

The Magus of Genesis

2

THE AGE OF WORDS

Kanto Ishinomiya Presents...
始まりの魔法使い

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ファンタジア文庫

The Magus of Genesis

vol.2

by Ishinomiya Kanto

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Illustrations



IF I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN... I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO RESERVED IN BEING WITH YOU.

IT'S TIME TO BEGIN CULTIVATION.

TO BE HONEST... I FOUND OUT THAT IF THINGS CONTINUE ON HOW THEY'VE BEEN, THIS VILLAGE WILL GO UNDER.

Mentor
THE MC.
REINCARNATED INTO THIS WORLD AS A DRAGON.
MADE A MAGIC ACADEMY WITH AI AND NINA.

BIG BROODOTHER... FINISHED MY STUFF!

Shig
A YOUNG LIZARDMAN WHO CAME AS AN EXCHANGE STUDENT SO THAT HE COULD BECOME STRONGER.

ADAMANTITE, YOU WHO ARE RED STRONGS, THE CHILD OF ALL SOIL.

FOLLOW MY GUIDANCE AND BECOME MY SWORN

A CHARMING YOUNG ELVEN GIRL.
GENERALLY DOESN'T APPEAR TO GROW UP.

Nina
(BREASTS INCLUDED)

Yunagi
A GIRL OF THE SWORDSAIN CLAN.
EXCEPTIONAL IN BOTH HER MAGIC AND SWORD SKILLS.
HAVING AN EXCITABLE PERSONALITY, SHE'S MORE ATTACHED TO MENTOR THAN ANYONE

LIVING IN FORESTS,
ELVES ARE DEEPLY
CONNECTED WITH
THE SOIL.

LIVING IN GRASSLANDS,
LYKOSCENTAUR
FOLLOW THE
WIND'S AURA.

LIVING IN THE SEA,
MERMAIDS LIVE
ALONGSIDE
WATER.

LIVING IN VOLCANOS,
LIZARDMEN
ARE INTIMATE
WITH FIRE.

MERMAID
Rin

ELF
Violet

LYKOSCENTAUR
Luka

I FELT
TODAY
WOULD BE
A GOOD DAY
TO MEASURE
YOUR
APTITUDES
WITH THE
FOUR MAJOR
ELEMENTS.



“ NEITHER THE VILLAGE NOR THE ACADEMY HAD ANY
MAJOR PROBLEMS AND CARRIED ON FAVORABLY—

TOO FAVORABLY, IN FACT. ”

THE MAGUS OF GENESIS

#02

THE AGE OF WORDS

始まりの魔法使い ◆ 言葉の時代

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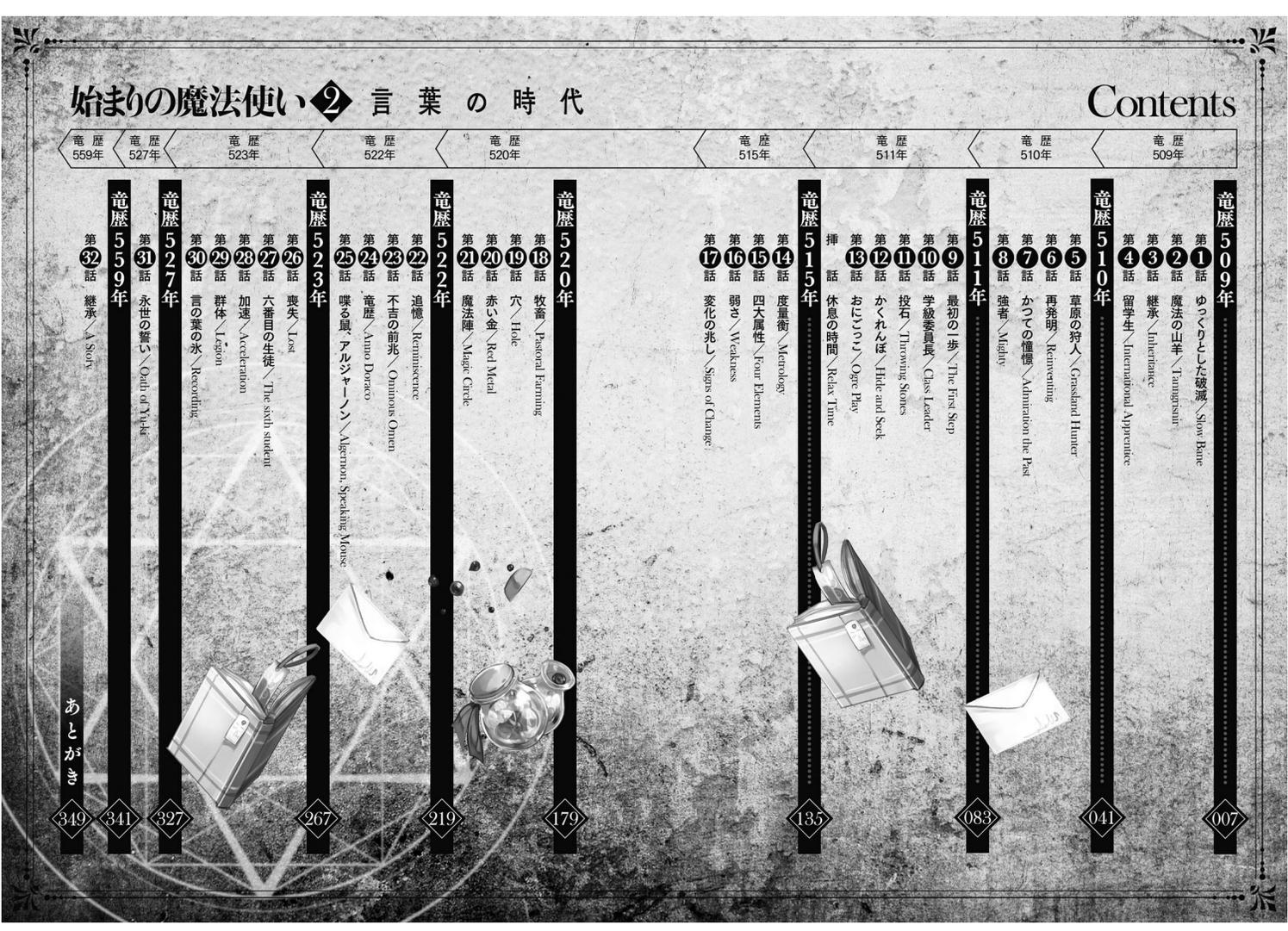
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Chapter 1: A Creeping Ruin



*It came upon us like a shadow,
catching us unaware.*

“I give up...”

Stopping the pen in my hand from continuing to write on the wooden board, I was at wits' end. No matter how many times I recalculate it, it's always the same.

“What should I do?”

Just as I started wracking my brain with my head held in my hands, the area outside the room suddenly grew noisy. Shifting my gaze to the window, I looked toward the now red-tinged sky and, noticing the time, sighed.

“Mentoor, see you!”

“Yeah, see you later.”

I waved and smiled at the village's children running outside the window, smiles on their faces.

They were the village's precious beings, those who would one day inherit the village. Which is why I cannot overlook this issue.

“Haah, so tired. Finally done for the day.”

“Good work today, Nina.”

I welcomed Nina as she walked into the faculty office. Though well, Nina and I are the only faculty.

“What’s wrong? You look more miserable than usual.”

She spoke as she looked me over. It’s been somewhere near five hundred years since I met her. Now that I think about it, we’ve known each other for quite a long time now. We’re able to more or less understand how each other feels with a simple look-over.

Her expression didn’t change much at all, but her current expression was the one she used when she was concerned.

“Oh, well...”

It happened when I began to speak.

“Big broooother~!”

I caught the tiny figure that jumped at me and shouted with a rather energetic voice.

“Finished my stuff!”

With her red hair drawn into two separate tails, a brilliantly sparkling smile lit up her face. Although her large, shining red eyes spoke well of her future beauty, she herself acted mostly like a tomboy with a sword carried at her hip.

“Oh? That’s great, Yuuki.”

This young girl who’s energetically clinging to me was one of the children attending school and has taken a particularly keen liking to me.

“Excuse me, I think I saw Yuuki heading this way... oh. So she did come here.”

Shortly after Yuuki’s sudden burst into the room, a boy whose face looked just like hers appeared. He was a beautiful youth who, with his similarity to Yuuki save for his calmness and slightly grown out short-cut hair, could easily be mistaken for a girl.

“You must have it hard, Amata.”

“No, I apologize for how my sister always inconveniences you.”

His conduct as he lowered his head in a bow was, despite being only one or two years' different in age compared to the childish Yuuki, very calming. That said, I do think that it would be alright for him to act more his age; he's still a child, after all.

"Come on Yuuki, we have to head back!"

"Don't wanna—!"

For example, he could be more like Yuuki here, who's now clinging to me as tightly as she can, not wanting to go home.

"... So."

Despite what was happening, unexpectedly, Nina spoke up.

"What's bothering you?"

Eh? You're asking me that *right now*?

"It's not really something I want to talk about in front of children..."

"Oh come on, they're both Swordsaints. It's fine."

"Yeah! I'm a Swordsaint!"

Hearing what Nina said, Yuuki's eyes immediately gleamed as she started waving her hand in the air. Taking in a deep breath, I raised my hands in surrender. Well, talking about it in front of these two won't make much of a difference.

"To be honest... I found out that if things continue on how they've been, this village will go under."

"Eeh!?"

Nina's eyes opened wide, Amata took in a sharp breath, and Yuuki shouted in surprise.

"That said, it should take somewhere upward of one hundred years, and even then only if we don't do anything right now."

"Ooh."

"That surprised me a bit!"

Yuuki and Amata felt relieved at hearing what I followed up with. Right, one hundred years. It'll only take a century.

“What do you mean though? Did you see the future?”

Speaking in a serious tone, the only one who felt the same as me was Nina. For Yuuki and Amata, something that won't happen for another century was of little concern to them and would very likely only occur well after their deaths. However, that's not the case for Nina and I. That amount of time could pass with a surprising swiftness.

“It's not precognition, it's a prediction. Simple mathematics.”

Me, Nina... and Ai. The magic academy that started with just us three grew up along with this village that has come to be known as Scarlet. The number of people living here has been increasing to the extent that magical research has progressed far enough to make life in the village relatively comfortable. Closely following the village's development and growth, the magic academy's student base has increased as well, causing a positive feedback loop in growth.

Neither the village nor the academy has had any major problems of concerns

It went too favorably, in fact.

“The problem is that if things continue on, we'll run into a food shortage.”

The village's food is still dependent on hunting and gathering. Although we've long since passed the sustainable population size that normal hunter-gatherers could maintain, we've even been able to store winter rations and then some for emergency. This has all been thanks to magic.

The ice house constructed through the usage of cold magic can preserve meat for a long time and the hunting of that meat itself has become much more simple by using magic to cause spears and arrows to hit their mark even if they would have normally missed. By manipulating trees and listening to the voice of the grass, even small children could safely divide themselves into groups to collect fruits from high up in the trees in the forest.

Nina and I defend everyone from external threats and there hasn't been a large epidemic at any point so far, so we've come this far without any problems.

So one finally arrived.

“The amount of edible plants and animals have been decreasing slowly year by year. Meanwhile, our population has only ever increased. As is, everyone would have to eat rice... but again, that’s only what would happen in one hundred and twenty-eight years.”

Unable to fully comprehend my explanation, both Yuuki and Amata stared at me with somewhat dazed faces. Only Nina nodded in understanding.

“But big brother, you’ll manage it somehow, right?”

“Yeah, of course.”

Of course. There’s no way I would allow this village to fall. I have to make this school even bigger, big enough so that its known the world over.

“You know what to do already?”

I nodded in affirmation to Amata’s eager question.

“It’s time to begin cultivation.”

Chapter 2: Tanngrisnir

*That which grinds its teeth,
pulls our carts and becomes our food,
will not break so long as its bones are uninjured.*

“Wow, we’re up so *hiiigh!*”

“Make sure to hold on tightly, Yuuki!”

A bit concerned due to her shouting so happily from on top of my head, I flapped my wings. It had taken about three years, but I did eventually return to my original form as a dragon and took to the skies once again.

Dragon and human. The magic Ai had left me with gave me the ability to freely change between these two forms. It would be convenient if I could remain in my human form and just take out my wings or just switch to having human fingers in my dragon form, but I wasn’t able to do anything like that at all. Perhaps it’s due to my name as a dragon and my name as a human?

“Alright, let’s go down.”

“Yeah!”

Hearing her energetic response, I went to the landmark I was aiming for in front of the forest and descended.

Simultaneously twisting my wings backward and spreading them around me like a coat, I transformed into my human form and caught Yuuki by the legs in a piggyback.

“Aaah, that was fun! Big brother, let’s do that again!”

“When we head back. Now hold my hand and don’t let go, okay?”

Pacifying Yuuki from her delighted giggling, I held out my hand to her. Although she’s a fundamentally honest and obedient child, she’s energetic and beyond curious. There’s no telling where she’d zoom off to if I didn’t hold her still.

“Okay, big brother!”

“... I wonder if there’s anything we can do about you calling me that...”

“But big brother is big brother?”

I’m not sure why, but Yuuki has been calling me big brother for a long time now.

Even though she has a full-fledged elder brother, she just calls him Amata.

In terms of age, I’m too old to even be her grandfather, let alone her brother.

“Halt.”

A little ways into the forest, we were stopped by a sharp voice.

“What business do you two monkeys have in our forest?”

“Hey, Ultramarine. It’s been a while.”

When I waved my hand at the elf who was gazing at us in a stinging manner, she appeared to grow all the more severe.

“How do you know my name?”

“No no no, it’s me, the red dragon. What’s with you always forgetting, really.”

Ultramarine’s expression softened.

“Oh, ooh, what, you’re that lizard Dropout keeps around! Hah, right. You’ve changed both your forms, so this one here’s Dropout? You two got pretty small!”

While saying that, she began to bang against my back with her hand and pat Yuuki’s head.

“What? This child here is Yuuki, a child from our village. Nina stayed home this time.”

“Huh? What are you doing here then?”

Her expression grew suspicious, but it wasn’t unreasonable. I’ve visited this elven forest several times now, but each time was under the guise of letting Nina visit her home. Now that I think of it, this is the first time I’ve come here without her.

“I came to see Pea Green.”

“Hmph, well alright. If you want Pea Green, he’s this way.”

She’d nodded like she was uninterested in it, but began walking anyway. It appeared as though she was going to show me the way.

“Hey big brother, who’s Pea Green?”

“He’s the person that looks after the domesticated animals in this forest.”

Still walking, I answered Yuuki’s question. Yes, the elves had supposedly already been successful in raising domesticated animals. I haven’t actually seen the farm itself, but I have heard stories about it.

I’d said that I would start us raising animals, but I don’t know how to go about that at all. Since that’s the case, I decided that we should come to the elves’ forest and borrow their wisdom as they’d already started doing it. Them telling me exactly how and what to raise would be the best case scenario, but even them only telling me what species of animals are suitable for herding would be a great help.

When I looked for them myself, I couldn’t find any animals suitable for it in this world. Even the animals that resembled cattle and pigs were both strong and ill-tempered and would easily end up wrecking whatever fence we built for them.

“Hoh, Mentor. Long time no see.”

“You too. My apologies for not contacting you for so long.”

It had been somewhere around a century since I last met with him. Even so, he managed to remember my face, unlike Ultramarine.

Pea Green lowered his head in a bow.

“I see. I don’t mind. Besides, Eldest had told me to teach you how anyway.”

“He did?”

Once I’d explained my situation to Pea Green, he agreed and responded with something that caused me to incline my head.

I can’t say that Eldest—Nina’s father—dislikes me, but he doesn’t like me either. I doubt he’d ever help me without us asking for it first...

“This way.”

What Pea Green guided us to was neither a fenced enclosure nor a pen. It was an open area overrun with grass and weeds. There were the deer-like and goat-like animals I'd often hunt grazing on the greenery, but they didn't look like they were going to run away even after we approached them.

“You're just in time. I was thinking it was time to harvest some meat.”

Saying that, Pea Green put his hand into some of the tall grass that was growing nearby him. Immediately after that, the grass grew even longer and he took out a thin, pea green-colored blade of grass. I suppose this is the magic that his name originates from?

The blade of grass held a long edge and had a sharp tip, much like a sword. Picking out a moderately sized goat from the group, Pea Green swung his grass blade down.

“...!”

Seeing the goat have flesh cut away from its flank, I inhaled sharply.

Be it the blood overflowing from the wound or the clean cut itself, the goat didn't appear to react at all, not even giving so much as a single bleat.

When Pea Green placed his grass blade against the goat's wound, it stuck to the wound with a supple flexibility that betrayed the image of its solidity from a moment ago. He wrapped it around the wound like a bandage, even going so far as to add two or three more blades of grass.

“If I do it like this, I'll be able to harvest meat again in about a month's time.”

“By not killing it... you're able to heal its wound and harvest meat from it over and over?”

“Yeah.”

Pea Green nodded as if it were natural.

Looking at his reaction, I finally remembered. What Eldest had told him to teach me was the thing I found back when searching for how to gain immortality. The process of manufacturing Zombie Powder.

They didn't run, weren't frightened, and simply continued to eat the greenery. The goats must be under the effects of that medicine. That was the original reason I'd even met Pea Green, I'd entirely forgotten about it.

"So what do you think?"

Pea Green inquired as though curious.

He wasn't particularly cold-hearted or cruel, he was actually a rather ordinary elven youth.

—However, our sense of values were different..

To me, I could only pity the goats being unable to die despite being sliced from forever and saw it as repulsive. Then again, for the elves, that was no big deal, similar to how we think nothing of taking fruits from trees year after year.

"Big brother?"

I glanced to my side at Yuuki. She looked curious.

That's just the sort of era we live in. She wasn't some young lady that would be frightened by the corpse of an animal. Rather, she'd be delighted to join the hunt. It was something similar for me, I'd sometimes end up eating my prey still alive.

I think that how things live and go about their lives is more important than how they die.

An efficient method like this could save hundreds or thousands of people's lives.

But even so, I can't choose a method like this.

I don't want Yuuki to become accustomed to acts like this. That's what I believe.

"... It appears that this won't help you much."

He probably guessed what I was thinking from how I looked. Pea Green's shoulders drooped, discouraged. In his own way, he wanted to be able to help.

"Yeah... we don't have a way to cut its flesh so cleanly, nor magic to use to heal its wound."

Even if I set aside what I like and dislike about it, it's a fact that Scarlet would be unable to carry this out. Pea Green's magic was simply magnificent. Even I could use magic in order to heal something on the level of a small cut, but healing a wound as big as that in a single month would be impossible.

Same with slicing its flesh so cleanly, it would be difficult even using my claws.

Nina might be able to manage it, but there's no way I could have her handle the ranch on top of teaching the children.

"Why not have her teach him then? She's better at cutting than Pea Green."

"True, that might be a good idea."

Unexpectedly, Ultramarine spoke up after being quiet until now. Pea Green nodded in response.

"Who?"

"You've met her before. Violet!"

Like that, the name of the strongest woman in the forest popped up.

Chapter 3: Inheritance

For hunting beasts, spears are good. Their long handles lets you strike things as they run away.

For killing enemies, axes are good. Their heavy blades cut and sever through strong armor.

But what they selected was neither of those—

Violet is an elven warrior whose name comes from the vibrant violet-colored flowered that bloom along with the thorns she uses to fight. I'd first met her as an opponent in a duel with her working as Eldest's guard, but nowadays we occasionally meet each other as good friends.

"She's had a lot of spare time recently. It's your fault."

"Mine?"

Ultramarine started speaking when Pea Green parted ways with us along the way.

"Lizardmen, giants, everyone's been quiet. Violet's job was to glare the lot of them away, but they've been docile the past hundred years so she's had nothing to do."

"Well... peace is a good thing."

Lizardmen and giants are both extremely warlike races and would come to attack without any particular reason to spur the assault.

They'd come to attack Scarlet multiple times as well, but Nina and I managed to fight them back, finally managing to negotiate with them through extreme patience and perseverance.

"Peace, huh... so you're still talking about stuff you don't understand. Ah, here's Violet."

Before I had a chance to ask about what it was I didn't understand, Ultramarine waved her hand.

"I will listen to your story. Come."

Violet spoke, showing me into her home. She guided me into a cave made in a huge tree. Elves could know what's generally going on within the forest by listening to the murmuring of the trees. It appeared as though she already knew what we came to say.

"I take it you wish for me to teach you how to handle a sword?"

"Well, yes..."

Seeing Violet cut to the chase, I began with what I came up with when I was listening to Ultramarine earlier.

"If you are fine with it, would you, Violet, come to our village yourself?"

"Me...?"

Violet blinked her eyes in surprise. She probably didn't think I would make an offer like that.

"Yes. I believe that with both you and Nina, we could not only have you teach the art of using the sword, but magic as well."

Even if we could slice through flesh as cleanly as Pea Green, I have no intention of putting together a ranch like that in Scarlet.

So although we have to figure out another way to raise animals in a way that suit our needs, our current situation puts us at a lack of capable hands.

Anyhow, the village has a lot of children. A single person should teach several dozen at most, yet just Nina and I have been the only two teaching the hundreds of children in the village. We do teach on separate days and times, but we haven't had much time, not even for research.

I've consulted Nina about how we need to acquire more teachers to prepare for the ever-increasing number of children several times. For that need, Violet is a great candidate.

"... I *do* have an interest in your school, Mentor."

After taking a moment to think, Violet responded.

"However, I am the guardian of this forest. I cannot leave it out of interest alone."

“Sure, but didn’t you lose to Bearmonkey?”

Ultramarine joined the conversation to point that out, but Violet only nodded, unphased.

“Yes. I could get permission if it were in order to acquire that strength. However, it has been several centuries since then. I am aware that human lifespans are short. That child is no longer alive, is he?”

“... Correct.”

Holding on to the stone ornament hanging from around my neck, I nodded. Even now, every time I think back on those days, I feel like I might burst into tears.

“Don’t you have a ton of free time anyway?”

“That is not the problem.”

Violet shook her head in response to Ultramarine’s question.

“You could have Ultramarine go with you.”

“I really don’t want to though?”

Even though Ultramarine was encouraging Violet to do it, once the subject changed over to her she denied it as though that was the obvious answer. Well, that’s just the kind of girl she is. I can’t see her being a teacher, anyway... Come to think of it, I haven’t even seen Ultramarine use magic yet, have I?

“I would not mind teaching you how to use the sword if you came over here, though.”

“Thank you. I’ll take you up on your offer if I get the chance.

I stood up from my seat and bowed to her. That said, I wasn’t sure if I’d ever have the need. At least for me, I’d be better off on the battlefield in dragon form using tooth and claw rather than relying on a sword to fight.

“I don’t get it, all the way...”

The moment I started out to head back, Yuuki spoke up.

“But if I’m stronger than you, Violet, you’ll be a teacher?”

“... I am well aware that Mentor is strong. I very likely would not be a match for him in his original form... however.”

Violet displayed her ability and thorns grew from her hand, forming into a sword.

“This strength is a power I was born with. Being a dragon is an even greater strength. That is not what I desire. Using the sword is a skill, something that is refined and polished after one is born. That is what I pursue, child.”

Darg was also someone born strong. However, the reason for him being victorious over Violet was due to him learning magic from me. He would have been defeated if the challenge had come before he'd met me.

“Yup! Then—”

Yuuki drew the sword sheathed at her waist. What was contained within that wolflion leather scabbard was a blade made out of wood with a piece of stone cut to act as its edge. Not a spear, nor an axe, but a sword. Her family was the foundation that we called the Sword Clan.

“When I win, you'll come?”

Violet's eyes narrowed in response to Yuuki's phrasing. Her smile visibly disappearing, she looked Yuuki up and down.

In terms of height, Yuuki only made it to Violet's chest. Seeing that Yuuki was clearly still a child, Violet turned to look at me as though to infer my thoughts.

I wonder if Nina predicted this happening? I was originally going to head to the forest alone, but she'd told me to bring Yuuki along. She might have figured that there was no other way.

“Try to not get hurt.”

I spoke to the two of them.

“Yuuki is strong.”

They each took a stance and faced one another, their swords held aloft. Violet held a shield made from thorns weaved together along with her small, sharp stalk formed into a sword. Yuuki held her stone-inserted wooden sword one-handed. Their physiques and equipment were entirely different, but they

nevertheless looked similar.



“Alright, make sure to stop once you believe the match is decided,

immediately pulling your sword away. Especially you, Yuuki. Alright?"

"Yep!"

Yuuki nodded cheerfully, but I was still a little worried. Even so, it's impossible for me to stop them now that I've already acknowledged the match.

"Well then... begin!"

The first one to make a move following my signal was Violet. She shot out a thrust with lightning-like speed by extending her arm to an unbelievable length. Closing the distance Yuuki thought herself to be safe out in the blink of an eye, she aimed her attack at Yuuki's hand.

"I am quick!"

In that instant, Yuuki's body disappeared, leaving only her voice. However, Violet only lost track of her for a short moment, finding her once more within a tenth of a second. Within their forests, elves will never lose track of their opponents.

"I am solid!"

Yuuki parried an attack coming right at her with her empty hand. That attack, what could have blown a hole open in a thick tree, sounded like it was shoved aside by a boulder when it was deflected.

"I am strong!"

And with that, an accelerated slash swung straight for Violet's throat. Violet quickly brought up her shield due to sheer instinct and was able to deflect it. The stone blade easily tore through her thorn shield, severing its upper half.

"Kuh...!"

She appeared to have finally realized that this small girl was not an opponent she could let her guard down against. As though fully working together with Violet's movements as she leapt backward, an armor of thorns began to cover her entire body.

But that was a poor move for her.

"You are slow!"

As soon as Yuuki shouted that out, Violet's movements slowed noticeably.

"You are soft! You are weak!"

Violet seemed like she was going to try for another attack, but her legs lost their strength and her stance crumbled.

"Light! Be what seizes all and slices it apart!"

In that moment, Yuuki's blade began to glow with what appeared to be flashes of lightning covering it.

"That's enough!"

As I shouted that out, Yuuki's shining sword blade had cut Violet's thorn blade in two, stopping just after breaking through her helmet.

... As harsh as ever. After reinforcing herself and weakening her opponent, she finally strengthened her weapon, making it so that her opponent would be unable to evade or block. Her attack had enough power to kill an armored bear in one stroke. It was a simple yet polished way of fighting that one wouldn't believe a nine year old child was capable of.

"That... from just now, who do you learn how to do that from?"

A stunned look on her face, Violet asked Yuuki a question.

"My dad!"

Hearing Yuuki's response, Violet seemed to be taken by surprise. Although her small stature and cute features were entirely different, her red hair and eyes were just like *his*.

"And dad learned from grandpa. And grandpa from his dad. We've taught sword techniques forever and ever!"

Swordsaint, my final gift to Darg. To the best of my knowledge, it is the world's first family name.

"But... your fighting style is entirely different from *his*."

Violet's voice was trembling.

It was as she said, Darg's style was much more hearty and dynamic. Although the magic strengthening them was the same, how they wielded their swords

and how they moved their bodies were entirely different.

“Yep. Our ancestor made the magic, but how we use our swords, well, it’s different.”

It wasn’t as though all of Darg’s descendants had the same excellent constitution as he did. So Darg smashed down his crag blade into a smaller stone blade and came up with a way to fight that worked with smaller, lighter swords.

“We mimic how that suuuuper strong person he met in the forest used her sword!”

She was referring to the story handed down through the Swordsaint clan, the story of his adventures with a dragon, an elf, and a girl.

“So Violet, I’m so so so happy I got to fight you!”

Her eyes brimming in delight, Yuuki spoke in glee.

“... I would like to see where the future of this child’s strength and of my sword leads.”

Wiping the corners of her eyes with her fingers, Violet’s attitude changed.

“Then that means...”

“Yes, please, I would love to be allowed into Mentor’s school... If Eldest permits it.”

The words she tacked on at the end made me groan. She wasn’t able to make her own decisions after all? I suppose I’ll have to get Eldest’s permission.”

“It’s alright.”

Seeing my frown, Violet smiled to put me at ease.

“I am sure that he will not deny me—”

Giving us a meaningful smile, Yuuki and I tilted our heads to the side.

Chapter 4: Exchange Students

"I get it, so you're wanting to get some more dragons around, huh?"

Nina, what led you to that conclusion, exactly...?

"... Why's Violet here?"

Nina spoke with a somewhat cold tone upon seeing me return with both Violet and Yuuki on my back.

"Eh—didn't you have me bring Yuuki along because you thought this would happen?"

"What're you talking about? I just thought you wouldn't do anything stupid if you brought Yuuki with you."

She sent her as a watchdog? Though with Yuuki's personality, I did keep thinking of ways to keep anything unreasonable from happening...

"Dropout. My humblest apologies, I will be staying here for a while."

"Cut it out with that, just call me Nina."

Nina frowned and waved away the respectfully kneeling Violet.

"So what'd you bring her for?"

"You know that we're lacking people to be teachers right? Violet should be able to lend us a hand with that."

Immediately after I spoke, Nina's eyes opened wide as she took Violet's hand.

"Do your best, I'm counting on you!"

"Eh? Ah, yes. I will strive to do my best."

Even while being utterly surprised by Nina's sudden change in attitude, Violet nodded.

"We really do need to get more teachers, don't we?"

"Urgently!"

Nina gave her thoughts on my grumbling immediately after I said it.

“Amata wants to be one.”

Yuuki spoke up.

“Amata, huh...”

I knit my brows and crossed my arms. I do agree that with just a little more instruction, he would be able to fulfill the role of a teacher.

... However.

“But he also has his duties as a Swordsaint.”

Well, it isn't as though those duties are enforced. It's just that the head of the Swordsaint clan naturally came to be considered the village's representative and the key figure for its protection. The two Amaga fathers are filling that role currently, but Amata should be the one to take over their duties at some point in the future.

“Oh yeaah.”

Standing next to Yuuki, Nina looked like she wanted to say something.

How long has it been since she started to look like that so often? Even though she usually just says whatever's on her mind, there are times she won't say anything and just look at me like that. I haven't been asking her about it recently, either. I trust that if it's something truly important, she'll come out and say it.

“I've been thinking about this for a long time now, but I think it's about time we get some exchange students.”

“*Exchange students?*”

Not only Nina, but everyone else there cocked their head to the side, wondering what I was talking about. This was the first time I'd ever used the word around them, so it was to be expected.

“You know how there are only children from Scarlet in our school? I want to take in students from all over... and not just humans, either. I want to accept those from other races.”

“Are you crazy?”

Nina scowled at me, looking like she thought it was a really bad idea.

“I’m not talking about dozens of students, just a handful.”

“I just said that we need more teachers and now you’re wanting to get *more* students!?”

“Well yes, but it’s not like there are that many people who could become teachers either, right?”

They’d need to not be prejudiced against humans and they need to have magic and other skills that can be taught. There simply aren’t many people that fit those criteria. It was even unreasonable for me to ask Violet to be a teacher.

“That’s why I’ll first need to train people to become teachers.”

“You could just do that with humans from this village. It doesn’t even need to be Amata, there are a few others that look like they could be good enough. Like Itsuki, Kerel, or Hakanaku, wouldn’t they all work out?”

I nodded in response to Nina’s good question.

“Yes. However, I do have three reasons for it. First, long lived races like elves are able to serve as teachers for a long time. It would be hard to train new teachers every few years.”

“Well... yeah.”

Still not really wanting to take on even more students, Nina begrudgingly nodded.

“Second, the fact that the type of magic one is specialized in is dependent on their race. I am particularly specialized in fire magic and elves use all kind of plant-based magic, yes?”

Is it simply due to how one is raised? Or perhaps its genetic? Or maybe the answer is to a question I can’t even fathom? No matter what, I have no idea right now. However, what I’m certain of right now is that there exists some bias on one’s specialization based on their race.

“Those first two reasons are why I’m interested in bringing together various races—I want to research all kinds of magic.”

For some reason, it doesn't appear that humans are born with any particular specialization. The kind of magic that they are good at seems to vary from one person to another. Looking at it another way, that also means that humans can learn all kinds of magic. Assuming that to be true, there are no downsides to researching as many kinds of magic as possible.

"Hmm... alright then. So what's your last reason?"

It's not something for Nina to be happy about, neither is it something she's really opposed to. Looking only half interested, she urged me to continue.

"It's a matter of the balance of power. I don't think us only ever supporting humans like how we've been will turn out too well."

"What do you mean?"

"You already know about how fast humans can develop. Although their civilization still lacks in comparison to the elves', it's only a matter of time until they overpass them. When that happens... they may end up becoming an enemy to the elves.

"But you wouldn't let that happen, right big brother?"

Looking uneasy, Yuuki pulled on my sleeve.

"I would do my best to stop it, of course. But you know, Yuuki, humans will someday become independent from me. Of that, I'm certain. Just like how a child will eventually become independent from their parents."

Everyone in Scarlet are good-natured people, they're all nice. However, history has proven time and time again that people don't stay the same. That history may have been from my previous life, but I doubt that it would be any different in this world.

"Which is why I want to share the results of my research. I wish to keep the balance so that that doesn't happen. At least for the races that are amiable to humans."

Besides elves, there are several other races we've come into contact with. Humans—humans from my previous life, that is—ended up bringing all forms of intelligent life other than their own to extinction. The knowledge that humanity

was the only race left felt exceptionally cruel and lonely to me. I don't want the same thing to happen in this world.

"That's it for my reasons."

"... If that's how it is, oh well. Alright."

Nina agreed reluctantly, sighing.

"I was wondering why Violet was allowed to leave the forest, but I guess that's why."

"Eh? Y-yeah, umm..."

"Yes. I intend to study humankind's strength here."

Violet spoke with a smile, interrupting my fumbling sentence.

As a matter of fact, I hadn't talked to Eldest about what I said just now.

I just told him how Nina was doing as I do now and then and he agreed with the conditions Violet gave almost immediately. Thanks to Nina learning how to block others from using plants to observe us, not even Eldest could look in on us. It seemed like he was anxious. It makes me feel like I just invited a spy into the area, but I'm not exactly hiding anything either way.

... Besides.

There is a fourth reason I want to accept exchange students, something I didn't even tell Nina. The number one most important reason.

My goal is to make this magic school of ours incredibly famous. I don't just mean famous in Scarlet, either. I have to make its existence known the world over.

—Because I don't know where in the world Ai will reincarnate.

Just like how I went from being a human into being a dragon, she may not be reborn as a human either.

So I can't just make it famous to humans. It has to be known to anyone from any race.

So that she'll some day be able to find her way to return.

Chapter 5: Hunters of the Grassland



Just give up. Continuing to chase after their target anywhere and everywhere is in their blood, they'll never stop.

"Oh, big brother, is *that* a behemoth?"

Yuuki pointed at an animal lumbering its giant body across the huge grassland and raised her voice.

"It is, and it's the first time I've seen one in a long time... we used to eat them a lot a while back."

"Are they tasty?"

"Ye—whoops, yeah."

I started to nod as I answered her, but stopped myself in the nick of time and just responded verbally. Right now, I'm in my dragon form with Yuuki sitting on my head. My back would be preferable over my head as far as stability is concerned, but that's just too far away for us to have a comfortable conversation.

"... They got so small."

I muttered to myself. Even considering the distance between us, the

behemoth Yuuki pointed out looked rather small. It wasn't as though they'd all actually gotten smaller, though.

I'd simply gotten bigger.

I'd say my body's around close to ten meters long right now. I'm still smaller than the behemoth, but it's not to the extent of the huge gap in body size there used to be. I'm confident that I could even take it in a head-on fight now.

"Going to hunt it?"

"No, even if I did, we wouldn't be able to bring it home with just the two of us... and there aren't many of them left."

Behemoths were large and strong. But they weren't invincible. A master hunter from Scarlet would be able to take one down with just a few people. However, as one might imagine from their massive builds, their birth rate was abysmally small and it took a long time for them to come of age. If we'd continued to hunt them whenever we wanted, they would have been wiped out quickly.

"Kaaay."

"Come now, let's go down. They're waiting."

Calling out to Yuuki, who responded in a slightly dissatisfied manner, I descended toward our destination and turned into my human form..

"Big brother, where are we?"

Yuuki asked me a question as she saw the unfamiliar buildings and looked around here and there. We were at a small village in the middle of the grassland.

Yuuki's and everyone else's houses were built out of wood, but all the buildings we saw in this village were tents and pavilions constructed out of animal pelts and hide. With their framework made from behemoth bones, they were portable and easily deconstructed.

"This is the *lykos*' village. There's supposed to be a child here that'll be an exchange student, but..."

"Then... where are the *lykos*?"

That's odd. I don't sense anyone in the village. Even looking into one of their tents, I don't see anyone. There's still a fire lit in the fire pit, so there should have been people here until just a moment ago. Even if they went somewhere, not even seeing any children is strange.

"Big brother, over here!"

Yuuki pointed to the ground and shouted urgently.

She was pointing to a good number of footprints. Given the sharp claws they showed, they were from some kind of carnivore.

"They were attacked just a bit ago."

Her face serious, Yuuki traced a footprint. The footprints were all made in loose soil and would be quick to disappear. In other words, the tracks' owners could still be nearby—

By the time I felt their presence, I'd already been pushed down by the beasts.

They had four legs, sharp claws, silver fur, and appeared to assert just how ferocious they were. With their long, thick legs placing more emphasis on stamina than explosive strength, they would chase their prey for as long as it took with their sharp sense of smell. Their bodies were similar to a wolf's... save for one particular point.

The group of them pinned my body down, biting down my shoulders and arms as growls resounded from their throats.

"S—stop!"

I cried out on reflex, but the wolves didn't cease their attack.

Crap. They might get injured if I don't...!

"Hey—stop it! You're troubling Mentor!"

Just as I was about to return to my dragon form out of my sense of impending crisis, a young girl called out. Immediately after, the children that were piled on me stopped what they were doing and Yuuki lowered the hand she was about to use to unsheathe her sword.

"Thanks Luka, you saved me there."

Relieved, I thank the girl who spoke up for me. Her reaction was delayed since she didn't feel any bloodthirst coming from the children, but any longer and she might have cut them down.

"You could have pushed them away if you wanted to, right Mentor?"

The girl—Luka spoke to me half in amazement, holding her hand out to me.

"They might have gotten hurt if I did that though. Besides, it doesn't hurt even when these children bite me, it feels more ticklish than anything, actually."

"It's just that Mentor is so kind, everyone got excited."

When I took Luka's hand and stood up, Luka puffed out her cheeks adorably. She was no different from a human girl.

... Other than her lower half being a wolf's, that is.

Judging by human looks, I'd say she's around fifteen or sixteen years old. Truthfully, they have longer lifespans than humans, but races with longer lifespans tend to also grow into adulthood slower.

Triangular ears popped up from under her similarly silver head of hair. Everything below her waist was like a wolf, including her currently wagging tail.

"These kids are... *lykos*?"

"Yes. Half human, half wolf."

I looked around to the children who all looked similar to Luka and nodded in response to Yuuki's question.

To put it simply, these girls were all the wolf version of centaurs. Their human-like upper body was situated exactly where a wolf's neck would have been. They live in small packs, similar to actual wolves.

Luka's brothers and sisters always jump at me whenever they see me, play-biting out of playfulness. They weren't actually hurting me. They were completely different from ferocious wolves in the first place, they were all calm and friendly. If anything, they were more like dogs than wolves.

We'd talked to them and have exchanged things for a while now, so the first group I thought of when I came up with having exchange students was them.

“So Mentor, what business do you have here today?”

Still handling her younger siblings that were still playing around with each other, Luka cleared her throat and spoke.

“Well... I came wondering if you would like to be one of my pupils, Luka.”

“Really!?”

Come to think of it, I didn't think of a way to ease into the subject, did I...?

But Luka's eyes all but sparkled the moment I mentioned pupil.

“Mentor, ever since I first heard about what you do, I've always wanted to go to your school!”

Her tail wagging back and forth energetically, Luka clenched her hands together against her chest and spoke enthusiastically.

“Ah, but...”

However, her tail quickly fell limp, followed by the two ears on her head laying flat.



“But... I’m sorry, Mentor. I can’t go.”

“Eeh? Why not?”

Yuuki spoke in dissatisfaction as she looked at Luka cast her eyes down.

“Because I need to look after the children.”

Sad, Luka spoke as she patted the heads of her younger siblings.

“... No way, your parents...?”

Understanding what I hesitated to say, Luka nodded her head. Female lykoscentaur live in packs of around a dozen, forming communities that don't infringe upon another group's territory. The village's elders would care for its youths while they learned to hunt, the youths eventually forming a new pack of their own.

Normally, Luka would also be part of the group still being looked after...

“What happened?”

Lykoscentaur are considerably strong within their ecosystem. They have both the strength of wolves and the wisdom of humans and are by no means weak. There are creatures even stronger than them in this world such as dragons or giants of course, but having both parents die at the same time was very uncommon.

“It's gotten hard to find recently, so...”

“They left you all?”

“Yes. They went somewhere far away...”

Hearing her excessively tragic story, I frowned.

“Then have you all been able to get enough to eat?”

Luka shook her head no.

“I'm hungry...”

A young girl pressed down on her stomach and grumbled how hungry she was—it was heartbreaking.

“Alright.”

I nodded, determined. I'm not sure what I should tell Nina when I get back

home though.

“I’ll be everyone’s—”

“I’m back, Luka!”

—parent. Just as I was about to finish my sentence, I heard a deep voice call out from behind me.

“Welcome home, father! Mother!”

Luka’s face glowed as she saw her parents return carrying a large amount of prey.

Oh. So when she said somewhere far away... she meant physically...

“By the way, Mentor, what were you about to say?”

Luka tilted her head to the side very adorably.

“Nothing, nothing at all.”

Chapter 6: Re-Innovation

Given the era of the ancient ruins it was recovered from, this apparatus was no simple item of daily use so much as it was a symbol of faith.

“You’ve had to go hunting that far away?”

“Yeah...”

With us surrounding a crackling open-air fire, Luka’s father—Tauro shook his tail feebly. He’s told me that they’ve had to go to a spot that’s a three day’s journey away.

Six days travelling, one day of hunting. The children happily dug into the spoils that took seven days to get. Seeing them eat so enthusiastically is pleasant to see, but the meat that Tauro and his wife got for them was quickly being used up. At this rate... wouldn’t it barely even last the day?

I understand that the lykos are like most carnivores in that they can go through several days of fasting, but even so, this is a bit much.

“Why that far?”

Lykoscentaur all move locations depending on the season. Their simple tents don’t tie them down to one location as they are constructed with portability in mind. Unlike humans, they only eat meat, making them unable to fill their stomachs with fruits and vegetables and instead have to rely entirely on what meat they can gather through hunting. Therefore, they move to whatever place has enough prey during that particular season. If there isn’t enough prey around where they live, they simply have to pick up and move locations.

That was my simplistic view on it, at least.

“Each of us has a territory, we are not permitted to hunt in another group’s territory. Territories are decided on by fights between the leaders of their respective packs. However...”

Tauro’s ears lowered on his head as he responded, mumbling dispiritedly.

“Guess you lost.”

“Hey, Yuuki!”

Yuuki didn't say it out of ill-will, but it still managed to cause Tauro's tail to hang even more limply.

“That's why father has gone into the forest, outside of any territories.”

Wiping her little sister's mouth, Luka explained on Tauro's behalf. Lykos territories are pretty much only ever in grasslands. They hunt by trailing their prey and striking once it grows tired. It was a hunting style not suitable for hunting in the forest.

“It's because I have what Mentor made for me.”

With that, Tauro took out a spear that had a stone tip.

“How nostalgic. So you're still using that?”

It's been a few decades since I gave that to him. It's something I made for Tauro since he wasn't able to hunt that well. Although people from Scarlet would use magic to throw it, Tauro didn't need to. Being able to run like the wind with his lupine lower half allows him to even hunt and catch quick rabbits by piercing them. For him, it might even be easier for him to hunt in the forest than the grasslands.

“Let's help them, big brother!”

“Hmm. I was planning on that.”

“It'll work out if they win right? I'll teach them how to fight!”

Most lykos were unable to use typical magic. Although it would definitely be an easy win if they could incorporate Yuuki's inter-personal specialized magic...

“No, I don't think that would be a good idea.”

Magic that strengthens one's body is unexpectedly rather difficult. The enhancement part of the magic is easy, it's moving your body around afterwards that's the hard part. It's hard to control that amount of strength, so even if you intended to use a small amount of strength to do something like walking or running, most people would just fall over. In fact, fighting with

strengthening magic requires a lot of practice and good senses. Not even I can use it at a practical level.

The Swordsaint clan has specialized in that kind of magic for generations. Yuuki is able to easily strengthen herself three-fold alongside weakening her opponent, but she's practically in the realm of acrobatics. Let alone me, not even Nina can mimic what she does.

"I don't think it's quite suitable for Tauro's personality, either."

I've known him since the time he was an even younger pup than Luka is now. He's always been too kindhearted to be suited to the territorial disputes. It's the same for me.

Although it's true that they are our closest friends all lykos, it isn't a relationship the other packs don't know about. If Tauro's pack expanded their territory, that just means they'd be taking food from the other packs. It was a sad story all around.

"Then... then, can we do anything?"

"No..."

Seeing Yuuki visibly sadden, I shook my head slowly and answered.

"You don't scramble about in times like this. That just ruins the pie."

Several days later.

"Alright, it's done!"

Wiping off the perspiration that had been accumulating on my forehead, I looked at my completed work. Considering an amateur like me made it, I think it came out pretty good. Might just be me, though.

"What is it?"

Yuuki inclined her head and both Tauro and Luka looked at it in just as much bewilderment. I made it from a tree I cut down and shaped into a big box. The curious-looking components I added to the sides probably only look like strange ornaments to them.

"This is a cart."

I clapped my hand down on to it and spoke. Of all great inventions, there are two kinds.

The first kind are things reached through the development of technology and civilization. The other kind were much more rare, ones created by geniuses—innovative concepts that reshaped the world itself.

The wheel would be the leading one even among those. It's not like I'm one of those geniuses of course, it's just that I know that the one who figured it out was one. So long as you know how to do it, making a wheel isn't exactly hard.

“If you put your prey into this when you catch it, you should be able to transport a lot at once.”

I pulled the rope attached to the cart and showed them how it moved. The cart itself was considerably large and heavy, but it was easy to move even in my human form.

“You won't have to leave to hunt as often if you can bring more back right?”

“But... just this won't help much that much...?”

Looking at the cart, Luka knit her brows, troubled. Tauro's back was wide. He'd be able to fit two or three deer on it. The amount they could bring home would be almost twice that amount due to him going with his wife. Compared to them, the cart could carry maybe four at the most.

Tauro wouldn't be able to both pull the cart and carry anything at the same time, so it would increase the total amount by one at the most. It was within their margin of error. What Luka pointed out was justified.

“—That's if the one pulling the cart is Tauro.”

Luka perked up at that and saw me smiling.

“Yuuki, how is it?”

“Perfect!”

When I glanced over to Yuuki, the red-haired girl struck her chest and turned to Luka's siblings.

“Kay everyone, do it!”

“We, are strong!”

The young lykos spoke the incantation at the same time, two of them pulling the cart’s rope. Then, when they pulled on it with a jerk, the cart that dwarfed them began to move.

Using strengthening magic was practically a dirty trick when used like this.

What made using that kind of magic so hard was that it would cause your strength to rocket so rapidly. To put it another way, it was like replacing a four cylinder engine with a hemi, all the while keeping the car’s weight the same. In that case, you can just pull more things by increasing your horsepower. Looking at it from another angle, you can keep from feeling too light by adding more weight to the cart.

“Even the small children will be able to transport what you catch like this. Now you’ll be able to hunt together.”

Their current situation used to come with another problem. Lykos children learn how to hunt by following their parents’ example. However, Tauro didn’t have the spare time to allow for that. Being held back by children during a harsh hunting trip would have kept them from being able to get enough food to eat.

Which is why they left Luka to teach her younger siblings how to hunt.

“Then Mentor, that means—!”

“We’ll have to test it a few times to see whether it’ll work or not, of course. But...”

Looking into the young girl’s face, I once again asked her.

“Will you come to our school?”

“Yes! Gladly!”

Luka nodded with a beaming smile, her tail flapping back and forth in delight.

Chapter 8: Mighty

*I'd thought that using weapons was cowardly.
However, I came to learn the truth soon after.
Not using them was even more so.*

—*Shig, the Skyarms.*

“Unnecessary. We have no need to partake in that.”

“Oh, alright.”

I couldn't help but nod back due to his matter-of-fact response.

“But Beol—”

“Mentor.”

Interrupting me with his deep voice, Beol folded his four arms and looked at me with arrogance.

Lizardmen. Those of their race were hunters that relied on their physical strength.

To briefly describe his appearance, he was like a four-armed lizard that walked upright. With a thick, long tail and green scales covering his body, he held an amazing level of strength. His thin, sharp pupils gazed at me motionlessly.

I was currently in my human form, so I felt a tremendous sense of intimidation wafting off of him.

“I acknowledge you. However, that is not due to the techniques you refer to as *magic*.”

Ambition filled his entire four-meter tall body to the brim.

“You are strong. This *magic* you continue to talk about is irrelevant to that.”

In the past, I had fought against him and won. I'd done it back when I was looking for a method of prolonging Ai's life.

“But... there are things that cannot be handled by strength alone. Magic has

the possibility to solve those things.”

“I don’t believe that to be so.”

Beol ignored my attempts at persuasion.

“You red dragons, are you not the very embodiment of strength?”

Conversely, his words struck home, causing me to let out a groan.

It’s true. I’ve never come across a creature stronger than a dragon. I’m not talking about myself, of course, but my mother. It was only one time, but I have seen her fight.

Her opponent was a blue dragon, one easily twice as large as I am now. The dragon had attacked by using lightning that had clad its entire body, swooping down and letting out extremely loud roars. Mother had casually swiped her leg at it, turning it into that evening’s meal.

Even for me, my research into magic has nothing to do with being able to continue living. For that, I could simply continue hunting behemoths whenever I need.

I feel like I’ve come to understand Mother’s unnecessarily extreme knowledge of astronomy. Dragons are too strong and too smart to simply use their time on surviving.

“Beol, is there no one else who might be interested in it?”

“We do not have someone so weak as to—”

Beol suddenly stopped himself, hesitant.

“No. Among my comrades, there is no one like that.”

It was a rare break from his usual matter-of-fact way of speaking, but Beol quickly restated his response.

“... Alright. Thanks anyway.”

Judging that I wouldn’t gain anything by attempting to negotiate further, I left the cave he lived in.

“... You kept quiet?”

Yuuki walked over to me when I had made my way out of the cave. I asked her a question.

“Yeah...”

Her head hanging, Yuuki answered weakly. The reason I asked was that was because, given her personality, I was secretly afraid that she might try to challenge him to a fight like she did back with Violet.

“That person there, he’s super strong. I don’t think I’d win.”

Yuuki spoke, vexed.

“Yeah. He would be difficult for you.”

Beol was more than three times Yuuki’s height. Their physical abilities would be about the same after Yuuki strengthened herself and weakened him, I think. Assuming they were of equal strength, the larger one... that is, the one with the longer reach would have the advantage. Adding on to that, Beol would have two extra arms compared to her.

“Aww...”

Frustrated that I admitted it outright, Yuuki groaned.

“Yuuki, you’re still growing up. Beol’s lived even longer than me.”

There’s no way he’d let himself lose face by losing to someone just a few years old with his strength he’d tempered for several hundred.

“You would probably even give him a good fight in ten or so years.”

“But that’s sooooo long away!”

Yuuki pouted. For a girl as young as her, something a decade away probably felt impossibly far away. I wonder how long it’s been since I last felt like that?

“Well, it appears there’s nothing more we can do here. Yuuki, get on my back...?”

“Big brother.”

It was easier to put her on my back before turning back into my dragon form than doing the opposite. When I turned around and bent down to let her on, she, no longer sulking, faced a direction with a sharp glint in her eyes.

“Someone’s fighting... there!”

As soon as Yuuki said that, she sprinted off toward it. I chased after her in a hurry.

As my physical strength suited my human form’s looks, I was adequately slow. It was to the point that I would fall behind if I didn’t take it seriously. I ran frantically in attempt to somehow catch up to her... and when I finally did catch up, what I saw was a spectacle I couldn’t quite call a fight.

Judging from their physiques, they were still children. Lizardmen all around one and a half meters in height surrounded a single lizardman that was about a head shorter than the others.

The small lizardman sent a punch out to one of the ones surrounding him, but his fist was grabbed and twisted, bringing him to the ground rolling.

“Just give up, Skyarms. You’re no match for us.”

The lizardman that appeared to be their leader called out, grabbing hold of the smaller lizardman’s arms and legs with his four arms and raising him into the air.

I quickly came to understand the reason the small lizardman was called Skyarms. Of the four arms lizardmen had, his upper pair of arms stopped at their elbows.

“Stop! Let go of me!”

The youth they called Skyarms shouted, biting the arm of the lizardman holding him up.

“You...!”

Grimacing at the pain, the lead lizardman let go of him and stuck his body with the remaining three.

“That’s enough!”

Seeing the young Skyarms once again roll across the ground, I shouted to interrupt the rowdy lizardmen.

“Bunching up on someone smaller than you, is that how you lizardmen do

things?”

“... This guy here’s the one who started it.”

When the leading youth said that, he turned his back to me and stalked off. Imitating their leader, the other lizardmen did the same, leaving the young Skyarms alone as Yuuki and I ran over to him.

“Are you alright?”

“... Who asked you for help?”

However, the youth looked away from me and responded in a provoking manner.

“Well...”

Did his pride get hurt there?

“I don’t care!”

In my hesitation, Yuuki responded instead.

“What?”

“Whether or not I help gets decided by if I help or not, not if you ask!”

Her objection was rough, but it was true in a sense.

Unable to think of a way to respond, the boy just kept quiet.

“If you don’t like it, get stronger!”

“What are you saying I should do then, huh!?”

Finally responding to Yuuki’s continued chiding, the boy snapped back.

“Just look at my arms! Even my body’s smaller than theirs. No matter how much I train, I can’t bulk up. How can I get stronger with a body like this!?”

Seeing him clench his teeth and fists, Yuuki responded in puzzlement.

“Eh? Aren’t there lots of ways?”

“... Huh?”

“Use a weapon. Use magic. Use the terrain. Use tactics. The biggest thing you can do, use them thinking you’re weak against them. And taking on so many

alone is just a bad call.”

The boy’s eyes opened wide after hearing her oh-so-obvious response—no, it actually was obvious for her.

“By weapons, you mean what you all use... that, that right there?”

The boy spoke, pointing at the stone sword at Yuuki’s waist.

“This?”

“Isn’t using that cowardly?”

“Eh, why would it be?”

“Using something like that is like admitting you’re weak.”

“Yep.”

I had to hold in my laughter after hearing Yuuki answer so honestly.

“I’m weak, so I improve.”

Humans were weak. Weaker than beasts, dragons, elves, lykoscentaurs, merfolk, and lizardmen. Overwhelmingly weak. Accepting that as natural, Yuuki puts in effort so that she can win. Not only for herself, either. For over five hundred years, the Swordsaints have inherited from each other in an unbroken line of succession.

“You are bigger than me, have more arms, have a tail, claws, and scales.”

Yuuki stood in front of the boy and compared his height to hers, showing him her skin against his.

“But if we fought, I’d definitely win. Even though I’m weak.”

“What was that?”

As expected, he didn’t overlook that.

“Want to give it a shot?”

Calm and composed, Yuuki provoked the now-flaring up youth.

“I don’t think you should...”

“Shut up! This shorty’s making fun of me and you’re wanting me to sit back!?”

Ignoring my advice, the youth shouted and struck toward Yuuki—

In the next instant, he was flying through the air.

“Eh... wha—...?”

He probably couldn't figure out what just happened. Rolling a few times upon landing back on the ground, the boy was flustered. Yuuki used neither weapons nor magic. She just threw him by using his own momentum against him.

I'd only taught their family the rough concepts of the akido style of martial arts, but they managed to sublimate the skill splendidly through several centuries of trial and error. What an amazing clan.

“If you come to big brother's school, you'll get stronger, too.”

Yuuki reached her hand out to him. The boy didn't make eye contact with her... but he took her hand.

“Ouch—owowow ow, ow, ow, ow! It's gonna break!”

Turning his hand upside down, Yuuki studied his joints.

“Don't worry! I haven't broken it yet.”

“Yet!? What do you mean by yet!?”

I knelt next to the struggling youth.

“Let's see... your name is?”

“Why're you... Shig! I'm Shig! I said it, stop!”

When Yuuki put some force into it, the youth... that is, Shig confessed his name in a panic.

“If you believe that you're ready to use any means to become stronger, I believe that I could be of help to you.”

“... You?”

Shig looked at me in disbelief. Well, I don't look strong at all, so it's a natural enough reaction.

“Yeah. At least, to the extent that you could defeat someone at my level.”

“... I think I could do that right now though?”

Seeing my smile, Shig responded.

“Then how about you come to the school if big brother wins?”

Letting go of his hand, Yuuki gave him an offer.

“And if I win?”

“Eh, that’s definitely not happening, so don’t worry about that.”

Yuuki answered Shig, who was holding his arm Yuuki had investigated so thoroughly, without any ill-will. She wasn’t intending to provoke him at all, she was just being frank.

“Just you wait and see!”

But as a result of that, Shig held up his fists and turned to me.

“Ah, yeah... well then.”

I kind of feel like I should apologize for swindling him. Thinking that, I returned to my original form.

The coat that had covered me fluttering and changing as it clung to my skin, the hems where the coat split rose up to the sides and turned into wings. My limbs swelled up as talons grew from my hands and feet. Turning into a muzzle, my mouth extended up my cheek as my teeth reformed into fangs.

Staring at me with his eyes wide open, he looked to be caught in a daze due to my transformation.

“Come at me.”

When I breathed out flames with my provocation after having turned entirely back into a dragon, Shig was overwhelmed and fell backwards as though shoved by the pressure of my words.

“A... a dragon—!!”

“Yep, I’m a dragon. Sorry about that.”

I apologized to him.

“Uwaaaah!”

Screaming, Shig jumped to his feet and started running.

However, unexpectedly, he didn't run away. He ran straight at me.

Raising his fists, he threw a punch at my muzzle as strong as he could.

"Ah."

I let it connect and he hit my nose.

"Oooooow...!"

Holding his hand against his stomach, he writhed in pain.

"Be careful now. I'm pretty hard."

Thankfully, his injury didn't seem to be too bad. It's probably a good thing that he's not too strong, hitting me with a herculean strength would just end up hurting your fist.

However, Shig's fighting spirit didn't abate as he aimed at my legs over and over. He struck with his palms, his feet, his tail, even with his teeth. His attacks were all-out, but they didn't even feel like mosquito bites to me.

"Shig."

It had been over ten minutes and he was more than exhausted, but he was still keeping at it. Bringing my face down near his as he bit at my toes, I spoke his name.

"Why... why, why...!"

Still biting at my toes, he shed tears and glared at me. I'm sure this is an incredibly mortifying experience to him.

"You are very strong."

Not just Shig's, but even Yuuki's eyes opened wide when I said that.

"I was mistaken. You are strong."

Seeing him continue to bite down with all the strength his jaw could muster, he likely thought I was being sarcastic.

"There are not many among even the lizardmen who would so boldly face a dragon. Even when Beol had fought me, he was double your size and I was half mine."

However, as I continued to speak, he stopped biting down on me.

Challenging a creature much larger than yourself is a truly frightening thing. Especially if you know that it is stronger than yourself.

Even Yuuki was unable to challenge Beol, someone she knew would defeat her.

“Your strength of spirit is rare. It is just that your body and skill cannot match up to it.”

The polar opposite of me. While thinking that, I returned to my human form and knelt in front of him, bringing my eyes to his.

“I believe that I can help you if you come with us.”

“... Enough to defeat you?”

Shig looked straight at me, his eyes tinged with both doubt and hope.

“Yeah. Defeating me is pretty simple.”

I was speaking honestly, but the doubt in Shig’s eyes strengthened.

“... Alright. I have my doubts, but... I’ll believe in what you’re saying, at least a bit.”

But he just sighed and chose to believe.

Chapter 9: The First Step



It's said that everything that can go wrong will go wrong on your first try, but that doesn't mean it won't happen again the second time.

“Here are our three exchange students. Luka, Rin, and Shig.”

Finished with the necessary arrangements, the three exchange students all came to Scarlet.

The lykoscentaur girl who came with a lot of luggage due to her worrywart father, Luka.

The young mermaid who'd already wrecked three wheelchairs in her excitement, Rin.

The lizardman youth who left his home with just the clothes on his back, Shig.

“... They're all kids though?”

Looking at the three in turn, Nina voiced her dissatisfaction.

“That just means they have promise. Besides, I have another reason.”

“What reason?”

Half-suspicious, Nina sent me a look

“We’ll eventually be trading with where each of them are from... I believe that it will be mutually beneficial.”

The mermaids can easily catch fish from the sea, so if we can trade for the meat they can’t eat themselves with fruits and vegetables, even the lykos children too small to hunt will be able to help out their families. The promises of that working out with the lizardmen... but it’s not like they just live and eat, so we should have at least a chance at making the negotiations work out.

“Our first order of business here is getting the villagers all used to the way they look. They shouldn’t be too scary since they’re children, they’re easy to get along with.”

Unlike how the elves look practically the same as humans, all three of our exchange students are visibly different. They’re used to seeing me in my dragon form, so I don’t think they’ll be too resistant, but they still may find them strange. I’m hoping to remove as much of their racial discrimination as possible.

“Hmph, it all sounds a bit forced to me, but sure. Why not.”

I was honestly surprised at how interested Nina sounded. It’s true that what I said is how I really feel, but I only thought of it after I decided to bring Rin. The lizardmen had no one that would come other than Shig, so it’s just a coincidence that all of them are children.

“At any rate! I thought this would be a good opportunity for Violet and these three greet each other as our Scarlet Magic Academy’s first ever exchange students and show them around.”

Clearing my throat, I changed the mood and spoke.

“I look forward to learning more about all of you.”

“Heya~!”

“Ah, umm, mmm, h-hello.”

Following Violet’s warm greeting, Rin answered back with her hands waving back and forth in the air. Luka lowered her head, timid.

“... I’m not here to make friends.”

But Shig merely said that, his mouth bent into a frown.

“Well aren’t you a cheeky one.”

Suddenly narrowing her eyes, Nina raised one of her thin eyebrows.

“What. I came here to become stronger. I won’t listen to what a weakling says. Or are you a dragon too?”

“No, she isn’t a dragon, but...”

“You’re coming with me.”

I tried to stop what was about to happen, but Nina just seized Shig by the neck and dragged him outside the classroom.

“Be careful, she’s stronger than a dragon... ah, looks like I was too slow. Oh well, then.”

I turned to the other three.

“He didn’t bring any luggage so we can help him later. Let’s go, I’ll show you to your rooms.”

I decided to entirely ignore the scream coming from outside.

The next day.

“Well then. I’d like to start with our first lesson.”

Looking toward the four exchange students side-by-side in our newly-built small classroom, I began.

There are two major subjects taught in our school: general knowledge and magic.

For their general education, they will be taught the alphabet, words, and simple arithmetic with Scarlet’s other children. However, when it comes to magic, I decided to use another time slot to teach them because this is very experimental.

Nina’s attending this first attempt as an aide, but I’m the one that’ll be leading them. The general education lessons will be left in Nina and Violet’s hands.

“If you have any questions, raise your hand and let me know.”

We didn't have any chairs or desks for them yet.

The reason for that is because I've been unable to prepare suitable furniture for anyone but Violet.

Setting aside Rin, who's unable to move after getting off her wheelchair, Shig is unable to sit on a normal chair due to his tail getting in the way and I can't even begin to imagine a chair that Luka could use comfortably with her four legs.

So, unfortunately for Violet, I had everyone but Rin sit on the floor as equals. Many of our students are unable to even write the alphabet yet, so it goes without saying that desks were unneeded.

"I have a question!"

I was lecturing on the basic fundamentals of magic. When I brought up the most important part, Rin shot her hand up."

"What's a name?"

"Eh?"

But hearing a question I didn't anticipate, I was taken by surprise.

"You don't know even know something like that? You have a name, it's Rin."

Sounding just as surprised, Shig interjected.

"I know *thaaat*. I mean *why* is it Rin?"

"Why...? Because that's what your parents named you, duh."

Shig responded with a somewhat dampened vigor once Rin asked him a strangely philosophical question.

"Then you'd be Sleepybum if I called you that?"

"Of course not! And don't give me such a weird name!"

Rin's question left me at a loss for words.

"... So is the important part what is first first, then?"

"Nope. True names can be changed, after all."

Nina responded to Violet's confusion, her arms folded and a difficult

expression on her face.

True, be it plants, minerals, or animals, humans have given everything names to wield with magic. On the other hand, it's impossible for someone to reference another unless they have a true name they are aware of themselves. I haven't even thought about that until now. Just what is the difference...?

"Umm... Mentor?"

"Oh, right."

Luka's reserved question pulled me out of my thoughts and back into the lesson.

"At any rate, you know how you can more or less understand that things have names and recognize them by it even if you don't know what the basis behind what having a name is?"

Everyone nodded when I asked that, causing me to feel a little relieved.

"What's important is that you know something's name. If you don't know its name, you will be unable to use it with magic."

I stuck my index finger upright.

"Fire, my friend. Please ignite a very, very small flame on my fingertip."

A tiny, candlelight-like flame ignited at the end of my finger once I chanted the incantation.

I'd get a flame large enough to burn down the entire building when I used fire spells in the past, but I've made advances in magic these past five hundred years. Not just in how much the incantation can influence its strength, but in my suppression over its output as well.

That I have to use two verses for something as small as a candle's flame is a bit sad, though.

"This is *Fire*. Fire is..."

"What kind of fire?"

Once I attempted to begin explaining as I recalled what I said when I first taught magic, Shig interrupted me with a question.

“What do you mean?”

“Fire to roast meat, fire to warm the body, fire that burns trees, there’s lots of kinds.”

Oh. Come to think of it, didn’t the lizardmen’s original language have many different ways to describe fire due to them living at the base of volcanoes?

“Is fire not simply fire?”

As I was thinking about how I should respond, Violet asked a question of her own.

“Hey, what *is* fire?”

Rin inclined her head to the side.

“Excuse me, umm, Mentor? There are different kinds of fire?”



Hearing Luka raise her hand and ask her question seriously, I was stumped on

how to respond.

Each of them recognized fire differently, very different from one another.

Shig, a lizardman, grew up with fire as his ally, something so close to him that he had a way to refer to it for each of its uses. On the other hand, Rin, a mermaid born and raised in the ocean and who was on land for the first time, didn't so much as know of fire's existence at all.

As an elf who spent her life living in a forest, fire was akin to being the symbol of danger, the thing that could take the roof over her head away and ruin her surroundings. However, for Luka, a lykos who lived as a nomad in the grasslands, it was just a tool to cook with and warm up.

... Teaching all four of the exchange students at once may have been a mistake. When I tried to look to Nina for help, I found that she'd disappeared.

Sh-she ran away!?

"Teach me how to be stronger than fire."

"I would prefer to go over something else."

"Umm, uhh, I..."

"Hey! What's this *fire* thing?"

There were only four students in all, but I couldn't keep up with them in the least with them all talking at once.

I thought back to my very first pupil.

Ai. How patient and diligent she was, the ideal pupil.

She studied under my inexperienced teaching, never complaining.

How blessed was I for that?

It's been five hundred years since and I'm only just now realizing.

Chapter 10: Class Leader

Don't let tonight's meal be decided by the dragon.

*Often misused to mean 'It's an unnecessarily perilous experience',
a proverb passed down through the Scarlet Clan.*

"So tired..."

"Good work."

Nina pitied me indifferently as I returned from the day's classes and sat back against a chair.

Ten days had passed since the transfer students' special classes began. The clamor that happened on the first day has steadily gotten worse, so the classes have only been proceeding at a snail's pace. Each time I try to teach something about magic, it turns into a giant fuss despite my best efforts to avoid it.

"Are things moving along well with general education?"

I ended up leaving that side of their education entirely to Nina and Violet, but I haven't heard much in particular about that from them at all. However, thinking about it carefully, Scarlet village's population has been increasing so quickly and there's been so many children that they should be having an extra difficult time.

"Pretty much, there haven't really been any problems. Shig and Rin start making a fuss now and then though."

"Those two, huh..."

Hearing their names, I imagined the two of them making a clamor.

Luka had an obedient and honest personality, and Violet was an adult. Even if they were confused by the differences in their environment and the culture they'd leapt into, they weren't the kind of people to make problems for others.

The ones making any problems would be one of the two youths, or perhaps even both of them.

Adding on to that, those two seem to have trouble getting along with each

other, leading to them bickering with each other right away. I say that, but given how Rin just jumps into things headfirst, I get the feeling that it's Shig who's suffering. Rin doesn't understand the concept of avoiding conflicts at all.

"How do you deal with them when they go at it?"

"You want to know how?"

Following her response, Nina moved her fingers. Vines grew up from the ground, coiling around me and lifting me into the air.

"That's how."

"I get it, I get it already, let me down!"

I shouted, panicked.

I grew more uneasy than I thought I would at having my body's freedom taken away and my feet lifted from the ground. Even if it wasn't that far up, I still felt fear at wondering if I'd just be dropped all of a sudden.

"And if they still don't listen, well..."

When Nina waved her fingers again, my body was shaken up and down rather violently. My vision blurred at the jostling, I started grabbing on to the vines on my own volition in fear of being tossed away due to the g-forces I felt. It might look humorous to those seeing it, but it was nothing of the sort for those going through it.

"They started to behave around the third day."

Obviously they would!

Finally released and left to fall back to the ground, I wanted to shout out but found myself unable due to fighting my nausea.

"Big brooooother! Wait, huh? What's wrong?"

It looked like Violet's class let out. Yuuki, who came by the office on her way back as she usually did, jumped on top of me even while I was still trying to get up. It was alright, though. She didn't weigh much.

"No, it's nothing... I'm alright."

When I told her that it was nothing, she turned and went over to Nina.

“What happened?”

“He said the special classes haven’t been going well.”

Oh, come on!

Yuuki just asked the same thing over again and Nina let it slip.

“Oooh. I get it. Rin and Shig right?”

Yuuki immediately figured out the two culprits, probably due to them always being like that.

“It’s not like it’s either of their faults. It’s mine.”

Regardless of their methods, Nina and Violet had been able to continue teaching their classes perfunctorily.

“Yeah. I agree!”

Unfortunately, Yuuki agreed with me so fast that I felt a bit sad.

“Big brother’s waaay too soft.”

She didn’t stop there either, she even pat me on the head.

I might cry here, you know?

“A leader should be strong!”

“... A leader?”

I responded to Yuuki, whose words seemed to hold some deeper significance.

“I’m *saying*, big brother doesn’t feel like a leader.”

It’s true, even I don’t think I’m suited to being a leader. Scarlet doesn’t officially have a village chief, but it’s de facto leader is the head of the Swordsaints. That is, Yuuki’s father, Amaga.

“Leader... a leader, hmm.”

The leader of a village is its village chief, the leader of an academy is its headmaster. However, the leader of a classroom is not its instructor.

“Yeah. Let’s decide on a leader.”

Suddenly thinking of it, I spoke.

“Class... leader?”

“Yeah. Class leader. Leader for short works fine too.”

Hearing Shig ask back my words like a parrot, I responded with a nod. Class Chairman wouldn't have been a good fit since there wasn't a committee to be in charge of, so I thought that class leader would be a more appropriate fit. It's similar, at least.

“What I'm saying is that let's decide who the number one person in the class is, that's all. What that person says, goes. Easy, right?”

“Shouldn't we do what you say, Mentor?”

Violet proposed a legitimate question.

“Yes. Of course, I will be ranked above you all as your instructor. But that's also the reason why I cannot be your leader. It's up to you all to determine who the leader is.”

“... I see. So it's like being a scout leader? Using that example, Mentor, you would be like Eldest?”

Taking a moment to think about it, she understood and responded with that.

“Hey, hey, what kinda thing is it~?”

“Well now... in other words, Mentor, you're saying that we can think of it as choosing the next person in charge after you?”

Seeing Rin pull on the hem of my clothes, Luka explained what she understood in her own way. It wasn't entirely accurate, but it was probably easier for her to understand it that way for now.

“I'll do it!”

“Sounds fun, I wanna do it too!”

Then, as expected, both Shig's and Rin's hands shot up right away.

“If it's alright, could I?”

Then, unexpectedly, Violet joined in as well. She probably felt some measure of apprehension towards letting either of them decide everything. She should be aware of the problem itself, as well. As a woman who served as one of the

scout leaders she'd spoken of, Violet being the leader would definitely be a great help to me.

—However.

“Nothing would change if I decided on it myself, now would it? Take me choosing Rin, for instance. Shig, you wouldn't consent to that, would you?”

“Let alone someone with only two arms, I could not follow someone without any legs.”

I suppose the lizardmen's sense of values places importance on how many limbs they have?

“Rin's tail and waist fins act as her arms and legs, so she has the same amount as you, Luka, and me... but, well, let's leave that for some other time.”

I didn't exactly have enough time to explain Darwin's Theory of Evolution just then, nor did I even know for certain if that applied to this world.

“At any rate, we'll be deciding who through an impartial method.”

“Impartial... like with a fight?”

Shig seemed to look nervous as he glanced over to Violet. Come to think of it, Violet's class hasn't been having any problems either, has it? I feel like I understand that look of his, somehow.

“No, it's something everyone is about equal in.”

As I spoke, I took out what I had prepared beforehand.

“Rocks and... wood?”

Seeing what I'd taken out, the students all tilted their heads.

Chapter 11: Throwing Stones

*I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought,
but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.*

—Albert Einstein

“And there we go.”

Next to the building I’d built to be the schoolhouse, there was a large area set aside to be the schoolyard. In addition to physical training, it’s also meant to be used for magic experiments. Finished with drawing a line across the ground with a stick, I nodded in satisfaction. After putting three desks around five or so meters away from the line I drew out, I set some small pieces of wood on them... well, they were basically kindling.

“Then, from the other side of the line...”

I picked up a suitable stone and gave it a toss to the kindling.

The stone hitting its mark, the piece of wood gave off a slight sound and fell down.

“Throw ten stones, the person to knock down the most pieces of wood wins.”

With such a short distance as this, even Rin should be able to throw the stones far enough.

But hitting the small pieces of wood wouldn’t be so easy.

“You can choose whatever stones you want, just make sure you’ll be able to throw them.”

As soon as I said that, Shig and Rin bolted to look for stones they wanted to compete with. Violet followed after them, leaving Luka to trail after them all in thought.

“Now then, let’s see what happens...”

Watching them, I set the fallen piece of wood back up.

“Alright, I’m first!”

The first one to return a few minutes later was Shig. Carrying all of his stones in his arms, he breathlessly shouted in joy. The contest is about how many pieces of wood they can knock over though, not how fast they get their stones.

“Here I go... hah!”

The stone Shig threw with all his strength missed the wood by quite a ways... and struck the schoolhouse’s roof, echoing out with a loud bang.

“Woah.”

We’re a good distance away from the schoolhouse, I made the schoolyard pretty big after taking into account how large my dragon form is.

For it to make it all the way to its roof, didn’t he just throw that several dozen meters?

“Gah, dangit!”

He was honestly really bad at his control, but that went without saying.

He ended up losing his cool and getting angry, so Shig’s following stones all continued to miss their marks.

“Gaaah! No way, Mentor, this is impossible!”

“Let’s see how the others do. If no one hits any, we can re-do it.”

Soon after I appeased Shig, I heard wheels spinning about behind me. Rin was back.

“Mentooooor! I’ma do it with *this!*”

But what she was carrying was more of a big rock that took her entire grip to hold on to than small stones.

“That’s cheating!”

“No it’s not! He said we could choose whatever we wanted!”

Shig shouted at her, but it was outside of my predictions as well.

“Hah!”

However, Rin was barely able to throw the rock that far at all, so it wound up falling to the ground straight away.

“What, so there was no point?”

Shig spoke half in mockery and half in relief. However, the rock continued rolling after falling to the ground and stuck one of the table’s legs. That collision provided enough force to the table to knock over one of the pieces of wood.

“Yay!”

“No way that counts!”

“Hmm. Well... I guess it’s alright?”

Shig protested as he pointed at Rin, whose arms were up in the air and waving about in glee. However, I responded after a moment of thought. I told them to throw stones to knock the wood over, but I never said how they had to go about it.

Still though, that way’s a lot simpler than hitting the wood directly. Rin’s strategy might just bring her the win.

“Haah. I’m wiped, that’s good enough!”

The moment I thought that, Rin stopped with a smile on her face. What a free personality...

“Could I try next, then?”

I didn’t notice when she’d come back, but Violet was just suddenly behind me.

“Oh, yeah. Sure. Rin, please move away now.”

Once I’d set the fallen wood back up, Violet held a small stone on her palm. Starkly contrasting what Rin used, hers was as small as a plant seed.

“Hah!”

She threw it like a throwing star. The pebble hit a piece of wood dead on and knocked it down. Looks like the third person up to bat managed to hit one straight away.

Violet then continued on to hit her second one, then her third. She kept going...

“Ah—”

Her tenth throw. A small cry made it's way not from Violet's mouth, but Shig's.

As demonstrated by that voice, that particular stone just barely missed the wood.

"Nine, then?"

"... My aim erred."

Violet responded in slight disappointment.

"Then I'm up next!"

The one to say that carrying pebbles was Yuuki.

"Wait what?"

"I thought she should be able to participate in this class too."

I explained my thoughts to Shig, who was confused.

Even if she hangs out with them usually as well, I think it's important for them to have a human included in their class. This will also serve as a good comparison between how humans and other races study magic.

"Hyaah!"

The stone Yuuki threw drew a large arc through the air.

"What, that's way off."

It happened just as Shig said that.

"Hit it!!"

The stone suddenly fell from the sky and bashed against the wood.

"That's got to be a foul!"

"Eh? Using magic's bad?"

"No. I never disallowed it."

I refused Shig's protests and shook my head. The only conditions I imposed on them was for the location they threw from and the amount of throws they could use. They could throw whatever rock they wanted, however they wanted.

The only ones to realize that fact were Rin and Yuuki, though. In the end, Yuuki's method of throwing the rocks finished with none missing and all of the wood being knocked down.

"Woow, awesome!"

"Good job, Yuuki."

Rin was bubbling over with excitement and Violet praised her.

Shig appeared discontent, but he didn't complain.

"Umm... are these alright?"

Late to the party, Luka came back. She was carrying three palm-sized stones.

"Umm, I couldn't find many good stones..."

"How slow can you be? You spent that much time just getting three of them?"

Luka's ears and tail hung low at Shig's comment.

"Of course they're alright. Give it a shot."

I extended my arms and urged her forward. Nodding, she took a short distance from the line.

Then, dashing forward as fast as her lower half could take her, she threw the stone the instant she reached her top speed.

However, missing the pieces of wood by a large margin, it struck the ground below a desk and wedged itself into the ground.

"Oh boy. Looks like *she's* going to be the leader now..."

Shig sent a furtive glance to Yuuki as his shoulders sagged.

"Eh, why? Luka's not done yet!"

"Idiot. Yuuki got all ten of them, it's over if she misses even a single one.

Luka threw her second rock. It also hit the ground.

"Why? Why would that happen if she missed one?"

Rin tilted her head to the side in confusion as she asked Shig the question.

"What do you mean why? You don't even get that? There's ten pieces of

wood, so her being able to knock them all over with less than that many stones is...”

“Yaaah!”

Shig was interrupted by Luka’s shout as she launched her third stone.

It hit one of the desk’s legs—and, together with a cracking sound, broke right through it.

Its balance broken, the desk collapsed, knocking into the one next to it. The second desk knocked into the third, continuing the motion. In the end, all of the wood placed upon the three desks fell over.

“Umm. Is that alright?”

Turning around, Luka sounded confident.

“... That was your goal?”

“Yes. Umm, Father... Father said that when I’m hunting a big target, I should go for the legs.”

Luka nodded in response to my question and explained herself.

Lykoscentaur were a race with superior stamina. They were good at chasing their prey for as long as it took and would capture them once they grew exhausted. Them going for the legs of enemies that wouldn’t be beaten with a single strike was sound logic.

But even so, that’s easier said than done when it comes to breaking a desk’s leg with a rock. When I picked up one of the stones Luka threw, it was heavier than I’d expected it would be and was blade-sharp.

“Could it be that my strategy wasn’t allowed?”

“No, it’s fine. And since you managed to knock them all over in just three throws...”

“It’s Luka’s win!”

Yuuki spoke over me in her excitement.

“You’re so awesome, Luka! Hey, hey! I wanna do that too! How’d you do it?”

“I didn’t do anything that great...”

“... Amazing.”

Rin seemed to have gotten excited and started pulling on Luka’s sleeves. Violet also seemed to have been impressed, judging by what she said. Even Shig was standing there with his eyes open wide as he stared at the desk’s broken leg. Looks like it’s a unanimous agreement.

“Well then, Luka. Congratulations on being the leader.”

“Eh—”

Hearing my congratulations, Luka blinked twice.

“—Eeeeeeeh!?”

Not having actually expected to win, her voice raised into something like a cry.

Chapter 12: Hide and Seek

Hiding in the trees when chased by an elf in a forest isn't too bad of a plan. Just give a few seconds' thought about what the meaning behind an entirely meaningless action might be.

Somewhere around half a year passed since I began giving our exchange students special classes.

“That’s why you’re an idiot! Shouldn’t you be able to get it just by thinking about it?”

“Eeh, but whyyy? I don’t get it!”

Today, just like every day, I could hear Shig and Rin squabbling with each other in the classroom.

“Alright you two, that’s enough!”

However, more recently, Luka’s been starting to break them up.

“I was wondering what would happen when she started, but it looks like it turned out well.”

Looking at the situation progress from a little ways away, Violet smiled. Luka was fairly hesitant at it at first, but she already had lots of experience in this after looking after her younger siblings for so long. She seemed to have come into her stride the past few weeks, so we’ve all seen Shig and Rin get scolded by her quite a lot.

“You two really are like siblings.”

In response to Luka chiding him with her hands on her hips, Shig muttered out a response... which provoked yet another warning from her. Rin, laughing at his misfortune, was equally scolded in turn. Rin generally just went about doing things her way without letting anyone trip her up, but it seemed as though Luka was able to get through to her with her scoldings.

“To be honest, I thought that I would be the one who would need to assume that role. Luka seems suited to it, though.”

Watching Luka patting their heads after chiding them, Violet spoke in a gentle tone.

“Rather than being like an older sister, Violet, you’re more like their mother. It feels like you’re always watching over them.”

“Oh?”

Unexpectedly, Violet’s eyes opened wide upon hearing my comment. Perhaps she’s still too young to be likened to a mother?

“Then that would make us something of a couple, would it not? Mentor *is* the classroom’s father.”

What she responded with was just as unexpected.

“Oh, well, umm, sorry, I didn’t mean—”

“No!”

Yuuki shoved herself between Violet and I, who’d become somewhat incoherent.

“I’m who’s gonna be big brother’s bride!”

“Are you now?”

Seeing Yuuki cling to me with so much gusto, Violet smiled in amusement.

“I’ve said it many times now, but I’m already married.”

Even while patting Yuuki on the head, I admonished her. Of course, I took Yuuki’s words as those of a youth’s short-lived yearning. However, I knew from past experiences that it would hurt her if I didn’t answer them straight on.

“Hmph.”

Yuuki scrunched up her lips in discontent and grumbled, but that was all. It didn’t look like her feelings were hurt.

“Now then, how about we start class?”

Clapping my hands together to gain everyone’s attention as soon as there was a lull, I waited for my students to get back to their seats.

Setting aside Violet’s, Yuuki’s, and Shig’s chairs which all had standard

backings to them—along with a hole in Shig’s for his tail—we also had version fifteen of Rin’s light-yet-robust wheelchair and a sturdy ottoman for Luka to sit her belly down on. Quite a line up, if I don’t say so myself.

“Mentor, what are we doing today?”

Luka wasn’t the only person who’d come into her own in the classroom. Through many trials and tribulations, I’d also gradually come to understand what I should do.

Giving them some goal and allowing them to go about it in their own way generally worked out better than just giving each of them the same thing and teaching them directly.

“Right... today, we’re going to play hide and seek.”

“Hide and seek?”

Rin parroted back the game’s name, followed by Shig and Luka both tilting their heads in confusion.

“But that’s a kid’s game.”

“What is hide and seek?”

They did so for opposite reasons, however. Shig, because he knew what it was, and Luka, because she didn’t.

“It won’t be any standard hide and seek, of course. You’ll be using magic to escape and hide. The person who’s it can use magic to give chase, as well. Being found is alright, but you’re out if you get touched. If you can keep away until nightfall, you win.”

“Sounds fun! I wanna be it!”

As soon as I gave Luka and the others the explanation of what they’d be doing, Rin’s hand darted into the air.

“Then I want to too!”

Competitive as he was, Shig raised his hand as well.

“Sorry, but I’ve already decided on who’ll be it.”

“Bleh.”

Shig grunted in dissatisfaction.

“Who’s gonna be it, big brother?”

It was rather unusual for me to unilaterally decide on a role for them, so Yuuki asked me in curiosity.

“Today, you all—”

Smiling, I continued.

“—are going to be attempting to escape from Violet in the forest.”

“I will be off, then.”

“Have fun.”

After the other students went and hid in the forest, Violet counted to one hundred and followed after them. Seeing her off, I took a few small red scales out of my pocket. They were things I’d removed from my dragon form, parts of me.

“Those that are strong enough to defend against any and everything, that hold a crimson luster and gleam in the sunlight, that are fragments of the dragon that is me. Be my ears and let me hear, be my eyes and give me sight beyond sight.”

Scattering five of them on the ground and reciting the incantation, flames rose up to show me each of my students. I had handed each of them matching scales to use this magic, enabling me to see what they were doing.

The first one to catch my attention was Yuuki running through the forest with Rin on her back. It would be difficult for Rin to move about in the forest—a place with no pavement and scarcely no flat ground for her wheelchair—so I had her pair up with Yuuki.

Rin generally looked small due to her youthful appearance, but her lower body was fairly long. If you compared her full length to Violet, who was rather tall, Rin might just come out on top. She was somewhere around forty kilos, too. For Yuuki to be able to dash so easily through the woods despite bearing her weight as well spoke a lot of her strength.

On the other hand, Shig and Luka’s pair seemed to be wandering aimlessly

through the forest. They didn't necessarily need to pair up, but I told them to do so to be similar to Rin and Yuuki. Both of them held better natural physical capabilities than humans, too. The speed they traveled at as they went through the brush was comparable to a human sprinting on flat ground.

And following behind them was Violet in a very relaxed manner. She looked as though she were taking a stroll in the park, not hurrying in the least. She had the composure only an elder could, seeming as though she'd be able to capture them the instant she got seriously.

"... Those are some pretty harsh conditions."

When I turned around upon suddenly hearing a voice, I saw Nina gazing into the flames.

"Are they?"

It's true that the forest was vast with many places to hide. Normally speaking, this would make it so that it'd be highly impractical to find someone hiding in it by yourself. However, Violet was an elf. Although it wasn't the forest she grew up in, I think she should have many ways to search for them...

"Well, whatever. What about food?"

"Ah, whoops. I forgot. Well, there's fruits and nuts everywhere in the forest, so they can just grab something when they get hungry."

I don't think they'll have enough time to actually hunt... but maybe Rin and Yuuki's pair might be able to?

"Want me to make their's while I make mine?"

"What, dinner?"

"I'm talking about lunch, obviously."

Nina shook her head, acting as though I said something stupid.

"Oh, they're not coming back for lunch. Perhaps I should have set up a rest break for them?"

"... You know—"

Shaking her head once again, Nina sighed.

“They’re not going to last till lunch against Violet.”

“Caught you, Shig.”

I heard Violet’s voice almost simultaneously with what Nina said.

When I turned around in surprise, I saw Violet catching up to Shig in no time flat and grabbing his arm. I only looked away for two or three minutes. When did she...!?

It looked like Luka had managed to escape, as she was dashing away at top speed while keeping an eye on her rear.

“You are me, I am you. Beat with my feet and swing with my arms, we run—shadow clone.”

Once Luka finished the incantation, her shadow suddenly seeped up from the ground and reformed to look exactly like her before continuing to run straight ahead. Seeing her shadow off as it left indistinct footprints on the ground and broke twigs as it ran, Luka stealthily hid behind a shrub so as to not leave any traces of her doing so.

She couldn’t be seen from outside of the shrubbery, but she could see her surroundings rather well. Luka strained to listen with her perky ears as she concentrated on listening for anyone approaching her. She had senses that surpassed even the most excellent hunter due to being a lykoscentaur, her hearing and sense of smell were so sharp that they were incomparable to human senses. If she concentrates, there’s nothing that could get the jump on her.

“Got you, Luka.”

—Other than an elf in a forest, that is.

“Pyaaah!?”

Her neck caught by the arm that quietly avoided the bushes’ leaves hanging down overhead, Luka let out a queer shriek.

“Oh? Looks like she isn’t putting much strength into it, but the way she’s holding her neck right there’s pretty much impossible to escape without getting your neck dislocated first.”

“Violet isn’t going to injure her right!?”

Hearing Nina’s calm explanation, I shouted out in a panic.

“Don’t worry about it, she wouldn’t do something so imprudent.”

Alighting down to the ground, Violet pat Luka on the head.

“Well then, two more to go.”

Saying that with a smile on her face, her eyes were trained exactly on Yuuki and Rin’s current location.

Chapter 13: A Game of Tag

Alright everyone, that's enough. Time to eat!

—Scarlet Magic Academy's Vice-President, Nina

"... This is a little troubling."

Pressing a hand to her forehead, Violet looked at the spring as she tilted her head. In the deep bottom of the water, Rin could be seen. However, although this was hide and seek, the rule was that you wouldn't be defeated so long as you weren't touched. She needed to somehow get close to Rin underwater.

Just like how the forest was Violet's territory, so was the water Rin's. Although it wasn't as though Violet couldn't swim, it was sheer folly to attempt to capture a mermaid underwater.

After hesitating over what to do for a little while, Violet left the area. Although Rin was staying still at the bottom, she was an excessively energetic girl. She quickly grew tired of waiting and became impatient, so she swam up to the surface to look around and make sure that Violet had left.

"Rin, watch out!"

Hearing Yuuki's warning the moment she approached the shore, Rin quickly dove back into the water. Violet, her body clad in leaves to mimicry the trees, reached out her hand and grew thorny vines from her fingertips. The thorns caught Rin's tail, however...

"Yaah!"

Together with a shout, Rin shot something out from the water and easily tore through the vine rope.

"Mentor, what about that?"

"Hmm. I guess she's safe. You have to touch them with your own body."

"The thorns are like a part of me though..."

Unexpectedly, Violet complained. She was probably feeling a bit vexed at losing her target. She looked about, but Yuuki had erased signs of her presence

completely.

As if to tease Violet, Rin sent bubbles up to the surface.

“Mentor, this is Rin’s home, correct?”

Violet spoke in her usual calm tone.

“Yes...”

“Would it be a problem if I made it unlivable for a while?”

Oh, it looks like she’s more annoyed than I thought.

“That would be a bit much... Rin, if you don’t want it to be destroyed, get out, okay?”

I transmitted my words to Rin. Violet looked like she was growing impatient.

“Please do something to prevent it then, alright?”

Saying that, Violet raised her arm and grew briars all over it, hands included. It grew larger and larger, eventually resembling what looked like a gigantic glove. Honestly, it looked exactly like a glove a giant would wear.

She then placed her hand into the spring. Although Rin did her best to avoid the fingers, Violet wasn’t aiming for her. Far down in the water was a great big rock.

“I, am strong.”

Putting her finger onto the edge of the rock, Violet recited an incantation. It’s the Swordsaint’s—!

The thorn glove expanded even further and lifted the rock with a jerk. When she pulled it up to the surface, she threw it away to the side. Where she threw it was the entrance for the spring’s source of water. A small river of flowing water.

The spring had a single stream where water came into it two where water left. By damming up its only entrance, she intended to dry it up.

Just as Violet went to grab a second rock, Rin started vigorously producing more bubbles. Upon taking a closer look, the bubbles she’d been producing for a while now were drifting in the water, none of them had disappeared. Pushed

on by the newly produced bubbles, they jumped out of the water's surface and began to enclose around Violet.

“That's...!”

Even so, it wasn't as though the bubbles were some offensive ability. They were just ordinary, powerless bubbles. Which meant—it was a feint!

Violet, arriving at the same conclusion as me, lifted her free left arm and produced a thorn sword. Then, an instant later, Violet used her sword to clash against the one that came at her from the trees above.

“Ah, you realized!”

What Yuuki was holding wasn't her usual stone sword. She probably figured that it would be a bad idea to use bladed weapons in a game of hide and seek. It was just a long, wooden stick. That said, it appeared to be strengthened through magic as it was able to hold up against Violet's sword unharmed. Violet reached her hand out toward her, so Yuuki quickly took a distance. Unlike their match from before, this was hide and seek. Even if she could defeat Violet, Yuuki wouldn't win. All Violet had to do to win was touch Yuuki. No matter how good Yuuki was, winning a one on one against her with that condition was too hard.

—But this wasn't a one on one.

“Take this—!”

Resurfacing, Rin shouted at Violet from behind. Well done. Yuuki had just escaped to a position that placed Violet directly between her and Rin. She then used magic to shoot a bubble... no, a water ball. Was that what she used to cut through the vine a bit ago?

Violet immediately caught the blow using her thorn glove as a shield, but the water ball had enough force behind it to tear through the thorns. Moreover, Rin could shoot them rapidly. Although Rin's aim was insufficient even with her using an incantation due to her lackadaisical personality, dodging so many of them shot back to back looked like it was tough on Violet.

“You are slow!”

Just then, Yuuki used her magic. It caused Violet to lose her balance, however...

“I am fast!”

It was immediately countered by her own magic.

Even Violet found it impossible to move normally while strengthened through magic. Therefore, she burdened herself with the thorn glove as well as waited until she could counter Yuuki’s magic with it. What a wonderful plan.

However, Yuuki wasn’t one to miss a chance presented to her. At practically the same time as Violet did that, Yuuki aimed low with an attack. It was something that Violet, who’d lost her balance, wouldn’t be able to cope with.

Yet Violet leapt up into the air through very unnatural movements and dodged it.

“No way!?”

Even if Violet could have done something like roll to avoid the blow, there’s no way she should have been able to jump with the stance she’d had. Not foreseeing the turn of events, Yuuki opened her eyes wide. Violet had extended a vine from her arm and latched onto a tree branch, using it much like an action wire.

She then extended another thorny vine to a different tree and used it to move through the air. This method of moving about was what she’d used to catch up to the other students so swiftly.

Unable to do anything, Yuuki looked up at Violet moving around at high speeds overhead. Rin shot more water balls at Violet, but none connected due to how fast she was moving. While this was happening, Violet extended another vine to Yuuki to catch her.

Even so, Yuuki wouldn’t allow herself to be caught so easily. She slapped it away with the wooden stick in her hand, cutting it through. Her balance destroyed once more through the shock of that attack, Violet fell to the ground.

—However, this was a trap.

It enticed Rin to shoot her water balls lower down to collide with Violet.

Unfortunately, Yuuki was now in the path of those balls.

“Uwaaah!”

It turned into a great example of friendly fire. Yuuki, having grown entirely negligent of Rin, was struck in the back by the water balls and got knocked tumbling. Her body was then surrounded by Violet’s thorn vines.

“Not like this...!”

Yuuki tried to cut away the vines with her stick by thrusting it between them, but the vines lifted her body up into the air before she was able to and flung her away.

“E-eh, ummm, hah!”

If Yuuki kept on as is, she’d collide right into Rin, who’d popped up through the water’s surface. Rin opened her arms wide and caught Yuuki. However, unable to absorb the impact entirely, the two of them shot down into the water.

Yuuki did her best to get out of Rin’s hold on her, but it was already too late. Two huge, thorn-made hands enclosed them and grasped them firmly.

If it were just Rin there, it probably wouldn’t have went so simply. Capturing the girl who was able to swim freely through the water while launching water balls to keep her distance would have been a herculean undertaking. However, Violet had thrown Yuuki at her to give herself a chance at catching them both. Violet’s split-second decision led to her victory.

“See? Told you they wouldn’t make it till noon.”

Pointing to the sun that was just now beginning to reach its zenith, Nina spoke in triumph.

“Yeah, looks like you were right. Let’s go have lunch with every—”

“Mentor, one more time! Let us try it one more time!”

Interrupting me, Shig spoke up in frustration.

“Wouldn’t it be alright to wait until after...”

“Umm, Mentor, I would also like to try again. I’m not hungry yet, so...”

Then even Luka started to ask for the same.

“Me too! I wanna do it too!”

“Big brooooother! I wanna do it another time too!”

Agreeing with the others, Rin and Yuuki spoke up in insistence as well.

“I don’t particularly mind... but what to do...?”

I meant about not eating. It wasn’t too much of a problem for Luka as her species could go a while without eating, but the others were still growing children that needed to eat regularly.

“Couldn’t you all just wait until after eating?”

“No way!”

Shig shouted in response to Nina. With that, Nina narrowed her eyes and glared at him. It was something she did whenever she felt irritated at something.

“Alright then, sure. Let’s do it again. Just—”

Nina spoke in a penetratingly cold voice.

“This time, *I’ll* be it.”

After that, everyone—Violet included—was caught within five minutes.

Interlude: A Moment of Rest

This happened shortly after welcoming the exchange students.

“Alright. With this, I’ve more or less finished preparing.”

I looked up and down the memos I’d written down on the wooden board and gave my shoulder a spin to work out the stiffness.

The exchange students’ bodies and ecologies were all entirely different from one another’s, so there were many different things I had to pay attention to.

Their rooms, for example. Although the second floor of the school building

has turned into what's basically a dormitory, the only ones living there at the moment are Shig and Violet. Having grown up in the grasslands, Luka dislikes heights and has a newly established room on the first floor. Rin, on the other hand, is in water. A deep spring in the forest to be exact.

I have to be careful about their meals as well. Luka isn't able to eat anything but meat, while Rin's staples are fish and seaweed. Although Shig appears able to eat just about anything, I do not know what he prefers nor what is poisonous to him, so I have to be careful and try different things little by little.

I also have to produce furniture that matches their each of their physiques... although my ideal society is one where various races can coexist, it's turning out to be a challenge.

I decided to go take a bath to deal with some of the exhaustion I'd accumulated.

"Ah, going for a bath?"

"Yeah."

Noticing me make a move, Nina came along. Bathing with her has turned entirely into a customary thing, I don't even feel awkward or embarrassed about it at all at this point. Even after marrying Ai, it had turned into us three bathing together. I did start wearing a bathing suit for a period of time, but changing into and out of it every time was tiresome, so I wound up stopping that.

"Do you all want to take a bath with us?"

Even so, Nina extended the invitation to the students who still remained in the classroom.

"Yeah!"

Before I could say anything to stop her, Yuuki shot her hand up in the air immediately.

"Nina described it to me as a warm spring, I have to say that I am interested in it."

Violet spoke up as well.

“I wanna go too!”

Despite likely not even knowing what a bath was, Rin stuck *both* her hands in the air.

“There’s a bath in a place like this? In that case, I want to use it.”

Even Shig seemed to be interested.

“U-U-Umm... I’ll go, too...”

Seeming as though she didn’t want to be the sole one left out, Luka raised her hand very timidly.

“... Maybe I should wait until after?”

“The water wouldn’t be warm without you there.”

Sure enough, Nina rejected my proposal... and so it was decided.

“Haah... this feels quite pleasant, Mentor.”

“I-It does, doesn’t it.”

I responded to Violet, who let out a captivating sigh, while hoping that that would be enough of a response.

The destructiveness her mature, adult body held was on another level. Yet even so, she wasn’t making any attempts to hide it in the least. It was likely that she similarly didn’t feel abashed at having her naked body seen. It was a bit rude to think about, but her body was the type that seemed less voluptuous when clothed.

This large bath was constructed under the assumption that I would enter it in my dragon form. Therefore, there was still a lot of space remaining even after everyone got in it. Firewood wouldn’t be enough to warm it no matter how many logs you brought, but it would warm up on its own just by me entering it.

Which is the reason why everyone’s crowding themselves nearby me. There was Nina, who I’d grown used to seeing long ago, Yuuki and Rin, who were still children, and Shig, a man. However, the ones who had a severe effect on me were Violet and—

“Hey, your body’s pretty big, come over here and dunk yourself all the way

in.”

“Hyaah—!”

Luka. Luka, in particular, was dangerous. Pulled in by Nina and looking nervous... she covered her breasts and stood timidly at the center of the bathtub. In other words, she was right in front of me. Her face was bright red, but it likely wasn't due to being in too long.

She was the same as me in that regard.

—She was embarrassed.

With a wolf-like lower half, the girl usually clothed everything on her upper half. Accordingly, she seemed to regard having her skin be seen as something thoroughly embarrassing.

Her body corresponding suitably to her age, she didn't hold the overwhelming destructiveness like Ai or Violet. However, her attempts at covering herself was a frighteningly strong, sure-kill ability.

I couldn't just stand there looking at her, so I diverted my gaze to Yuuki and Rin, who appeared to be playing around in the water together. Watching them was... how should I put it?

Relieving.



“Come to think of it, Rin, are you alright in the bath? It’s not too hot, right?”

“It’s ‘kay!”

Rin nodded back cheerfully. I’d heard that fish could get scalded by water even as warm as human body temperature, but it looks like it’s fine for mermaids. Well, they’re obviously a homeothermic species, so I suppose it’s alright.

Her flat body type was truly a sight for sore eyes. I could see her purely as a child. Even her lower half being that of a fish’s was an appreciated thing. I don’t feel uneasy around her at all.

Even though she’s also a child, I get the feeling that Yuuki’s starting to grow up a bit. We’ve taken a few baths together here and there, but compared to Rin, she’s growing a bit more curvy, more womanly. Upon closer inspection, I could even see that her breasts were starting to grow...—ah. Upon thinking that, I realized that I was staring and quickly averted my eyes. No matter how much of a child someone is, staring like that is bad. With that, my eyes fell upon Nina.

As far as growth goes, she *did* seem to be growing. Her features had matured to some extent since we met five hundred years ago, and it seemed like she’d grown just a tad taller. That said, if she continues growing as she has been, I can’t see her gaining Violet’s body type...

The instant I thought that last part, Nina’s eyes met mine, so I once again looked elsewhere. Finally, my gaze fell upon the only other person I could feel relieved around here... Shig. I’d heard that lizardmen often went into hot springs that dotted the area around volcanoes, causing their culture to be one that valued bathing. It seemed as though Shig was happy to be soaking in the hot water.

The lizardmen based their standard of beauty on how long their tails were, so he probably didn’t think anything of those without tails looking at him. He was able to relax despite being surrounded by so many open beauties.

“What?”

Noticing my gaze, Shig’s expression changed.

“Even if we’re both men, you shouldn’t stare at me like that. I get it, my tail’s

short and slender!”

No, I wasn't thinking about that at all...!!

“What'd you eat to get a tail like *that*...”

Shig grumbled to himself. I wonder, am I considered fairly beautiful to the lizardmen? I do recall Beol once telling me that the longer the tail, the better.

“So don't stare at me like that!”

Shig didn't want me to look at him, but the only other option for me was the flesh-colored garden surrounding me.

My anguish continued for a good while after that.

Chapter 14: Metrology



One meter is the distance covered by communication magic through a fetish in 1/299,792,458th of a second.

—The 22nd International Weights and Measures General Assembly, Dragon Year 5463

“That which is hot, which is red, o’ fire. Gather in my palm.”

The whispering, high-pitched voice of a young boy could be heard coming from the schoolyard. The sun still hadn’t risen.

“Morning. Giving it your all so early, Shig?”

“—...! Oh, Mentor? You surprised me.”

Jumping at my voice, Shig turned around with an embarrassed look.

I wasn’t sure when he’d started doing it, but I recently noticed that he’d been secretly practicing magic by himself in the morning.

“... I really just can’t get my head around these magic flames.”

Shig muttered, looking at the small flame floating above his palm. It shook somewhat before whiffing itself out. The flames he produced weren’t able to stabilize.

It's the same with how my compatibility with fire is too good, controlling it doesn't go so well.

"But they're lasting longer than before, right?"

Shig's expression grew mixed in response. He was someone who usually stayed away from others, but this expression of his was easy to get. At the very least, he didn't seem happy.

"I am hard. I am fast. I am agile. I am heavy. I am strong..."

Layering up various incantations on himself, Shig clenched his fists. Controlling reinforcement magic was a difficult thing. However, as far as he was concerned, that was nothing. Taking a step forward, Shig thrust a fist out toward me.

After being trained by Yuuki, the way he carried his body was so smooth that his former self couldn't compare.

—I caught his fist. Not as a dragon, but in my human form.

"Hey, Mentor."

He was getting stronger. There was no doubt about that. But even so...

His progress was too slow.

"When, when will I be able to win against you..."

I didn't have an answer for him.

"I think it's about time we started farming large scale this year."

"Really!?"

Yuuki's response wasn't surprising.

It had been around five years since we started this special classroom. We'd been trying to cultivate plants on a small scale since the second year. It all withered on our first attempt, but the second attempt and on has been successful, with each harvest yielding more than the last.

Even so, there was a reason that we hadn't started seriously farming on a large scale.

“If we’re going to do this seriously, we’ll have to prepare a large field.”

“Ugh... we’ll have to do *that* again...?”

She seemed to be thinking back to what we’d had to do. Yuuki frowned in reluctance.

Digging up dirt to till it, as well as the deweeding and stone removal were all necessary steps. Even just a small field took a considerable amount of work. Let alone heavy equipment, we didn’t even have the more common farming machines or tools.

“How big will it need to be, I wonder?”

“Yeah, that’s the first problem to figure out.”

I nodded in response to Violet’s question. How big do we need? Even now, I still don’t have the means to give an answer to a question like that. The reason being that I still haven’t decided on a basic measurement. Not just for length either, but for weight and volume as well. I haven’t made any progress in deciding on our system of weights and measures at all.

Of course, since we’re using Japanese as our language, we can still use words like meter and kilogram. Still though, saying exactly how long a meter is is what’s stumped me.

If I recall, the meter was based off of the size of the Earth or the speed of light. That said, it wasn’t like it was easy to settle on, making it so that they had to keep a close eye on its establishment.

Extreme accuracy is unnecessary at our level of civilization, of course. For example, saying something like *a foot* is easy to understand because its name implies that it’s based off the size of a person’s foot. Although it is easy to understand, using it in this world comes with its own problems.

The fact that our body types are so different being the first to come to mind. Lizardmen never stop growing and just continue slowly getting bigger, while lykoscentaur, similarly to wolves, only touch the ground with the tips of their feet, so deciding whether it’d be foot or leg size becomes its own problem. Then there’s merfolk, who don’t have feet at all.

It's not limited to difference races either, it applies to humans too. Compared to humans on Earth, the humans here are much more varied. Although having a giant on Darg's level is still rare, there's still many who are considerably tall or, on the other end, short.

"It'd be nice if there was something that always had the same length..."

I could use things like stones or trees standards, but stones are heavy and difficult to use, and trees fade away before you know it.

"There is though?"

I looked at Nina as though to ask her what she was talking about.

"I'd be happy if it was something that didn't change in length over a century or two, but..."

"It doesn't change though?"

Huh, was there something like that?

I tilted my head.

Nina didn't look like she was changing, but even she was growing ever so slowly. She's gotten the slightest bit taller since I met her, and she's matured.

"In at least these five hundred years, you haven't changed at all."

"Huh? No, I've grown... too..."

I started to respond, but then I realized. Even though I did grow as a dragon, my human form's appearance hadn't changed at all. I didn't know if it was due to the magic or due to dragons' longevity being so extraordinarily long, but I stayed looking like a twenty-something year old youth.

"My height hasn't changed at all?"

"Nope."

Nina answered me immediately. She's seen me practically every day, so it's probably not wrong if she says so.

"Then maybe we should base it on me...?"

If I recall correctly, I was a hundred and seventy-five centimeters tall in my

previous life. I might've shrunk somewhat in my later years, but I remember getting to that height and staying there for ages since it was such a nice, easy-to-remember number.

"Yuuki, can you make a mark on it at my height?"

"Sure. Don't move, okay?"

Once I stood next to a column that was supporting the classroom's roof, Yuuki unsheathed her sword and in a single motion leapt forward. The wind following her movement caused my hair to move slightly and I heard the sound of the wood above my head be cut.

"Now we divide this into seven... mmm, splitting it seven ways is difficult..."

You get twenty-five after dividing a hundred seventy-five by seven to make it easier to use, but splitting it up into seven was unexpectedly difficult.

"Oh, right. Violet, could you hand me a vine of about this length?"

"Certainly."

Still not knowing what I intended and tilting her head to the side, Violet easily grew a vine from her finger and handed it to me. Once I cut it to my exact height, I made a circle and laid it onto the ground, drawing a seven-pointed star inside it.

It's difficult to divide a line into seven, but it's relatively easy to draw a seven-pointed star. As an occult enthusiast, I'd drawn it over and over in my previous life, after all. I never thought it'd be useful for something like this, though.

Seven is the only single-digit number that cannot divide evenly into three hundred sixty degrees. One week is seven days, there are that many holes on a face after adding together eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. It holds an importance in magic. Well, I suppose there was no meaning to it in my previous life, then.

... Come to think of it, I haven't thought about it till now, but I wonder if magic formations would be useful for any of this world's magic?

"What's that?"

"It'll be easier to get an even split if I do it like this."

Answering Nina's question, I cut the circle wherever the points of the star touched it and gathered the pieces up. The seven pieces of vine were all the same length.

This time, I drew a pentagram in the same fashion and divided one up into five centimeter lengths. I'd be able to accurately draw a pentagram if I had a mariner's compass and a ruler, but doing it manually like this is quicker. For an occult enthusiast like me, this was the basics of the basics.

I could draw another pentagram and divide them into centimeter pieces, but the vine itself is too pliable, so that'd just increase the margin of error. It should be fine without going down to such detail for now.

"Hey hey, Mentor, what's that~?"

Not really seeming to understand what I was doing, Rin spoke up after seeing me divide the vines up into pieces. Everyone else seemed to be just as confused, so it looked like no one got it.

"Alright. If I had ten water apples and three scarlet potatoes, which do I have more of?"

"There'd be seven extra water apples!"

Rin raised her hand and answered energetically, so I nodded in response. It was simple mathematics, but it was surprisingly hard to get her to be able to understand the comparative difference in volumes. It was the result of Nina's steady efforts in educating her.

"Alright, now, between Violet and Nina, who is bigger?"

Rin looked from Nina to Violet and back again and placed her finger against her forehead in thought.

Then, realizing something, she pointed at Violet's breasts and spoke.

"Violet's twice as big!"

"I'll punch you."

Nina clenched her fist after hearing Rin's honest response... Come to think of it, *those* hadn't grown at all either....

As soon as I thought that, Nina swung at my head.

... Seriously, ow.

“Not that... their height. Even if you understand that Violet is taller, you’d be stumped to answer by how much right?”

“About this much—wouldn’t work, then?”

Shig showed their height difference with his hands.

“Oh! So you mean to give a name to that feeling of *about this much*?”

“Yeah, exactly!”

I responded emphatically, practically clapping.

“Just like how you can count how many nuts there are or how many objects or animals there are, you can enumerate the length of something with a centimeter. Each of these small vines are five centimeters. For example, my height becomes a hundred and seventy-five centimeters.”

“Hundred... seventy-five...”

Rin hadn’t had to deal with such large numbers usually, so she repeated it over again to try and wrap her head around it.

“Hey. How about me?”

The first person to ask that was Shig.

“Violet, could you give me another vine?”

“Sure. One moment, please.”

Violet picked up one of the twenty-five centimeter vines I cut and, concentrating, closed her eyes with it in her hand. Following that, she moved the vine in her hand around a few times while slowly producing another from her hand.

“Will this be fine?”

“That’s amazing!”

I exclaimed upon seeing the vine she produced. The vine Violet made had a thorn every twenty-five centimeters along it. It was very convenient. It also

consequently showed that she understand the concept of unit lengths.

“Alright, then stand in front of the column. Let’s see...”

After making a mark on the column to match Shig’s height, I measured the mark’s height from the ground with the vine I got from Violet. It was just a little higher than the fifth thorn, and was practically just right after adding a five centimeter vine.

“Shig, I’d say you are around a hundred and thirty centimeters tall.

“Big brother, measure me too!”

“What about me? What about me?”

“I’d like to know too.”

Everyone seemed like they wanted to know their heights and started to speak up, so we suddenly ended up having our first body measurement session.

Nina was a hundred and fifty-five centimeters tall. Violet was just a little shy of a hundred seventy. I was a bit confused about where exactly I should measure to on Luka, but the height to her head from her standing upright as she normally did was a hundred and sixty centimeters. Rin was about a hundred centimeters when I measured her the same way, but she was a hundred and seventy when I measured the full length of her body from head to tail.

“Yuuki is... a hundred and thirty, I’d say.”

“Eh, the same as me!?”

When it was finally Yuuki’s turn, Shig was surprised.

“Oh, pretty much.”

Yuuki waved her hand above her and Shig’s head as they stood back-to-back. Five years ago when they first met, Shig was a good bit taller.

“Yuuki, how old are you now?”

“I’m fifteen years old!”

It’s already been that long? She has grown a lot, both in her height and that her former boyish body has gotten more feminine.

“These got bigger too~”

“Yep. They have.”

Yuuki answered Rin, not seeming to mind the fact that her breasts were latched onto by Rin in an eagle grip.



I guess the reason I didn't feel like she'd grown up much was because of her

ever-present childish personality. Her climbing my body like some monkey's never stopped, after all.

“Stop that, it's shameless.”

I rebuked her out of habit, but I appeared to be the only one embarrassed among the mostly female group here. Even though Shig was also a man, lizardmen females didn't develop breasts, so he didn't have that same feeling about them.

“It'd be nice to get our weights too.”

“Exercising~?”

“I mean figuring out how much we weigh.”

Rin tilted her head and I answered her.

Even though I said that, measuring weight is much more difficult than height. How should I go about making a scale?

I couldn't even consider it, honestly. Draw water and measure it with a balance? I don't even really know how to make the scales though.

“Weight has a number too?”

“Yeah. Most things can be represented by numbers.”

“Then... magic, too?”

Hearing Rin, my breath caught. It's true, magical strength comes in all sorts, but I've never even thought of how to go about representing it numerically.

After all, magic's strength varies way too greatly depending on the person that uses it. I don't think it'd be possible to measure it with a single standard like height... wait.

“Maybe so.”

Coming up with a certain idea, I spoke.

If I can't measure it with a single standard, why don't I just use multiple?

Chapter 15: The Four Major Elements

All things consist of Earth, Water, Fire, and Air, the four major elements. The elements are united by Love, and separated by Hatred.

“Elements is the way to think about it all.”

Drawing out a picture on a stone board with a stone for the first time in a while, I started to describe my thoughts.

Writing letters on the huge stone board I’d brought back to the classroom with the soft white stone was practically the same as using chalk on a blackboard. I could easily erase it all with a wet cloth, but we hardly used this special classroom at all. Teaching our students in the field was a far better way to have them remember.

However, it was necessary to understand something mentally first.

“All of the things in this world are made by combining several attributes, that line of thought. Among those attributes are four that are particularly basic, what we’ll call the four major elements. Fire, earth, water, and air.”

Drawing pictures to illustrate the four with burning fire, a hard stone, dripping water, and leaves blowing in the wind, sure enough, my students all had figurative question marks floating above their heads.

“Using a living thing to describe it should make it easier to understand. Water—blood—flows through our veins, we breath in air, our bodies will eventually return to the earth, and the fire of life fills our chests. Any living thing will die if they lack even a single one of these.”

“Our bodies are made of dirt?”

At about that moment, Shig looked doubtful and asked a question.

“It just belongs to the earth, I didn’t mean that it was itself of the earth. Like how blood isn’t actually water.”

“We learned about something similar from Nina some time ago. The three

phases of matter, yes?”

I suppose I should say the wise elf came to the rescue. Violet has an amazing memory. Not only does she remember things well, she picks things up at an alarming speed.

“Three phases... what’re they again...?”

Although Rin had definitely been there for the class as well, she tilted her head. Judging by their expressions, neither Shig nor Yuuki could really remember them either.

“Visible things like stones and dirt and have a shape are solids. Although you can also see water, it doesn’t have a constant shape, so it is a liquid. Things you can’t see and have no shape, like air, are gasses.”

“Oooh, I get it now!”

Listening to Luka’s polite explanation, Rin, as well as Shig and Yuuki all let out sounds of amazement. Luka was very good at describing things the way each of them saw them.

“Right. Solids, liquids, and gases. These correspond to earth, water, and wind. Fire is energy... the power that moves things. All things in this world are comprised of these four.”

“Even water?”

I was at a loss for how to answer Rin’s nonchalant question. Her way of thinking wasn’t bound by the usual stereotypes, so she tended to freely and often pierce right to the heart of the matter.

“Idiot. Water’s just water, so it can’t have the others.”

“That’s not actually the case.”

And as the owner of a respectable commonsense, Shig was the exact opposite. However, due to that commonsense, it was hard to explain things like this to him.

“You know that water turns into steam, a gas, after warming it up and that it turns into ice, a solid, after cooling it down, correct? In other words, the water contains both earth and air as well. If you add fire to water, it turns into air. If

you reverse that, it becomes earth. Being able to do that also means that the water had fire in it as well.”

“Oh, really? These fire and water things, they’re like colors. Fire red is the color of fire, but it’s not fire itself. Like that?”

“In a sense, that’s right, yeah.”

I nodded in response to what Yuuki, who’d struck her fist onto her hand, said. Understanding the elements through colors was a good, easy to understand way for her to go about it. Her sensibility was a bit peculiar, but she was terribly good at getting the knack of things in her own way.

“... So, then, what about these colors?”

The explanation was probably feeling like it was dragging on to Shig who, looking a bit irritated, asked about what was next.

“Right. If everything in this world is made through a combination of elements, I thought that magic should be the same. In truth, you are all to some extent a collection of the attributes.”

Living in forests, elves are deeply connected with the earth.

Living in grasslands, lykoscentaur follow smells on the wind.

Living in the sea, merfolk live alongside water.

Living in volcanos, lizardmen are intimate with fire.

I’ve had a hunch that the four elements have been deeply involved with magical aptitude for a long time now. Kind of like how I, a fire dragon, can’t use magic concerning the cold at all.

My conception of it was been fairly vague until Rin gave me the idea though.

“I think I’ll have you all measure your aptitudes with the four major elements today.”

“Everything’s ready, Mentor.”

“Yeah, thanks. You’re a big help, Amata.”

I thanked Amata, who’d courteously bowed at the waist.

The formerly girlish youth who looked like Yuuki had grown up rapidly, his height outpacing his younger sister who hadn't grown at all, and turned into a fearless adolescent. His burly arms easily picked up a wooden pillar easily several times the size of him, which he put in the center of the schoolyard.

“But what are you going to use this stuff for?”

He'd prepared several small wooden tubs, a scale, and a single big stone the size of a fist. Amata was very skilled with his hands, particularly with treating wood, and assembled it all wonderfully.

“These are what we'll use for measuring. Nina, if you would.”

Giving Nina the signal, I returned to my dragon form and prepared to use the vine I'd gotten from Violet.

“Yeah... Fire.”

Simultaneously with Nina muttering that, flames coming from her hand went up like a pillar.

“Let's see, about here I guess. Yuuki, hold where Nina's hand is.”

Once I'd floated up to the top of Nina's flame with the vine by using magic without using my wings, I had Yuuki grip the vine where Nina's hand was. With that, we'd be able to know how long the flame was.

“Yeah. About five hundred sixty centimeters.”

“Nina... Fire... five sixty...”

I had Luka record the numbers on a wooden board.

“Next up is water.”

“Water.”

Reaching her hand out to me, who was holding a wooden bucket, Nina recited her short incantation.

I caught the water with the tub so that none of it would spill.

“Hmmm, eight hundred.... and twenty-ish?”

The bucket was made to be ten centimeters in all three dimensions. In other

words, it would be one thousand cubic centimeters upon being fully filled. Every centimeter of height the water had was a hundred cubic centimeters. Anything inbetween was measured by eye.

Following that in the same way was wind. The wind blowing from Nina's fingertip following her, once again, short incantation blew the leaf I'd put on my hand away.

"Exactly one thousand six hundred, I'd say."

We just measured the distance from her feet to where the leaf flew.

"And last but not least is earth."

I was troubled on how to measure the earth element. Only elves like Nina and Violet could cultivate plants, but on the other hand, it also seemed impossible to just produce soil out of nothing.

"Become heavy."

So what I thought of what weight. Gravity is the ground's power. Magic that increases weight should be under the earth category. Immediately following Nina's incantation, the scale started to screw greatly to one side. I put water in the bucket on the other side to keep the balance.

"Looks to be about four hundred."

The empty bucket and stone were balanced with each other otherwise, so the amount of water I had to pour into the bucket was equal to the amount of weight the stone gained. Since water was just about one kilogram per liter, I could know the weight through the volume of water.

"Oh, big sis, earth is your worst one?"

Looking at the number Luka put down, Yuuki spoke up.

"No, there isn't much meaning in comparing the differences in the numerical values between elements."

If you did, for example, it would be like comparing your grip strength with your long jump.

What we'll be able to understand through this is how the students compare

to one another.

“Now then, please measure measure yourselves in whichever order you prefer. I’ll be in charge of fire. Nina will take care of water and air, with Amata taking care of earth. Only use the single-worded incantations that you heard Nina use just now.”

I honestly get the feeling it’d be better if we measured it all without using incantations at all, but there are students who can’t use magic without them. That being the case, I decided that using a single word is the rule.

“Then I’m gonna do fire~!”

I didn’t expect it, but Rin came over to me first.

“Fiiiiire!”

She held her hand up as high as she could and a flame popped above it. It was a pretty cute flame compared to the one Nina produced, but...

“Ninety... no, one hundred.”

Even so, the flame was a meter tall. I thought it’d be worse since she was a mermaid, a race that lives in the water, but it was actually an alright result.

“It’s my turn now I think?”

The next to come was Luka, looking a little nervous.

“Fire...!”

Cropping up from her hand like a water dribbling upward was a small flame. Its length was about fifty centimeters, but it was really easy to measure since it was stable and not as violent as Rin’s flame.

“I suppose I am next... Fire.”

The third person was Violet. A focused flame extended up from her index finger about thirty centimeters. She was an elf the same as Nina, but her output was greatly different. I don’t know if it was due to individual differences or the time they’d practiced, though. Rather, wait, Rin’s the best so far. What?

“Big brother, measure me, measure me!”

Just as I started worrying about that, Yuuki jumped over and up onto me. It’s

because she acts like this that I can't help but see her as a small child. Well, she is actually quite small, so...

“Fire!”

A vigorous flame burst up from Yuuki's hand. Despite its intense flame that reminded me of a jet engine's, the force of the flame was stable. Not only does the length vary with the exact same incantation between person to person, but so does the form and power of the flame.

Upon measuring it, it was ninety centimeters tall. Regrettably, it didn't quite measure up to Rin's.

“I lost to Rin—!?”

With Yuuki groaning in frustration, the last person up to be measured was Shig. With an unusually calm and serious expression, he held his palm up.

“... Fire.”

He lived in a volcano, is familiar with fire, and practices every morning. I predict that he'll produce a rather huge flame.

However.

What appeared was contrary to my expectation.

A very, very small flame, the size of a fingertip.

Chapter 16: Weakness

Strengths come in various forms.

The moment I learned the true meaning behind those words was when I realized that weaknesses, too, were the same.

—Shig, *the Skyarms*

“...—!”

“Ah—Shig!”

Shig, seeing the flame he produced, ground his teeth and suddenly dashed away.

“Wait, Shig!”

Ignoring me entirely, he’d jumped out of the schoolyard surprisingly fast.

Now that I think about it, I’d never seen Shig produce a flame with a single word before. He always used long incantations, but I just thought that was to prevent himself from produce too *much* fire.

“Mentor, umm...”

Timidly, Luka handed the wooden board with his measurements on it to me.

Pitifully low results were written on it. A hundred for wind. Twenty for earth. Zero for water. Let alone Nina, his was the lowest among the five students.

Shig being shocked by the results he was getting is definitely the cause. I didn’t think about this enough. I’d thought that Shig would discover his strengths and weaknesses through the numerical values and learn what he needed to work on, but it turned out to have an entirely adverse effect.

“Shig...!”

“Wait.”

Nina stopped me from leaving to follow after him.

“What are you planning to do after catching up to him?”

I couldn't answer her. Honestly, I couldn't think of anything.

What would I tell him? Me, someone who's obtained this much strength without any hardships at all.

"... I don't know."

I shook my head feebly.

"But I'm his teacher."

I couldn't just leave him alone.

When I said that, Nina struck me on the back.

She's probably angry for me not being able to think of anything.

"Alright. Good luck."

However, contrary to my belief, she was actually smiling.

I nodded back to her, returned to my dragon form and unfurled my wings.

"Big brother, wait! I'm going too!"

Just before my feet left the ground, Yuuki grabbed onto my tail.

"Watch out!"

"I'm okay!"

The moment I took off into the sky was when my body would be subjected to the most pressure. However, even during that, Yuuki easily maneuvered up my tail and took her usual spot on my back, grabbing a horn on my head.

"... I'll find him."

Not wanting to shake her off, I pointed my head downward only slightly as I flapped my wings.

Dragons had keen senses. Their eyes, ears, and nose were incomparably better than a human's. My highly developed sense of smell quickly caught track of Shig's scent and when I looked in the direction it came from, I could see his tracks in just as much clarity.

"That way."

He was headed for a forest that grew near the village. It was a place we'd often used for the class' game of hide and seek. Shig's scent weaved through the trees and brush, moving from place to place like a beast trail. Sniffing out his trail from up in the sky, I followed after him.

However, it suddenly stopped.

"That's weird. He definitely passed through here."

I circled back around and checked the scent again, but at a certain point, Shig's smell just cuts off."

"I'll take a look."

As soon as she said that, Yuuki jump from on top of me down into the trees' branches, descending to the ground.

"... Big brother, it was magic!"

After looking around for a few moments, she shouted back up.

Descending into the forest from above, I changed to my human form and went over to her. Having such an over sized body was a nuisance at times like these. On the other hand, my human form's senses felt dull and it was physically weaker, so it was a bag of mixed dice.

"See? He kept going without bothering to avoid anything."

Yuuki showed me a broken bush's branches and his footprints. It was true, the signs pointed to him not avoiding any obstacles at all, but then it gets to the big tree's trunk.

"Did he camouflage it so we couldn't follow?"

Luka often used magic that could create shadow clones.

Moreover, these didn't only leave traces, but smell as well.

"Are you going to get Violet or big sister?"

"... No."

Shaking my head no, I touched the traces he'd left. The fact that smell created by magic were still there meant that there must be magic remaining as well.

“You are him, he is you. Shadow that imitates and disguises. Wake, oh shadow of shadows. I bid you to guide me to your master.”

That being the case, I will turn it into a fetish that guides me to Shig. A shadow rose from the footprints left on the ground and took the shape of a young lizardman running in reverse.

Chasing after it, the shadow turned at a certain point and passed through an area of trees that grew oranges before un-jumping into the river that was there. Upon entering the water, the shadow blurred out like ink and disappeared. The smell here had been erased, as well as the magic.

“Guess he went through the river?”

“I wonder. I would if I were Shig.”

Water was a thing to be avoided for me. I had a go at the four major element measurements myself, but I couldn't even produce a drop of water. There's times that Shig is obstinate and inflexible, but he's not actually slow in the head or anything. If he wanted to throw me off, he'd definitely do it with water.

But even though he's escaped through water, it's not like I have to use water magic.

“That which spreads its roots through the hard earth, which grow its plentiful bed of leaves, which produces beautiful flowers, and which births delicious fruit. I bid you to tell me, which direction did the lizardman youth go?”

When I asked a citrus tree, its leaves shook and pointed downstream. It's a magic that Nina was easily able to use without an incantation, but even I could do it if it's just for something like this.

“Thank you.”

I said my thanks to the tree and followed the river bank.

“After this is...”

“Yeah.”

I nodded in response to Yuuki, who'd realized where Shig had headed first. After this was the spring where Yuuki and Rin fought against Violet in our first game of hide and seek.

Sure enough, Shig was sitting beside it.

“Shig!”

When I called out to him, he turned toward us in surprise, his expression off. Like he was angry, like he was sad—and yet, like he was happy.

“I was looking for you.”

I didn’t know what I should say, so I said the first thing that came to mind. He closed his mouth, drawing it into a line.

“... Liar.”

His words stabbed my heart.

“Liar. Liar. Liar.”

Shig repeated it over and over, like he’d forgotten every other word.

“You told me. You said I would get stronger. Didn’t you!?”

“Don’t talk to him like—!”

“No, it’s fine, Yuuki.”

I reigned Yuuki in from retorting.

“It’s like you said. I am a liar.”

Shig spoke cutting words, but he said it with a hurt expression the whole time.

“But you’ve misunderstood something. Even more than you think, way more —”

“You’re talking about my progress in magic? You’re always telling me that. But you know? I already get it... I’m not suited for magic. I don’t have any talent in it.”

Sure, it’s true that his magic is progressing the slowest amongst the students.

“No, that’s not true. But that’s not what I’m saying you’ve misunderstood, either.”

“What did I misunderstand then?”

Hearing his vexation, I bowed my head forward.

“Far more than you realize... I... I’m weak.”

“... Huh?”

He probably never thought he’d hear those words come from my mouth.

Shig let out a voice like he’d just seen something really weird.

“If you don’t believe me, let’s try fighting.”

Saying that, I held up my fists and looked at him.

“No, that’s not—”

“If you’re not going to come at me, here I go!”

I shouted and flung a fist at him.

“Uwah, hey, wait up!”

Shig stood up in a hurry to dodge.

Easily avoiding my following attacks, he simply turned his body to avoid my kick.

“Really, what are you doing!?”

After I turned back around after stumbling forward a few steps, he grabbed my arm and threw me down to the ground. The impact on my chest was so hard that I had trouble even breathing.

“Are you making fun of me!?”

“N-No, I’m—not...”

I had trouble managing to respond to Shig, who shouted angrily.

“This, really is, my best.”

I’d hunted many times. Same with fighting to protect something. But a fist fight? This was the first in my life. Beating an opponent you don’t want to hurt is harder than you could imagine, but I knew that I could give it all I had without even being able to put a scratch on him.

Because he had grown up splendidly.

“Your best?”

Shig glared at me, indignant.

“Let alone not your dragon form, you’re not even using magic, what kind of best is that!?”

“This is my true full strength.”

Bearing the pain, I sat my body up and answered him.

“There was a time, when I was a human.”

“A... human?”

Shig looked at me in suspicion.

“A second ago, you said that you had no talent, right?”

His face grimacing, Shig nodded.

“But I really do have no talent. I’ll tell you something about me. I couldn’t use magic at all... I died, not even able to make a tiny flame or a tiny breath of air, that’s the kind of man I am.”

My lack of talents aren’t just in magic. I couldn’t even land a fist on a boy more than forty centimeters shorter than me. If I didn’t depend on a small girl, I wouldn’t have even been able to put together the classrooms. That’s the kind of pitiful man I am.

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

“In the past, I was a human. I researched magic my entire life, yet I died without ever using it... When I came to after that, I’d become a dragon.”

I heard the sound of Yuuki breathe deeply beside me. I’d only ever told Ai the story of my previous life until now. It wasn’t that I meant to hide it, it was just too absurd of a story.

“There’s no way that—”

“Then hey, have you ever heard of a dragon that could take human form other than me?”

Shig kept quiet. Dragons were things that stood out. Although there were terrifyingly few of them, anyone would talk about them after seeing one. Even if someone had never actually met one before, they would have heard of

someone else that did at least once or twice.

I've actually met some as well as heard stories about others, but I'd never once heard about a dragon that could take human form. There was no reason for a dragon to want to use magic to weaken itself in the first place.

"That's why I know. I know what it's like to put in all your effort and get nothing for it. I know the pain of seeing no results."

Me reincarnating as a dragon was nothing but dumb luck. I didn't obtain this power nor this magic because of my effort.

Which is why this form is the real me... Confessing this in front of them, who idolized me as their mentor, was extraordinarily hard.

"But even someone like me has one thing—just one thing that I won't be beaten at by anyone."

"... What thing?"

Shig asked half out of doubt.

"I'll never give up."

I smiled.

"Although effort doesn't always pay out, you can be rewarded if you never give up. Who knows, you might just get lucky at some point."

"But then... then it could still turn out as pointless?"

"Yeah, which is why I'm not telling you to not give up. That's not it."

I nodded back in response to the youth's question and spoke.

"Give me another chance. I won't give up. I will definitely make you stronger."

Shig's red eyes reflected my face.

"... So, in the end, aren't you telling me to give it my all and not give up anyway?"

"Eh? Uhh, yeah... I think?"

A short moment later, I inclined my head and answered him.

No matter how I think about it, there's no way he'd achieve anything without

putting in his own effort. So I guess it ends up as me telling him to not give up after all?

“Whatever, sure. It’s not like I ran away because I didn’t like the results or anything anyway...”

“Eh, really!?”

Surprised, I held my mouth closed. I didn’t breath fire in my human form, but it was a remnant of my early habits as a dragon.

“Yeah. I don’t mind them.”

Shig spoke with an expression that looked somehow over it. Well, I guess it’s alright if he says it’s alright, but still...

“Then I was the one to make a mistake, everything I said was for nothing...”

“I-It wasn’t for nothing. It did make me happy.”

“Yeah! Besides, big brother, you looked so cool like that!”

The two hurried to cheer me up after I slumped forward.

“Cool, huh...”

Objectively, all I did was suddenly try to punch and kick Shig but get thrown to the ground. Then, my two students had to comfort me from feeling so down after thinking about it. Huh, that’s weird. I could have sworn I’d come here to encourage Shig?

—And doing all this in the middle of the forest, there’s no way that Nina didn’t see it all.

I, having returned to the school, was amazed yet again.

Chapter 17: Winds of Change

*Every living creature in this world,
regardless of their desire to do so, will never stop changing.
Mortals, those with long lives, and even those immortals share this fate.*

“Chaaaaa—!”

Two small figures dashed across the ground together with a high-spirited cheer. They were Shig and Yuuki. Their back-to-back attacks had such little timing between them that it made it difficult to tell who was doing the attacking and who wasn't at any given point.

“So by shifting the scale's pole from the center, I've improved it so that we can measure weight without having to constantly adjust the weight on the other side with water.”

“That's amazing, I hadn't thought of that.”

Amata spoke to me, not taking his eyes off of what he was doing. He swept Yuuki's legs out from under her while simultaneously managing to grab onto Shig's arm and fling him. The two were both knocked flat on the ground.

“... You really are amazing.”

“Thank you, you're too kind.”

Amata bowed respectfully. Shig saw him bow and thought it'd be a good chance to land a hit in from behind, but Amata knocked his fist away with his hand and flung him away with the parry.

No matter how much I see it, it's like he has eyes on the back of his head. It's just another kind of magic, though.

Since then—since I promised to definitely make Shig strong, the pitiful, weak me has been relying on Amata. I'm still exploring ways for Shig to succeed as a Magus, of course, but even though I'm still teaching him magic, I knew that this was the quickest and most reliable way.

Amata agreed to help, leading to them practicing like this. To put it another way, he's this world's first physical education teacher. I'd only intended to have him teach people interested in hand to hand combat techniques, but after Yuuki and Shig started, Violet wanted to learn as well. Seeing her start it, Rin thought it looked interesting, so then Luka followed along after everyone and eventually we just wound up with everyone joining in.

At this point, the other three are all lying down on the ground, or perhaps I should say they're sitting down taking a rest? The only ones still up and going are Shig and Yuuki, but they'll probably be hitting their limits here soon. Their movements were already starting to slow down. Meanwhile, Amata wasn't even winded.

"Mentoor, how about thiiis!?"

As I was watching their battle continue on despite not really being able to follow it, I heard my name from a far distance away.

"Wait up, I'll be right there! ... Alright, go easy on them, Amata."

"Yeah. I will do my best to meet your expectations of me, Mentor."

Amata nodded, his face masculine. Halfheartedly considering that I may have done something a bit bad to Shig and Yuuki, I headed to the back of the school building. What was there were the faces of the villagers, all of which were covered in dirt. As well as a field prepared and corded off with rope.

"Yeah, good job! Thank you everyone, this will be perfect!"

I thanked my students for their work on the soil. I didn't know if the soil itself was of a good quality, but removing the weeds and rocks should be enough.

Doing that through magic was unexpectedly difficult. Aside from just digging up the ground, doing delicate work like deweeding and removing stones was by far faster when done by hand.

It wasn't an amount of work that could be completed by just a few people, so I decided to borrow the villagers' labor for it. Now that we'd decided on a system of weights and measures, they were even able to do it exactly how I wanted.

“I guess we’ll be planting scarlet wheat here.”

The village’s main crops were wheat and potatoes. They look like and taste very similar to actual wheat and potatoes respectively, but we decided to at least temporarily call them scarlet wheat and scarlet potatoes. I can’t tell the difference between different types of wheat too well anyway, so I wasn’t confident enough to call them the same thing.

“Earth, bless these seeds. Let them rest through the winter. Let them rest well and grow big.”

We sowed the seeds while reciting that incantation. It started as something Rin said, but I can’t say if there’s any meaning for us to or not though. It’s like a *just in case* thing at this point.”

“Let them rest through the winter. Let them rest well and grow big.”

That said, it’s true that working at something with everyone chanting the same thing makes it go by faster than doing it in silence.

Even in my previous life’s world where we had mostly mechanized agriculture, the things that had to be done were more or less been the same since before the modern calendar became a thing.

It was an extremely straightforward, demanding task that was no different in this world of magic.

“Alright, that’s enough for today everyone. Good work!”

Finished with sowing the seeds we’d prepared, I showed my appreciation to my students. I felt a little guilty at making them do farm work for class, but they didn’t seem to mind much. Rather, it seemed like there were a lot of children interested in planting and growing plants with their own hands.

I’ve also been teaching how to measure lengths and weights in general studies recently. As well as how to find amounts from weight. I’m also teaching about the transitions from one season to the next as well as how to read a calendar and the like. The list of things I have to teach has been growing bigger and bigger.

“Good job today.”

“Good job.”

Just as I was stretching out my stiff waist, Nina came over. Despite having just finished working in the field, her clothes didn't have even a single speck of dust on them. I'd expect nothing less from this child of the forest.

Though if everyone could use magic like her, we wouldn't have to struggle like this.

I'm not sure if it was because I was thinking about her, but Nina just knocked me in the gut like it was the right thing to do. It didn't hurt since she didn't put any strength into it, but did I do something to make her angry?

Though just as I was wondering that, a smile cropped up on her face.

“Ehh, what?”

“Nooothing.”

Looking like she wanted to say something contrary to what she actually said, she leaned back against me. I don't really get it, but I guess she's happy? If so, everything's fine.

“Haah, so tired~”

Yuuki popped up and clung to me from behind, nearly hanging from me. It turned into me having Nina in front of me and Yuuki behind me.”

“Good job, Yuuki.”

“Yep! But really, that Amata, he reeeeeeeally doesn't hold back!”

Yuuki was complaining, but she barely had any scratches that could be considered scratches. Despite rolling around on the ground so forcibly like that. Amata's extreme competence at teaching is so good that it's long since passed the level of me admiring him, I'm flat out amazed at this point.

“But our ancestor was stronger, right?”

“Hmmm, I wonder?”

In terms of techniques, they're definitely more refined nowadays. Enough that Yuuki's skill would win out. However, imagining them actually fighting together, I can't picture Darg losing at all.

“Hey, can I hear a story about back then?”

“Yeah, of course—”

I started to say that I didn't mind when I suddenly realized something off. Something was different from usual.

“You've been acting weird.”

Nina spoke up and I finally realized what it was.

“... You noticed? Guess it's weird for me...”

“It's not weird!”

Feeling Yuuki freeze up, I shook my head and denied it. Yuuki has been growing her hair out recently and it wasn't just her appearance that's changed, either. Her personality was becoming more feminine, too. Like how she asked for a story instead of demanding it. At the very least, no one would mistake her for a boy like they might have when she was younger.

It's not like I think that women have to act a certain way to be feminine or anything, I just mean that she's definitely changed. In a world still in an era like this, I'd say it's something to be happy about.

“... Well, whatever. Alright.”

Even so, Nina's voice lost the cheerfulness it had a moment ago. It was back to her usual indifference. But this was something that only I could tell, this was the voice she use when she was secretly angry.

Eh, why am I the only one that would know?

Because I've known her for a really long time. I know how to deal and interact with her. Like how I shouldn't approach Nina when she's angry like this. She won't tell me why no matter how I ask and just asking makes her mood get worse.

“That's great! I'll hold you to it, big brother!”

Sandwiched between the happily smiling Yuuki and Nina, who was leaning on me in a bad mood, I was confused.

Chapter 18: Pastoralism



There are six conditions for an animal to be suitable for pastoralization. Small appetite, fast growth, high fertility, docile, quiet, and large herds.

“They fit two of them.”

“How positive of you.”

“Shig, that way!”

“I got it!”

Answering Violet’s quick direction, Shig stood in front of the escaping deer and spread his enlarged arms wide.

“I am strong!”

When he stamped his foot down following him finishing his incantation, the noise that boomed out was heavy and deep, unbecoming of his small body. It was evidence that his body had been affected by his reinforcement magic.

Growing with Amata’s instruction, he’d reached the point of mastering reinforcement magic—

“Uwaah!”

—but it wasn’t enough.

I looked up, following Shig as he got launched into the air by its huge antlers.

The deer easily destroyed the wooden fence and escaped.

“... Are you alright, Shig?”

“Yeah...”

He got up as I spoke to him.

At least his safety was guaranteed by the scales covering his body.

“Sorry.”

“No, there’s nothing you could’ve done there. It was a long shot from the get go, it’s not your fault.”

I wasn’t just trying to console him, it was a fact. Shig wasn’t the only one that couldn’t stop the deer, Yuuki, Violet, Rin, and Luka had all had similar problems with it.

This year will be the tenth year after starting the special classroom. While things on the agricultural side have developed rather well, we’ve practically made no progress with livestock. The creatures of this world were just too strong.

They weren’t the only things that were strong, of course. We could use magic, so killing them hasn’t been an issue. But when it comes capturing them alive, however, the difficulty skyrockets.

And even if we managed to somehow capture one, raising it comes with its own set of impossible issues. They’re able to easily destroy our fences and run away, and most importantly the wild animals simply don’t grow accustomed to being around people.

No matter how much we feed and care for one, they never let down their guard toward us and run away the moment they see a chance to.

“What about rabbits? I love them.”

“Hmm. I don’t know...”

Nina randomly decided to recommend going for rabbits. Although rabbits were extremely proficient in breeding, they were the same in never growing

attached to people, so it'd be hard for me to say whether we could successfully domesticate them. It's true that we could make a fence that the ordinary rabbits wouldn't be able to break through though.

But that said, there's very little to be had for food from a rabbit. Most of what you see on them is just fluffy fur. Moreover, they have a lot of small bones so the amount of meat you get from them is comparatively small to the amount of preparation work that is required to cook them.

It's not like there isn't another way to eat them without preparing them like that, though.

"I'd like having some of that blood bake again~"

"Cutting your finger when you're cooking happens often enough, but I'd prefer not having to cut my finger in order to cook, if possible."

I shook my head in response to Nina bringing that up. By blood bake, she was talking about the cooking method that bakes a rabbit from the inside out by having it consume a red dragon's blood. The rabbit's fur would burn off after being cooked from the inside out and its bones would grow brittle, allowing it to be eaten whole. According to Nina, it's the most delicious way she's ever eaten a rabbit.

However, that cooking method was not reproducible through magic, let alone ordinary fire. Nina had tried many different ways to try reproducing it, but she eventually came to the conclusion that it only worked with my blood.

"With that one gone, none of them have worked out so far..."

Her tail and ears hanging down, Luka made a big x-mark on the wooden board. Great horned deers, six-legged goats, horned wildcats, fanged boars, we even gave breeding things like frogs and giant insects a shot to try changing it up, but none of it worked out.

"Next is... armored bears?"

"You know that wouldn't work."

Nina gave her suggestion with a serious look, but she was just joking. She had a habit of saying jokes too seriously. It's true that armored bears were actually

rather delicious, but they were beasts among beasts. No matter how I think about it, I can't see them ever being domesticated.

"Then how about something on the opposite end... rats?"

On the other hand, I was troubled over whether what Violet said with her usual earnestness was actually a joke. I don't think anyone would take it as anything but a joke normally, but she said it so naturally...

"We wouldn't be able to contain rats either. If we could, we wouldn't be as troubled as we already are."

"Oh my... now that you say so, that is true."

Looks like she was being serious. Embarrassed and placing a hand to her cheek, Violet tilted her head to the side.

Outside of our problems with pastoral farming, we've had trouble with rats. Our farming was going well, but we've had many troubles with preserving the food. Rats would end up eating the potatoes and wheat we'd been storing.

I'd tried building a raised-floor type of storehouse with rat guards using the vague memories I have of them, but it didn't work at all. This world's rats could break through the rat guards as well. At any rate, they were way too strong.

They were weaker at low temperatures so the food would be safe from them, but then the wheat and potatoes would go stale from being too cold. It's not like we wouldn't be able to eat them at that point, but the texture would be poor.

Cats, popular as pets in my previous life's world, were said to have originally been domesticated as an anti-rat measure. I'd tried breeding horned wildcats in hopes of recreating that, but it was an utter failure. Treating that particular animal improperly made it more troublesome than even an armored bear. It was extremely nimble and boundlessly ferocious, so they came dangerously close to injuring people.

I definitely recall the importance of starting pastoralism and horticulture in the same era, but I never thought it'd end up being this difficult. Well, it might just be a problem particular to this world, and even so, *same era* could easily mean a difference of two or three hundred years, given that what we're talking

about it something that had happened in the classical era.

“Mentor, if even you’re having trouble with it, pastoralism must be a really hard thing...”

I felt a complicated mix of emotions from Luka saying that as she knit her brows.

It’s said that the first animal domesticated by mankind was a dog. Their ancestors were wolves... but rather than using them as livestock, humans grew attached to them and called the wolves dogs. All through history, they were mankind’s best friend.

However, there weren’t any wolves in this world. There were species similar to cats, bears, goats, and deer, but no wolves. There was only the half-human half-wolf race like Luka. By the were, there weren’t any horses either. Just half-human half-horses.

Whether the half and half races wound up filling the same niche that the original species would have filled or everything just eventually evolved into a half-human type, I don’t know. All I know was that there being none seems to be a certainty.

They’ll probably become even better friends with mankind than dogs. They’re a very friendly, calm, and intellectual race... but definitely way too wise to be treated like a domesticated race. They’re basically the same as humans, after all.

As for the human race... or perhaps for her race, I’m not sure if that will turn out to be a blessing or a curse.

“Let’s see, it’s fine as long as it’s an animal that doesn’t run away, right?”

“You have one in mind?”

Shig responded to Rin, who’d suddenly spoke up. He’d always denied Rin’s opinions without giving her a chance to explain, but he hasn’t done that recently. He’s also growing into an adult bit by bit.

“Yep! The behemoths!”

“Oh come on, seriously!?”

And just as I thought that, he immediately shot down Rin's suggestion.

"Really, I don't think that'd be possible... it's just so big."

"Making a fence big enough to enclose one would be difficult."

Even so, it wasn't just Shig doing it. Both Luka and Violet seemed to agree with him.

"Behemoths... behemoths, huh?"

I thought of the behemoths I'd seen before. Their huge mouths and long tusks. Their faces that looks like a mix between a hippo and a rhino, their cow-like horns.

I've never measured them, but they had to be at least ten meters tall. Easily twenty or thirty meters long. Four times the body size of an african elephant. It was like a blue whale living on land.

—However.

"You..."

Nina looked at me, my eyes half-closed in thought.

"You're thinking about giving it a shot, aren't you?"

Sure enough, she saw right through me. I mean, I really was thinking about it. Any man alive would be excited by owning a dinosaur-like creature.

"Eeh, really? Mentor..."

Shig spoke with an astounded look to him.

"Why not? It sounds soooo intersting! Big brother, I wanna give it a shot!"

Yuuki spoke, raising her hand in the air despite everyone's overall negative mood to the idea.

"I knew you'd agree, Yuuki. You always get how I feel."

"Really? Ehehe..."

Yuuki reacted bashfully as I pat her head.

"I give up. There's no stopping you when you're like that. Get ready,

everyone.”

Nina spoke, her fingers against her forehead like she was trying to hold back a headache.

I'd already started coming up with a plan on how to capture a behemoth.

Chapter 19: The Hole

I'll tell you something good.

This strategy of yours and donuts have something in common.

—*The Verdant Magus, Nina*

“Oh, right. The first time I'd met Darg was when I was out looking for a behemoth, too.”

“Our ancestor?”

Walking down a path in the grassland, I nodded to Yuuki, who was walking alongside me. This was the way we'd looked for behemoths long ago. Following their tracks was the best way. Looking all around the grasslands was hard even if I took to the sky, not even a dragon's keen eyesight could make out their tracks from high in the sky.

So we were walking side by side, following its old tracks on the ground.

“It turned into a spout over our prey. There was a bit of trouble after that, but we ended up becoming friends as a result.”

He always called me his brother in respect, but there wasn't a hierarchical relationship between us.

Best friend. If he'd called me that, I would have agreed. Nina's obviously a second-to-none friend to me as well, but it feels like she's a different kind of friend to me than he was.

“What kind of person was our ancestor?”

“Hmm...”

I thought for a moment before speaking.

“He looked exactly like Amata does now.”

Amata looked exactly like a young girl back when he was small, but he grew up rapidly and became a masculine young man... then he took it another level beyond that and grew into a giant. The fact that he's still as polite and gentle as

ever is a bit amusing though.

“There are times that I think that that child is atavistically growing into Darg.”

I looked at Yuuki and was happy that she didn't look the same. Polar opposite to Amata, Yuuki's height practically hadn't changed at all. If I recall, she was just a hundred and forty five centimeters last time we measured heights. Rather short for a twenty year old woman, even for this world.

She still had most of her innocent, cheerful personality, but she used to come off as a boy when she was a child. It might be because of her waist-length sidetails that make the difference...

It's probably also because of her grandly self-proclaiming breasts.

“Hm?”

Noticing my gaze, Yuuki turned toward me and smiled.

Her smile there felt shockingly mature, causing me to look away.

“Ah—big brother, there it is!”

Yet just as I thought that, the way she tugged on my clothes after spotting a behemoth was just like how a child would. Iterating between a child and an adult like a pendulum, people would steadily grow into adults. Then, everyone—everyone would leave me behind.

“Big brother?”

She looked at my face in curiosity.

“Oh, yeah, let's go.”

I nodded, flustered.

I already knew that that would happen, I've known it for a long time.

“Yeah!”

Yuuki nodded and hopped up onto my back. Feeling her hold onto me with her body was very embarrassing, so I hurriedly moved into my dragon form.

As Rin said, behemoths were creatures that just didn't run away. Sure, they'd attempt escaping if they were wounded, but they wouldn't run away from

something approaching them. They usually had nothing to be afraid of from other animals with their huge body and hard skin, after all.

Behemoths wouldn't even try running away if a red dragon like me appeared in front of it. I'm not sure if I should call them brave or nonchalant, but that made them so easy to hunt. Perhaps calling them dunces would work?

"Alright Yuuki, if you would."

"Yeah!"

Nodding, Yuuki stood on my head and readied her spear.

"Thou who is long, sharp, and may pierce anything! Become a spear without equal, thine aim unerring, thy strikes unblockable. Act as a shooting star!"

Throwing the spear at the behemoth's rear end as she finished the incantation, the spear left a trail of light in its wake. Just afterwards, the behemoth let out a low-pitched sound and started to move sluggishly. We'd intended for it to run away... but it's so slow. Of course it's because their bodies are so large that their speed is, accordingly, slow, but it doesn't even look like it's in a hurry at all.

"Nina, can you hear me? We found a behemoth. We'll be pursuing it from here on."

Following the behemoth that was running ever so slowly.... rather, following the behemoth that was walking, I contacted her with magic.

"Got it. But it's going the wrong direction. It needs to be a bit more to the left."

Eh, how did she detect where we were? Well, it *is* Nina, I guess...

Following our brand new Nina Nav, Yuuki threw a few more spears at the behemoth to correct its course. A while later, I saw a huge wall rise up on the horizon. It was something Nina produce, a tree cage.

It would have obviously ended up destroying any old normal cage, so we had to come up with a few solutions to prevent it from escaping. One was having long spear-like logs growing toward the inside the cage.

If it tried run through it, it would see them and stop. Though honestly it's

doubtful whether or not they'll actually be able to pierce the behemoth's iron-like hide, Yuuki throwing spears at it is teaching it that sharp objects give it pain. We're hoping that it will be alarmed by the spears and stop in its tracks.

"It's in!"

Adjusting the behemoth's course, we herded it into the cage. I was worried that the cage would be a bit narrow for its body, but the behemoth was able to get into it. Then, cautious of the spears we'd pointed inward at it, it stopped itself from continuing to move.

Did we do it...?

The moment after I thought that, the behemoth opened its mouth wide and sunk its teeth into the tree logs sticking out at it, chewing them.

It just continued on eating the cage itself. Once it was happy and done with its meal, it just walked off. There's nothing we could do but sit and stare.

"... Behemoths... eat trees, I guess...?"

Yuuki muttered from on my back.

"Come to think of it..."

I'd just realized that I hadn't even known what behemoths ate until then.

We wouldn't have been able to care for it even if we'd managed to capture it, huh?

"... Well, at least we know what to bait it with now?"

"I take it you haven't given up on it yet then?"

Hearing me mutter, Nina replied half in amazement.

"I get the feeling that we're on to something here."

All of the animals we'd tried so far escaped with all their might. The behemoth at least stopped moving. I think they'd be much easier to handle than the deers or goats.

"Maybe we could use trees that are too hard for a behemoth to eat...?"

"Professor Nina, can you produce trees that are harder than those were?"

“Impossible.”

Hearing my idea, Shig tried asking Nina but was immediately shot down.

We hadn't made the wooden cage from trees we got from the forest, but from what Nina produced herself. Making a large enough cage to surround a behemoth out of trees we felled ourselves would be impossible with a day's work. But using *Dropout* Nina's capabilities, it wasn't hard at all.

If she says it's impossible, it's impossible.

“Maybe we could use wood it doesn't like to eat...?”

“Wouldn't it just bite it and spit it back out then?”

“How about if I added a large number of my thorns to it?”

“They'd be too small to hurt it. Behemoths are pretty tough.”

“What if someone stood by the cage and stabbed it with a spear if it got too close?”

“Who'd want to do that...?”

Luka, Violet, and Yuuki each came up with ideas, but Shig shot all of them down. Not that it was his fault, though.

“Then what if we used rocks instead of wood?”

“Where would we get that many stones... wait, no, maybe we can use stones just for the spears' tips? They'd be like proper spears then.”

Shig got an idea from Rin's proposal and asked me about it.

I'd come to know about it recently, but he was good at identifying any pitfalls in a plan, filling them in, and constructing plans for practical measures. Rin used her flexible mentality to come up with ideas and Shig followed by shaping them into workable things. We'd come to see similar conversations play out often recently.

“Stones might not be durable enough...”

“So it's a no go? I thought it might work, too...”

Shig's shoulders slumped forward.

But I was meaning it the exact opposite way.

“Putting it another way, so long as we can do something about their durability, it’d work. We just need something harder, more durable, and sharper than stone.”

“Does something like that exist?”

“Yeah.”

Metal.

“The problem is... I don’t know how we should go about getting it.”

I’d thought about how we could use metal several times before. After using stone tools comes the shift to the bronze age. Well, I’m not certain if this world even has copper or tin in it.

I have no inkling of how to go about excavating a mine. I’m pretty sure you can’t even mine rocks with wooden pickaxes, it’s difficult enough even using stone ones.

I’d thought that you needed metal to excavate a mine, but that puts me in a catch twenty-two. Did the chicken come before the egg, or the egg before the chicken?

How in the world was it done back on Earth?

“You know where it is then?”

“Yeah. Inside mountains... Really, inside them. You’ll get it from digging into a mountain... probably.”

It wasn’t something I was entirely certain of either. What sort of mountains did iron or copper come from? What sort of mountains held no metal at all? It was a topic I knew effectively nothing about.

“Hmm. If you just have to open a hole in a mountain, don’t we just need to go over *there* and take some?”

“Where?”

Nina just pointed behind me in response.

She’d pointed to a huge, magnificent mountain. Mount Hole, as we’d come to

call the mountain.

The story of how it got its name is a simple one—it's because of the giant tunnel-like hole that goes through it halfway up.

“Oh... there!”

And the thing that caused the hole was, well, me. Around five hundred years ago. Five hundred and eight, to be exact.

I'd grown angry in a fight against Darg and opened the hole with my breath.

Chapter 20: A Red Metal

There is always treasure laying underfoot.

Holding the meaning of 'There is always happiness to be found', a proverb passed down through the Scarlet Clan.

“Wait, Mentor made that hole!?”

Luka, staring at the huge cave opened in the mountain's side, was wide-eyed.

“Reeeally?”

Finding it hard to believe, Rin tilted her head in a tinge of doubtfulness.

“He did. I remember that day well, too. Even in our forest, we all saw the flame that Mentor produced clearly.”

Nodding along, Violet gave her side of the story. Even for the elves, something from five hundred years ago can be said to be a while back.

“Well I don't doubt it one bit. Even if Mentor's usually calm, he does some absurd stuff now and then.”

Shig struck my back with a grin.

“How nostalgic.”

“You weren't there, Yuuki. Alright everyone, get down.”

I put my nose to the rock and tilted my head to act as a way down. With my current body, it wasn't very difficult carrying all of our students on my back.

“So... what does this metal thing metal look like?”

“Honestly, I don't know.”

I shook my head as I returned to my human form, answering the question Nina asked upon entering the tunnel.

“How should I put it... it's like a glittering thing, something with a different feel from ordinary rock.”

“Glittering...?”

Nina took a quick glance through the tunnel.

Sunlight didn't make it into the, so it was practically pitch-black on the inside.

“So... you?”

“No, not like me... I mean like it'll reflect light more intensely.”

How should I explain metallic sheen?

“Like water?”

“Oh, yes, a bit like water.”

Making it about water despite me talking about stones was very like her, but it's true that metal can reflect light on its surface in a way that's similar to water.

“In that case... please shine on us, small sun.”

A small light burst from Luka's hand, floating up and becoming a sphere of light much like a small sun, as the incantation indicated.

“Great stability there.”

“Eheheh... thank you.”

When I praised Luka for producing a light orb that didn't flicker, her tail wagged back and forth in embarrassment. Maintaining a fixed output to the magic was much harder said than done.

“Still though, it went further than I thought it did...”

The tunnel's hole made by my breath had a glass-like surface. It had melted everything it came into contact with. Though judging by the various holes and rubble inside the tunnel, it looked as though it had collapsed here and there.

“I suppose we will have to clean the area up first?”

Violet made her hands larger by gloving them in thorns. Taking that as the signal to begin picking up rocks, everyone started to clean up using their own methods.

“Flooat like fluffs aaaand... bam!”

Reciting her incredibly unique incantation, Rin floated rocks into the air and their them toward the entrance.

“Woah! Hey, be careful with those!”

Holding a rock with his arms, Shig shielded his head from the rocks she sent over his way with his upper arms and complained back at her. In his case, he could move rocks without relying on magic because of his physical strength.

“Luka, these are for you!”

“Okaaay.”

Meanwhile, Yuuki was slicing through the larger rocks and leaving them to be carried out by Luka. A very cooperative way to deal with the more difficult ones.

Even if a dragon’s legs aren’t suited to carrying objects, I decided to return to my dragon form and deal with the much larger things by putting them in my mouth and sweeping the debris with my tail.

Next to me, Nina was doing the same thing; just in a magical sense. When she waved her arm as though to move the air, the debris moved accordingly. I couldn’t understand the principle behind how it worked at all, but even if I tried asking her about it, she’d just answer with something that wouldn’t actually answer anything.

“Haaah, I’m wiped!”

“Hey, get back to it.”

Rin was giving it her all in making the debris fly away, but she also quickly exhausted herself and fell prostrate on the ground. Seeing her lying down like that, Shig spoke up.

“Hey hey, Shig, you know, couldn’t these be round?”

Not paying him any mind, Rin spoke up while striking some of the rubble with her tail.

“Round? What are you talking about?”

Seeing Shig be confused, Rin pointed at her wheelchair a few times.

“Ooooh.”

Understanding what she meant, Shig nodded and sat down the rock he was carrying.

“Those who are hard, who are heavy, and who are the children of the earth. Reform yourselves as my hands desire.”

It happened slowly, but once Shig completed the incantation and pressed his hands against the stones, they began to alter their shapes. A short moment later, it was as round as a ball.

“Now I’m gonna shove it out!”

“I said to be careful with those!”

Rin, giving it a big shove and shouting, pushed it out of the tunnel like a bowling ball.

“Shig, that magic you just used...”

“Eh, did I do it wrong?”

“No, that’s not what I mean... I mean, you thought of something great.”

He’d changed the rock’s shape like it was clay.

Far from me not teaching him that kind of magic, I’d never figured out how to do it in the first place. So magic can do that sort of stuff as well...

“... I just changed its shape though?”

Shig answered back, confused.

“It’s simpler than producing fire or water from nothing or flying without wings, yeah? I mean, you could always change a rock’s shape by hitting it anyway.”

Hearing his obvious explanation, I got hit by a mental shock.

I’d held the notion that magic was mysterious, something unexplainable.

To put it another way, I’d completely missed the concept of being able to use magic to reproduce something normally possible.

“Those who are hard, who are heavy, and who are the children of the earth. Reform yourselves as my hands desire.”

Replicating Shig's incantation, I patted the rock. It did immediately begin to distort its shape, but it was hard for me to shape it as properly round as Shig did. I might've used too much water on it, judging by how it felt more like watery mud than clay.

"This truly is difficult."

"I didn't soften at all..."

The other students also attempted to replicate the feat, but while Violet was also unable to properly change its shape, Luka's attempt at the magic didn't appear to have any effect at all.

"Shig is so good!"

"Why're *you* so proud about that?"

Rin said that as she puffed out her chest in pride and elbowed Shig, who was smiling in embarrassment.

"Hmmm."

Making a sound simply to make a sound, Nina stretched out a rock with her hands, not even bothering to use an incantation. It looked like thick pasta noodles. Seeing our resident genius do it so easily dented Shig's hard-earned bit of happiness.

It would've been nice if she held back even a little.

Suddenly, something dropped out of her noodle rock.

"Hey, is this it?"

What Nina picked up was a red mineral with a distinctly different luster from the surrounding rocks.

"Yeah, that's it!"

When I examined it in my hand, it was heavy for its size and rather cold.

It was some kind of metal, there's no mistaking it.

"... Shig, can you change this thing's shape as well?"

Suddenly coming up with something, I asked Shig if his magic would work on

it.

“Sure, but... what’s its name?”

It’s name.

My mind blanked.

“I can’t use magic on it without a name yeah? Should I go with *metal*?”

“No, give me a moment...”

I hadn’t thought of anything in that direction at all. It looked to be neither iron nor copper. It had a red color to it, but it was rather different than the dark red tinge rust would give. It was a vivid red, like a flame. Maybe I should go with a name like how I did with scarlet wheat and potatoes?

“Scarlet iron... no, wait. Right—let’s call it scarlite.”

Thinking up a name for it, I decided to call it that. Although it might not turn out to live up to the legendary metals Japanese fantasies had like adamantite or mithril, I hoped that the name would fit the red metal well.

“Got it. That which is hard, which is heavy, and which is a child of the earth—scarlite! Reform yourself as my hands desire and...”

Tripping up midway through the incantation, Shig stopped enunciating the incantation and looked at everyone.

Looking to Yuuki as if to ask what he should make, he appeared to have come up with something as the perplexity disappeared from his eyes.

“Reform yourself as my hands desire and become a sword.”

Seeing him perform the task, I realized that the processing difficulty depended on the material itself. Although it took several strokes of the hand to turn stone into a ball, the scarlite formed into a sword in the blink of an eye.

“Here.”

Shig gave Yuuki the sword, which was formed from its tip to the hilt area, with the point facing himself.

“It’s heavy...”

Contrary to her words, Yuuki easily brandished the sword.

She swung it down, then up, then thrust it forward followed immediately by a pseudo-parry. It moved so fluidly in her hands that it was like she'd had it since birth. Wanting to give it a proper test, Yuuki's expression turned serious and she faced a nearby rock.

"Hah...!"

Together with a sharp breath out, she slashed.

The rock was cut cleanly in two.

"Wow, it's amazing! Big brother, this is amazing!"

Yuuki jumped up and down in delight.

"Umm, could I see something?"

Luuka brought her nose to the sword in Yuuki's hands, giving it a sniff.

"... Huh?"

... And tilted her head.

"What's wrong?"

"Umm, Mentor?"

Luka, troubled and furrowing her brows, spoke to me hesitantly.

"If this is what you're wanting, there's a lot of it near the academy."

"Eh—?"

Hearing something I never thought she'd say, I couldn't stop my voice from coming out.

"Err, do you remember that stone I threw when we were deciding on the class leader? That was this."

"Eeeh!?"

Q: *Without metal tools of their own, how did ancient civilizations first obtain metal?*

A: *In those times, there was ore to be found on the surface, not needing to be*

dug up first.

Now that I think about it, it was a simple answer.

For some reason, I thought that you wouldn't be able to find metal without digging into a mountain first. Although metal ores are originally produced deep underground, mountains themselves are just ground that has risen upward. Following that logic, it's possible for minerals to be unearthed at the surface given a long time period.

Then again, the reason I hadn't thought of something that simple is because in my era, the ores that could be found near the surface had long been excavated.

However, there was still more than enough metal ore on the surface in this world. If I have all of our students go and look for it after this, we should have enough gathered to go around to help everyone in the village.

Chapter 21: Magic Formations

It is unknown as to who first came upon this world's magic formations. However, that person must have undoubtedly been a graceful, gentle individual.

Around a week after discovering scarlite.

“Hey, hey Mentor! Look look look!”

When I turned around to Rin who'd shouted in delight, she literally jumped onto me.

“Rin!? What's the matter?”

I caught hold of her out of reflex, my opened my eyes wide in surprise.

She was wheelchair-bound, but it wasn't as though she couldn't leap.

“Ehehe, look, look!”

Moving herself away from my body slightly, Rin pointed at her waist. She was pointed at was her waist fins, now large enough to look like a skirt. Although it had grown quite a lot in the past ten years, it was obviously much larger than yesterday.

“Such rapid growth...!”

“Hey, a bit back, remember the sword Shig made?”

She very abruptly changed the topic, but I took it in stride and nodded.

“I was like, can I change their shape? So then I tried, and I could.”

Rin's concise explanation put me at a loss for words.

When I took a better look at her waist, she still had the same number of annual rings.

“Rin. Please, let me know before you want to use magic on your body, alright?”

“Okaaaay!”

Rin cheerfully raised one of her hands into the air. She's so obedient.

I don't know if I should be happy she was willing to use her body for research or be frightened by it, though...

"What're you doing? What's that?"

Rin tilted her body to the side and asked to peek at what was behind me.

What was behind me was what looked like a poorly made snow hut built out of clay. It was made to be hemispherical with a hole in the front. You could see flames burning inside the hole.

"This is a kiln."

After the events of a few days ago, I came to know that we had a large amount of metal nearby.

However, it wasn't like there were no problems with it. Unlike the condition of the metal found at Mount Hole, the majority of it wasn't in a crystallized state, but rather as ore mixed with rock.

"I've been trying to extract scarlite from the rock using this, but..."

It should be fine as long as I can extract pure metal... I think. Since the temperature at which the metal melts is lower than that of the rocks, in theory I should be able to melt only the metal when I heat it. Probably. All I had to give me the information I was working on what this poorly constructed kiln.

I'd tried applying flames to it directly to see if it would melt, but the flames I produced from my dragon form after going so long without breathing them out were much too strong and wound up evaporating the scarlite ore instantly.

I figured in that case, I should just control my output in my human form, but then it wouldn't melt no matter how much I heated it up.

Creating a flame somewhere in between was bringing me all kinds of stress. Using magic at any steady amount of power was earth-shatteringly difficult. Although I was able to regulate it to some extent, keeping a constant temperature or constant strength wasn't possible to do so easily, so although I *could* do it, it was awfully tiring. It demanded an extreme level of concentration and stamina.

To compare it to something, it was like blowing dandelion fluff. You could easily blow it weakly or forcibly, but just trying blowing it with a constant strength than could keep it hovering at a single point in the air.

Therefore, I decided to rely on science, rather than magic. Instead of heating it directly with magic, I would increase the heat in the kiln to melt the metal. With this method, I should be able to increase the temperature without going too far.

“Woah!”

—And that shallow reasoning blew up in my face, along with the now-exploded kiln.

“Amazing! Do it again!”

“... That was a failure.”

Rin was happy as could be, but I just sighed with my shoulders drooping.

Was it the structure’s fault? Or maybe the materials I used? Either way, when I increase the temperature up to a certain point, the kilns end up exploding before the scarlite melts. No matter how carefully I increase the temperature, the same thing always happens.

Just in case, I wasn’t using just soil for the kiln. On top of using properly prepared clay, I also used reinforcement magic on it. At the very least, it seemed impossible to make a kiln that could withstand the heat necessary to melt metal with my scant knowledge in the field.

“Why not ask Luka how?”

“... Luka?”

I parroted back her question.

“Yeah, Luka’s good at this kind of stuff!”

It’s true that she is good at keeping her magic output stable. Speaking only in terms of output though, she ranked as the second lowest next to Shig. However, that was hardly helpful. I’d initially thought that talent was something that you were born with based on your species or personality, but it might be something you can learn the trick of. Like getting the hang of juggling, for

example.

Striking while the iron was hot and deciding to give it a go, I headed to the schoolhouse with Rin in tow.

She was chatting with the other students.

“Oh, Mentor. How are you... huh!? Rin, you’re walking on your own!?”

When Luka turned toward us, she saw Rin next to me and stared in wonder.

“How’d you do that!?”

“Ahem...—I’m awesome right!?”

Rin boasted with her chest puffed out in response to Shig’s surprise.

Looks like she came to me to show off how she could move about on her own now. It’s a fairly simple thing, but I’m a bit.. no, I’m very glad.

“Luka, I want to ask you something. Is there any trick to stabilizing magic?”

After Rin was done showing off the effects of the magic she’d used on herself to everyone, I cut into the conversation.

“Any trick...?”

“Yeah. Luka, you’re incredibly skilled at stabilizing the output of your magic, right? I’m, well... I’m like this. Light, produce a tiny light at my fingertip.”

As soon as I finished my incantation, a dazzling light overflowed from my hand and immediately enveloped the surrounding area in brightness.

“I said my fingertip!”

Closing my hand as I shouted at it, the light calmed down like a stifled fire.

“Ooow, my eyes...”

“Mentor’s magic is as intense as ever, I see.”

“That control though.”

After accidentally staring directly at the light, Rin used her hands to cover her eyes. Violet voiced her admiration, while Shig just said that sarcastically.

“Oh come on. It’s not like you’re amazing at it either.”

“Not as bad as you at least.”

“You give it a shot then.”

Having a verbal back and forth, I urged Shig on.

“Sure.”

Shig agreed to it, not the least bit hesitant. Even if I'd only meant it as a joke, him accepting the challenge could be called progress.

“Light, you who are white, who are dazzling. Come to exist on my palm.”

His incantation finished, light burst from his hand. It repeatedly pulsed from weak to strong and back, eventually going out.

“Big brother, it's not *that* different from yours.”

“Geh...”

Hearing Yuuki say that so frankly, Shig and I groaned at the same time.

“Alright then, Luka. I believe it is your turn now?”

“Ummm... Light.”

Prompted to go by Violet, Luka recited her simple incantation and made a bowl with her hands. A ball of light appeared within her hands. It wasn't dazzling like mine, nor was it changing its intensity constantly like Shig's. And above all, its shape was beautiful.

The light sphere she produced was a virtually perfect sphere. It looked like a full moon in the night sky. Compared to that, Shig's looked like a flame with an ambiguous, constantly changing outline. Mine probably would've looked like that as well. If you were a hundred or so meters away, maybe.

Although Yuuki and Violet were both much better than us, not even they could produce a light with such stability.

“I got it!”

Unexpectedly, Rin popped up.

“If you do that with your hands, it goes good!”

She pointed over to the bowl Luka formed with her hands.

“If you think it’s that simple...”

“Light!”

Interrupting Shig, Rin mimicked Luka and shouted with her hands together.

“No way...!?”

“Oh my.”

“That’s awesome!”

Shig’s eyes were wide, Violet had placed her hand over her mouth, and Yuuki cheered in excitement.

What appeared in her hands was a slightly distorted sphere of light. It was distorted, but it could easily be seen as a sphere.

Rin’s magical stability was low amongst the students. On the other hand, her output was high. Although imperfect, *that* Rin managed to stabilize her magic.

“L-Light! ... Oooh!”

Shig followed suit and put his hands together, followed by him letting out a voice of amazement as a small spherical light appeared above the palms of his hand. Violet and Yuuki did so as well, likewise also confirming that their magic would be stable.

No way, could it really be that simple...

“Light!”

I cupped my hands together and shouted out in high spirits.

—A moment later, the classroom was filled with light.

* * *

“I’m still seeing spots...”

“I’m sorry, really.”

I bowed to Yuuki and the others, who were all blinking repeatedly and grimacing.

Apparently, my magic diffuses much too much.

As a result of stabilizing and concentrating itself, the strength of the light that came from it was so much that it could at least momentarily blind someone. Even though I'd immediately stopped invoking the magic, all of the students were complaining about being unable to see properly.

I'm not sure if it's because she's particularly sensitive to light, but the usually energetic version of Rin was nowhere to be seen—she was basically limp with her eyes shut. I checked and it looks like I don't need to be afraid of potential blindness, but still...

"I never thought that how you held your hands would affect the output of a magic..."

It's true that magic normally comes from one's hands. To be exact, a place slightly off of the hand. Even so, I'd never concerned myself with the shapes my hands had made until now. We've all just been using magic with whatever way was most convenient at the time.

"I'm not sure why... but I've always imagined that the light is settling into my hands."

Looking as though her eyes had recovered somewhat, Luka said that as she once again formed a bowl with her hands.

It's true that the light sphere she'd produced was about the same size as her palms.

"I see. I agree that when you have something to use as a standard for size, it becomes easier to manage."

Violet also once again formed a bowl with her hands and produced light.

It was more stable than before, perhaps due to her now understanding the principle.

"So that's how it is..."

"Don't do that again!"

Seeing me make another bowl with my hands, Shig spoke up in a panic.

"A standard size...? Luka, how many centimeters are your hands?"

“Oh!”

Hearing Yuuki’s casual question for Luka, I accidentally shouted out loud.

“Wh-What’s wrong, big brother?”

“That’s it! That’s it, Yuuki!”

I grabbed her hands in excitement and shook them up and down.

“Violet, could you please create a vine? A suitable size will be fine.”

“... Here you go.”

Binding one end of the vine Violet made to a stick, I tied the other end to charcoal. Then, drawing a spot on a desk using the charcoal, I stood the stick up on its other end, held the charcoal against the desk just far enough away so that the vine was taut, and drew in a circle. With that, I had a proper circle drawn on top of the desk. To put it simply, I’d made an impromptu mariner’s compass.

“Luka... actually, no.”

There was a possibility that Luka’s would be too perfect for me to be able to see a difference at all.

“Yuuki, could you please try making a light while imagining it fitting perfectly into this circle?”

“Okay! —Light.”

I asked Yuuki, who had good intuition and could probably figure out what I was planning, to do it. Holding her hands around the circle, she spoke the incantation. With that, light emerged not within her palm, but above the circle. It was a beautiful sphere of light, like a full moon lighting up the night sky.

A circle.

The simplest of magic formations.

What significance do magic formations hold in this world? The answer is something I realized intuitively.

They are rulers for magic. Not to measure a line’s length, but to allow for drawing the line straight in the first place.