won't be long until the next vacation…]"

I realized that a year and a half had already passed since I started attending the academy.

During break time, I was muttering and smiling to myself when a nun who looked like a freshman, who was watching me with a curious expression, cautiously asked.

Well, it's been about three months since she became a freshman. "Um… what do you usually do during vacation, Saintess?"

Oh, she's the first one to talk to me.

I was about to answer with a smile, but a senior nun next to her slapped the junior nun on the head and said.

"You idiot…! She's the Saintess, so of course she spends her days praying to the Goddess and purifying herself, or doing important things that ordinary people like us can't understand! Why are you asking such a thing!"

"Hmph…" No…

I don't know what she's thinking, but I've never really lived like that… Never…

Nev…

…

…

'Yeah, that's not it…'

Come to think of it, since I started attending the academy, most of the time I've been throwing myself into attacks by the Demon King Army executives or demons.

Every time, I came back injured and half-dead, so it's understandable that they would think I'm in charge of important tasks.

But still…

'Wait… come to think of it, am I an outcast…?' Of course, I'm not really an outcast.

I get along well with Evan, Stella, and Uriel, but most of the students find me difficult to approach.

After all, I can't see, hear, or speak, and rumor has it that I'm incredibly devout and a true Saintess who doesn't hesitate to sacrifice myself more than anyone else…

And since I've actually accomplished things, there's no denying that's the impression they have.

Well, most of it is true, so it's not that strange.

But still…

'I think I've had more days of living normally…'

I have more memories of praying in the cathedral every day and living a frugal life, but I guess the biggest reason is that it's boring and it's just everyday life, so it's not imprinted on my mind.

Anyway… she asked, so I have to say something… In this case, it's best to answer in a textbook manner. "[I must fulfill my duty.]"

Well, if there's anything to do during vacation, it's probably clearing the Trial of Courage… Actually, it's the trial I'm most worried about, but at the same time, it's the trial I'm least worried about, so I have a lot of thoughts about it.

It's literally testing courage, but how much courage should a Hero have, who has to face a great disaster that will plunge the world into destruction?

At least, they must have strong courage to the point where they can sacrifice their own lives without hesitation.

I wonder if Evan can muster that kind of courage, that's the kind of worry I have.

'It's not like he's so lacking in courage that he can't handle it…'

In the first place, he's already proven his qualifications to some extent by becoming a Hero.

But I can't help but worry.

While I was suffering inwardly like that, the two nuns, who knew nothing about my thoughts, put their hands together, smiled, and said.

"As expected of the Saintess…"

"Let's go, Mirne, we shouldn't disturb her." "Hmph… I wanted to talk to the Saintess more…" "Quickly."

"Yes…" Oh,

No.

No, really.

It wouldn't matter if you disturbed me, so I wish you would talk to me a little more…

I prayed inwardly, but I couldn't ask them to talk to me more.

With a sad heart, I couldn't stop the two people from leaving and could only stare blankly.

'Well… this is to be expected…'

It wouldn't be easy to approach the Saintess.

If you think about it from their perspective, it's easy to understand.

I'm just a nun, but I'm talking to the Saintess? I wouldn't think that's possible.

Or it's like a commoner wanting to get close to the crown prince at the academy, but it's impossible due to their status.

It's a little different, but it's for a similar reason, so I guess I should just accept it.

In fact, the child who tried to talk to me is amazing.

Or maybe she's just clueless… 'She was cute, though.'

It was nice… what a shame… "[Hmm…]"

No… has my heart weakened?

Until now, I thought it was okay, but it's only now that I'm reminded that I don't have any friends at the academy except for Evan, Stella, and Uriel, and it bothers me even more.

Come to think of it, isn't that right?

I always walk alone, pray alone, and no one approaches me, so what else is that if not being an outcast?

It's me, so it makes me feel bad.

I was fine before, but the fact that I'm feeling worse and worse means that I've been alone for too long and my heart may have weakened little by little.

"[I should finish quickly… and go back…]" For some reason, I want to see Evan.

That's just how I feel.

.

.

.

"S-So that's why you came to me…?"

"[Living alone without knowing anyone is very difficult…]" When I said that, Evan comforted me in a slightly awkward voice. 'Is she relying on me…?! Yes…!'

Um. Uh… Uh-oh…

Okay, I understand you're happy, but what's with being so happy that I can hear it all through your Thought-form…?

On the outside, he was comforting me with a stern, serious, and solemn expression… no, a pitiful expression, but on the inside, he was wildly happy.

It's a little absurd…

But I didn't dislike it, and I found Evan cute.

Maybe that's why, "Pfft…"

I couldn't help but laugh. "Why, what's wrong?"

Evan seemed flustered by my sudden laughter and asked if something was wrong.

At the same time, he was worried that I might have heard his thoughts through his Thought-form, which made me laugh even more.

He looks like a nobleman, but his actions and thoughts are so pure. 'Well… that's why he was chosen as the Hero.'

They chose the right person.

"[It's nothing. It's just… I'm enjoying talking like this, so I couldn't help but laugh.]"

Now, if I say that, he'll believe it and we can be equal friends, a normal relationship.

And yet, he's someone who treats me sincerely and worries about me more than anyone else.

He's a fool.

Stella and Uriel also worry about me, but how should I say it…

Those two feel like friends, but with Evan, I can feel his ulterior motives. Um…

I wonder if he knows…

'Demon King… huh…'

Come to think of it, he said he would confess to me after defeating the Demon King.

If he had just said he had something to say, but saying he would confess after defeating the Demon King is basically telling me not to refuse.

Of course, I would understand even if he said it the former way. It's absurd.

Especially since saying it that way is like saying he's going to die.

If you think about it, it's like saying, "I'm going to confess to her if I survive this war." It's the same kind of story.

Or it's like an uncle in a war zone showing off a pendant with a family photo and saying, "Look at my family. I have a daughter who was born not long ago," and chuckling.

The details are quite different, but the conclusion is similar, so it's not a good story.

Anyway… even so…

'Demon King… I must defeat him…'

Thinking about the future where I can live peacefully with Evan and everyone else doesn't feel so bad.

Really.

# Small Happiness (Intermission)

As time passed, I spent my days enjoyably and busily, and before I knew it, several months had gone by.

"The semester is almost over!"

Aria nodded as Uriel exclaimed in a joyful voice.

I had been waiting for this time to come, and it had finally arrived. "I know… I can finally rest easy… Heehee…"

I chuckled inwardly as I watched Stella, the blue-haired girl, laugh like crazy in a voice that sounded like she was about to die.

Someone once said that sleep is the best medicine.

No matter how much I restored her energy and blessed her, Stella's mental state wasn't great, as she was still mentally exhausted.

"[Are you alright, Stella...?]"

"No… I'd like to say I'm okay if I could, but I'm too tired right now… Sorry…"

"[There's no need to apologize… Shall I cast a heal...?]"

At my words, Stella reflexively raised both arms in a defensive posture.

Her feet, stretched out to the side as if to run away at any moment, were so fast that I felt a sense of awe.

'Pfft…'

I almost burst out laughing…

"N-no, no more heals… I can't sleep if I get one…"

I've never gone without sleep in my life, so I don't know for sure, but I think she must be feeling very strange mentally.

Physically, she would have received the heal and all her fatigue would have disappeared, but mentally, she would have suddenly become a body that didn't need to sleep and was always energetic.

It might be okay at first, but if that lifestyle continued for months, she would feel a sense of alienation.

I smiled and sent a Thought-form to ease Stella's anxiety.

"[Don't worry. It won't be too strong. If you receive this heal and sleep, you'll sleep much better.]"

"... Really?"

At my words, Stella, who had been trying to get away from me, began to slowly approach me again, as if tempted.

"R-really…? I can sleep even more happily…?" Um… I don't think I said that far…?

Seeing her ask with a Thought-form full of anticipation even as she was nodding off, it seemed like she really wanted to sleep.

She wants it this much, so shouldn't I grant it?

"[Wait a moment. If I use it here, you'll fall asleep right away, so… um… ]" No matter how sleepy she is, I can't let her sleep in the classroom.

I think the first thing to do is to return to the dormitory.

"It's okay if I sleep here, so can you cast it right away…? I'll be in big trouble if I get caught sleeping…"

What's with the 'big trouble' thing again… Whoosh!

"Ah, there you are. I've been waiting for you, Stella." No, this Thought-form…

Stella turned her head towards the direction of the Thought-form with a trembling expression.

And of course, there… "M-Master…"

"I heard that Aria cast a heal on our Stella, is that alright?"

As someone who had worked with the Saintess and Hero party in the past, she seemed to know that even fatigue would come to me.

I smiled and replied.

"[I'm fine. More importantly, I have a question, Argen Headmaster.]"

"You have something you want to ask? Ask me anything. I'll answer everything."

As expected of Argent.

But…

"Eek, eeeek!"

"Where do you think you're going, you foolish girl?" "Ah, help me, Aria!!"

She was expressing her doubts to me while effortlessly holding Stella, who was struggling to escape, with one hand.

I had been wondering about this for a while, but I had forgotten about it while continuing my academy life.

"[Do you happen to know where Mirnel is?]"

When I woke up, she had already disappeared from the academy.

When I asked where she had gone, everyone said they didn't know, so I had been planning to ask Argent, but it wasn't easy to meet him.

Although the biggest reason is that I forgot. "Ah, come to think of it. Mirnel wasn't here." "It's been a long time since I last saw her…" Aren't you guys being too much?

Even though we caught Fenrir together, you could at least remember her…

Of course, we didn't spend that much time together, and we didn't know much about each other, so it's not strange to forget her when you're busy with your daily life…

However, in response to my question, Argent replied in a nonchalant voice, as if he had just remembered.

"That girl? She probably went back to her hometown. She said there was something she didn't bring. Anyway, she asked me to enroll her as a student here as she pleased, and then she left right away… Annoying girl."

"[Something she didn't bring… you mean?]"

She went back to her hometown…

"I could have sent it to her right away if she had told me, but she's so stubborn… That's how elves are."

Do you perhaps hate elves?

It's possible for Argent…

Of course, Mirnel is more inclined to be like that, but even if he said he would send it to her right away with magic, she would probably refuse, saying she would rather travel while feeling nature.

Although I'm not sure.

"Well, no more questions, right? Then I'll be on my way? I'll educate our cute disciple and return her right away, so wait until then~"

"Save meeee~!!"

Leaving behind Stella's desperate cry for help, he disappeared.

Although she became a disciple because she wanted to, I should at least offer a silent prayer for her, as she seems to be going through a lot.

Hang in there a little longer…

'There's a saying that pleasure comes after hardship, right?'

I believe that if she studies hard, she will one day find herself becoming a great mage.

"[He's gone… ]"

"She wasn't the type to go like that…" "Sniff… I won't forget you… Stella…" Aren't you guys accepting this too well…?

I cleared my throat and sent a Thought-form.

"Ahem… [Actually, I have something to do this vacation, everyone.]"

Perhaps because anything I had to do was usually important, the two of them looked at me with serious expressions.

Something to do during vacation? What could it be, guys.

"[There's still one Trial left, isn't there?]" Now there is only one Trial left.

"... The Trial of Courage."

Evan swallowed hard and muttered.

"[I think we should visit it again after a long time.]"

The Trial of Courage is located near what was once called the Demon Realm.

Going there is the first priority.

As the saying goes, strike while the iron is hot. Since there was only one left anyway, we decided to finish it quickly, and as soon as the vacation started, we left for the north as if we had been waiting for it.

"This is too much, really…"

Stella muttered with a dissatisfied expression.

As expected, Stella's animosity was directed towards us. "S-sorry… I'm really sorry…"

Evan apologized with a sincere expression, but Stella didn't seem to be in the mood to accept it.

"[Although it wasn't exactly intentional, it's still our fault. It's something we have to endure. I'm really sorry, Stella… ]"

It's unfair, but what can we do.

We're the ones who heard the story from Argent and decided that it was okay to leave first.

It's not strange for Stella to feel upset with us. "Hmm…"

Meanwhile, Uriel was looking at a letter with a troubled expression. "[Is something wrong?]"

At my question, Uriel was about to turn the letter towards me, but then she made an 'ah' expression.

"S-sorry… you can't see it…"

I wasn't particularly angry, but for some reason, I felt like teasing Uriel, so I decided to tease her.

"[Hoo… I'm glad… I was about to be disappointed in Uriel… ]"

At my words that I was about to be disappointed, Uriel panicked and started to fidget.

And then,

"I-I'm sorry…!"

She bowed her head deeply towards me and apologized, which made me even more flustered.

It seems she took it seriously.

I hid my bewildered expression and awkwardly smiled as I explained to Uriel.

"[I'm just kidding. Don't worry too much, Uriel.]" "R-really? Ugh… I'm so glad…"

No… If you react like that, doesn't it make me feel like I'm the bad guy for joking…?

"[I shouldn't make jokes like this in the future… ]" "It's a type of joke you shouldn't make to Uriel."

I nodded at Stella's words.

I knew that Uriel was pure from the start, but I didn't know that she would actually cry because she thought I was serious when I jokingly said I was disappointed.

Still, it's not a bad feeling to know that she likes me that much. Isn't it a part where you can see Uriel's sincerity?

Still…

'I should be careful from now on…' Because I feel sorry for Uriel…

# 1 - Conflict

So, everyone arrived at what used to be the Demon Realm. Everyone looked around with bewildered expressions. "Was it this warm here...?"

"[I know, right...]"

I voiced my own question, agreeing with Evan's words.

Until a year ago, it was an extremely cold region where blizzards raged.

Moreover, it was a barren area where it snowed 365 days a year, so the snow never melted and piled up high, making one wonder if people could even live there.

But what about now?

It was a bit chilly because it was the north, but the sun was shining brightly, and the snow had melted enough for weeds to grow, making it hard to fathom how much it had changed.

More than anything... 'W-Warm...'

It was beyond warm; it was hot.

Anyway, I thought I should dress warmly since it was the north, but it was so warm that I wondered if I had overprepared.

Well, whatever... it seems like they're doing well without any major problems.

"[I wonder if they're doing well... Lord Valencia... Lucia...]"

If they were sick or something, they would have called me, so there must be no problem.

Still, I couldn't help but anticipate, or rather, worry.

'There's a possibility they didn't call me because they didn't want to bother me...'

It would be best to go inside and check.

Of course, it would be best if nothing had happened, but if something had to happen, I hoped it wouldn't be something painful.

I would be so happy if only I could feel the pain... but there's no such convenient thing, is there?

If that's the case, then it's best if nothing happened at all.

I was thinking that to myself and was about to call out to the Lord inside, but...

Clatter, clatter Neigh!

The sound of hooves, and the sound of a horse stopping... "You guys are..."

At the same time, a familiar voice rang out, and everyone turned their heads towards the Thought-form.

And there... "[Lord Valencia?]"

Lord Valencia was there.

"[It's been a while, Lord Valencia!]" "... Saintess? Are you the Saintess?!"

The Lord's eyes widened as he looked at me.

He looked as if he didn't expect me to come here. I thought I sent a message saying I was coming? 'Did he not see it?'

It's possible if he was busy, but I hadn't heard anything about the Lord being particularly busy, so I was a bit puzzled.

But soon, I thought it didn't matter. That's when it happened.

"Uncle? You're Uncle, right?!"

The Lord seemed to glance over us, then his gaze stopped at one person upon hearing a familiar voice.

It was Uriel's voice.

"You are... Uriel? Is that Uriel?"

"And you're Uncle! You're really Uncle, right?! It's been so long!" Oh.

It seems they knew each other.

Well, it's not that strange for the Lord and a princess to know each other. "Uncle...! It's been so long~!!"

Uriel smiled brightly and reached out to hug the Lord.

"Don't get too clingy..."

However, the Lord pushed Uriel away, looking troubled. Regardless, Uriel chuckled and replied.

"Hehe... you're so shy, Teacher."

I was surprised to see this new side of Uriel... and then she even mentioned him being her teacher.

Everyone was shocked and stared at Valencia and Uriel, as no one had expected him to be her teacher.

Realizing that the atmosphere was turning strange, the Lord, sweating, said to us.

"Well... it's not really a place to talk here, so let's go inside first." Everyone nodded at the Lord's words and followed him into the mansion.

It was as if he hoped we would forget about Uriel's story while moving, but unfortunately, that wasn't going to happen.

'I think I have a lot to ask.' What's going on?

I was so curious.

"Sit wherever you like."

As soon as we sat down, a maid approached us and served refreshments. "Haa..."

Everyone sat at the table and looked at the Lord, who took a sip of tea, put it down, and sighed.

It seemed best for me to start the conversation first. I was most curious about the weather.

Why did it turn out like this?

"[The weather seems to have gotten a lot better... what happened?]" "... It's thanks to the Saintess."

"[Me... are you talking about me?]" I tilted my head.

What was he talking about?

"Saintess... and thanks to the Hero defeating that Magic beast, peace has come to the Demon Realm, and even the blizzards have stopped. Thanks to you, we can live peacefully without anyone having to sacrifice themselves anymore. Thank you so much, Saintess."

Valencia said that and bowed his head.

His attitude towards me seems to have changed a bit compared to before... or is it just my imagination?

Well, I guess it could be.

However, I wanted to say that there was no need to be so formal like Valencia was now, but I decided to just let it go.

I don't know... I should bring up another topic.

"[By the way, where did Lucia go? I'd like to see her after a long time...]" "Ah, Lucia, you say? I'll call her right away."

No, I mean, you're being too much, you know.

Anyway, I'm glad that I'll be able to see Lucia again after a long time.

Whether it was true that he would call her right away, it wasn't long before the door opened and a girl walked into the room.

"... Wow...! D-Did you really come back?!"

Lucia, who had grown a bit taller in the year, greeted me. 'Wow... it's really been a while.'

She seems to have grown a lot in just one year, probably because she's in her growth spurt.

"[Are you Sister Lucia? It's been a while.]"

When I said that with a smile, Lucia smiled brightly and hugged me. Hmm... T-This is...

"[Y-You're going to be taller than me soon, aren't you?]" "N-Not that much..."

She turned her head slightly, as if embarrassed, but for me, it was a ghostly matter.

Hey, isn't she really going to be taller than me...?

"[Um... are you not feeling well anywhere? Is there anything I can help you with...]"

"Don't say that. I'm really fine." "That's right, there's really nothing!" Hmm...

Did I try to work too much after coming to see them after a long time? The reaction isn't very enthusiastic.

But something... 'Is strange...'

Why are they reacting like that?

If nothing was wrong, they would react normally, but they were reacting as if there was something bothering them.

Mainly Lucia.

"[You're making me worry more by reacting like that. Are you sure nothing's wrong?]"

Even to my sharp question, they only reacted by saying that there was nothing wrong.

'This is really suspicious...'

Seeing their reaction no matter how much I asked, there were only two possibilities.

Either there really was nothing wrong, or there was something wrong, but it was something they couldn't tell me.

Anyway... unless it was something important, I couldn't ask any more. "[If that's the case... I understand.]"

Even as I answered that, I spread my Thought-form towards Lucia. Then, I easily caught her tail and heard Lucia's thoughts.

'The village is in an uproar... I wonder what's going on... Dad, really... he never tells me these things... Hmph.'

Oh, she's sulking.

It doesn't seem to be my fault.

Unlike Valencia, who can completely hide his inner thoughts and is used to it, Lucia doesn't have that, so I just poked around.

More than that, the village... 'I can say that this is bingo.'

It seems that something has happened in the village. The time to visit the village may be coming soon.

.

.

.

"Hmm... I see..."

Valencia, who had heard our story, lowered his head with a troubled expression.

It's not like I know exactly where it is located, either.

After all, there's bound to be a difference between the map in the game and reality.

So, there's no other way but to mention the things that were around it as much as possible and find it one by one...

"I'm sorry. You explained it diligently, but with this much information, I don't think there's a way to find it right away."

Valencia said with a sincerely apologetic expression.

If he's saying that much, I should just think that he doesn't know.

"Is there anyone in the village who knows the geography of this place well?"

Valencia fell into thought at Evan's question. Oh, as expected of Evan.

With this, he had a chance to find out the location of the Trial of Courage, as well as what was happening in the village.

However...

"Hmm... there is someone, but I'll go and ask. There's an old woman who knows this area well."

Valencia said casually, as if it was nothing, but I narrowed my eyes, oh right, I don't have eyes.

Anyway.

It's a setting I've never heard of.

If it's simply a hidden setting that didn't appear in the game, I have nothing to say, but what are the chances of that?

'This might be the chance.'

The opportunity to go to the village came so quickly, it was fortunate if anything.

"[If someone as high as the Lord goes to ask something like that, the old woman will be very surprised.]"

"That's... then if I send someone..."

"[It's confidential. It mustn't be leaked.]"

"..."

Valencia had a speechless expression.

Valencia, who can't come on strong to me in the first place. "[... So something is happening in the village after all.]"

At that, Valencia silently declared surrender.

In fact, I had expected something to be happening from the moment I felt that the reaction was a bit strange, so I wasn't that surprised.

Valencia sighed and turned to Lucia. "Lucia, go out now."

"Ah, Dad..."

"It's a terrible story for you to hear."

At those words, Lucia lowered her head and clenched her fists tightly. "Okay..."

Then, she opened the door and left with a drooping voice.

After confirming that she had left the room, Valencia turned back to us and opened his mouth.

"Then... let's start the story." That's how Valencia's story began.

The cruel story that happened, or is still happening, in the village.

# 2 - Conflict

The story that began that way was as terrible as Valencia had initially warned us and Lucia.

"...A raped and torn corpse was found, and not just in one house, but in several?"

Evan asked, clenching his fist tightly. Valencia nodded at Evan's question. "I can't believe it..."

"That's awful..."

Uriel covered her mouth with her hand, looking sad. Stella also muttered softly, seemingly angry.

It was a cruel story, enough to understand why Lucia had been sent away. There was no way such a story could be told in front of that pure child. "[...I think I know why you told us not to go to the village...]"

Currently, in the northern village, the Matimos Tribe lives alongside the residents of the duchy who originally lived there.

When the Beast of the Apocalypse awakened, the village where the Matimos Tribe lived collapsed, forcing them to live together.

Of course, Valencia's contribution was significant in allowing them to live with the residents...

'That's the problem...'

The residents probably opposed living together as much as possible.

It's not strange to be scared if Beast-Humans suddenly start living together.

It's just that, contrary to the perception of Beast-Humans, the Matimos Tribe are very kind people.

You might say that's prejudice, and that even though they are a minority, a bad Matimos Tribe Beast-Human could appear.

No, that's impossible.

I guarantee that if such a guy appeared, he would have been dealt with before he could commit any wrongdoing.

If you think about what they were protecting in the first place, and who they were worshiping, doesn't the answer come out?

'They are a race that worships the Sun God Solanis...' They couldn't have done it.

I know that best.

But…

'Given the nature of Beast-Humans, if such an incident occurs, attention will naturally be drawn to the Beast-Human side.'

It's a very unfair situation for them, but it can't be helped.

In reality, the physical difference is that they are much stronger, so if they forcibly try to overpower and kill someone, an ordinary person would have no way to stop them.

Being torn to pieces by that overwhelming power is only natural. And…

"But they deny the incident. They say they don't have relationships with other races."

Yes, that's it.

They do not have relationships with other races.

If there were just torn corpses, there would be no choice but to suspect the Matimos Tribe, but if nothing else, that was certain.

Unless I'm misremembering, that was a setting about them that appeared in the actual setting book.

The only problem is that the fact is irrelevant to the villagers. "[Efforts to find the culprit internally...]"

"They say they are doing it for now, but..." Valencia shook her head.

The Matimos Tribe have lived as a minority for a long time.

In a way, it is only natural that they tend to protect their own people in such incidents.

Especially if they are on the side of the relatively small and weak.

Therefore…

'It's definitely not them.'

The Matimos Tribe are definitely not the culprits. There's no way.

Even though they seem that way, they worship Solanis, the God of Purification.

They can't commit such acts.

If they did, they would have lost that power of purification.

If they thought they would commit such a heinous act themselves and actually acted on it, they would lose the Holy Power they possess just by doing that.

The culprit will be revealed soon.

Besides… 'Rape?'

As I said before, this part is from the setting book, so there's no room for error.

In other words,

Either there is a culprit who actually committed such an act, 'Or they forced the Matimos Tribe to act that way...'

Like a Mental Assault... Mental Assault...?

Ah…!

'Could it be…!'

I suddenly thought of one possibility. 'Succubus Queen…!!'

I gritted my teeth.

Yes, if that bitch intervened in this situation, everything would make sense.

Of course, she was supposed to appear soon, but I didn't expect the world to flow this way.

I think I saw this vicious method in the story, but it was so long ago that I don't remember it well.

Besides, it was even harder to recall because the timing was different. 'She's not supposed to appear at this time, but she did…?'

As expected, I completely twisted the story, so this much error occurred.

Well, it's a fact that doesn't matter anymore, but if it has changed this much, it seems right to use the knowledge of the future only for reference.

I've already given up on it since it seems useless anyway.

I have no doubt that this group can overcome it even without knowledge of such stories.

However…

'Even with Valencia, this is dangerous...'

The Succubus Queen's close combat, that is, her inherent power, is at the lowest level, even if she is a high-ranking executive.

If she fought Valencia in close combat, she would be split in half and die in a few moves.

But the really scary thing about that bitch is something else. 'Mental Assault...'

She is skilled in all kinds of Mental Assault, including Temptation, Charm, and Mental Confusion.

This is the biggest problem.

If I were to choose the most difficult opponent in this game, I would definitely choose the Succubus Queen.

Until now, the executives and enemies have attacked mainly with physical damage and magic damage, so all you had to do was increase physical defense and magic resistance.

But this bitch is different.

You had to have high Mental Power, of all things.

If this stat is low, each attack is an instant kill pattern, so you have to avoid them all.

Fortunately, the instant kill pattern attacks are non-targeting attacks, so you can avoid them if you know the patterns.

It's just that avoiding them is too difficult... 'But this isn't a game...'

The idea of avoiding it with physical skills should be virtually abandoned.

At some point, your companions may be dominated by Mental Control, Hallucination, or Temptation and change.

'Evan might be affected too...'

His Mental Defense is very high, but it doesn't mean he won't be affected. The same goes for Valencia.

Even Valencia, who is at the level of a Sword Master, and Evan, the Hero, are affected, so there is no way that even the Matimos Tribe, who worship Solanis, can stop it.

The traces of the corpses that were raped and brutally murdered are likely the work of the Succubus Queen.

However, there was one problem. 'I can't tell them...'

Aside from not even knowing if it was the Succubus Queen's doing in the first place, I can't arbitrarily conclude anything without even properly figuring out who did it.

The moment I bring up this story, the way they look at me will definitely become strange.

The story about the Trial can be passed off as a Divine Revelation or the Goddess's guidance, but there's no way the God would tell me that the Succubus Queen committed such an act.

So, for now…

'I have no choice but to take a bit of a dangerous gamble.' It's not like I don't have anything to rely on.

I smiled, thinking of the Relic in my arms.

Even though it's dangerous, if I think about what is the safest way to lure her out and deal with her, there is no better way than this.

Of course, I can't tell them about this plan, so for now… "[How about going to the village first?]"

It would be good to go to the village and find out more details. That was the best I could do right now.

The place they all arrived at was Elgar Village. 'It looks like it was built haphazardly.'

Is it just my imagination?

Anyway… right now, it was more important to investigate the events that had occurred in the village than that.

"It's very chaotic..."

Uriel said in a pitiful voice.

Evan also seemed to feel that the atmosphere of the village was not very good.

I can't feel the atmosphere of the village because I lack sight and hearing, which account for most of my five senses, but I can tell how scared and anxious the villagers are just by the Thought-form I hear.

'It's very serious.'

Everyone may not have seen the state of the corpses, but…

Just by looking at the Thought-form I hear, I can easily tell how serious the situation is.

The atmosphere is chaotic, but no one is trying to come outside.

"[First of all, it would be best to find someone who knows the incident well.]"

It's not like I remember all the NPCs, so how would I know? Actually, the word NPC is wrong, but anyway.

Whoever it is, I'll be able to find them soon by reverse-tracking these overflowing Thought-form one by one.

…

Probably… that's right…

Um…

# 3 - Conflict

After several hours of searching, they finally found the man consumed by hatred after losing his wife.

It wasn't difficult to find him.

Simply passing by him sent shivers down their spines with the overwhelming feeling of hatred; it would have been stranger not to notice.

Especially since it was directed at the Matimos Tribe.

Judging by the intensity of his emotions, it seemed like he would cause trouble soon, so they quickly went inside to stop him…

“…”

Aria shook her head with a sad expression, as if answering the man's words. “Even with your power… is it impossible…?”

Then, the man asked her with a strained voice. Yes.

It was impossible even with her power.

In the first place, reviving a corpse was only possible if the corpse remained… How could she revive someone from a place where not even a trace of them remained, torn to shreds?

To revive a corpse that had vanished without a trace, their soul had to still be present in that place.

Otherwise, it was impossible.

But to revive a corpse so horribly mangled that it was unrecognizable, a corpse that had been dead for quite some time, was impossible even for her.

'Her heart aches to revive her, but…'

The thought of the pain made her shudder, and she wanted to revive her for the man's sake, but the situation was such that she couldn't even attempt it, so there was no way.

Aria lowered her head and said.

“[Please… tell me what you know so that we can honor her spirit. I beg you.]”

The man's hatred for the Matimos Tribe hadn't disappeared, but thanks to her efforts, his expression had softened, and he nodded.

“I don't know much… but if it can be of any help, I'll tell you anything.”

Perhaps it was thanks to the image she had built up in the Demon Realm, but fortunately, the man began to tell them everything he knew.

It seemed like things were going well, but she didn't know whether to call it fortunate yet…

The story they heard from the man was shocking.

When he returned home from work, it was already very late. The first thing he saw when he entered the room was the chaotic state of the house.

There were signs of destruction and tearing everywhere, furniture and the floor stained with blood, and at the end of it all, a gruesome corpse filled with blood and flesh.

And only traces of carnal acts remained.

“I only knew it was my wife when I saw the pendant in the blood… *sob*… *sniff*…”

The man clutched his head with both hands, holding the pendant in one hand, and wept.

Everyone watched the man with pity.

'…With this much, it's understandable to suspect the Matimos Tribe…'

They couldn't leave the corpse there, so they had already cleaned everything up, but the nightmare would continue to replay in his eyes.

Perhaps he was suffering just by being in this house. It was understandable to be suspicious.

Of course, rationally, he might know that they wouldn't commit such acts, that it was their culture not to engage with other races.

Of course, that was only what they claimed, and it was up to him to believe it or not, but in reality, that was the case, so he had no choice but to believe it.

But in any case, the Matimos Tribe were the only ones with the physical capabilities to commit such an act.

In the end, he had no choice but to suspect the Matimos Tribe. “Saintess…!”

The man approached Aria and knelt.

Clutching the pendant soaked in hardened blood with trembling hands, the man looked at her with a face burning with hatred and said.

“Please… please make those bastards pay for their sins! I beg you…! Please…!!”

It was complicated to see him grabbing her sleeve, who was much younger than him, and saying such things.

She had never had someone she loved so much, so it was difficult to fully empathize with his feelings, but…

'How precious must she have been for him to be like this.' At least she could understand that much.

What it would be like if someone precious died. 'If Evan were to die…'

Aria briefly imagined Evan dying.

Actually, it wasn't something she could easily imagine… 'Ah…'

As the image of Evan dying came to mind, a sigh escaped her lips. Hmm.

It didn't feel good to imagine it.

No, it was starting to make her feel bad. “…”

She couldn't fully understand, but she could understand to some extent what he was feeling.

So…

“[…Yes. I will definitely catch the culprit.]”

Making the one who killed his wife pay for their sins was probably not something she could do.

But…

'I can make the cause of this pay for their sins.'

If that cause hadn't existed in the first place, this wouldn't have happened, so it was the same as finding the culprit and making them pay.

Besides, they were already a target they had to subjugate anyway, so it would be killing two birds with one stone.

“Ah…”

The man looked up at her with a moved expression and then lowered his head deeply.

“Thank you… thank you so much…”

And then he thanked her repeatedly, sincerely.

For a long time…

“That's too much…”

Uriel muttered with a sad expression.

It seemed like she had said that before, but she was saying it again, so the story from earlier must have been very sad for her.

Well, it was a sad story even for Aria, so it must have been even more so for Uriel.

'Succubus Queen…'

In fact, the Succubus Queen probably hadn't ordered the victim to be killed so brutally.

If she had intended to get involved to that extent, traces of her power would have remained to the point where it wouldn't have been strange for Aria to track her down immediately.

But right now, there were no traces left.

In other words, she hadn't used that much power. 'Considering it was a Beast-Human, maybe…'

She had simply manipulated his mind to rape a human, but that was it.

There was no way a normal person could withstand the assault of a Matimos Tribe's strong body.

Thinking about it that way, the gruesome corpse wasn't incomprehensible. Then there was only one thing left.

'Why on earth did they do this…'

What benefit was there in making the Matimos Tribe and the residents of this place get along worse, to the point of taking direct action like this?

'It's because it's me that I figured it out.'

If it wasn't for her, the case would probably have been lost in the fog. She had concealed her power that thoroughly.

Then… 'Could it be…'

Was it their intention to lure them to the village? '…I don't know yet, but…'

Since they had to go to the Trial of Courage anyway, staying here was essential.

If it was a grand scheme to lure them to the village, then she would be moving as she expected, and if nothing happened overnight, she could

assume that her prediction was wrong.

If possible…

'I have no choice but to hope that my prediction is correct.' It would be good to secretly prepare to catch them.

Aria habitually poured Holy Power into the Relic.

But…

'Purification Holy Power.'

She poured the Holy Power of Purification into all the Relics.

In fact, the way to use Relics was to put in each of their respective Holy Powers, or the original Holy Power that was generally not separated, but…

'It's different now…'

She completely understood how to use the Relics.

There was a separate technique that could be used when all the Relics were gathered.

She was thinking of using that. “It's already getting dark…”

“Trial of Courage… we couldn't find it after all.” At Uriel's words, Aria smiled awkwardly and said. “[Why don't we stay here for a day and go back?]” “Saintess?”

Valencia seemed taken aback, as if she didn't expect her to say such a thing.

Even she thought it wasn't something she would say, but she felt like they had to stay here today.

“[Is that not okay…?]”

When she sent a Thought-form with a slightly pleading tone, Valencia made a genuinely flustered expression.

Um… was that too much?

Evan also looked at her with a dumbfounded expression, but soon he seemed to guess that there was a reason why she was acting like this, and he turned to Valencia and said.

“If Aria is saying it to this extent… I think there's something going on. I'm asking you.”

“…I… I understand… I will do so, Saintess.” Embarrassing.

Aria couldn't bring herself to look up and answered with a faint Thought- form, thanking her.

If she had known it would be like this, it might have been better to just say nonchalantly that she wanted to spend a day here.

She was sad…

# 4 - Conflict

In the end, we ended up spending the night outside.

Should I be relieved that things are going as planned? I was worried because I insisted on this, thinking that I wouldn't get another easy chance to catch the Succubus Queen if not now.

More than anything…

'I don't know if he'll be okay without even going through the Trial of Courage…'

That was one of my biggest concerns.

If Evan had to face the Succubus Queen without even completing the Trial of Courage… even Evan could be affected by Mental Assault.

The experience points from the Trial were quite high.

I was sure that the difference between having that experience and not having it would be significant.

But…

'It's too good of an opportunity…'

Originally, the Succubus Queen was a strategist among the executives.

That's why she rarely showed herself. Despite that, she was incredibly difficult to catch, so it wasn't for nothing that the story was set up for us to catch her at this time.

There was no way to lure her out except for now, when it might seem like an opportunity to secretly sabotage us without being noticed.

The problem is that if we don't subjugate her, she'll use her terrifying Mental Manipulation to lead not only our party but the entire world to ruin.

'It's difficult…'

In fact, I wasn't even sure if she would take the bait.

Even if I wasn't sure if we could deal with her definitively once she took the bait… at least we would definitely get a chance.

It's never easy to get a chance to face and subjugate the Succubus Queen, who is difficult to even meet in the first place.

In that sense, it was too good of an opportunity.

'For now, I have no choice but to rely on Evan and Valencia.' I can weaken her by using the Relic, but that's it.

In the end, if Evan's mental strength can't overcome the Succubus Queen, she could take him over, and the world could be destroyed.

Valencia is here too, but Valencia alone can't catch the Succubus Queen.

No matter how strong he is, it won't be easy to fight while blocking the Mental Assault of someone like the Succubus Queen.

In a one-on-one fight, she could use Mental Assault while also attacking physically, and Valencia would have no chance.

She's a vicious opponent who inflicts debuffs on opponents of similar caliber.

But if Evan is there, if she uses Mental Assault on Evan, Valencia will go wild, and if she uses it on Valencia, the opposite will happen.

Either way, it's difficult to deal with, so she can force a meaningless either- or choice.

It was a so-called high-risk, high-return situation.

Stella hasn't awakened as an Archmage yet, and Uriel is in a better situation than Stella, but still weaker than Evan.

'Is it right to mess with her now…'

Even if we don't mess with her now, we'll meet her someday. If we think about it in terms of the story.

But…

'This world is already too twisted from what I knew…'

The Succubus Queen, who should be infiltrating the academy as a student and gradually collapsing it from within, is here, causing rifts between the Matimos Tribe and humans.

I don't know her exact intentions, but she was probably planning to seduce Valencia, the Sword Master.

It makes sense if I think about it that way.

In other words, she must have judged that attacking the academy and subduing or killing the Hero was too risky, so she targeted Valencia.

Or…

'She might have lured us here.' More precisely, she lured me here.

Since I've spent many years in the Demon Realm, the fact that I have a strong bond with Valencia and the soldiers of the Northern Demon Realm is a famous story, to the point where a statue of us is erected in the center of the Empire.

In other words, she most likely thought that if something big happened in the North, I would come here alone and did this.

'If that's the case, I'll have to fall for it.' She must have set up a trap for me.

I should also set up a trap for her.

I wouldn't normally take such a gamble…

'I have to subjugate the Succubus Queen at this opportunity…'

In the end, if we don't subjugate her, subjugating the Demon King is a distant dream.

Especially since the Succubus Queen is the only executive left now. Let's see… who will win.

.

.

.

The place we arrived at was a relatively luxurious inn in the village.

Of course, I didn't see anything luxurious, just that it was a pretty spacious inn.

“…Are you really going to be okay?” “[Yes, this is better.]”

“But…”

Valencia looked at me as if worried.

But after seeing my determined expression, he sighed as if he couldn't help it.

“…Come here, Evan.” Valencia called Evan.

Evan, looking questioning, approached, and Valencia whispered something in his ear, Evan's expression turning to shock.

'Huh.'

What did he say to make him react like that?

I was curious, but he didn't seem to want to tell me. Too bad.

Anyway… I know to some extent why Evan is reacting like that. “[So, we're spending the night together, Evan.]”

“Y-Yeah…”

Because I'm sharing a room with Evan. And it's at my request.

'It's a way to lure out the Succubus Queen.' I have a plan for this.

Evan is the Hero, and I am the Saintess.

Of course, you might say that Evan is more likely to be scared and not approach because I'm the Saintess.

It's a little different.

The Succubus Queen has many abilities besides directly confronting and messing with minds.

That's why she's such a difficult opponent to catch.

Even with me, the Saintess, it won't be easy to prevent her from using Charm and other Mental Assaults.

It would be difficult and not very rewarding to use such Mental Assaults on me.

It might be possible to mess with my mind and make me unable to function…

No, even that would be impossible.

I'm confident that I can enjoy even that. 'I'm actually curious.'

I'm curious about how mental pain will affect me.

But given the Succubus Queen's nature, she's more likely to mess with Evan than me, who would be like stirring up a hornet's nest.

Even though he's about to undergo his final awakening, he's still the most vulnerable when he's off guard, and he's the second strongest in combat after Valencia.

It will be difficult to stop her.

That's why we need the Relic now more than ever. 'I need to seize the opportunity…'

To counterattack and subjugate the Succubus Queen, who will come in when we're off guard.

To that end, it was essential to sleep in the same room as Evan.

“A-Are you really going to be okay…?”

Evan and I, who had already entered the room, were standing in front of the bed.

“[Shall I use Purification magic on you?]”

“I-It's okay. I just feel like I want to wash… Aria, do you want to go first?” “[No, Evan, you can go first. Purification magic is enough for me.]”

Evan nodded with a bewildered expression and walked towards the bathroom, disappearing inside.

Watching him, I shouted 'Nice' in my mind.

'While he's inside washing, I should prepare to face the Succubus Queen here…'

If you're at a certain level, especially since Holy Power and Demonic energy are opposing forces, you can sense them much better.

But unfortunately for the Succubus Queen, she can't sense what's inside the Relic, and I can also use magic using Holy Power… so-called Holy magic, with magic circles.

If I draw that magic circle, even the Succubus Queen won't be able to figure it out unless I'm pushing Holy Power into it to activate it.

In other words, it's possible to create a complete trap.

'Top-tier Purification magic… and Barrier magic to prevent her from escaping… and finally, using the Relic to purify Evan's mind should be the goal.'

If this plan succeeds, we can catch the Succubus Queen for sure without anyone getting hurt…

'No one gets hurt, huh…'

That's a method I would never have considered in the past. Why is that?

There have been times recently when I've felt like I'm changing.

Even right now, I'm prioritizing saving someone over the pleasure I get from pain.

I chuckled to myself.

It's amazing, but I don't have time to worry about that now. I had to finish things before Evan saw me.

It wouldn't be too late to worry about that after this is over.