

백작가의
망나니가 되었다

F U S I O N F A N T A S T I C S T O R Y

Trash of the Count's Family

– 백작가의 망나니가 되었다 –

- Volume 1 -

-Author-

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- STORY -

"I can't be a trash forever."

Chapter 1

Prologue

When I opened my eyes, I was inside a novel.

[The Birth of a Hero].

[The Birth of a Hero] was a novel focused on the adventures of the main character, Choi Han, a high school boy who was transported to a different dimension from Earth, along with the birth of the numerous heroes of the continent.

I became a part of that novel as the trash of the Count's family, the family that oversaw the territory where the first village that Choi Han visits is located.

The problem is that Choi Han becomes twisted after that village, and everyone in it, are destroyed by assassins.

The bigger problem is the fact that this stupid trash who I've become doesn't know about what happened in the village and messes with Choi Han, only to get beaten to a pulp.

"...This is going to be a problem."

I feel like something serious has happened to me.

But it was worth trying to make this my new life.

Chapter 2

When I Opened My Eyes (1)

The man could feel someone gently tapping his body. The rough hand made the man think of the hands of an exhausted parent. It was that warm.

“Young master, it is morning.”

But the voice was very profound. The man felt chills throughout his body and his eyes subconsciously opened. Rather than the bright sunlight coming in through the window to warm the man’s eyes, what he saw was an old man standing there with a satisfied expression.

“It is surprising to see you wake up after a single attempt.”

“Huh?”

“The master wishes to dine with the young master since it has been a while. It looks like it will be possible today.”

The man could see a mirror past the old man’s shoulder. Inside the mirror was a red-haired man who seemed to be confused looking back at him.

‘I guess that guy is me.’

“Young master Cale?”

The man turned toward the source of the worried voice to find the old man, who looked like a servant, looking toward him. But that concerned man was not the problem.

The man clearly heard it.

Young Master Cale. It was a familiar name. He slowly blurted out the name.

“Cale Henituse?”

The old servant was looking at him like he was looking at his own grandson.

“Yes. That is your name, young master. I’m guessing you are still a bit drunk.”

Listening to the concerned response of the old man, the man naturally thought about a name that was even more important than the name Cale Henituse.

“...Beacrox.”

“Are you talking about my son?”

“...Chef.”

“Yes. My son is the chef. Do you need him to make something for your hangover?”

The man felt his surroundings turn dark and he started to feel dizzy. He lowered his head and put it into his hand.

“Young master, are you still drunk? Should I call the doctor? Or will you wash right now?”

The man looked at the red hair that was falling in front of his face. It was a bright red color, much too different from his original black hair.

Cale Henituse. Beacrox. Beacrox’s dad, Ron.

They were the characters that appeared at the beginning of [The Birth of a Hero], the novel the man was reading before he fell asleep last night.

He jerked his head up and looked around. He could see the bedroom that was completely different from a typical Korean design. It made the man think about Europe. Every single thing in the room was extremely extravagant and luxurious.

“Young master?”

The man responded to Ron, the old man who was pretending to be concerned and worried.

“Cold water.”

“Excuse me?”

He needed something to clear his mind. He could see the face of Cale Henituse in the mirror behind old man Ron.

‘Still looks normal.’

‘I guess Cale hasn’t been beaten to a pulp by the main character just yet. ‘

His handsome face caught his attention.

The man had become Cale Henituse when he opened his eyes.

Cale Henituse. The trash who was beaten to a pulp by the main character in the beginning of [The Birth of a Hero]. That was who he was.

“Young master, I presume you will not be bathing in cold water. Are you asking for drinking water?”

Cale turned his gaze toward Ron. Ron may be pretending to be a benign old man, but he was actually hiding his true identity as a cruel and vicious individual.

He made the request to Ron.

“Please get me some drinking water.”

He needed to drink some cold water and clear his mind first.

“I will prepare it right away.”

“Great. Thanks.”

Ron flinched for a second and had an odd expression on his face, but Cale did not notice it.



Ron had to leave the bedroom as there was only warm water in the room. Once he was left alone, Cale got off the bed and headed to the bathroom. If he really was inside of the novel, he knew that there should be a large mirror inside.

As expected, the full body mirror was inside the bathroom. Cale Henituse, who had a lot of interest in his appearance and physique, had this mirror set up in here. Nobody else in the household had such a mirror.

The man in the mirror had red hair and a pretty fit body. It wouldn't be wrong to say he had a body that would make any style look good.

"I really am Cale."

The man in the mirror indeed was Cale Henituse from the novel. [The Birth of a Hero] was very descriptive about each of the character's appearance. That was why the man had no choice but to agree that he had indeed turned into Cale Henituse.

Do people usually become calmer when they are surprised and shocked? Cale, no, Kim Rok Soo, calmly thought about the night before.

It was a typical day off. It had been a while since he had read an actual book instead of on his phone, so he went to the library to check out some books. He borrowed the entire series since he planned to read all day long.

The name of that book was, of course, [The Birth of a Hero]. He managed to finish the fifth volume before he fell asleep. But when he woke up, he had turned into Cale Henituse, the individual that the main character mercilessly beat up in volume 1.

'Will things go the way they did in the novel?'

He felt unnaturally calm. Once he got past the point of shock, his mind had calmed back down. He started to remember the contents of volume 1.

[The Birth of a Hero.]

This novel was about the birth of the heroes in the Western and Eastern continents, as well as their trials and growth. The main character was, naturally, Korean. He was

a student who had been transported into the world when he was a freshman in high school. Furthermore, his lifespan became as long as a dragon's lifespan, making him pretty much never age.

"...This is bad?"

He was going to be beaten into a pulp by such a person. The important thing, however, was that he had not been beaten up just yet.

Cale took his eyes off the mirror and walked into the tub that was full of warm water. He leaned against the tub and looked up at the ceiling. It was that expensive marble that was described in the novel. The estate that Cale lived in was actually full of marble.

Cale started to mumble as he looked toward the ceiling.

"It's not like there's much I'll miss."

His life as Kim Rok Soo. There really wasn't much to it. He was an orphan and didn't have much money. He also didn't have a person he loved to death, nor a friend he would give his life to save. He only continued to live because he could not die.

Yes, he could not die.

He completely hated the thought of death or pain. He became an orphan after both of his parents passed away from a car accident when he was little.

He didn't like pain or death. No matter what it was, even if he was rolling in a pile of dog shit, it was still better than being dead.

'For that reason, I need to first make sure I don't get beaten up.'

Cale did not know what day it was in the novel right now, but he was sure that he had not met with the main character just yet. The reason was simple.

'I don't have the scar on my side.'

Cale Henituse, the trash of Count Henituse's family. A few days before meeting the main character, Cale was drinking and causing a ruckus. He was flinging things around and got stabbed on his side by a broken desk leg, resulting in the scar.

What an interesting character. He didn't get the scar from fighting someone else. He got it because he got angry that the alcohol didn't taste good and threw a tantrum. He meets the main character after he gets the scar, and, after a short discussion, he gets beaten to a pulp.

"Mm."

Cale crossed his arms and started to think.

He did not know what happened to Cale after getting beaten to a pulp in volume 1. All he knew was that the main character, Choi Han, has many fateful encounters and overcomes a lot of trials to grow into a hero along with his party members.

Thus the era for him to prove that he is a hero will begin. The Roan Kingdom that Cale currently lives in, as well as many other locations in the Eastern and Western continents, will be filled with war. It truly will turn into the time for the heroes to show their full potential.

Cale started to frown. Kim Rok Soo, the man who became Cale. His life motto was pretty simple.

Living long without pain. Enjoying the small joys of life.

Living a peaceful life.

"...As long as I make the story proceed like normal while taking out the fact that I get beaten up, the main character will take care of the rest."

For some odd reason, he could recall every single line in the book without any issue. Cale relaxed in the warm water while coming to a final conclusion with his now clear head.

"It's worth trying."

It was worth trying to avoid the continent's war and living peacefully. This trash's situation was much better than when he was Kim Rok Soo. The location of this estate was also in the corner of the Western Continent, making it an ideal location to avoid the war. In the novel itself, there were many nobles who managed to avoid the

influences of war. Even if he could not completely avoid it, he should be able to at least reduce the damages to a minimum.

“Young master, are you inside the bathroom?”

He could hear Ron’s voice coming from outside. Cale thought about Ron’s true identity. Ron was an assassin who crossed over from the Eastern Continent by sea. He pretended to be a benign old man, but the true Ron was a cruel and merciless man.

“Yes. I’ll be right out.”

His natural response was to talk informally to the old man. Cale realized what he was doing and made up his mind about what to do in the future.

He needed to push that old man to the main character and send him away.

That old man could easily kill Cale with a single blow, but treated Cale like a puppy you left alone because you felt bad for it. He was smiling gently, but there was not an ounce of care about Cale on the inside. In the novel, Ron leaves with the main character and his son after Choi Han beats Cale to a pulp.

Cale put the bathrobe on as he quickly exited the bathroom. Ron was standing there with a smile on his face and a tray with a cup in his hands.

“Young master, here you go.”

Cale picked up the cup and walked past the old man. He did not want to make eye contact with such a dangerous old man.

“Great, thanks.”

Ron’s expression turned odd once again, but Cale had already walked past him. Cale took a drink of the cold water as he started to think.

‘There are too many strong people here.’

In fact, there were too many of them. No matter where the main character went, there were either strong individuals or individuals with hidden secrets. These individuals were both human and other races.

‘I at least need the strength to protect myself.’

In order to live long without pain in the continent that will soon be filled with war, you needed a decent level of strength. Of course, you could not be too strong. Then other complicated things will happen.

Cale thought about the different fateful encounters that occurred in the beginning parts of the novel. The powers that strengthen the main character and his party members. He was thinking about the ones that would help him live long without pain. There were a couple that came to mind. He just needed to pick one of them.

“Young master, we will start to dress you now.”

“Oh, right. Thanks.”

The door soon opened and couple servants entered to help Ron dress Cale. Cale did not notice that Ron had a stoic expression unlike his usual self as he looked at the clothes the servants were bringing in.

“Ah, something simple today.”

He hated really complicated attires. Simple clothes that let you relax comfortably were the best.

“Yes, young master.”

The servant in charge of the attires quickly pulled out some simple clothes and Cale changed into the simplest of them all. He lightly frowned after finishing getting dressed. Even this, ‘simple,’ attire was extremely extravagant and not to his liking.

However, the reflection in the mirror was quite handsome.

‘He really is handsome and makes any clothes look good.’

The face really was the final piece to fashion. He looked in the mirror and fixed his sleeves before turning around to look at Ron.

Ron was once again smiling like a gentle old man.

“Ron, let’s go.”

“Yes, young master.”

Cale walked behind Ron. It was nice that he did not need to know the layout of the estate. He just needed to follow Ron wherever he needed to go. All of the servants that Cale saw flinched and bowed respectfully before they seemed to run away.

‘Why are they so scared? Cale never hit people.’

He just liked to drink and play. Sometimes, when he was drunk, he did break things. But that was why he was the trash of the family. He also did not treat people like people, other than the few people he liked.

‘Well, it’s better if nobody talks to me.’

Cale thought about it peacefully. It would be more difficult if he was in the body of a model citizen. A trash can do as he pleases without worry. It was only possible because there was no desire to live as a model citizen.

“I will now open the door.”

“Sure.”

Cale nodded his head toward Ron. The book mentioned that Cale treated Ron, someone who raised him like he was his own grandson since he was little, as nicely as he treated his own father. It mentioned that he always responded to Ron and treated him like a person. Of course, Ron did not really think that way. That was why it was easy for Cale to talk to Ron. He just needed to answer Ron’s questions and treat him like a human being.

“I hope you enjoy your breakfast.”

“Thanks. Ron, make sure you eat a good meal too.”

Cale walked past Ron and into the dining room. He could see his family sitting there. His father and the current head of the Henituse household, Deruth. Next to him was Cale’s step mother, the Countess, as well as her son and daughter. The four people

looked toward Cale.

“You are late again, today.”

Cale’s gaze turned toward his father who spoke. [The Birth of a Hero] described Cale’s feelings for his father like this.

‘His father was the one person that Cale listened to. The reason the trash did not leave the area and got everything he wanted inside the Count’s territory was because of his father, Count Deruth Henituse.’

But, unfortunately, Cale’s father was unlike the other strong fathers in this novel. He did not have any special skills or influence. He just had a lot of money. However, Cale liked this a lot. It was the perfect family environment to live a simple life.

Then there were the other three individuals.

His stepmother who knew that he did not like her and avoided him.

Her smart first-born who found it difficult to deal with his much older brother Cale.

And the cute youngest of the family who avoided her older brother Cale.

But it wasn't like Cale bothered them or they bothered Cale. They just treated each other like strangers.

Cale thought this was such a great environment to quietly live alone.

“Take a seat.”

“Yes, father.”

Cale looked at the feast on the table that did not meet his definition of breakfast and sat down on his seat. He then felt something was odd and lifted his head up.

“Is there something you need to say, father?”

“...No, I do not.”

Deruth was staring at Cale. The rest of the family was doing the same. Cale made eye contact with each of these family members. They all quickly turned away whenever he made eye contact and continued to eat.

‘I guess they find me really difficult to handle.’

Cale turned his head toward the table as well. This luxurious feast that was different than the breakfast he used to eat just to fill his belly made him start to smile. He first started by cutting the sausage in half with the knife.

‘It is so juicy.’

He didn’t know if juice flowed out as soon as he cut into it because it was handmade or because it was cooked well, but the color on the sausage made him hungry. Cale started to smile without realizing it.

Clang.

He heard something fall down and made eye contact with his younger brother Basen. He could see that Basen had dropped the fork in his hand.

“My apologies.”

Basen calmly apologized like the personality described for him in the novel. The servant in charge of the meal quickly came over to hand Basen a new fork and picked up the fork on the floor. Watching that made Cale think that it was nice to be a noble, before he focused once again on the food in front of him.

Cale had found the first good thing about coming into the novel. This breakfast was extremely luxurious and so tasty that his stomach was completely happy.

The smile on his face could not disappear.

“...Ho?”

That was why he did not hear his brother Basen’s shocked proclamation.

Chapter 3

When I Opened My Eyes (2)

Cale looked around at all of the dishes in front of him. He then moved his fork towards a salad made of fruits that he did not recognize. After filling his stomach with meat, soup, and bread, he wanted to try something new.

The fruit looked like an orange, but the color was closer to that of grapes. Cale put the fruit in his mouth and took a bite.

“Mm.”

In that instant, sweet fruit juice filled his mouth. He really hated sour fruits, so this extremely sweet flavor in his mouth made him subconsciously start to drool.

At that moment, he made eye contact with his father Deruth, who was looking at him.

“Cale.”

Deruth quietly called Cale’s name before hesitating. He then started to frown and move his mouth. Cale did not like that awkward atmosphere and started to speak.

“It’s delicious.”

“Yes, it tastes like trash... huh? Did you say it is delicious?”

“Yes. Everything tastes wonderful.”

Cale picked up a different fruit this time and smiled after tasting the sweetness in his mouth once again. The trash, Cale Henituse, never cared for etiquette anyways.

He probably shouldn’t do this while speaking with his father, the head of the household, but whatever. He’s just trash in the first place.

‘It really is best to be the trash.’

Nobody really cared no matter what he did. As long as he can prevent himself from getting beaten up by the main character, it will be a good life.

As Cale expected, nobody criticized his lack of manners. In fact, Deruth actually had a smile on his face as he started to nod his head.

“Yes, it really is delicious. It is nice to see you enjoying food so much.”

Deruth really seemed like the only person who cared for Cale. He didn't even seem to care about Cale's lack of manners. Well, a truly caring father should probably try to fix this personality of Cale... but this Cale did not care as he was not the real Cale Henituse.

“Yes. Please make sure you eat a lot as well, father.”

Basen let out another, ‘Ho,’ and Cale, who heard it this time, turned his gaze back to the dishes. The 15 year old Basen. The three years younger brother of the Cale that he possessed was difficult to handle.

Unlike the trash Cale, Basen was smart, sincere, and very responsible. The people of the family were pushing for Basen to be the next head of household. Kim Rok Soo agreed with this sentiment even after turning into Cale.

‘Rather than having a complicated life being in charge of this territory, I'd rather use my position as the Count's older brother to laze around and live peacefully in a section of the territory.’

Cale did not try to argue with Basen. He could hear Basen's gasp of shock and knew that Basen was looking down on him, but what could he do about it?

Once Basen becomes the head of the household, his personality was one that he would probably not kill Cale, but in order to not get hurt and quietly move to a small village, he needed to not get on Basen's nerves.

‘If that's not possible, I'll just make some money beforehand and go somewhere that the war will not reach.’

Cale pretended not to hear Basen's gasp and continued to eat. Once the meal was over, his father, Deruth, was the first to get up. He seemed to have been satisfied with

breakfast, as his face was filled with a smile.

‘It really was delicious.’

If breakfast was like this every day, Cale would probably give up some sleep to come eat breakfast all the time. Deruth looked around at the family members who got up after he did, before resting his gaze on his first-born son, Cale.

“Cale, is there anything you need?”

Cale was confused at Deruth’s sudden gesture, but he decided to honestly answer.

“Please give me some money.”

“Sure, I’ll give you a lot.”

Deruth answered without any hesitation.

This really was a well-off family.

As a territory that mined for marble and grew grapes for wine, they were overflowing with money right now.

“Great. Please give me as much as you can.”

Cale could feel his two younger siblings looking at him, but there was no need for him to be embarrassed. Wasn’t it better to ask for money instead of drinking and causing a ruckus?

Furthermore, he needed money to proceed with his plans. That fateful encounter to get himself a strong enough power to keep himself safe. He needed some money in order to cause that fateful encounter to happen.

“Sure. I’ll give you as much as I can.”

Cale started to smile after being satisfied with his father’s response. However, he was at a loss of words after returning to his chamber and receiving the cheque from the deputy butler, Hans.

The cheque that was issued through a partnership with the treasury department and the magic department made Cale's heart run wild.

'So much money?'

This family didn't seem to only have a bit of money. In fact, they seem to have a lot of money.

The novel did mention that Cale received a large allowance, but it did not mention the exact amount. However, he could realistically understand how large it was based on the amount listed on the cheque.

'10 million gallon.'

It is about equivalent to 10 million Korean won. If it is like this, Cale could change his plans. Cale's brain started to quickly think about his options.

"I'll be heading out now, young master."

The deputy butler delivered the cheque and bid goodbye, but Cale did not respond. Deputy Butler Hans just treated this as normal and headed toward the door. However, he soon stopped moving.

It was because Cale had gotten up from his seat and said something to Ron.

"Ron, let's go to the study."

Hans then became anxious at Cale's words. Ron was the same.

"...Did you say the study?"

Cale found this odd. This sly old man's voice was shaking a bit. Was there a reason he could not go to the study?

"Yes."

He needed to go to the study to form his plan. There were no desks or even any paper in his chamber. There were a lot of expensive looking alcohol bottles though.

“Excuse me, young master.”

“What is it?”

Cale looked toward the anxious looking deputy butler.

“This, we have not been able to do our morning cleaning of the study just yet.”

“Is that so? It’s fine if it goes a day without cleaning.”

“No sir. We cannot let that happen.”

The deputy butler was extremely pushy about this for some reason. He then smiled brightly and put up a single finger.

“Please just wait one hour! I will put my name on the line to make sure that the study is completely clean, not like a study that has not been used in ten years, but one that was used just yesterday!”

“Sure, whatever.”

He didn’t mind waiting an hour.

“Great. Then I will go report this to the master.”

“No need to do that, but go ahead if you want to do so.”

“Yes, young master. I will be off now.”

“Okay. Sure.”

Like a well-trained deputy butler, Hans closed the door without making any noise and disappeared. He seemed to be in a rush. Cale knew that there were three deputy butlers vying to become the official butler. Maybe that was why Hans was so passionate about it.

“Ron.”

“Young master?”

“Why are you blanking out like that?”

“My apologies, young master.”

“No need to apologize.”

Ron had another odd expression on his face, but Cale put the precious cheque in his inner pocket as he asked. There was so much going on that he did not even have any time to ask about today’s date.

“What is today’s date?”

This question would seem odd coming from anybody else, but the servant Ron answered in a gentle voice.

“It is the 29th day of the 3rd month in the 781st year of the Felix Calendar.”

“Mm, that is a problem.”

“Excuse me?”

“Nothing.”

Cale tightly clenched on the 10 million gallon in his pocket once more. The only thing he could trust was money.

Yesterday, the 28th day of the 3rd month in the 781st year of the Felix Calendar. That was the day that the villagers of Harris Village, the village that the main character Choi Han went to after escaping from the Forest of Darkness, the place that Choi Han felt human affection for the first time in this world, made friends, and created a second family, were all murdered by an unknown group of assassins.

Even Cale, who had read until the fifth volume, did not know the true identity of this secret organization that murdered the villagers.

Some readers may be saying something like this while reading about this situation.

‘I thought he was really strong. What was Choi Han doing while they were murdered?’

It is only natural to think like that.

However, there is a reason this novel is called, [The Birth of a Hero], and not, [The Strength of the Hero], or, [The War of the Heroes].

Birth.

It was the story of a person who overcame all sorts of obstacles and carried the pains of his past as he became a hero. Love and friendship comes up along the way as he meets enemies and friends.

Something that cannot be missing from a story is the, 'awakening.' He may have explosive talents and have lived for tens of years in the Forest of Darkness, but, through all of that, Choi Han was still an innocent and gentle person who could not kill another human being. He had no issues killing monsters, but Choi Han had never hurt another person.

In order to turn someone like him into a hero, the novel had created a situation for Choi Han. In order to heal the lady who treated him like her own son, Choi Han had gone into the Forest of Darkness to find some precious medicinal herbs.

He had to travel deep into the forest to find it, and, when he finally managed to find the herb and headed back towards the village, he found the corpses of the murdered villagers, the burning houses, and the assassins who were about to leave.

Choi Han went berserk after seeing this and killed someone for the first time. Of course, the people he killed are the members of this secret organization, and this secret organization clashes against Choi Han every so often throughout the novel.

Choi Han only returns to normal after killing all of the assassins from the secret organization, before falling into a state of despair as he is unable to gather any information from the dead bodies. He then buries the bodies of the villagers before making a promise to himself.

'I will kill them all. I will kill all of the people that made this happen.'

Choi Han realized what the sadness of death was at this moment, but his first kill starts to twist his mind. Of course, he starts to feel again and starts to become more human-

like after meeting his party members later in the novel, and grows to become a true hero.

“...Ron.”

“Yes, young master.”

“A cup of cold water please.”

“...I understand.”

After Ron left and he was alone in the room, Cale covered his face with both of his hands.

The problem was that the city that this twisted Choi Han arrives at after leaving Harris Village is the city called Western, located in the center of the Henituse territory.

Cale who happens to run into Choi Han annoys Choi Han and ends up getting beaten up. That is when Choi Han gets his first subject/party member, the reliable chef Beacrox.

‘...I was going to head there in advance and help him out.’

The best scenario to not get beaten up is no longer available. I did care more about potentially saving the people of the village, but there is nothing I can do about it at this point.

Now, all that is left is to make sure I act in a way to avoid getting beaten up by the angry Choi Han, who is moving at a crazy speed to arrive at Western City by tomorrow.

‘Avoiding the main character is not a good idea.’

He needed to run into Choi Han so that Ron and Beacrox run into him as well. That was the only way for the three of them to leave this place together to start their official journey. Then that left just one course of action.

‘Have them run into each other and then get out of their way.’

With the best possible first impression, if possible.

“Young master.”

“Ah, thanks, Ron.”

Cale took a sip from the cup that Ron brought over. He then started to frown.

“It’s not cold water?”

“It is lemonade.”

He really is an insidious man. He knows that, just like Kim Rok Soo, the original Cale hates sour things. But he still chose to bring lemonade, which would take more work to prepare than cold water. Cale wanted to be angry at the sour taste, but he could not do so because he was afraid of that assassin old man. He could only drink the lemonade.

“Thanks, it was wonderful.”

“No problem. Young master. We should be able to head to the study soon.”

“Great.”

Ron’s benign and gentle smile caused Cale to have the chills. He once again clenched onto the 10 million gallon cheque for support.

Money really was the only thing you could trust.

Chapter 4

They Met (1)

He could not think about anything else while food was in front of him. He could not even prevent the admiration that was flowing out of his mouth.

“Ha. It’s so delicious.”

The deputy butler Hans flinched at the words that came out of Cale’s mouth. Cale was sitting alone at the table, with Hans standing next to him.

Other than breakfast, Count Henituse’s family tended to take care of the other meals freely. To be honest, it was mainly because they each had their own responsibilities.

Nobody said that it was easy to be a noble.

Especially if you were in administration or politics, you had to follow a strict schedule, dropping everything else if you received an order from someone above you.

Count Deruth had responsibilities as the lord of the region, making it difficult to share other meals together, while Cale’s younger siblings timed their meals based on their studies. The Countess was busy interacting with the wives of the influential households in the region, as well as other tasks.

‘Now that I think about it.’

Cale put the fork down after suddenly remembering something. Hans started to get nervous, thinking to himself that this was the normal Cale. He was worried because he did not know when that fork may fly toward his face. Cale did not care whether Hans was nervous or not as he got lost in his own thoughts.

‘There are a lot of experts hiding as artists or craftsmen.’

The Roan Kingdom was pretty advanced in construction and the arts, especially sculpting. It was because there was a lot of marble in the Roan Kingdom. Thanks to

that, the Henituse region became the fifth best marble mining region, bringing in a lot of money.

Furthermore, a mountain range took up most of Count Henituse's region. Even though it was located in the northwest, the mountains were extremely fertile, allowing the residents to grow grapes in between the mountains for wine. Although there was not a large quantity of wine from these fields, it were still treated as one of the best wines in the entire continent.

However, Cale's mind was filled more about the, 'strong individuals,' and not these facts. He had even missed lunch as he sat in the study thinking about that all day.

'Why are there so many experts on this stupid land? This isn't the murim.'

There were so many hermit experts here like in the murim. That was why Cale came to a conclusion.

Do not mess with just anybody.

An average looking chef could be a poison expert, and the person working in the repair shop could be someone who viciously killed people with his wires. This was that type of land.

"Sigh."

A deep sigh came out of Cale's mouth. He had just completed his plan to prevent himself from dying and living peacefully.

"Young master."

Cale, who wanted to let out another sigh, turned his gaze to the source of the cautious voice. It was the deputy butler Hans.

"What?"

"Should I get them to make something else?"

"Huh?"

Hans held back his sigh after seeing Cale frowning and opening his eyes widely. He was thinking that Cale would now flip the table. Hans didn't know why the Count would assign him to take care of Cale, but held back his rising despair as he waited for Cale's response.

And Cale did respond.

"Why would you remake something this delicious?"

"...Excuse me?"

Cale picked his fork back up and sliced the meat. Dinner was even fancier than breakfast. It was not delicious because he had never had something like this when he was still Kim Rok Soo, but because it was an extravagant taste, even for the original Cale.

Kim Rok Soo didn't know how Cale grew up, but the original Cale had issues with anything that was not fancy. He liked that fact quite a bit. Everybody knew that was the case and only brought the best of the best.

Cale put a piece of the well-cooked, but still juicy, piece of steak in his mouth as he asked Hans. His attitude was one that said he did not care about etiquettes at all.

"Hans, who made this meal?"

"Ah, it was second chef Beacrox."

...Cale suddenly lost his appetite.

Beacrox. He was clean cut and was the son of the servant Ron. However, unlike his father, he specialized in the way of the sword and not assassinations. Beacrox was also obsessed with cleanliness and sharpened his spotless blade every day, using that same sword to slice the heads of his enemies off their bodies.

'...He also specializes in torture.'

That kind of guy ends up admiring Choi Han's sword skill and chooses to follow him. His father Ron makes a deal with Choi Han to help him, and chooses to leave with the two of them for the sake of his son. Although he may not look like it, Ron cherishes his

son quite a bit.

Cale looked down at the medium rare steak that was still slightly pink on the inside and gulped a few times.

‘I can’t allow my blood to shed like this steak.’

He turned his gaze toward Hans who was still looking at him before cutting another piece of steak and putting it in his mouth.

“It is delicious. He is Ron’s son, right? I did not know he was such a talented chef.”

“...I will deliver your message to chef Beacrox. I’m sure he will be very happy to know that young master Cale complimented his cooking.”

“Is that so? Let him know that I truly enjoyed this delicious meal.”

“...Yes, sir.”

Hans was looking at Cale with a stiff expression, but Cale had made up his mind. He was not going to mess with Beacrox and would work to make a good impression.

Cale enjoyed the meal once again with a relaxed heart. Everything will be settled once he made Beacrox run into Choi Han and leave the region. Cale had already made what he thought to be a pretty good plan to make that happen.

Just like during breakfast, Cale completely emptied the dishes. He had a satisfied smile on his face as he got up and looked toward Hans.

“Hans, why did you suddenly end up being assigned to me?”

Hans had mentioned before dinner that his father, Deruth, had sent him to personally handle Cale’s needs. Although Cale did not know about the situation in Count Henituse’s family once Choi Han leaves, Hans was extremely skilled and probably had the best chance of all the deputy butlers in becoming the official butler.

Hans slightly bowed his head and answered the question.

“The Count-nim was concerned after hearing that young master had missed a meal

while working in the study and ordered me to make sure that the young master makes sure to eat every meal. As a result, I will be overseeing just the meal-related duties for the young master.”

To be specific, Hans was responsible for the meals.

“Is that so? My father did something he didn’t need to do. I would eat properly on my own. But I guess I would not have realized it was time for dinner if Hans did not come tell me.”

Cale was busy writing down all the fateful encounters in the first five volumes of the novel in Korean. After leaving the dining room, Cale smiled toward Hans.

“Hans, take good care of me.”

“Ah, of course. Please take good care of me as well. I will do my best.”

Hans stumbled a bit as he answered, but Cale just let it be. Cale saw Ron standing there as soon as he opened the door and started to frown.

“Ron, didn’t I tell you to go eat?”

Cale told him to go away because he did not want to see this old man’s face, but he would not leave. He just roamed around Cale like a fly. Ron had been waiting outside the door when he was in the study, but even that got on Cale’s nerves.

“Young master, it is my duty to take care of you.”

Cale clicked his tongue after seeing Ron smiling at him. He then threw a bit of a tantrum.

“Enough. I don’t need it so go eat. Why don’t you go eat even when I tell you to go eat? Don’t follow me. You know my temper if you do, right?”

Cale threatened Ron with his gaze to reinforce that he did not want Ron to follow as he headed back to the study. When he peeked back, Ron was standing there with a stiff expression while Hans was looking towards him with shock.

‘Should I not have thrown a tantrum?’

Cale was scared of the assassin old man's stiff expression and turned his head back around before speeding back to the study.

The desk was completely empty.

The document that he had been working so hard on to write in Korean was already burnt in the fire. Cale had done so himself. There was nobody here who knew Korean, but he had to be careful. He had also told all the servants not to enter the study without his permission as well.

'I remember everything anyways.'

Kim Rok Soo had always been good at remembering things he enjoyed. Comic books, novels, movies, no matter what it was, as long as he enjoyed it, he was able to remember the names and appearances of the characters. Of course, if he didn't like something, he would not remember anything about it at all.

Cale leaned his back onto the chair and thought about what he needed to do in the future.

'First, I need to see Choi Han tomorrow and do that.'

The corners of his lips started to slowly rise.

'I need to pick up a shield.'

To live long without dying. He had no intentions of fighting.

In order to achieve that goal, the first step was raising his defenses. Second was finding a recovery method. Third was being faster than anybody else. Fourth was a strength that does not hurt him but can kill others.

Of course, the most important thing was to avoid the battlefield or anywhere where there may be bloodshed.

Cale thought about these so called plans of his as he slowly closed his eyes with satisfaction. He was thinking about it even as he fell asleep.

'At least, I will not be beaten up even when the time comes for it in the novel.'

The Indestructible Shield. Cale was thinking about this first shapeless strength he was going to get as he fell asleep. The corners of his lips that had gone up did not seem like they would ever come down.

Fateful encounters did not have an owner. It was a first come first serve type of deal.

The important day. What did he need to do in order to calm his nerves and be successful? Cale thought the first step was to have a hearty breakfast.

He felt like the only thing he did after coming to this world was eating, but he was going to enjoy the meal since he will be busy for a while starting tomorrow.

"Mm, ahem. I heard you fell asleep in the study last night."

"It somehow ended up that way."

He casually answered his father's question and continued to focus on the food. The fact that he did not even look at his father probably seemed rude, but it was fine since he was known for being the trash.

Cale finished eating first and stood up. The screeching noise of the chair made everyone focus on him.

"I will head out first."

It was not proper etiquette, but Cale's father Deruth just seemed to like his son no matter what. He looked back and forth at Cale and the empty plates before starting to smile.

"Sure. Go ahead."

"Thank you."

Cale needed to quickly leave because he had a lot of things to do today. But Deruth held him back for a second.

"You don't need any allowance today?"

“...I do need some.”

This really was a family with a lot of money. Cale held back his smile after hearing that his father will send him the allowance through Hans and left without even saying thank you. He did make eye contact with his brother, Basen, for a moment, but Cale just ignored it and headed toward the dining room door.

He saw that Ron was following him and shooed him away.

“Ron. I’m going out. Don’t look for me.”

Don’t look for me. That was Cale’s code for letting Ron know that he was leaving the estate that was located near the rear of the city to go drinking. Whenever he did this, Ron just smiled and told him to have a safe trip.

“Will you not go to the study today?”

But for some reason, Ron asked a rare question today. Cale started to frown.

“Ron, I don’t think that is something you need to be curious about.”

“...I understand, young master. I will be waiting for you.”

Cale’s forehead started to show even more wrinkles after hearing that Ron will be waiting for him.

“Don’t wait for me.”

Cale flicked his finger to beckon one of the servants standing at the entrance of the residence over and walked out with him. Cale still seemed angry, so that servant did not say anything as he followed behind Cale.

Once he exited the residence, he could see the garden and the gate of the exit farther away. It was only then that Cale let out a sigh and peeked backwards. He could see Ron’s stiff expression through the closing door.

‘I’m glad I was able to shake him off.’

He was glad that Ron did not follow him. However, Cale was afraid of that stiff expression. He was an assassin after all. Cale decided that he will treat Ron better and not make him angry starting the next interaction as he exited the estate. Of course, he was on a carriage.

He arrived at his destination a little bit later.

“Young master. Is this the right place?”

The driver cautiously asked as he opened the door. He then peeked toward the shop in front of him. The driver’s face was clearly filled with confusion.

“Yes. This is it.”

Cale, who was wearing clothes that would be fancy to others but was the simplest thing in his closet, walked out of the carriage. Nobody was around them, as they had moved away as soon as they saw the carriage with the count’s crest on it.

[The Fragrance of Tea with Poetry]

It was a tea shop that allowed you to read poems while drinking tea. This clean three story building looked to be pretty expensive. It was true that the owner of the shop was very wealthy. In fact, as the bastard son of a concubine of a large merchant guild, he was even wealthier than Cale. The only thing was that he was living here while hiding that identity.

‘If I recall correctly, the owner goes to the capital around volume 3 to meet Choi Han there. It is there that he claims that, he may be a bastard son of a concubine of the merchant guild, but that he will become the owner of the merchant guild.’

The man who shouts and swears to Choi Han that he will become the owner of the merchant guild. Cale only read the first five volumes, and thus did not know if the man ever ended up becoming the owner of that merchant guild, but since he was one of the main character’s partners, he probably will succeed.

Cale looked toward the driver who was sweating like a hog and gave an order.

“You can leave now.”

“Excuse me?”

“Are you going to make me say the same thing twice?”

“No, that, do I not need to wait for you, young master?”

Cale casually answered as he opened the door to the tea shop.

“Yeah. I’ll be here for a while.”

Gulp. He could hear the driver’s gulp behind him, but a much clearer and pleasurable noise filled Cale’s ears. Clang. A quiet but clear bell sound announced Cale’s entrance into the tea shop.

Cale stood at the entrance and looked around the tea shop. It was still early, and there were not many people there. Cale could see that all of them were shocked to see him there.

Well, the novel did say there was nobody in this region who did not know about Cale. He was public enemy number one for the merchants because he had a tendency to break everything in their shops.

“Welcome.”

However, the owner of this shop warmly welcomed Cale in. Cale looked toward the baby pig-like man who welcomed him in from the counter.

‘He must be the owner.’

The wealthy bastard, Billos. His round face and full body definitely looked like a baby pig like the novel described. His charm was his extremely bright smile.

‘He looks like a piggy bank.’

Cale took out a gold coin and put it on the counter as he ordered.

“I plan on staying on the third floor all day today.”

Billos stared at Cale with a smile on his face. Cale pretended not to notice as he pointed

to the bookshelf.

“Any tea that is not bitter. Do you have novels here too or just poems?”

Clang. The sound of someone putting their teacup down rang through the shop. Cale just thought of it as someone putting the teacup down hard and looked toward Billos. He preferred novels to poems.

“Of course. We have a lot of novels as well, young master Cale.”

“Really? Then send up the most interesting book and a cup of tea.”

“Yes. I understand.”

Cale’s gold coin fell onto Billos’s chubby hands. Cale turned away as Billos tried to give him change.

“I’ll drink more tea later so just keep it.”

“...But it is still too much, young master.”

A gold coin was worth 1 million gallon. Having that coin, that was worth 1 million Korean won, Cale did something that he had always wanted to try.

“I have a lot of money. Consider it as your tip.”

Talking about how rich you are. Who cares if Billos actually has more money than he does? He also knew about many fateful encounters that will earn him a lot of money. Cale tried to look cool as he pointed toward the tables on the first floor with his chin.

“Well, if it is too much, you can treat everyone here to a cup of tea on me.”

Golden Bell. He wanted to do something like this once. After he told his father that he needed allowance, he received three gold coins which were worth a total of 3 million gallon.

“Young master, still...”

“Ah, enough. Just bring my tea.”

It really was good to be the trash. Cale did not care about being respectful as he headed up to the third floor. He could hear whispers coming from behind him, but he did not need to care because there were already enough rumors about him, the trash of the Count's family.

"Just like I thought."

There was nobody else on the third floor right now because it was early in the morning. Cale took a seat in the innermost corner of the third floor. He then looked out the window.

'This is the right spot.'

The spot where you could best see the Northern Gate of Western City. Cale planned to watch Choi Han from this location today.

Chapter 5

They Met (2)

‘He gets chased away from the gate early in the morning.’

Choi Han headed in the direction he remembered hearing about from the villagers after he finished burying all of his beloved villagers. He was heading toward Western City.

Choi Han had been transported to this world when he was a freshman in high school, but he had lived here for tens of years already. Of course, the fact that most of that life was spent trying to survive in the Forest of Darkness made him mature in a slightly twisted way, and, as such, he was more rational than anybody would expect after such an incident.

‘I need to go report this to the lord at the castle.’

Harris Village may have been a remote village, but it was still under Count Henituse’s jurisdiction. That was why Choi Han headed to Western City, hoping to at least prepare a small funeral for the villagers.

He was also planning on looking for information regarding the assassins he had killed when he had lost his calm, as he was unable to ask them any questions. However, sending the dead off properly came before revenge.

‘If you think about it, he really is an affectionate person.’

But losing all of the first people who showed him love after tens of years in the Forest of Darkness at once made it impossible for Choi Han’s mind to not become twisted. In the novel, that was when Cale messes with Choi Han and touches a nerve. He remembered what the Cale in the novel said to Choi Han.

[“Why should my father care whether or not some useless villagers are dead? This cup of alcohol in my hand is worth more than all of your useless lives combined.”]

Choi Han starts to laugh at Cale's words as he asks back.

["What an interesting thought. I am very curious to know whether you will change your mind or not."]

["Shall we test it out?"]

That test was beating Cale to a pulp so that he was almost dead. The amazing thing was that Cale never changed his mind even after he was beaten to a pulp.

"Ah, I'm getting the chills."

Cale started to rub his arm after seeing the goosebumps that were developing. He quickly took a sip of the tea that Billos had brought for him. He then looked out the window once again, only to get the chills right back.

'It's that punk.'

The moment the gates opened for the morning, a young man wearing clothes with black marks everywhere, such that it made it seem like the clothes were burnt in multiple places, approached the gate. It was Choi Han.

Cale did not get up from his seat as he observed Choi Han.

His speed was admirable, as he ran like a lunatic through a distance that would normally take a carriage a week to travel, but, as a result, he looked like a mess. Of course, the events in the village were responsible for a bit of his messy look as well.

The guard blocked Choi Han's path as he walked in with his head down, looking completely exhausted. Cale didn't know what they were saying, but he could see Choi Han shake his head at the guard's question.

'I'm sure they're asking if he has any identification.'

The guards of Western City were generally gentle, but they were strict when it came to the rules. They replicated their liege, Count Deruth's personality.

"They kicked him out."

As expected, Choi Han walked back out of the gate. He did not even throw a fit. After continuously running for a day, his slightly recovered conscience told him not to kill an innocent man.

‘Choi Han will now wait until night time before he stealthily jumps over the city wall to enter.’

He then runs into Cale who was busy drinking away.

Screech. Since Cale was alone, the sound of the chair being pushed as he stood up sounded pretty loud. He went downstairs and informed Billos who was at the counter.

“I’ll be back soon. Don’t clear my spot.”

“Yes, young master. I look forward to your return.”

Cale ignored the smile on Billos’s chubby face as he walked out of the tea shop.

“He didn’t break anything!”

Cale could hear someone’s voice coming from inside the shop, but he did not care. He needed to set the foundation to earn that Indestructible Shield today.

The Indestructible Shield.

It is not talking about a physical item. The best comparison might be a mage’s mana shield. Something that does not actually have a physical form. However, it was very different from a mana shield, as it was closer to superpower than magic.

The funny thing was that the human who created the power, but ended up dying, was someone who served a god but ended up being excommunicated.

‘All sorts of weird things are in this novel.’

As with the history of any fantasy world, this world also had its ancient history. During that ancient time, neither magic nor weaponry was developed.

Instead, it was a society where your own innate talent or talents gathered from supernatural occurrences played a pivotal role. The strongest powers in that society

were superpowers, divine powers, and natural forces. It was a very primitive time.

Some of those powers have lasted all the way until now, staying hidden in certain locations or items. It was possible to take those powers for yourself if you meet the right conditions.

Ancient powers.

The heroes would find these powers, however, these powers were all supporting powers, not strong enough to be used as a hero's mainstay.

These were the powers that Cale was looking to find.

'Everything but the divine powers.'

Whether it be god or angels or devils, Cale did not want to get involved with any of them.

That was why Cale was looking for the powers that people naturally developed or came from nature.

'That is the way to make sure I don't need to put in any effort.'

Those were the types of powers he was looking for. Something like sword art or magic would require him to put in effort to practice. He didn't want to do something like that.

Unlike other books, the ancient civilization in the novel, [The Birth of a Hero], was not that strong.

As civilization developed, the magic and summoning skills that were developed outshined the natural powers left behind by the ancient civilization. Superpowers were the same way. Most subtle superpowers would be blown away by a single hit from the, 'Aura,' that was used in present day.

It wasn't like the heroes just used these powers sparingly for no reason.

'And my goal is to collect these subtle superpowers to become decently strong.'

It was a satisfying goal. Especially because he also knew the ancient power that could

strengthen these subtle super powers.

In order to take the first step in his plan, Cale started to look for the ancient power that was hidden in Western City. He knew the requirement to earn that power.

“Youn, young master. Welcome.”

Cale just nodded his head at the baker, who bowed so low that it looked like his head might touch the ground, to respond. Gasp. He could hear the baker gasping, but Cale pretended not to hear it. He felt bad about how his trash reputation was making this baker so fearful.

“Give me some bread.”

“Excuse me?”

Cale pointed at all of the bread in the bakery and sternly responded.

“Everything from here to there.”

Clang. The gold coin that Cale took out started to spin on the counter.

“Pack it all up.”

The baker seemed to be frozen in place as Cale continued to speak.

“Two or three more gold coins should be enough for a week’s worth of bread, right?”

The baker’s gaze, which had been on the gold coin, moved to Cale. It was too much money to pay for the bread. Cale just stoically responded to the baker’s shaking eyes.

“I can go somewhere else if you don’t want it.”

“No, it is nothing like that! Young master! I will pack it as fast as possible!”

The baker was extremely respectful for a different reason than before as he moved around quickly. After a few minutes, Cale left the bakery with a bag full of bread over his shoulder.

Even though it was just bread, it weighed quite a bit. The weight made Cale start to frown, and he ignored the baker who was watching him leave as he stepped into the street.

Cale leisurely walked down the street, noticing that anybody who made eye contact with him would quickly turn and walk away. The majority of the people even ran away to avoid eye contact with him.

‘It really is different than Korea. It is truly a fantasy world.’

Cale looked around as he wandered around this market that gave off the typical fantasy feel.

“Mm.”

“Mmph.”

Any time he made eye contact with a merchant, they became shocked and avoided his gaze. Tsk tsk. Cale really must have lived up to his title of trash in the past. Cale was talking shit about himself as he walked past the market and toward the western part of Western City.

The slum is located to the west. No matter how wealthy a territory may be, there are always going to be poor people. In a situation like this, most people would probably expect something along these lines to happen.

‘Ah, it is a fateful encounter that you can earn by sharing food with the poor.’

Unfortunately, that was not the case.

Cale could feel people peeking at him as soon as he entered the slums. This was the place where both the idlest and the most vicious people lived together.

Although the poor may not know the face of their liege, the count, they knew Cale’s face. These people who had nothing needed to pay even closer attention to the type of person that would cause a ruckus in the market, pub, plaza, well, you name it, and Cale has probably caused a ruckus there too.

“Tsk.”

Even though they knew all these stories about Cale, they couldn't resist the sweet smell of the bread in Cale's bag. Cale just ignored all these gazes as he continued to walk.

The tip of his expensive leather shoe started to become dirty from the dirty water. An unknown stench also filled Cale's nose, making him naturally start to frown.

This made him start to walk even faster. The slums were on one side of a small hill and constituted of old houses. Cale was heading toward the top of that hill. As he got closer, the gazes and steps of the people following him started to lessen as well. Cale's sharp glare probably played a role in this as well.

'It's better here.'

After being freed from the stench, Cale stood at the top of the hill and turned around to look down at Western City. Of course, this hill was not as high as the count's estate. There was no way that they would allow the lord of the territory to live somewhere that was lower than that slums.

Cale came back to his senses as he headed toward a tree that was fenced off in all directions. The fence, that was made of planks the width of Cale's body, had an entrance that had rotted. It was easily broken once Cale pushed at the fence.

This large tree seemed to have lasted for hundreds of years. Trees in the slums were usually chopped into firewood or had its layers peeled off to make it useless, but this tree was not like that.

The reason was simple. The reason could be heard in Cale's ear. These two were the only two who had followed him until the end from the slums.

"You can't approach that t-tree!"

Cale ignored that warning. He heard another worried voice as well.

"You can't go there! It's a man-eating tree!"

A man-eating tree. Anyone who hung themselves on this tree became mummies overnight. Furthermore, any blood that lands on this tree instantly disappeared.

Finally, there was only dirt around this tree. Grass, and even weeds, were nowhere to be found.

This was the tree that Cale was looking for.

A long time ago, during ancient times, there was a person who loved food so much that his gluttony in the place of worship got him kicked out. That person ended up starving to death.

This tree is said to have grown on top of his body, and that person's grudge and strength were both in this tree. The Indestructible Shield that Cale was looking for was here.

How primitive, mysterious and strange was this! The majority of the ancient powers were mysterious like this.

Cale took a bread out of the bag and carefully observed a hole that was the size of an adult's head. He needed to first send away the owner of that voice before starting his work. However, before Cale could even say anything, the voice was even louder this time as they could no longer see Cale from outside the fence because he crouched down. The voice was shaking quite a bit.

"You're going to die! Don't do it!"

Cale pressed his temples with his fingers.

"Sigh."

The number of people following him decreased the closer he got to the man-eating tree at the top of the hill, however, the owner of that voice continued to follow him.

'There are always nosy punks no matter where you go.'

Cale frowned as he turned his head around. When he did, he noticed a girl who seemed to be around 10 years old, holding her younger brother's hand while looking at him. Her eyes were full of concern.

Seeing that Cale was frowning and staring at her, the young girl stumbled on her words

and started to mumble.

“It’s a man-eating tree. You’re going to d, die.”

“I won’t die.”

Cale took two breads out of the bag and threw it toward the little girl. It didn’t matter if it rolled on the ground because they were all individually wrapped.

“Take that and get lost.”

The young boy instantly grabbed the bread, but the young girl was still hesitating. In the end, Cale needed to use his identity. He stood up and pushed his head outside of the fence.

“You two don’t know about Cale the trash?”

The young girl’s face turned pale. Her younger brother just looked toward Cale before picking up the other bread for his sister and started to tug on her arm.

“Noona.”

“Uh huh.”

The young girl looked back and forth at the tree and Cale even as she was being pulled.

“You can’t die.”

Cale clicked his tongue at the young girl who continued to say that, before making sure nobody else was around as he sat down underneath the tree. Nobody would be able to see what he was doing unless they came right up to the fence.

“Let’s get started.”

He started by taking a loaf of bread out of the bag and putting it into that hole. His hand soon disappeared into the darkness underneath the tree, and Cale could feel a cold sensation as the bread in his hand disappeared.

He felt like his whole hand might be sucked in, and quickly took it out.

The darkness in the hole underneath the tree was still the same.

“If you die with a grudge, you have to resolve that grudge.”

This man-eating tree wasn't actually a man-eating tree. It was a tree that would eat anything. It was the side effect of the power that was left behind by the person who starved to death. But for such a thing to be related to an ancient strength... it was comical, but made it seem more realistic.

‘I remember it said I need to feed it until the darkness disappears.’

The darkness in the hole underneath the tree was not the result of shade. It was darkness formed by the grudge.

This could not be done with other people. One person had to continue to provide a large amount of food until the darkness disappeared. Once the darkness finally disappears, the light that was hiding underneath would appear.

Once he eats that light, the, ‘Indestructible Shield,’ will become Cale’s.

“Eat all you want.”

Cale put the opening of the bag into the hole and emptied all of the bread into it. In a normal situation, that small hole should have become filled with bread, however, only the darkness continued to remain once Cale removed the bag.

“I guess I’ll need about ten more large bags.”

The darkness in the hole was slightly fainter than before.

Ten bags. Only someone like Cale, with 3 million gallons as allowance, could casually say such a thing.

Rumble-

An odd cry seemed to resonate from the tree. It seemed to be saying that it was hungry and asking for more food. Cale felt like the darkness might suddenly reach out and grab him.

“...It is a bit scary.”

Cale quickly got up. He felt like he should not be here for a long time.

“Just what can a stupid grudge do?”

Gluttony was a scary thing.

“I’ll come back tomorrow.”

Cale said goodbye to the rumbling tree as if it was a person and exited the fenced area. Cale noticed the siblings eating the bread as soon as he entered the slums.

For someone who was claiming that he should not go there because it was a man-eating tree, they seemed to be enjoying the breads. They must be liking the flavor, because both of them seemed very happy.

“My my.”

Cale snorted at the siblings before ignoring their gazes. However, their gazes were not on him, but on the bag that was filled with bread earlier but was now empty. They were probably curious.

But what could they do? They couldn’t do anything.

These children were probably too scared to even go near the man-eating tree. However, it is always good to be on the safe side. It would be bad if they went up to the tree and put their head into the hole and got eaten.

[The children of the slums have no fear. It was because they treasured a single grain of rice more than a blade coming their way. Death is always around them, so they do not fear death. They fear being hungry more than death.]

It was something that was written in [The Birth of a Hero].

That was why Cale decided to speak to the pair of siblings.

“If you want to eat bread again tomorrow, don’t say a thing.”

The two siblings did not say anything. They were immediately following Cale's order. The young girl, who seemed hesitant earlier, put her hand on her brother's mouth and pretended to not see Cale. Cale smiled and thought that she was pretty smart, as he quickly left the slums.

The people in the slums who knew Cale had gone to the top of the hill were looking at him wondering what crazy thing he was doing now, but Cale liked that kind of gaze.

The people outside the slums looked at Cale weirdly as well, but Cale didn't care about these gazes.

"Ah, young master. You are back."

Once Cale returned to the tea shop, Billos greeted him pretty happily.

"Yes. Bring me a new cup of tea. A refreshing one this time."

Cale headed back to his seat on the third floor. It should have been pretty busy at this time, but there was nobody else on the third floor. They were all avoiding the trash of the Count's family. That was why Cale could relax.

"Here is your tea, young master. I also brought up some desserts."

"Ah, great. Thanks."

Cale only continued to look toward the city gate as he took a sip of the tea. Billos observed Cale's face with an odd expression before he quietly left the third floor. It was weird to hear Cale thanking someone.

Cale continued to order tea and desserts as he looked outside the window until the sky slowly turned orange and the sun set. He only got up when night arrived and it was dark outside.

It was now time to go interact with the dangerous dude who will come from outside the wall.

Chapter 6

They Met (3)

When does a person get more angry?

Is it when they get hit by a strong straight or when they are hit five or six times by annoying jabs?

It is, of course, the latter.

Cale threw five jabs before he was hit. Which means, one jab should be okay.

“Are you heading out?”

“Yes.”

There were not many people left in the tea shop.

It was past 9pm. This was the time when there were more people in the bars than tea shops. Since this was the time that the people mining in the pits went to drink, the bar should be full of people.

“I look forward to your next visit, young master.”

Cale nodded his head at Billos’s statement.

“The tea was great.”

Cale shared his observations with Billos.

“And the book was good even though I only got through half of it. I especially liked the main character whose abilities are appreciated and the way he grows.”

In that instant, the corner of Billos’s eyebrows frowned for a moment before returning to normal. His eyes were cloudy as he observed Cale.

However, Cale did not notice, as he was trying to remember the contents of the book. He was too worried about Choi Han that he did not pay too much attention to it.

However, it was still fun to read while having this sense of urgency in his heart.

It might be an auto-setting from possessing the original Cale's body, but Cale was able to understand the language of this world, and had no issues reading and enjoying the book. A smile formed on Cale's face as he continued to speak to Billos, who was standing there with a blank expression on his face.

"Don't let anyone else read that book, so that I can read it whenever I come."

This truly was the immature son of the Count, who was trying to monopolize someone else's property. Billos, the bastard son of a wealthy merchant guild might not like it, but what could he do? Cale was the son of the Count.

"Yes! I will reserve this book only for young master Cale!"

However, Billos's response was different from what Cale expected. Billos smiled brightly as he urged Cale to come back soon.

"Please come again soon. I will be waiting for you."

"Sure, whatever."

Cale didn't want to go, but had to leave to go meet Choi Han. Ring. The bell rang once more and it suddenly felt like the tea shop became louder once Cale left.

However, it was even louder outside the tea shop than it was inside. Even though this territory was far from the capital, the fact that a lot of artists resided here and that they had a special product made it a popular location. These individuals, as well as the miners who were looking to relax after a long day in the mines, all were out late to drink.

Cale walked that street alone.

'If you think about it, he really is a unique person.'

Normally in fantasies or martial arts novels, the trash of the family tend to hang out

with the gangsters or bad crowds. They drink, fool around with women, and cause a ruckus on the streets or stores.

The funny thing was that Cale Henituse actually hated gangsters and scammers. In fact, he despised them.

‘He thought that they were all scumbags.’

The worst of all scumbags. It was better to at least be the citizens who worked hard even though there was no hopes for a better future.

That was why he never beat people up when he was drunk but had no issues throwing things at the gangsters he saw. Well, attempted to throw things, since his aim when drunk was terrible.

Maybe that was the reason.

‘Aigoo, young master, you’re here?’

The owner of the bar was extremely afraid of Cale. It was because of that one day when Cale broke pretty much everything around where he was sitting to drink. In fact, Cale was probably number one on the blacklist for Western City bars.

He did not respond to the owner’s greeting and just threw a gold coin at him.

“Bring a bottle of my usual. Oh, and roasted chicken breast. Don’t put salt on it.”

“Excuse me? Y, you don’t want to find a seat first?”

Cale started to frown. The owner immediately waved his hands and bowed his head.

“Immediately! I will bring it immediately!”

The owner was moving quickly, but it looked like he was smiling. It was because it looked like Cale was not planning on sitting down. Cale looked around the bar that became quiet once he walked in. Everyone was avoiding his gaze and turned their heads. It was like they were wondering why he had to choose this bar of all bars in the city. The gangsters and scammers in the bar were all extremely nervous right now.

“Tsk.”

The sound of Cale clicking his tongue could be heard through the silence in the bar.

“Young master, here is the bottle you requested.”

“Great.”

Cale grabbed the bottle and bag of chicken. It was the alcohol he drank often. It was probably the most expensive alcohol in this bar. He accepted the bottle with no regret and left the bar.

Cale immediately opened the bottle and drank about half of it as soon as he stepped out of the bar.

“Oh.”

The alcohol tasted pretty good. Since Cale had a high tolerance to alcohol, it did not affect him at all to drink half of the bottle at once. He just flushed easily, making people think he was a lightweight.

Cale quickly walked along with the bottle in his hand.

He walked back past the tea shop he stayed in all day until he saw the guards stiffen up after seeing him. Seeing them acting like that made him want to go out of the gate, but unfortunately, that was not his destination.

“Ah, I’m starting to get hot.”

Cale felt himself heating up as he continued to drink. He walked a bit further until he reached the city wall not too far away. The tall city wall that started at the gate seemed to defend against any potential intruders.

‘Well it depends on the person.’

Cale recalled the information from the book.

‘Approximately 100 steps from the city gate.’

That was the location where Choi Han jumped over the city wall. Cale clenched the bottle in his hand as he quickly ran toward the location. There were not many people on the streets because it was the residential area.

Cale took a deep breath once he arrived at the calculated location.

Exactly 100 steps away from the city gate. It was a corner of the residential area so there wasn't any other light other than the torch the guards put on top of the wall, as well as the lights coming out of the residential windows.

But that was enough light. Cale slowly approached his destination after letting his eyes adjust to the dark.

'Just as I expected.'

He could see something curled up underneath the city wall. Actually, there were multiple things.

Delicate looking things that were shaking because of the cold. Cale continued to walk toward the location. He could hear the voices of the curled up lifeforms.

Meow Meeeeeow.

Two cats were meowing as they lay curled up underneath the city wall. Cale started to smile.

'It's right here.'

He found the right spot. The moment Choi Han jumps over the wall, a baby kitten is body slammed by the alpha cat of the neighborhood and gets sent tumbling to the city wall. Choi Han quickly twists his body to avoid landing on the kitten. This was a world where coincidences played a big role.

'He really is a good guy.'

Choi Han twists his ankle after unexpectedly twisting his body to avoid hurting the kitten. He had run like crazy to reach Western City after killing tens of people for the first time and burying the corpses of the villagers. His body had reached its limit making him unable to land properly after making such a movement.

Meeeeow Meeeeeeow.

Cale gazed at the kitten that was curled up and shaking, as well as the other kitten that seemed to be its sibling licking the shaking kitten. He then turned his gaze.

He turned to look at one of the alleys that was close to where was standing. He could see him.

‘I found him.’

The man who was wincing in pain while looking like one of the homeless that lived in the slums. Cale could see the shaggy black hair and the old and burnt clothes.

According to the novel, Cale and Choi Han would meet tomorrow. Tonight was the night Cale got drunk and got the scar on his side. Things were already different than in the novel, even though it was just minor details.

Cale stood up as he had crouched down to look at the kittens. Choi Han must have felt his gaze from a few moments ago, as Choi Han slowly raised his head and his eyes focused on Cale through his shaggy black hair.

‘Damn it, I’m shaking.’

Cale could hear his heart going crazy.

Although it was too dark to see clearly, Choi Han’s eyes that Cale could see through his hair were extremely cold.

Cale thought that it was a good idea that he chose to drink.

Cale congratulated himself for making such a smart decision and calmed himself down as much as possible. Jab. He needed to launch a jab and leave a good first impression.

Cale took a deep breath as he started to speak to Choi Han who was staring at him.

“You look like you are hungry.”

Tsk tsk. Cale clicked his tongue and took the chicken breast out of the bag. Then with an extremely gentle movement, Cale offered the roasted chicken breast not to Choi

Han, but to the kittens.

“You poor things. Go ahead and eat it.”

Cale didn't know that the kittens would be this small. He hope that they could still eat the chicken breast. Tsk. He clicked his tongue as he ripped the chicken breast into pieces so that the kittens could eat it better.

He was wondering what the hell he was doing crouching here feeding these kittens. To be honest, Cale did not like cats. However, Choi Han treasured small animals.

Grrroooooowl. Groooooowl.

The injured kitten must have understood Cale's dislike for cats, as it showed its teeth and started to growl, but Cale started to pet the kitten's silver fur as he looked into its golden eyes. The kitten must not have liked it, as it did its best to avoid Cale's hand.

“You poor things. Eat this and get better soon.”

He didn't even look at Choi Han when he said that, however, he was thinking that Choi Han was definitely looking at him.

“Do you have somewhere to go?”

He did not hear a response. However, Cale continued to speak. The guards would soon come to patrol this area, and he needed to make a move before Choi Han started to limp away to avoid the guards.

“Or a place to stay?”

Cale petted the growling silver furred kitten with golden eyes and pushed away the red kitten that was trying to attack him as he asked. The red kitten kept trying to hit Cale for some reason. It's golden eyes, that matched its sibling's eyes, shined brightly even in the darkness.

But Cale needed to focus on Choi Han.

“Are you hungry?”

There still was no response. Cale had expected this.

Choi Han was probably observing him right now, but he also probably wanted to rest.

Both his body and mind had reached their limit. In addition, he had received a huge shock just the other day. For someone like Choi Han who had lived on his own without any human contact other than the villagers of that small village, Western City was completely foreign to him. He may have lived for tens of years already, but he was still young.

“Are you not going to say anything?”

“...Why are you talking to me?”

Choi Han finally seemed to have decided that Cale was weak.

Cale was weak enough that he could easily kill him even though he was at his limits. That was why Choi Han felt that it would be okay to accept Cale’s goodwill even though he had no idea why Cale was being nice to him.

Cale stood up and walked toward Choi Han. The guards would soon come patrolling through this location.

“Hey.”

He could see Choi Han’s situation better once he got closer. He was a mess. However, maybe it was because he was the main character, but his eyes were clear. The black hair and black pupils that showed that Choi Han was Korean were actually quite nice to see. That was why Cale smiled as he casually spoke to Choi Han.

“Follow me. I’ll feed you.”

The best first impression was to be the one who provides delicious food.

Chapter 7

They Met (4)

Choi Han stopped leaning against the wall and pushed his body up.

His body was leaning to his left probably because his right ankle was uncomfortable, but Cale did not help him or say anything about him. There was no reason to be any nicer to him than he had already been.

Cale told Choi Han to follow him as he headed toward the Count's estate. However, an existence blocked his path.

Meeeeeeeeow.

The red furred golden eyed kitten ran toward Cale and rubbed its cheeks on Cale's shoes. Cale started to frown. He didn't like cats, but this one seemed pretty cute. However, he suddenly felt chills all over his body and turned around. Choi Han was staring at him.

'Damn it.'

Cale awkwardly started to pet the kitten.

"It seems like it likes me. But I have to go. See you next time."

Cale never understood why people talked to animals. However, Cale, who had now become that person that was speaking to animals, quickly stood back up and walked away from the kitten.

Grroooooowl.

The silver furred golden-eyed kitten growled as if it was telling the red-furred kitten to come back while telling Cale to get lost. The red-furred kitten seemed to not want to go back as it continued to look back at Cale as it walked away. However, Cale did not turn back.

Meow, meooooooooow.

The sad cries of the kittens were getting farther away. Cale took a peek backwards. Choi Han was limping, but keeping up with him.

They made eye contact once more. Cale flinched as he quickly turned his head back. He was walking slowly to make it easier for Choi Han to keep up.

They passed the residential area and Cale took another sip of the alcohol.

The bars. Market. Plaza. They then passed the residences of the wealthy and finally arrived at the Count's estate located in the rear of the city.

"What are you doing?"

Cale looked toward Choi Han, who had stopped moving. Choi Han must have seen how the soldiers greeted Cale, as well as how the citizens avoided him, on their way here.

Choi Han was probably questioning whether it really would be easy to kill Cale.

Cale asked once more.

"Are you not going to come?"

As expected, Choi Han resumed walking. His reason for following Cale now was probably to get some information as well as to host the funeral for the villagers of Harris Village.

"Y, young master?"

As soon as Cale stood at the main entrance of the estate, the guards and knights stumbled over their words as they greeted him.

'Sigh. I wish they would stop with that y, young master business.'

It was odd hearing them stumbling over their words every time. Since he possessed the body of a trash, he was trying his best to act like one. It was easier to be a trash young master than a noble young master. He was trying to make his life as easy as

possible. Cale frowned at the guards' stumbling of words while the guards quickly opened the gate.

"Please head on in."

Cale turned back to look at Choi Han. The rest of them looked at Choi Han as well. They were probably curious about this beggar that followed their young master back. The knights observed Choi Han with suspicion in their eyes.

"Follow me."

Choi Han should know of Cale's status by now. He continued to limp as he approached Cale. Cale looked calm and turned back as soon as he saw that Choi Han was behind him and entered through the gate.

But his heart was going crazy.

'I'm sure he's thinking about taking me as a hostage if something dangerous happens. That is probably why he stood right behind me.'

He was sure that Choi Han would not kill him. However, just thinking about being taken as hostage caused serious mental strain that Cale frowned as he looked at the two knights who were following them.

'Don't follow me.'

The knights flinched at Cale's clear order. They looked back and forth between Cale and Choi Han before one of the knights approached Choi Han and Cale with a stiff expression on his face.

The knights cared about their creed more than anything else. It was fitting of the knights that Deruth treasured.

'Well, I guess they have to act like this to be good knights.'

Cale was satisfied at the knight's response to this beggar-like foreigner and left the knight alone to follow them. He just led Choi Han to the entrance of the Count's residence.

“Young master, you’re back.”

“...Yes, Ron.”

This scary old man. He had been waiting for Cale outside the door. Cale didn’t expect him to really be waiting. Cale was scared, but thought that it was actually for the better.

Ron’s gaze turned toward Choi Han, and his benign smile suddenly stiffened.

‘Ron should be at a level where he can estimate Choi Han’s strength.’

Choi Han also stared back at Ron. Cale didn’t care what kind of attacks they were sending each other through their eyes and did what he needed to do. He was not done just yet.

“Follow me.”

Cale called out to Choi Han once more and started to walk. The servant, Ron, quickly followed Cale.

“Young master, what is going on? I will take care of this guest if you tell me what is needed.”

“No need.”

Someone else approached Cale as Ron was speaking.

“Young master. You returned after drinking today.”

It was the deputy butler Hans.

‘Ah, he was responsible for me.’

Cale clicked his tongue and ignored Hans’s statement. Instead, he lifted up the alcohol bottle and pointed toward Hans. It was at that moment.

“Aaack!”

Hans covered his face with both of his arms as he curled up. Silence filled the air.

“Tsk.”

Cale clicked his tongue and Hans looked up with a face completely red from embarrassment as he looked back at Cale.

“Put this away.”

“Yes.”

Hans received the alcohol bottle from Cale with a blank expression on his face.

“I will actually throw it at you next time.”

Hans turned pale at Cale’s words. Cale did not seem to care at all as he continued to walk. With the inclusion of Hans, there were now a total of four people following him. Cale peeked every so often to make sure they were following him properly and arrived at his destination.

Kitchen #2. Cale pushed the door open as soon as he saw the sign.

“Young master?”

He could hear Hans’s confused voice behind him. However, there was a thick smile on Cale’s face. The end was near.

Now, Beacrox and Choi Han will meet. Cale’s heart was beating fast. The door easily opened. Cale’s expression stiffened at the scene in front of him inside the door.

Clang. Clang.

Second Chef Beacrox was smiling while sharpening his blade. He seemed to be enjoying himself while sharpening his blade all alone in kitchen #2. However, that smile disappeared as soon as he saw Cale.

That was why Cale was scared. It was always scary to deal with lunatics. You never knew what crazy things a lunatic would do.

Cale made a move before Beacrox could respond. He put a hand on Choi Han’s shoulder and pointed at him.

“Give him something to eat.”

“Excuse me?”

Beacrox asked with a stiff expression on his face. The sharp blade in his hand was shining as it reflected the light. Cale calmed his shaking heart as he said it once more.

“Give him something to eat. He’s hungry.”

Ho. The knight let out a shocked noise from the back, but Cale did not have the time to pay attention to that right now. He waited for Beacrox’s response with anxiety. Finally, Beacrox answered with a stiff expression still on his face.

“I will do as you instructed, young master.”

It was done.

Beacrox and Choi Han. And even Ron, someone that he did not expect. The three of them were connected now.

A bright smile formed on Cale’s face. He could finally relax as he gave Beacrox another order with a slightly higher tone.

“Also prepare something for me. I’m hungry.”

Cale thought about the steak from last night’s dinner.

“Your steak last night was the best. You are a great chef.”

The tip of Beacrox’s knife slightly shook.

“Something like that steak would be a wonderful meal. Prepare it quickly.”

Cale turned around without waiting for Beacrox’s response. He then left the kitchen and headed towards his chamber. The knight and Hans followed him, and Hans quickly asked.

“What should I do about that guest?”

“I guess he is my guest. You take care of it.”

Since he connected the three of them, he didn't want to deal with anything else for today.

Beacrox and Ron should be able to tell Choi Han's strength. In the novel, Beacrox originally swears his loyalty to Choi Han because of his strength, so he should pledge his loyalty after figuring out Choi Han's strength this time too. Of course, Cale had some other plans in the case that Beacrox was unable to determine Choi Han's strength.

All Cale had to do was make Choi Han beat someone or something up, without it being him. Oh, and Beacrox had to be there to watch.

Even if it might have some holes, Cale had thought about a lot of different things.

“Hans. Stop annoying me and just bring the meal over to my chamber when it's ready.”

As expected, Ron did not follow him. Cale left the knight and Hans outside his chamber door as he closed the door and laid down on the bed. He was happy. His exhaustion and the alcohol made him fall asleep before the food ever showed up.

That was why he did not know that Beacrox's cooking knife slashed toward Choi Han's neck and that Ron's sharp dagger was flung toward Choi Han's heart. Of course, both of their attacks had failed.

Well, this was actually a situation that nobody, other than the three involved individuals, would know about.

Chapter 8

Picked It Up (1)

Late at night.

Deputy butler Hans had to stand in front of Count Deruth. He started to make his report while Deruth quietly listened until he was finished.

“He is currently sleeping in his room.”

Hans finally finished his report and Deruth started to speak.

“The driver reported that he went to the Flynn Merchant Guild’s illegitimate sons tea shop. Today, he brought a young man whose identity we cannot verify. In terms of drinking, he only drank a little bit and kept a clear head.”

Hans’s report was short, but Deruth found that short report interesting.

“Should we put a tail on him?”

He waved his hand to oppose Hans’s question. He didn’t want to know what his son was doing on the outside to the point he would put a tail on him.

“No need. As long as he is in the city, anything he does is under my authority to handle.”

Deruth cherished Hans the most out of all the young deputy butlers. It was because he fulfilled orders well and was a good person.

“Do what you have been doing in terms of observing Cale inside the house and reporting what you see.”

“I understand.”

Hans did not say anything else as he bowed his head.

Deruth. He was someone who did not have any special abilities nor any solid networks. However, just like the previous Count, he was able to rule over the Henituse territory and grow his wealth by selling marble and wine. He was someone who was able to protect his territory properly.

‘Cale has changed.’

Cale felt different than normal. It wasn’t that he suddenly got smarter or stronger, but that his actions were clearly different from before.

“Ah, Hans.”

“Yes, Count-nim?”

“Bring me some information about the Flynn Merchant Guild.”

Tea shop owner, Billos. Deruth knew about this bastard son of the Flynn Merchant Guild. This was because the Henituse’s largest trading partner for wine was the Flynn Merchant Guild.

“I will get right on it.”

“Great.”

Deruth watched Hans walk out of his office as he started to think. There was a lot of things for him to think about other than the change in Cale’s demeanor.

The atmosphere around the continent was dangerous. It was like a volcano right before it erupts. Deruth could clearly feel the dangerous atmosphere despite the fact that he was in the corner of the kingdom. It was because he was always receiving an endless amount of information about it. But the message from the Imperial Court that he received today made Deruth even more certain about the current atmosphere of the continent.

The former Counts of the Henituse territory always passed on a single piece of advice to the next in power.

‘There is no need to be recorded in history. Just live for peace and happiness.’

"I guess I need to reinforce the city walls."

He may not be a good fighter, but Deruth was always thinking about ways to protect himself and his family.

There are times when the body is stronger than the mind.

"Young master, you were sleeping so soundly that I did not wake you up."

Cale had slept in. The fact that Ron brought lemonade instead of cold water again made things even worse. However, Cale could not say anything about it.

It was because there was a bandage around Ron's neck.

"Are you hurt?"

"...Are you worrying about me?"

"No. It's just annoying to look at."

"It is nothing much. I was just scratched by a cat's claw."

Is a 'cat,' another reference to an innocent person?

Cale was sure that someone would have had their fated meeting last night. He avoided the gaze of Ron, who was smiling, and headed toward the chambers window. He needed to move faster because he slept in.

"Will you be heading out right away?"

"Yes. I'll take care of everything on my own outside."

"I understand. Oh, young master."

Cale let go of the door handle and turned to look at Ron. Ron had an odd smile on his face.

"What do you think about the lemonade?"

"Great. It's delicious."

Ron's voice became an octave lower.

"...Is that so?"

"Yes."

‘What kind of question was that?’

Since Ron was someone he could not ignore, Cale just answered the question as nicely as possible while opening the door.

Slam. He then quickly closed it right back.

“...Ron.”

Ron approached Cale at his calling and whispered with a smile on his face.

“Young master, were you surprised? Your guest from yesterday is waiting for you outside.”

Cale was surprised. Cale had seen Choi Han staring at him as soon as he opened the door, which caused him to close the door in shock. His hand headed to the inner pocket of his shirt. The 10 million gallons in his pocket calmed him down.

Ron gazed toward Cale as he continued to speak.

“I didn’t have a chance to tell you because you opened the door right away. I told him to wait comfortably in his room, but he insisted that he needed to see you and waited outside the door.”

‘Didn’t have a chance to tell me my ass.’

Cale could not say anything to this terrible old man who definitely had the chance but chose not to tell him. Cale moved a step away from Ron as he opened the door again.

“What’s going on?”

Cale pretended like he never slammed the door as he started to chat with Choi Han. He was paying attention to Choi Han’s appearance as he asked.

After taking a shower, fixing his hair, and wearing new clothes, a pure and clean feeling was coming from Choi Han. However, it was difficult to think like that after seeing his eyes.

Choi Han was still in a twisted state. That was why looking at his eyes made Cale feel

a bit scared. Choi Han was also staring back at Cale before finally starting to speak.

“Pay you back.”

“Huh?”

“I will pay you back for the meal.”

Choi Han was speaking formally unlike yesterday. More importantly, Cale started to frown at the words, ‘pay you back.’

‘Pay me back? Is he trying to make me have a heart attack?’

Who in their right mind would use Choi Han for manual labor? Cale just wanted Choi Han to get out of this city as soon as possible.

Of course, Choi Han would agree to help Cale out if he said it was to pay him back. He was that kind of person. However, Cale didn’t have anything he needed from Choi Han.

“No need. Is there anything else you need?”

He quickly rejected Choi Han’s offer and asked if there was anything else he needed. Choi Han started to observe Cale even more closely. That gaze made Cale think about how Cale got beaten to a pulp in the novel, and his arms started to develop goosebumps. Choi Han started to speak at that point.

“There is something I would like to request for your help.”

Cale closed his eyes at the word, ‘help.’ He did not want to get involved with Choi Han. The, ‘help,’ that Choi Han would ask about could be nothing other than something regarding Harris Village.

The Cale in the novel called the villagers of Harris Village useless, and ended up getting beaten up because of it. Cale thought about that as he opened his mouth.

“Tell Hans your request. He will take care of everything.”

After opening his eyes again, Cale made eye contact with Choi Han, who was standing there as still as a statue.

“He is a talented deputy butler. He will be able to help you out with almost any normal request.”

Cale then put a hand on Ron's shoulder. He could feel Ron flinch, but Cale decided to get both of them out of his sight at the same time.

"Ron here is pretty useful as well. He will also be able to help you out. Ron, he is my guest. Make sure to take proper care of whatever he needs."

Cale also gave Ron an order before moving his hand off of Ron's shoulder. He then heard Choi Han calling out to him.

"But you don't even know who I am."

Cale turned around to look. He could see Choi Han still observing him. The scary feeling emitting from him had disappeared, and Cale could only feel an unexplainable purity coming from Choi Han.

"Why do I need to know who you are? Is there a reason to help someone who does not have as much as I have?"

Choi Han started to frown a bit at Cale's words. It was very faint, but Cale, who had been closely observing Choi Han, definitely saw it.

'Is he annoyed that I said someone who does not have as much as I do?'

Cale quickly continued on.

"Based on your situation, I doubt you'll ask for something difficult. Well, if it is something difficult, I'm sure Hans will know where to draw the line."

He pushed Ron toward Choi Han as he turned away from the two of them.

"Then goodbye. I have a lot of things to do."

Cale quickly headed toward his father Deruth's office. He needed to get a large amount of allowance today. He could hear Ron's voice coming from his behind him.

"Young master, I will do as you commanded."

'I don't care whether you do or do not.'

Frying and stirring was for them to do as the main characters, not Cale. Wouldn't they get closer to each other faster since they met four days earlier thanks to him?

Ron looked toward Cale, who was moving away from the both of them, before looking down at the empty cup in his hands.

"Interesting."

That fearless puppy did not like sour things. He still did not like it. However, he now drank it.

Ron touched his neck. He had been hurt for the first time in a long time, but something more interesting than the injury kept nagging at him.

The fearless puppy was scared of him.
Does he know something?

"Lead the way."

Ron turned his gaze toward the source of the voice. He could see Choi Han looking at him with disgust. This punk seemed to have figured out that he was someone who has killed after their short spar last night.

"Sure."

This punk, who also gave off a similar scent of blood, was pretending to be clean. Ron found it funny that such a twisted punk was acting that way.

This punk, that they met last night, gave off the violent, disgusting, and murderous aura of the Forest of Darkness. It was an aura that Ron and Beacrox could instantly tell apart from other auras.

Of course, that murderous aura was not Choi Han's own. Choi Han had gotten that aura from the assassins he had killed, and now that he had showered and cleaned up, the murderous aura was no longer surrounding him.

'I guess there is no way those people would cross over.'

Ron thought about the events of last night as he started to talk to the boy who seemed

to have gone through a lot in the past few days.

“Follow me.”

Ron started to walk in order to follow his puppy young master’s order, and Choi Han followed behind him. Choi Han’s gaze momentarily headed toward Cale’s direction before turning back to Ron.

Chapter 9

Picked It Up (2)

Cale held a bag that was twice the size of yesterday's bag as he headed back up to the top of the slums. The two siblings were there to greet him once again.

The children kept their mouth shut as they looked toward Cale. Cale smiled as he took out two small bags and pushed them toward the children.

"Take it."

The young girl slowly approached him. Cale frowned as he watched the girl with coarse grey hair approach him. She had a hand on her side as she limped over to him.

"Hey."

Cale pushed the two bags toward the young boy.

"You come here and take it."

The young boy quickly rushed over and snatched the bags before quickly running back. Compared to Cale's bright red hair, the boy had coarse dark red hair that shook as he ran.

Cale then turned around and headed toward the man-eating tree.

"Wow."

"It's not bread. It's meat and cake."

He could hear the siblings talking about the food, but he did not care. He continued to walk toward the man-eating tree's territory.

Oooooooooooooooooong-

"...It's a bit scary."

The black tree without any leaves seemed to be moving its branches to welcome Cale. This eerie feeling made Cale nervous, but he still poured the contents of the bag into the hole underneath the tree.

The bread quickly disappeared.

It was at that moment.

“...More, give me more.”

‘...It’s driving me crazy.’

The response he read about in the novel showed up. It was the voice of a weak girl. Yes, the person who starved to death was a priestess who served a god. However, unlike the present day priestesses of the temples or churches, the ancient priestesses were shamans. The majority of the ancient shamans could be considered people who had superpowers or natural forces under their command.

Cale quickly grabbed the bag and started to move.

‘Cale, come to my study tonight.’

That was what his father, Deruth, had said to Cale when he went to get some allowance. That was why he had to leave here before evening at the latest.

‘Half.’

He came here with the intention of taking care of half of the gluttony of the tree today. He went back down the hill to get more bread. He could see the two siblings looking at him with cake on their lips.

“Tsk.”

Cale frowned and clicked his tongue as he walked past the two siblings.

Cale then walked to the street where there were a lot of bakeries. He had already swept the stock of the bakery he went to yesterday this morning, so it would take them some time to restock. That was why he needed to look for another bakery. It was at that moment.

“Y, young master.”

A woman’s voice made Cale turn his head. A middle-aged woman smiled awkwardly as she pointed to her shop. Her hand was shaking and she was full of fear, but she still had some confidence.

“We have a lot of bread.”

Cale started to smile. Now this was a woman who knew how to do business. The other vendors were peeking their way while looking at what was going on.

Cale threw her a gold coin and the woman quickly picked it up.

“Give me everything you have. Pack it quickly.”

In that instant, the smile on the middle-aged woman’s face grew wider. She instantly went into the store and immediately came back out with a large bag full of bread. She had already packed it all up in advance.

“Here it is, young master.”

‘Wow. She really is a good merchant.’

This was someone who knew how to make money.

“I can also prepare some more.”

Cale liked this woman even more. However, at that instant...

“Young master! We can make even more bread than that!”

An old man across the street raised his hand as he rushed over. He was wearing a baker’s uniform. Cale liked his fitting outfit and threw a gold coin to him as well.

“I will head to your shop next. Have a bag ready.”

“Thank you very much!”

Cale was amazed by these vendors. They were still afraid of him because of his identity as the trash of the Count’s family, but they had no issues coming up to him to make

some easy money. It was probably because they knew that Cale did not hit anybody who was not a gangster, but he still could see why the Henituse territory was doing so well.

The fact that Cale had spent a gold coin to buy a bag of bread yesterday had already spread like wildfire. 1 million gallons. The others gasped at the week's worth of profit while their eyes started to sparkle.

'I can go around to those three places tomorrow to get bread.'

Since he gave each of them a gold coin, he should be able to get another bag from them tomorrow. Cale was happy that things were going so smoothly.

However, there was someone who was watching him from afar.

"Hmm."

It was the chef, Beacrox. Just like his father, he had a bandage around his neck, and he was watching Cale from behind a corner. He just watched Cale buy the bag of bread and some medicinal herbs before heading back to the slums.

"...Did he go crazy?"

Cale seemed like he had gone crazy since yesterday.

Beacrox had never cared about Cale, even when his father had said that Cale was an interesting kid, but, the more he saw, the more he started to agree. It felt like it would be just as fun to watch Cale as it was to watch the black-haired punk. Beacrox's eyes started to sparkle.

Billos, the owner of the tea shop with the highest view, took a sip of his tea as he received his subordinate's report.

"Young master Cale is going in and out of the slums?"

"Yes, Billos-nim."

"I see."

"We also received communication from the capital."

"Is that so?"

Billos's round eyes, that were hard to see because of his fat, opened widely. The subordinate flinched for a moment before continuing his report.

“Yes. It mentioned that the crown will soon gather people. That is why they wish for Billos-nim to return and get to work.”

Clank.

Billos put the teacup on the table as he motioned with his chin.

“You can head out now.”

The subordinate quickly moved into the shadows and disappeared. Billos stared at the spot his subordinate was standing in as one corner of his lips twisted upward.

“Do they think I will be their dog and watch the house again?”

His gaze headed out of the window. It felt like his gaze could reach the far away capital.

“This, this isn’t bread. Isn’t bread.”

“And?”

Seeing the young girl who was mumbling, ‘isn’t bread,’ over and over as she held the medicinal herbs in her hand, Cale just snorted as he headed back to the man-eating tree. However, the young boy got in his way.

“You cannot die.”

It was the young boy saying he cannot die now. Cale did not even frown as he just walked past the young boy.

Cale, no, Kim Rok Soo.

He was an orphan and didn’t have anything to his name. That was why there were a lot of people who showed the poor Kim Rok Soo a lot of sympathy.

‘Is there a reason to show sympathy for the needy?’

That was something he heard all the time when he was younger.

‘Young beggar.’

‘Poor orphan.’

‘You don’t need a reason to show sympathy.’

There was a time he just took that at face value, but he started to understand the real meaning of it as he got older.

There wasn’t a logical reason for the things your heart draws you to do. You didn’t need a reason.

“So annoying.”

Cale hated to see young children being hurt. However, he didn’t have any thoughts about nursing the young girl nor thoughts of consoling her. He frowned toward the young girl who was limping toward him and the young boy next to her as he answered them.

“I won’t die.”

The siblings finally stopped following him once he said that. Cale was unhappy at the thought that he did something he hated the most. He hated people who got involved in other people’s business without being asked, but he had done just that by giving the young girl the medicinal herbs.

Oooooooooooooong.

-More, give me more.

“Yes. Eat it all.”

Cale dumped the whole bag into the man-eating tree without caring about how it landed. He was not afraid. The bread instantly disappeared into the darkness that was now too light to be called darkness. Cale could now see a new grey light. However, it would only seem grey to him.

‘I guess it is paying off for the money I spent.’

Cale poured the other bag of bread into the hole as he headed back home. He didn’t see the siblings anymore, but that was better for Cale.

However, he saw the two struggling cats on his way back home and flinched.

‘It’s the cats from yesterday. They shouldn’t remember me, right?’

Silver fur and golden eyes, dark red fur and golden eyes. The two cats did not even meow as they stared at Cale. Cale did not want to cause a scene, and just looked away as he headed back home.

He then heard something from his father that almost made him faint.

“...Could you please say that one more time.”

“Yes. Cale.”

Basen was standing next to Cale as well. The story of the Henituse family that was not mentioned in the novel was happening in front of Cale’s eyes.

“You shall go to the capital as our family’s representative.”

Cale could feel a headache coming.

“Originally, Basen was supposed to go. However, you are the first born of our family.”

Cale just opened and closed his mouth repeatedly as he watched Count Deruth sitting there with a gentle smile. Going to visit the crown at such a time. Cale was quickly thinking about the contents of ‘The Birth of a Hero’ as Deruth continued to speak.

“The crown is hosting a big event, and the noble families of each territory have been invited to gather. It will be your first time to go visit the crown, but Basen has been going to similar functions for the last two years. However, I am hoping for you to go this time.”

Big event hosted by the crown. That made Cale think about a single incident.

The Plaza Terror Incident.

A secret organization commits a terrorist act when many of the citizens of the capital are gathered in one place. Our hero Choi Han is the one who manages to block about half of their plot. That would be the fourth time that Choi Han and the secret organization would come into contact with each other.

As a result, Choi Han is able to save a lot of the citizens at the plaza and becomes connected with the crown prince. They then quickly develop a friendship with each

other.

Cale suddenly got the chills.

Since the novel described the event from Choi Han's point of view, it did not talk much about the gathering of the nobles. All it mentioned was that Choi Han gains some party members before and after the incident, as well as the strong backing of the crown prince.

But he had to go to the scene of that terrorist attack?

Of course, he did not know whether the nobles would gather in the plaza as well. Cale started to recall the information in 'The Birth of a Hero.

[Tons of people were gathered in the plaza. The platform was still empty. It was for the royal family that would soon arrive. Choi Han could see some other people who looked like they held important positions. However, more important to Choi Han, was the fact that a lot of citizens, young, old, male, female, were gathered here. Choi Han's heart started to beat faster.

He did not want to see a group of innocent people dying ever again.]

Would people who looked like they held important positions include the nobles?

Cale turned to look at Basen even as his father was continuing to speak. Basen stood there stoically, looking at his father without giving Cale a single glance.

'Deruth said Basen normally goes to events like this. Should I tell him to go?'

Cale's mouth continued to repeatedly open and close. He did not want to go to a dangerous area. However, he could not bring himself to say Basen's name.

A relationship that was neither good nor bad. That was the relationship between the original Cale and Basen. Basen found Cale to be difficult, but that was it.

Cale's mind started to get complicated. Would Cale have gone in the story? There was no way Deruth would send the trash to the capital. Just why was he trying to send him then? Cale was wondering if he had done something wrong to have caused this to happen.

"You will leave in five days."

Five days later. Hearing Deruth say that, Cale knew that the Cale in the novel had not gone to the capital.

In the novel, he was beaten to a pulp by Choi Han four days later and carried into the Count's estate. There was no way he could go to the capital in that condition.

"Cale. Before Basen started to do it, you had participated in all of these ceremonies. Think back on those times and have a relaxed journey."

"Father."

Deruth looked toward Cale at his calling. Basen slowly turned to look at his older brother as well.

"I am a bit anxious because of this sudden development. I have not gone to any of these since two years ago. I don't understand why I would suddenly have to go. Please let me think about it."

Deruth agreed and told his two sons that they could leave. The siblings quickly left the study. Cale was busy thinking about all sorts of things. If Cale threw a fit and caused a scene, Deruth would probably send Basen, but that would leave a bitter taste in his mouth.

It was at that moment.

"Hyung-nim."

Cale could hear his young brother, Basen's voice. Cale turned his head. He could see Basen still stoically walking without looking at him. The 15 year old Basen always talked like this without ever making eye contact.

"Hyung-nim, there is no reason you cannot go."

Sigh. Cale let out a sigh.

Basen did not even look at Cale as he left the study and headed to his own room. Cale stared at Basen for a long time.

"...It's not supposed to go like this."

Cale had been pushed out of the successor spot. Cale could not stop acting like trash

even when his younger brother flat out acted like he was the family's successor since two years ago. He was the joke of the family.

That was why there were a lot of reasons he should not go as the family representative to the crown's summon. However, Basen was saying that there were no reasons not to go to the event.

Basen was saying that there were enough reasons for Cale to go as the family representative.

'Things will become complicated like this.'

Cale stated to frown. He did not like how things were going.

But the other problem was...

'It's worth a shot.'

He thought it was worth going through the events that were about to come up.

The reason was that the chances of Cale coming back without dying or getting hurt were pretty high.

'It will also make it difficult for me if Basen dies without being able to take the Count position.'

In order for Cale to live a peaceful life, Basen needed to survive. There was still their youngest sister, Lily, but she was too young. Furthermore, Cale needed to head out of Western City after taking the ancient power located at the man-eating tree in order to take some other ancient powers located outside the Henituse territory.

The scale inside Cale's mind started to tilt.

He started to stare at deputy butler Hans who was heading his way. Hans's expression was intense, but not dark. He seemed to be a bit bitter, but his eyes were clear.

"Young master, the request that your guest has asked for-"

"Hans."

Cale cut him off as he said something else.

“Bring that guest here.”

“Excuse me?”

Cale was not going to be pushed around. If he was going to have to move, he might as well do it in a way that was most comfortable for him and in a way that was most beneficial for him.

“Ah, if he doesn’t want to come, just tell him this.”

Based on Hans’s expression, Cale was certain that Choi Han’s issue was settled properly. In the novel, Count Deruth gave a proper funeral for the villagers and took care of everything even after Choi Han beat Cale to a pulp. That shouldn’t have changed at all.

“Payment.”

“Pardon?”

“Tell him to come because a way for him to pay me back has come up.”

Chapter 10

Picked It Up (3)

Deputy butler Hans immediately ordered another servant to call Choi Han over.

“Where is he right now?”

“Ah, he is with Ron in chef Beacrox’s kitchen.”

Cale’s heart jumped as he walked into the study. Were the three of them getting along as expected?

“Based on what I’ve been told, he is learning how to cook basic dishes from chef Beacrox.”

“Cooking?”

“Yes.”

One corner of Cale’s lips went up.

‘Cooking my ass.’

They were calling it, ‘cooking,’ but he was probably learning about torturing or Beacrox and Ron were admiring Choi Han’s sword skill. Cale didn’t need to see it to know the truth.

Cale naturally walked over and sat down at his desk. He then casually asked Hans, who was idly standing in the corner.

“What did he ask for?”

“Ah.”

Hans seemed shocked at Cale’s sudden words, before quickly putting on a serious

expression and started to report. It was the information Cale expected it to be.

Hans could not hide his sorrow and disappointment while sharing about what happened to Harris Village, and had gone to the Count with Choi Han to deliver the Village Chief's Plaque that Choi Han brought.

"Father met with him?"

"Yes. The Count immediately ordered for a funeral and will be sending inspectors, knights, and soldiers to investigate."

Mm. Hans stopped for a moment and hesitated before continuing to speak.

"However, the guest has indicated he will not be going back with us."

Hans recalled meeting the Count with Choi Han, as Choi Han explained the situation to the Count.

Choi Han was speaking normally, but the tips of his fingers were shaking. It was then that Hans found out that Choi Han was 17 years old. He was able to keep his life because he happened to be searching for medicinal herbs on his own at the time of the massacre, but he still had to watch his neighbors and friends all being killed at such a young age. Just how much shock would he have received?

"Will that be okay?"

That was why Hans had asked Cale. Will it be okay for him to not say his final farewell?

"It is his decision."

Cale answered Hans's question and changed the topic. He already knew why Choi Han did not want to return. He had already said his goodbye as he buried them. All that was left was to get his revenge on the people that took their future away.

"Has Ron been taking care of him?"

"Yes. He has made sure that the guest eats every meal. He has also been very friendly with him."

The three of them did indeed seemed to be getting along.

“Ah.”

Hans seemed to have remembered something as he continued to speak.

“Mr. Ron seems to have hurt himself while working again. He had bandages around his wrist.”

“Really? Make sure to give him some medicine.”

‘He probably killed someone again.’

That was what Cale was thinking. He heard Hans’s voice at that time.

“...I will make sure to deliver young master’s words and feelings to Mr. Ron.”

“Sure, whatever.”

Hans opened his mouth to say something as he looked at Cale’s nonchalant expression, but a different noise filled the study.

Knock Knock Knock

Choi Han had arrived. Hans opened the door, and Cale could see Choi Han standing outside. Cale waved his hand to send Hans away, and Hans bowed his head as he quietly exited the study. Only Cale and Choi Han were left in the room.

Cale kept the desk between them as he pointed at the chair across from him.

“Come sit down.”

Choi Han slowly looked around the study as he sat down on the chair. Cale gave him enough time to look around the study.

Like a typical pure and smart hero, Choi Han liked books. That was why the first thing he did after coming out of the Forest of Darkness and arriving in Harris Village was to learn how to read from the Chief. After looking around for a long time, Choi Han’s gaze finally landed on Cale.

“What is the payment?”

‘Getting right to the point.’

Cale smiled looking at how Choi Han didn’t beat around the bush.

Payment. Choi Han was thorough when it came to debts he owed.

Cale, Kim Rok Soo, realized that he had changed the contents of the beginning of ‘The Birth of a Hero.’ He could see that even more things would change because of it. That was why he was trying his best to not change too many things, but...

He had to go to the capital. Then even more things will change.

Cale put a piece of paper on the desk as he looked toward Choi Han.

“There is a way for you to pay back for the meal, but I need to first determine whether you will be capable of doing it. In simple terms, this is an interview.”

“Please go ahead.”

Choi Han immediately agreed to Cale’s talk of checking his qualifications. Cale started to ask.

“Do you know how to protect people?”

“...What do you mean?”

Choi Han flinched for the first time and asked after a moment. Cale’s gaze started to turn sharp. He was looking at the piece of paper on the desk and not at Choi Han.

Although he had to quickly change the plan, it might bring him more gains than before. He could prevent Choi Han’s party from getting the ancient powers while taking the ones that he needs for himself.

Those powers were useless to them anyways.

Cale kept his gaze on the paper as he continued to speak.

“Simple. Are you capable of protecting people instead of killing people?”

Silence filled the room. Choi Han did not have an answer. Cale removed his gaze from the paper and looked at the person sitting on the chair. Choi Han was sitting there with his head down, but eventually answered.

“I am not sure.”

Tsk. Cale clicked his tongue. This was why it was dangerous to provoke Choi Han right now.

“But you can kill someone?”

The answer came easily this time.

“Absolutely.”

“Then you should be able to protect people as well.”

Choi Han’s eyes shook for a moment.

“That is difficult.”

“But difficult does not mean impossible.”

There were not many things in the world you could avoid because it was difficult. The life that Cale had lived was like that. That was why he was so happy to possess the body of a trash like Cale who could do whatever he wants. But, unfortunately, there was now a mountain he needed to first climb in order to have that damn peaceful future.

Cale was looking for someone to climb and flip that mountain for him.

Choi Han had a bitter smile on his face.

“I guess that’s true.”

“Yes, it is. Now the final interview question.”

“Yes. Please ask.”

Cale looked into Choi Han’s firm gaze as he asked the last question.

“What is your name?”

“You don’t know my name?”

‘Of course, I do. You’re the person who was going to beat me up.’

“I have heard from other people, but I want to hear it directly from you.”

“Choi Han.”

Choi Han reached his hand out.

“My name is Choi Han.”

Cale shook Choi Han’s hand.

“Great. I am Cale Henituse.”

The short conversation called an interview quickly finished. Of course, it was a passing grade. Cale pushed the paper on the desk toward Choi Han.

“The way you can pay me back is simple.”

There were two names written on the paper. It also indicated where he would meet them.

“Go to the capital with these people.”

These were the party members Choi Han would meet on his way to the capital. Beacrox and these two people would grow and get strong with Choi Han until volume 5.

Rosalyn and Lock.

One was the princess of a neighboring kingdom who was returning to her kingdom after surviving an assassination attempt, and the other was an injured kid. Of course, that kid was the heir to the Wolf King. It was possible for him to transform into a wolf.

Princess Rosalyn was strong and cold. She had the most explosive strength after Choi Han and used her strength logically.

She was not interested in taking control of the throne. Instead, her goal was to create the continent's greatest Magic Tower, and she would grow into a hero as she moved closer to her goal.

'The Archduke of the kingdom, who attempted the assassination on Rosalyn, will be tortured by Beacrox in the future.'

Cale's heart started to shake as he recalled just how clear and descriptive that torture scene had been in the novel. His heart seemed to be shaking quite a bit these days.

"Rosalyn. Lock."

Cale nodded his head at Choi Han's voice.

"Yes. Those two people. I'm glad you know how to read."

Choi Han continued to stare at the two names. Cale's gaze fell on the name Lock.

Lock. This world had other races such as Elves, Dwarves, and Beast People. However, the most secretive of all races were the Beast People.

Beast People. This included beasts, birds, and even insects. Beast People were different from monsters because of the existence of a conscience.

'Lock has the purest blood of the wolf people.'

Lock had received the bloodline to dominate the wolves. The Beast People with the purest bloodline tend to look weak and average when they are in their animal form or their human form. However, once they enter their berserk state, they become more cruel and violent than anyone else. And Lock was the only survivor of the entire Blue Wolf tribe.

Cale took a map out of a drawer and opened it up on the desk.

“You will start the journey with me.”

He then pointed to a location on the map.

“We will separate at this point. You just follow what I wrote on the paper.”

Choi Han didn’t ask any questions and just quietly listened. Cale watched Choi Han for a bit. There was a reason Choi Han had to go with him until that specific point.

‘I need to avoid the crazy dragon.’

The beginning of ‘The Birth of a Hero.’ Like any other novel, new villains had to appear after Cale. However, those villains were not easy picking like Cale.

The next villain involved a Marquis who led one of the noble factions. Throughout the beginning of the novel, he gets in the way of the crown prince and Choi Han. He ends up being ruined around volume 2, but Choi Han runs into the Marquis for the first time on this trip to the capital.

‘That bastard raised the crazy dragon.’

It definitely was a crazy dragon.

It was still just a baby dragon. That black dragon was being tortured by the Marquis’s future successor in secret. They were training it to obey the Marquis’s commands.

‘They’re crazy too. Dragons are the strongest beings in the world. How do they think they will be able to tame a dragon?’

It actually does make sense.

The Marquis managed to get his hands on a Dragon egg through the secret organization and chained it down with mana restricting chains as soon as it hatched. Cale could not fathom the extent of the strength of that secret organization.

But would dragons be called the strongest beings in the world for no reason?

This black dragon, that was less than 5 years old, was still a dragon. In the end, the dragon goes crazy and berserk.

It may be young, but in the novel, it exploded with enough mana to remove the mana restricting chains. Since its mana was restricted, the mana it exploded was actually its own life force.

After living in a cave and being tortured every day without ever being able to see sunlight, the young dragon cuts into its own life force to find freedom.

After managing to escape, the dragon ends up losing its rationality and goes berserk.

The village that Choi Han is staying at the time almost ends up in danger because of the berserk dragon, and Choi Han ends up fighting against the black dragon.

[Choi Han gazed at the small dragon that was less than 1 meter long. It managed to blow up a mountain with that small body and put the villagers in significant danger. However, Choi Han could not easily attack this dragon.]

[The eyes of this dragon that had lost its rationality, were in pain and full of sorrow. However, the black dragon's mouth was smiling. Choi Han found that to be extremely sad.]

Choi Han ends up killing that black dragon and gifting it the freedom called death.

Cale had to go to that village.

'Either Choi Han takes care of it or I prevent it from going crazy and find a way to release it.'

There was no other choice because it was on his way to the capital. He would need to take an extremely long detour to avoid that village, and that would require a long time and change the flow of the story. He would also be late in arriving at the capital if he took that detour.

'For being a crazy dragon, it's described as being a really cute dragon.'

The novel described it as a cute black dragon with short legs. It mentioned that it was even scarier that such a cute existence had gone crazy and caused chaos. Cale decided to stop thinking about the dragon for now, and instead gave Choi Han the rest of the

order.

“Come to the capital with the owners of these two names. That is your way of paying me back.”

Choi Han asked as question.

“...I just need to protect these two people?”

“If you want to.”

These two people should be strong enough to not require Choi Han’s protection. Especially princess Rosalyn, she wouldn’t even budge an inch even if a truck load of Cales with the Indestructible Shield attacked her at the same time.

“Do as you wish. However, you must definitely come to the capital. You must also meet me there without being injured. You can at least keep yourself safe, right?”

Cale and Choi Han should have no reason to meet again after that. Choi Han has another negative encounter with the secret organization after getting involved with Lock. Meeting with Lock should allow Choi Han to stop the danger in the capital like in the novel.

“Why are you not answering? Can you do it?”

Choi Han’s gaze became a bit clearer.

“Yes. I can do it.”

He seemed to be speaking in a more respectful tone than before, but Cale just let it be. He relaxed a bit after seeing Choi Han put the paper in his chest pocket.

‘I should have been drinking as I did that.’

It was really tiring to talk to Choi Han with Cale’s body.

“You can leave now.”

Cale waved his hand at Choi Han. Choi Han started to walk toward the door after

seeing Cale's gesture. Cale leaned his back on the chair and watched Choi Han reach for the door before starting to speak again.

"In addition, everything we discussed here is a secret. I'm sure I don't need to tell you that?"

Choi Han did not look back and answered as he opened the door.

"Of course."

Choi Han's voice seemed to indicate that he was smiling, but Cale did not care. Once he was alone, Cale took out a piece of paper and pen and started to write in Korean. After writing for a while, he left the study and headed for his father's office.

"Father."

"Yes?"

"I need money."

"Okay. I will tell Hans to give you some."

Cale needed a lot of money. Once Cale laid down on the bed with another 10 million gallon check in his chest pocket, Ron approached him and put a bottle on the nightstand as he started to speak.

"It is warm lemon honey tea. My son made it especially for you, young master. Please have a good night. I am always by your side."

Cale's sleepiness went away in an instant.

No matter what happened, he needed to make sure the two of them went away with Choi Han.

The next day, Cale Henituse headed to the slums as soon as he woke up.

Chapter 11

Picked It Up (4)

‘Young master. I heard about everything from deputy butler Hans. This Ron will do whatever I can with my lacking abilities to make sure you can shine at the capital.’

Cale’s shoulders were starting to shake as he walked out of the Count’s estate. He was thinking about the conversation he had with Ron as soon as he woke up this morning.

‘This is going to be your first time outside the Henituse territory, right? I am very good at hunting rabbits. I will hunt some rabbits for you when we are camping outside.’

Ron’s calm and benign voice echoed in Cale’s ears. He felt as if he could still hear Ron’s voice echoing like a hallucination throughout the fog outside.

Cale was scared of the fact that Ron was explaining to him about how to hunt a rabbit first thing in the morning.

‘You need to be careful when handling a small animal like a rabbit that gets scared easily. Since you don’t know when or how it will run, you need to pay attention to the surroundings and kill it in an instant. Ah, you also need to remove the innards after catching it. I am also very good at that.’

Cale had to turn away as Ron mimicked cutting open a rabbit with his hands. Ron was excited. However, the only thought Cale was having right now was that Ron was toying with him. Cale was just happy that Ron was heading to the capital with him.

I can tack on Beacrox as my personal chef.

Ron. Beacrox. Cale had already told Hans this morning, so that he could bring the father and son duo with him. Of course, Ron was there as well.

‘Hans, I want to take Beacrox as my personal chef for this trip.’

‘May I ask, why Beacrox? He is extremely busy running Kitchen #2.’

'I don't know. But I can't eat anything other than Beacrox's cooking. I will be taking him, so you figure out the rest.'

Hans became anxious, but Ron seemed to be happy to be going with his son.

'Young master, my son will be very happy. We had a need to go to the capital anyways. I will deliver your exact words to him.'

Cale relaxed after hearing Ron's words. He was worried that they would say no, but Beacrox should enjoy leaving the Henituse territory and traveling to the capital as well.

Cale walked through the foggy Western City as he thought about the people he would take with him to the capital. The story was progressing a little differently than the novel, but it wasn't like he could give up on gaining some benefits for himself.

"Young master, you are here early today."

The baker seemed to be pretty relaxed around Cale after seeing him a couple of times. Cale just stoically asked the baker.

"The bread?"

The baker smiled as he handed Cale a bag full of bread.

"Of course, I have it all ready. But is today really the last day?"

"Why? Greedy for more money?"

"Yes, I definitely am."

Cale started to smile. He liked honest answers like this. Cale patted the shoulder of the baker, who seemed to be a bit more relaxed around him, and headed for the slums.

"I'll come back when I want to eat it again."

The baker longingly watched as Cale disappeared into the fog and then started to pray. He was praying for Cale to come back and spend a ton of money.

Cale naturally did not know about the baker's prayer as he walked over to the slums. He then saw the siblings waiting for him.

'Do these kids not have a home?'

Cale had come much earlier than usual. However, the siblings were curled up together and waiting for him, as if they had been waiting at the top of the hill all night. The younger brother seemed to be leaning into his older sister's embrace.

The siblings were quietly looking up at Cale. Their hair and clothes seemed damp, probably because they stayed here through the foggy morning.

Of course, Cale pretended not to notice.

"Here, take it."

The young boy took both of their shares from Cale. Cale waited until the boy picked it up before turning around and heading for the man-eating tree.

'I'm glad it is foggy.'

The fog made it difficult to see. Since this hill was the highest point in Western City, other than the Count's estate, the fog was even thicker up here. Nobody else would be able to see what Cale is doing, or more importantly, what Cale receives from the tree.

- More, give me more. Please.

Cale poured a bag of bread into the hole while listening to the eerie voice of the grudge-filled soul as usual. The darkness inside the hole was slowly turning from grey to white. Cale started to smile, thinking that all his efforts were not for naught. It was at that moment.

- More, more, more!

'What?'

Cale flinched and stepped backwards at the voice that now turned into a shriek.

'The novel didn't mention something like this.'

- More, more! I will give you a present if you bring me more. A present.

Present. That word made Cale's eyes start to sparkle. Although he didn't expect the soul to go crazy like this, the end was near.

"Just wait."

The black branch started to sway, as if nodding at him. It felt like a scene out of a horror movie. Cale shivered as he started to move back through the fog. It was the middle of the morning now, but the sun was not out, and the fog continued to get thicker.

It looked like it would start to rain soon.

The siblings must have gone somewhere, as he did not see them, but Cale just thought they went to dodge the rain and put the third bag of bread in front of the man-eating tree.

'This should be the last bunch.'

The light inside the hole was now as white as the fog surrounding Cale.

'It should become transparent after I put this last bag of bread in.'

Cale was full of anticipation as he poured the last bag into the tree.

And finally.

Oooooooooooooong-

A rumbling that was worlds different than the past rumblings poured out from the tree toward Cale. This rumbling, that was only aimed at Cale, did not catch his attention because of the hole that was starting to turn transparent. It should be dark inside the hole because of the shadow of the tree, but such a realistic situation did not occur.

That was the Ancient Power.

The moment Cale saw the Ancient Power, he could hear the voice that had been asking

him for more food until now.

- It was so, so good!

That voice was... obnoxious.

- That soft texture of bread! I especially liked the third bag of bread you brought. I guess even food develops as time goes by. There was no such thing as bread back in my days! The wheat itself must grow on a really fertile land! Yes, not all wheat is the same –

...The voice was evaluating the taste of the bread.

A storm caused by the voice started to rush toward Cale.

‘This wasn’t in the novel!’

The spirit that was tied down to the earth because of its grudge was resolving that grudge by evaluating the taste of the bread. Cale started to frown further. He was only thinking about the Ancient Power in ‘The Birth of a Hero.’ This Indestructible Shield was the only Ancient Power that was written about in the novel but never claimed by anyone.

‘No wonder nobody ended up taking control of it. But then why would the author mention something that could be useful but was never actually taken by anybody?’

That was the thought in Cale’s head, however, the obnoxious voice continued to chatter away, making him unable to focus.

- ...That’s why I am so full! It was delicious!

Chatter chatter. It felt like the grudge was from not being able to speak instead of not being able to eat.

After hearing the spirit chat on and on for a couple of minutes, evaluating all of the different types of breads that Cale had brought, Cale nodded his head and tried to cut the voice off.

- Things like this were not available in ancient times. The people of the Forest of

Darkness claimed to be servants of a god yet only gave me tasteless things.

•

However, Cale decided to wait a little longer after hearing the spirit mention the ancient times.

- I was, naturally, banished from that place. They said I was a glutton. A glutton my ass. Of course, I left with my friends. We were planning on putting the world back on the right track.

For someone like him who needed Ancient Powers, it was important to listen to stories about the ancient times. However, the story soon ended, and the spirit went back to talking about food and other useless things. Cale quickly cut it off.

- I don't think I could give up this taste even if I got fat. It's so unfair that I had to eat dirt and ended up dying!

"Yes, it was an amazing and professional evaluation. You're a bit lou-"

The spirit cut Cale off.

- You understand my evaluation. You are a really good guy! Thanks!

...Cale couldn't tell whether he could really communicate with the spirit or not.

Cale really could not figure out the situation at hand. At least the voice stopped after telling him thanks. Cale looked toward the tree in front of him.

"How interesting."

The man-eating tree, the originally black man-eating tree, was starting to turn white. It then started to slowly grow some green leaves. The scene looked even more mystical because he was surrounded by fog right now.

Oooooooooong-

The noise held some heaviness compared to before. Cale kneeled on one side and sat down underneath the trunk of the tree. A bright white light was pouring out from the hole.

Cale put his hand into the light. He then closed his eyes.

‘This must be it.’

A warm and strong power that wrapped around his hand. He started to smile before hearing the voice one more time. It was a pure and warm voice.

- It will protect you.

Shiiiiine.

For a very short moment, a bright light wrapped around Cale. The light was silver in color, and the light started to become absorbed by his body. The absorbed light all gathered at Cale’s heart.

“Huuuuuuuh.”

Cale let out a long sigh as he opened his eyes. It did not hurt. It was warm, and the pure power was making him feel happy.

Cale quickly lifted up the shirt that he was wearing.

‘I did it.’

There was a small silver shield inscribed over his heart. It was different from a tattoo. Such a beautiful and fancy shield left its mark over Cale’s heart.

The shield will prioritize its owner’s safety above anything else. The location of that promise was at the heart. This shield will be with Cale until his heart stops beating.

“How nice.”

Cale could feel the strength wrapping around his heart. It was not causing any issues. In fact, it felt like the shield had surrounded his heart, and was doing its best to protect him.

Ancient Powers like this left their unique mark when they are activated.

Cale quickly used the method that was written in the novel to trigger the Ancient

Power.

Paaaaaat.

The 'Indestructible Shield' appeared in front of Cale's eyes.

It was a silver shield that was just large enough to cover Cale's upper body. There were two silver wings on both sides of the shield, which allowed the shield to move within a certain radius from Cale. The size of the shield was also controllable.

Cale started to control the size of this shield that already felt like it was a part of his body. This immediate familiarity was one of the special traits of Ancient Powers. That was why heroes used it, even if it was just as a support.

Cale started to smile.

'A maximum of two times.'

Cale was thinking in terms of Choi Han, the strongest person around him right now. The shield should be able to block two of Choi Han's attacks.

'The strength of this shield is stronger than I expected. Why would the heroes not use it all the time?'

The Indestructible Shield, unlike its name, actually is capable of breaking. However, it does not disappear upon breaking. If the shield receives an attack stronger than its abilities, it will store as much of its strength as possible to protect the owner's heart before it breaks. After a while, the shield will recover its strength and can be used again. The strength of the shield comes from the owner's heart.

The beating heart. That heart becomes the strength of the shield. The heart strengthens the shield while the shield protects the heart. So, what would happen if the heart gets stronger?

'It will get even stronger.'

There were many ways to strengthen Ancient Powers. Cale will be strengthening this shield on the way to the capital.

Once that happens, he should be able to make a shield that can last 10, no, at least 5 minutes when someone of Choi Han's caliber tries to kill him with all of their strength.

Ancient Powers, as seen with this man-eating tree, are difficult to earn unless you, 'coincidentally run into them.' The person who knows the most about these 'coincidences' in the first five volumes is probably Cale Henituse, well, the current Cale Henituse.

Cale started to smile. He reached out and touched the shield. It felt nice. However, there was one thing he didn't like about it.

"...It seems too divine."

At full strength, it looked like a Holy Shield that the Knights of God carry with their swords in myths.

Of course, the former owner of this shield was a priestess who was tired of the term god, and the current owner, Cale, just didn't like gods.

'It's not like there will be many reasons for me to use this.'

He was planning on leaving the fighting to everyone else. The terror attack at the capital. He may have to use it if something dangerous happens there. But he will make sure it is small and faint so that other people will not notice it.

Cale returned the shield to his heart and patted the now white tree as he started to walk away. The misty rain inside the fog started to wet Cale's shoulders.

Cale liked the fog, but did not like rain. He started to walk faster toward home. He needed a carriage.

It was at that moment.

Meeooooooooow.

Meow.

Cale suddenly felt a chill on the back of his neck. It was the alley right outside the Count's Estate. He could see two pairs of round, golden eyes. Cale started to frown.

There were two kittens who looked extremely pitiful and drenched in the rain. They continued to meow as they approached Cale. They then started to rub their cheeks on Cale's legs.

"Sigh."

Cale let out a sigh and started to walk. The two little kittens followed behind them. The tiny things somehow managed to keep up with Cale, even with their short legs.

"Young master, what is going on?"

The person who greeted Cale at home was deputy butler Hans. Hans had a confused expression as his eyes opened wide. He seemed to be shocked. Cale clicked his tongue and handed Hans the things in his hands.

"Don't ask stupid questions and just take them."

Hans's eyes started to shake.

"W, what cute and lovely kittens!"

This deputy butler really did seem to be butler material. Cale carefully put the two kittens in the hands of the extremely excited Hans.

The two kittens, that were dangling in Hans's hands, continued to look at Cale, even when they were in Hans's arms.

"Young master, may I take care of these two lovely kitten-nims?"

"Whatever you want."

Hans started to smile in joy. Cale started to walk past the excited Hans as he added on.

"Ah, for your information, they become quiet if you give them food. The two of them are also siblings."

The two kittens flinched and started to shake. Their golden eyes opened widely as they looked toward Cale.

“Excuse me?”

The moment Hans asked in confusion, Cale moved back toward Hans. He then lowered his head and caressed the two kittens.

He had wondered about it for the last few days, but how could he not know by now?

The silver kitten had a faint smell of the medicinal herbs he had given to the girl. When he picked the two kittens up earlier, he could also smell the beef steak and bacon cream pasta that he had given them this morning as well.

That made Cale certain. The events of the last few days were finally resolved in Cale’s head.

“Did you think I wouldn’t know?”

The two kitten’s golden eyes continued to shake. Cale looked at the siblings he had been feeding the last few days and started to smile.

Chapter 12

Picked It Up (5)

Tap. Tap. Even at the rough patting, the baby kittens could only stiffly stare at Cale. Cale thought about the moment when he first met Choi Han. The injured silver kitten was growling while the red kitten was whining next to it.

‘The silver kitten should be the older sister with grey hair and the younger brother must be the red kitten.’

Cale had a bright smile on his face. He looked toward the kittens and started to speak.

“We’ll talk later.”

The siblings who seemed to be beast people avoided his gaze and Hans confusingly replied.

“...Are you talking to me?”

“Not you.”

Hans looked at Cale and the two kittens with an even more confused expression on his face, before holding the kittens even tighter. It was a movement that seemed to show that he was trying to avoid a dangerous person. However, he soon had to approach Cale once again.

“Are you heading back out?”

“Yes.”

It was because Cale changed his coat and was preparing to leave again.

“Where will you be going?”

“I have a promise to keep and someone to meet.”

“...Young master, you are going to keep a promise?”

Hans looked to be shocked again, as he questioned Cale.

“You seem to be getting ruder.”

“My apologies.”

The deputy butler’s apology was very quick.

‘Is he really the best of the butler candidates? He seemed decent by the way he handled Choi Han’s issue.’

Cale felt like Hans, who was caressing the kittens with a wide grin on his face, was not very reliable.

‘I’m going to take him to the capital as well.’

Cale was thinking about this, something that Hans would never expect even in his dreams, no, something that Hans would lament even if he learned about it in his dream, before Cale asked about the person he had not seen for a while.

“Where’s Ron?”

Hans had a satisfied smile on his face at that question.

“I heard that Choi Han-nim will be going with you as one of your guards for the beginning part of your journey to the capital. Is that true?”

Hans was thinking about Choi Han, who had defeated all of the Count’s Knight Brigade members today. He was more skilled than expected, making it easy for him to be Cale’s guard as Cale wanted.

Of course, neither Hans nor the knights knew that Choi Han had hidden his true power.

“Mr. Ron found out that Choi Han-nim will be going with you and went out with Choi Han-nim to purchase some clothes and other necessary items for travel. Ah, Chef Beacrox went with them a well.”

“I see. I’m relieved.”

‘They seem to be getting along well.’

There was a rare, extremely bright smile on Cale’s face. The smile was very fitting with his beautiful red hair. Hans started to speak while being happy about Cale’s bright smile.

“Mr. Ron, Choi Han-nim, and even Beacrox seem to be excited about serving you.”

He could see an instantaneous change in Cale’s face as he said that. Why would Cale suddenly look like he lost his appetite? Hans could not figure it out.

Both individuals headed outside the main gates once again. As he got on the carriage, Cale asked Hans who was watching him leave.

“Oh, Hans. Don’t the deputy butlers learn basic martial arts?”

“Of course.”

“And you are the greatest Butler candidate?”

The corner of Hans’s lips started to move up and down. Count Deruth cherished Hans because he took care of things well and had the best personality as well.

“Yes sir. I know the basics for three different styles: martial arts, dagger arts, and spear arts.”

A good butler needed to learn a couple different basic fighting styles, just in case something happened and the family members needed to run away.

“Amazing.”

“I guess I am a bit amazing.”

Cale could not hold back his smile watching Hans shrug his shoulders, while his lips continued to flicker. The two kittens could only shake their head as they watched Hans and the sly smile on Cale’s face.

"I'm leaving now."

Cale made up his mind to take Hans to the capital to take care of all annoying things he didn't want to deal with, and then closed the carriage door. The carriage headed into the fog and the now stronger rain to head to his destination.

[The Fragrance of Tea with Poetry]

Cale looked up at the sign before opening the door.

Ring.

The clear ringing of the bell and a desolate shop welcomed Cale.

"I guess nobody is here because of the rain."

"Welcome, young master."

Billos. The bastard of the Flynn Merchant Guild. He welcomed Cale as if they had known each other for a long time. Cale sat in front of the counter and made eye contact with Billos.

"I promised to come back. I needed to keep my promise."

"Of course. Promises need to be kept. Should I prepare the book and tea from last time?"

"Yes. 3 cups of tea please."

"Which teas should I make?"

Cale ordered three types of tea and set a time for Billos to bring the teas up before turning around and heading up to the third floor.

Drip drip-

The rain was getting even worse. Tsk. Cale clicked his tongue and went back to sit at the same spot near the third floor window and looked out.

“The rain is pretty strong, isn’t it?”

Billos came up and sat across from him and put down a single cup of tea. Cale was observing Billos closely.

‘Choi Han, Beacrox, Ron. And finally, Billos.’

These were the names of the individuals who continued to show up in the novel past volume 1. Of course, Billos only has about two sentences written about him in volume 1, as the owner of the tea shop that Choi Han stops by to rest. He returns in volume 3 to swear his loyalty to Choi Han and reveal his ambitions.

‘Reveal.’ That word was important.

‘He’s always been a greedy person.’

Billos was different from Hong Gil-dong. ^[1]

He was not sad that he could not call his father, ‘father,’ or his brother, ‘brother.’ In fact, he was just trying to beat them.

He wanted to make it so that they had no choice but to accept him. He wanted to create a situation where they will have no choice but to introduce him as son, to introduce him as the younger brother.

‘He must be exhausted.’

Cale thought Billos lived an exhausting life. However, he did not hate that. In fact, having that type of greed made him seem more human.

He didn’t like the people who had the abilities and strength, but said things like, ‘Hoho, I’m just going to give up. I have no choice.’ Why would you give up on something that could be yours? You should always take what is yours.

Anyways, this person had to meet with Choi Han at least once during the time frame of volume 1. It had to just be a short encounter.

Cale could hear Billos’s voice breaking his train of thought.

“Young master, I heard that you are going to head to the capital.”

“Are you going to keep sitting there? Don’t you have work to do?”

Seeing Cale pretending to be annoyed made Billos smile. He did not even try to hide it. This really was a very, very interesting young master. However, Billos could tell that he had a pretty sharp mind.

“I will be heading to the capital as well. I guess I will be following after you.”

“And?”

Cale already knew about it. In order for Billos and Choi Han to have an encounter in volume 3, Billos needed to head for the capital soon as well.

Billos had a stoic expression as he asked Cale, who was sipping his tea and looking out the window, a question.

“Young master, it seems like you have changed.”

Seeing Cale turn to look at him, Billos started to smile. Cale motioned with his chin for Billos to continue.

“You seem different than your nickname.”

“Which one? Trash?”

Billos could see the corners of Cale’s lips starting to go up. He definitely was different. This Cale was not the trash that he knew about. That trash did not know how to make such an expression. It was a slightly bitter smile.

‘...Should I have gotten a bit drunk and broken a chair or something?’

Billos did not know what Cale was thinking.

“Yes. You are right. Trash. Haven’t you always been a trashy young master?”

Did he not have any fear? Cale could not help but wonder, as Billos said such a thing to

the Count's son, the first born of the ruler of the territory. Was Billos the one who had something to drink?

But Cale did not want to fight with Billos. Billos was someone who was going to take over a large merchant guild. And Billos was being sincere. He was not smiling, he was actually sincerely asking the question.

'Haven't you always been a trashy young master?'

Cale decided to answer the question. It was not a hard question to answer anyways. It was easier than figuring out how to make money when you have no money.

"Billos."

Cale had a smile on his face, but did not laugh as he called out to Billos.

"You can't call your father, 'father.' You can't call your brother, 'brother.'"

Billos's gaze turned chilly. He started to take notice of the young master in front of him who had no problem touching his sore spot. Just like he had touched Cale's sore spot, he was returning the favor by touching his most painful sore spot. Cale just silently made eye contact with Billos for a bit.

The rain started to pour even harder outside. Cale broke the silence and started to smile as he asked.

"Are you going to keep being the bastard? Are you satisfied with that?"

Billos could feel Cale's sharp gaze on him.

"I know you're not."

Cale leaned back on the chair and continued on with an expression that seemed to be thinking about the past.

"I've acted like a trash for about ten years, since I started when I was 8."

'Wow. Now that I think about it, Cale Henituse has been doing trashy things since he was 8 years old. He started drinking when he was 15. What a guy.'

Cale thought about the past of the original Cale that was present in his mind, and started to smile. That smile looked scary to Billos.

At that moment, a small noise cut through the rain to reach Cale and Billos.

Squeak. Squeak. It was the sound of someone coming up the stairs.

Cale looked past Billos's shoulder to the entrance of the third floor. He could see someone's head. Black hair. It was Choi Han. Behind him was Ron. Cale had told a servant to tell Choi Han to come to this tea shop later in the day.

Cale moved his gaze away from the two of them, and started to speak to finish his conversation with Billos. Choi Han and Ron finished coming up the stairs and looked toward Cale as he started to speak.

"Billos."

Billos's stoic face felt pretty chilly.

"It's okay to throw away something you've been doing for around ten years."

Cale's eyes started to look more alive as he continued.

"I can't live as a trash forever."

Of course, Cale would still spend all the money he wants and do whatever pleases him, even if he wasn't a trash. He was going to live peacefully and enjoy life as the son of a rich noble. Although that was different than the direction of Billos's life, what mattered was that both of them were not going to continue living the way they had been living.

"Aren't you the same?"

The corner of Billos's lips started to slowly move upward. He then bowed and started to snicker.

After silently snickering for a bit, Billos raised his head up and looked toward Cale.

"I am indeed tired of it."

Billos was laughing as he said he was tired of it.

“See? I told you.”

Cale shrugged his shoulders and motioned for Choi Han and Ron to come over. At that moment, Billos got up from the seat and started to speak.

“Young master.”

“What?”

“I will see you at the capital.”

Cale started to frown. It would be complicated if they met at the capital right away.

“Why bother?”

Cale motioned for Billos to go away, and Billos respectfully bowed before leaving. Ron, Choi Han, and the descending Billos made eye contact, but they all just ignored each other.

‘Good.’

Cale welcomed that scene. Choi Han and Billos just barely ran into each other. It was just like in the book. Cale started to smile at the other two people with satisfaction.

“Ron, I knew you would come with him. According to Hans, Beacrox went with you too, but I presume he went back to the kitchen. He has a strong sense of responsibility for that kitchen.”

“Young master, are you close with that person?”

Cale shrugged his shoulders at the unexpected question from Ron.

“No?”

“...I see.”

Cale pushed it aside as nothing important, but Ron definitely heard it. He heard Cale say that he cannot keep living as a trash. Cale stopped looking at Ron whose response trailed off and made eye contact with Choi Han.

“I guess you can’t trust the rumors.”

‘What the hell is he saying?’

Cale ignored Choi Han’s words. At that moment, Billos brought up the other two cups of tea that Cale had ordered earlier.

“Should I give these cups to these two gentlemen?”

“Yes.”

Cale started to smile again.

“I ordered them in advance.”

Cale personally picked up the teacups and put one in front of each person. In front of Choi Han was the tea he just randomly ordered from the menu. As for Ron.

“I specially ordered this for you since it seems like you like it a lot. Why else would you bring it for me everyday?”

It was warm lemon tea. Cale could see Ron looking odd and felt the biggest satisfaction he had felt all day.

1. Hong Gil-dong was a Korean outlaw during the Joseon Dynasty who had a similar story of being an illegitimate son

Chapter 13

Picked It Up (6)

But behind that satisfaction, Cale suddenly felt chills on the back of his neck. It was because Ron drank the lemon tea without any complaints.

Clack.

Why did the sound of the teacup being placed on the table feel so loud? Thankfully, it was not just Cale being paranoid. Choi Han, who had been quietly enjoying his tea, started to frown.

“Why don’t you enjoy your tea a little more quietly?”

Ron held back his laughter after seeing Choi Han take a peek at Cale before speaking in a more respectful tone to him. Today, he had found a decently useful sword for Choi Han. It was a sword made by the same blacksmith as the one who made Beacrox’s cooking knife.

‘Want to try it out?’

‘I will not fight against someone who is trying to cut someone else with a cooking knife.’

His son, Beacrox, kept nagging Choi Han to fight him with that sword. It was because Beacrox learned a bit about Choi Han’s strength from that short bout last time, and wanted to find out more. However, Choi Han continued to reject him.

‘Ho, what a funny punk. What, do I need to bring a bloodied sword like you?’

Choi Han closed his eyes for a moment before opening them back up and responded to Beacrox as if he was confirming it for himself.

‘I, I will now be someone who protects. He said even I could do it.’

‘What the heck are you saying?’

Ron watched his son and Choi Han's cute bickering, before following Choi Han to come see Cale. He didn't expect to hear such a precious thing.

'I can't live as a trash forever.'

That was what Ron was thinking about as he drank the lemon tea. But it looked like he was glaring at Choi Han. Cale was watching that scene with satisfaction.

Ron and Choi Han's relationship in 'The Birth of a Hero' was just like this. They were always at each other's throats, but still continued to travel together. They were tied together by a contract, but they both knew they could also rely on one another.

Cale thought that a lot of things got twisted because of his actions to not get beaten up, but it looked like their relationship was forming in a similar manner.

'It is disappointing that it got twisted a bit, but my life comes first. I can't let the novel dictate my life.'

For Cale, his life was the first priority. After that, it was that everybody living within his territory lived peacefully. What else could you need?

"Sweet teas are really the best."

Ron flinched at the words that Cale happily said.

The tea time for these three individuals ended in the middle of the downpour.

"I guess the next time I will see you will be at the capital."

Cale shook his head toward Billos, who greeted Cale as he came down from the third floor after tea time.

"I will be coming here everyday for a while."

"Is that so? To read the book?"

"Whatever I feel like doing."

"Please feel free to visit whenever you would like. This tea shop is open to you at all times young master."

Billos was watching Cale, who walked by while pretending not to hear what he said,

with curiosity. Ron was just quietly observing them from behind.

The bastard son of the Flynn Merchant Guild. The fact that he was extremely talented made the official children resent him. That was why Billos had to come to this remote, yet profitable region in the Henituse territory.

He couldn't even use the family name of, 'Flynn,' either.

Ron was observing Cale being friendly with this greedy Billos and clicked his tongue. It was because he thought to himself, 'Why does it matter to me if that puppy young master is close to Billos?'

"Tsk. I guess even dislike creates affection."

"I don't want my dislike of you to turn into affection."

Ron let out a sigh after seeing that the clueless Choi Han had misunderstood.

"Not you, punk."

Ron's gaze was on Cale.

Ron was planning on heading to the capital anyways. It was because he had a bad feeling about it. He had been thinking about it countless times ever since Choi Han came out from the Forest of Darkness and entered the city with that dense murderous aura on him.

The reason Ron had to hide out in this territory. The reason he had to escape from the Eastern Continent. It looked like he needed to research the people responsible for it one more time.

'Wouldn't it be appropriate for me to make sure our puppy young master safely arrives at the capital and safely leaves as my final duty as his servant?'

He claimed to others while laughing that he would be by the young master's side because he found Cale's scared expression to be funny, but would an assassin ever tell the truth to others?

'I should tell Beacrox to make food that our little puppy young master will like during the journey.'

Cale was someone he looked after even more than his own son, Beacrox. Ron knew very well about the terrible things Cale has done, and the terrible personality that Cale had. However, there was someone else he knew.

Ron remembered how the young Cale had consoled his father when his mother died. He also saw how Cale hated his stepmother and her family, but never caused a ruckus with them, even when he was drunk.

‘But he definitely is still trash, tsk.’

18 years. Ron had watched over Cale for too long.



Cale returned to his chamber immediately after returning to the estate, only to find the two baby kittens staring up at him.

“Ah, I forgot about the two of you.”

He should have brought Choi Han, who cherishes small animals. Choi Han had returned to his own room after saying that his heart needed to become stronger to be someone who protects.

When Cale laughed and asked who Choi Han was going to protect, Choi Han responded that he would let Cale know once he became stronger. That answer gave Cale the chills. Cale didn’t know why someone as strong as Choi Han would want to become even stronger.

“Young master.”

Hans approached Cale as he was staring at the kittens.

“Young master, what do you think? Aren’t they even cuter, lovelier, and more adorable now? They are so mean though, they wouldn’t even let me pet them. Haha!”

Hans crouched next to the kittens and looked up at Cale with satisfaction. His expression was so full of admiration that it surprised Cale and Ron. His expression was not related to the cuteness of the kittens.

“Don’t you agree?”

This strong butler candidate seems to like cats very much.

“Oh, um, I guess so.”

The two kittens, that were sitting on a silk cushion that came from who knows where, definitely looked fuller and healthier. What kind of magic did this deputy butler do in that short amount of time? However, the two kittens continued to avoid Hans’s gaze. It seemed to be a very stereotypical relationship between a butler and a cat.

“Then I will be heading out now, young master. Please call me if there is anything you need for the kitten-nims.”

“Just go.”

After verifying that Ron got Hans to leave, Cale avoided the sparkling eyes of the kittens as he went into the bathroom. At that moment, the kittens’ ears fell down.

But then.

“Hooo.”

Ron approached the kittens after getting Hans to leave. Only Ron and the two baby kittens were currently in the bedroom.

“You are children of the Cat Tribe.”

The golden eyes of the kitten’s turned sharp. However, Ron did not seem to care, as he verified that the bathroom door was closed before standing in front of the kittens.

“Good.”

There was an odd smile on Ron’s face.

The Cat Tribe was known for their sensitivity to their surroundings. The Cat Tribe was one that was better known in the Eastern Continent than the Western Continent, but there was no way that someone like Ron, who was involved with assassinations, would

not know about them.

Unlike most beast people, who became violent when they went berserk, the Cat Tribe became stealthier and sharper. That was why they were a scary tribe, although they were not at the level of the Wolf, Tiger, or Lion Tribes.

There was only one thought on Ron's mind as he watched the two Cat Tribe children. It was a sudden thought, and they were still young, but...

'I can teach them.'

Ron checked to make sure that the door to the bathroom was closed once again.

The Cat Tribe put a lot of importance on relationships. If they trust someone once, they will never betray them. They were suspicious by nature, but, like the Wolf Tribe, they valued interpersonal relationships.

Children of such a tribe came looking for Cale on their own accord. Ron thought it would be nice to give his puppy young master a farewell present.

Ron moved a bit closer to the Cat Tribe children. He then reached out to caress the head of the slightly larger silver kitten.

Slap.

The silver kitten slapped his hand away and quickly moved away to the corner of the room along with the red kitten.

"Hoo."

Ron's eyes turned curious. These Cat Tribe children seem to have already figured him out. It made sense, since they needed to quickly recognize people like him, people who were close with death, in order to live for a long time. Even if cats do have nine lives, they needed to treasure them. The Cat Tribe was known for their long lives as well as their stealthy night movement. In this regard, they were stealthier than anyone else. Ron started to smile.

"One child is fog and the other one is poison."

The silver one was fog and the red one was blood, or poison. Even if they did not

become killers, they had the right foundations to become shadows. The silver kitten turned its head away as Ron said that, while the red kitten snorted. The two siblings had no desire to become killers who gave off such a thick scent of death.

The two kittens scoffed at Ron, as if they knew about his identity as an assassin already. Once Cale came out of the bathroom, they were still sticking very close to each other as they looked up at Cale.

“Stop looking at me.”

They immediately stopped looking at him once he said that.

“Ron. Go get me my meal from Beacrox.”

“Yes, young master.”

Ron left and Cale sat down on the couch and looked toward the two kittens. He then spoke to the two kittens who were whining in a corner far away from him.

“You two are part of the Cat Tribe, aren’t you?”

The two kittens nodded their heads without making eye contact with Cale.

“Are you planning on following me?”

There were no responses to this question.

Instead, the red kitten slowly walked over and rubbed its cheek on Cale’s leg, while the silver kitten approached Cale soon after and started to tap Cale’s foot with her front paw.

Cale already had a plan for these two siblings. He nodded his head and made up his mind about the kittens.

“Then make yourselves useful.”

The kittens immediately responded.

Meeeow.

Meow!

“Answer in human language.”

The pupils of the silver kitten, the older sister named On, started to sparkle as she spoke. ^[1]

“I want to eat meat. I’m still hungry.”

The red kitten, the younger brother Hong, tapped Cale’s leg as he added on. ^[2]

“I want to eat cake.”

Cale responded to both of them.

“I will give you a lot of meat and cake, so you know what to do, right?”

“Be useful!”

“Be useful!”

The kittens immediately replied, and that was how the two siblings, who were kicked out of the Fog Cat Tribe, became a part of Count Henituse’s household.

Four days later, Cale joined his family for breakfast for the first time in a while. Count Deruth looked at his son, who was wearing extremely simple clothes, and started to smile.

“I guess you are leaving today.”

Today was the day that Cale would leave the Henituse territory and head toward the capital.

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1. There are many Chinese characters for “On,” but I think the author is referencing the, “On,” that means conceal, because she is the fog that Ron describes.
 2. The name “Hong” is probably from the Chinese character for Red.

Chapter 14

Heading Out (1)

“It doesn’t look like you are nervous.”

Cale smiled instead of responding to his father’s statement. Cale’s complexion had gotten much better in the last few days. It had no choice but to get better.

‘Since I didn’t get beaten to a pulp.’

It was raining in the Henituse territory until yesterday. If the story went as it did in the novel, Cale would have been beaten to a pulp on a rainy day. Of course, Cale was not beaten up yesterday.

He could also sleep well now. This was because he could feel the Indestructible Shield always surrounding his heart. Knowing that he could manage to survive, even if he did something wrong to someone like Ron or Beacrox, made it easier for him to sleep at night.

“Father.”

Cale looked at the breakfast spread that was fancier than ever before, as he asked.

“It looks like the number of people in the envoy has grown again. I asked you to reduce the number.”

He had asked his father to decrease the number of servants accompanying him to help with his needs. He said that Hans and Ron were enough. Of course, Hans turned pale at first, however, he started to pack right away after hearing that the kittens will be traveling with them as well.

“Ah, about that...”

For some reason, Deruth stopped his sentence without finishing. At that moment, someone else’s voice interjected itself into their conversation.

“That was my decision.”

It was the Count’s wife, Violan.

Her hair was perfectly formed in a bun, without a single stray hair, as she was looking down at her plate. She looked so similar to her son, Basen. Even the way they both did not make eye contact with Cale and had a stoic expression was the same.

“We can’t have someone from our family looking poor and terrible just because you want to go with such a small envoy.”

It was an extremely stoic voice. Violan then lifted up her gaze to look in Cale’s direction before continuing on.

“...I am not saying you are terrible.”

“Even I know that much.”

Violan hesitated for a moment after hearing Cale’s response, before taking another bite of her food and continuing to speak.

“People, especially nobles, care a lot about appearances.”

The Countess Violan. Cale quietly watched her.

She was born as the eldest daughter of a poor artist’s family, and had dreamt about being the head of a merchant guild when she grew up. She was influenced by the luxury items being sold to the nobles and came to the Henituse territory. Once she got here, she fell in love with the art of sculpting.

Eventually, she met Count Deruth and fell in love, living as the director for the territory’s cultural business operations.

In Cale, no, Kim Rok Soo’s opinion, she had a lot of pride for herself and her life, which was why she had a lot of pride for this family as well.

Even though she knew that Cale was silently observing her, she continued on without a single change in her expression.

“Art is not for those human tras- mm.” (cut off without the h on purpose)

She was a bit of a coarse speaker because she worked in the merchant world for a while.

“Anyways, there are a lot of people who think that appearances reveal everything about a person.”

That was her way of telling Cale to take a lot of servants with him. Her goal was for Cale to not be judged negatively just because he only took a few servants with him.

Naturally, Cale wanted to take a lot of people to do his biddings for him as well.

‘How nice and relaxing would it be?’

He was finding it difficult to get changed without a servant now. Kim Rok Soo had been in this world as Cale for only about a week, but he already could not let go of that easy life.

However, a few days into Cale’s future was a crazy Black Dragon.

If he cannot release this crazy dragon in advance, it might go wild and kill a lot of people. Although Cale didn’t care about what happened to other people, he still did not want to see people dying in front of his eyes.

Furthermore, he also didn’t want to take responsibility for those people who will be injured because of the dragon.

Responsibility was a heavy burden, and for someone like Kim Rok Soo, who had taken responsibility for his own life since he was a young boy, he knew that responsibility related to people and people’s lives was the scariest and heaviest burden.

That was why he started to speak.

“Art is the mirror of the soul.”

Violan lifted her gaze off of her plate and looked toward Cale. This was the first time in a long while that the two of them had made eye contact with each other.

“...You do know about that.”

“Yes. I do know.”

Cale had roamed around the entire territory the last four days to prepare the things he needed on this trip. He just recited one of the things he saw on one of those trips.

“Sculpting is not just cutting into a chunk of marble. It is creating a reflection of what is in your heart.”

This time, it was Cale who looked at his plate and continued to eat while Violan was watching him.

“I read that on the plaque at the Gallery.”

The Gallery in the Henituse territory displayed the works of new sculptors. That statement that was written on the plaque in the Gallery was something that Violan had personally written.

“...Do as you wish. I will reduce the number of people going with you, but, in return, the carriage and everything in it shall be of the highest quality. That is how it should be for us Henituse people.”

“That is fine with me. Please give me the most expensive stuff.”

“Great. I will make sure you have a carriage that won’t even hurt your butt as you travel across bumpy roads.”

“Only the best.”

Cale could not see it because he was looking at his plate, but there was a slight smile on Violan’s face, before it disappeared. Count Deruth, who had been watching this from the start, let out a fake cough to cover up his slowly rising smile, and asked Cale.

“Did you verify the information from Hans regarding the personalities of all the nobles who will be going to the capital?”

Deruth had used his own network, as well as the information guild to purchase

information on the other nobles, and had handed it to Hans to give to Cale.

“Yes. It was pretty entertaining.”

It was probably difficult to purchase that file. In fact, it probably cost a fortune. Although it only had about three or four lines about each person, it was precious and expensive to purchase information on nobles.

“There are some petty ones, some stupid ones, some smart and scary ones, even some who are desperate for power. Looks like all sorts of people are coming this time.”

Of course, there were also some stupidly nice people, villains, and trash as well.

“You read the file I sent you. Ahem. Anyways, do as you please. But Cale.”

“Yes, father.”

“I heard a strange rumor.”

Cale’s shoulders flinched just ever so slightly.

“Apparently the man-eating tree, that black tree, has changed. It is now a white tree with beautiful blue leaves. There are even grass growing in that spot where nothing used to grow.”

The place that had changed the most in the last four days was none other than the top of the hill in the slums. It was a location where only the black tree had resided, however, that tree turned white with blue leaves after Cale had resolved its grudge, and it was now beautiful tree that looked almost divine.

“Isn’t it an interesting rumor?”

“It is. What an interesting rumor.”

Cale had no intentions of revealing his Ancient Power right now, so he simply pretended to have no knowledge of it.

There was no way that Count Deruth did not know about the fact that he went to the slums. However, he would not have any knowledge of the Ancient Power. He would

just suspect that something happened with Cale and the man-eating tree.

“Yes, but it isn’t that big of a deal. However, you need to pay attention to rumors no matter what you do. There is nothing scarier than human eyes and mouths. However, anything that happens inside the territory is fine for members of our household.”

“I will keep that in mind.”

Cale felt like he really could live a peaceful life, as long as he remained in their territory. How great would it be to quickly come back from the capital and live the life of a couch potato?

The luxurious breakfast that was made for Cale, who was leaving for the capital, finally came to an end. He received goodbyes from the Count and Countess, who couldn’t watch him leave because they had work to do, and then made eye contact with his siblings, who were awkwardly standing there.

“What?”

His younger brother, Basen, just shook his head at Cale’s question. His younger sister, Lily, slowly approached him. 7 years old. This youngest sibling of his was 11 years apart from him.

“P, please have a safe trip.”

“Thanks. You be safe here too.”

Lily vigorously nodded her head.

“Yes!”

She then quietly looked at Cale. Cale just casually asked in response to her gaze.

“Should I buy you a present while on my trip?”

“Really?”

‘As I thought. She wanted a present.’

Cale nodded his head as he watched the surprised, amazed, and happy expression all taking turns showing up on Lily's face.

"Yes. What would you like?"

"A sword."

"...What?"

"Please buy me a sword."

'A 7 year old wants a sword?'

Seeing the shock on Cale's face, Basen started to speak.

"Hyung-nim, Lily's dream these days is to become a swordsman."

"Is that so?"

Cale seriously looked toward Lily. The people of this household all had long arms, long legs, and a good physique. Lily was only 7 years old, but she was tall for her age and could easily become a good swordsman if she put in the effort.

"I guess it would suit her."

Lily's eyes started to sparkle.

"I will buy you an expensive one."

Lily started to smile as she lowered her head in embarrassment instead of responding. Cale did not see this, as he looked toward his 15 year old younger brother, who was looking at him.

"You want something too?"

"A fountain pen."

"Got it."

The breakfast came to an end once he got the list of presents from his siblings.



Cale's expression was odd as he stood in front of the carriage that would take him to the capital.

'How odd.'

He had an odd expression as he asked the person standing next to him.

"Why is it that their seat is better than my seat?"

Cale was looking at the expensive and soft cushion next to him, as well as the two kittens sitting on the cushion.

"Young master, shouldn't our precious cats travel comfortably on this trip? They are so small and precious."

Hans answered as he put the special treats he prepared for the cats in the carriage as well. Cale and Ron both had blank expressions on their faces.

'It's because he has not seen them create fog and fill it with poison.'

Cale called On and Hong to a empty corner of the garden three days ago.

'What can you do?'

In response to his question, On created fog while in her cat form, while Hong used a bit of his blood to spread poison into the air. Of course, On was able to control the poisonous fog to prevent Cale from dying. Furthermore, the poison Hong could spread was only at the level of paralysis right now.

'You two are quite useful.'

On and Hong proudly answered back after hearing Cale's praise.

'We were able to run away because of our poisonous fog!'

‘We are quite useful!’

Starting from that day, On and Hong were able to eat delicious food all day long. Naturally, Hans was happy to provide for them.

“Young master, I will be sitting with the driver up top.”

“Okay.”

Ron jumped up next to the driver, and Cale was about to board as well, when Choi Han approached him.

“Cale-nim.”

Choi Han said that he did not want to call Cale young master, instead choosing to call him Cale-nim.

“What?”

“Is it okay for me to not be in the same carriage protecting you?”

Cale’s expression turned like he had eaten some bitter persimmon.

“...Is there...”

‘Is there a reason to do that?’

That was what Cale’s expression was saying, and Choi Han didn’t say anything else, instead just nodding his head. Cale started to squint his eyes while watching Choi Han walk away.

‘It’s really weird.’

Choi Han’s eyes were still not very clear. His mind still seemed to be full of anger and thoughts of revenge. When Cale mentioned yesterday that they had sent people to Harris Village, he could see the anger in Choi Han’s eyes.

But he felt a little different than before. He wasn’t in complete despair like in the novel, thinking something along the lines of, ‘The world does not want me to be happy! How

could they kill all of my loved ones?!' That was why it was weird.

'He recovered pretty quickly.'

He seemed to be at the stage in the novel when he was traveling with Beacrox, Rosalyn, and Lock, with a sword in his heart but a calm demeanor on the outside. ^[1] He let it be since it wasn't bad, but Cale had an oddly bitter feeling in his mouth. It was at that moment.

"I don't think this is your spot."

The leader of the envoy, the Vice Captain of the territory's Knight Brigade, approached Choi Han and started to speak. The Vice Captain looked at Choi Han from head to toe before smirking, like he was looking down at Choi Han.

'I knew we would have at least one person like this.'

Cale clicked his tongue.

Choi Han had hidden his abilities to that of an average level.

The problem was that Choi Han was the first person Cale brought to the Count's Estate as a guest, and the fact that Count Deruth treated him like an important guest.

Adding on the fact that he was going as part of Cale's guards this time made some people start to dislike and oppose him.

They didn't annoy him visibly because he was still Cale's guest, but there were a lot of things they were secretly doing to annoy Choi Han.

'Young master, I do not think Choi Han-nim is getting along with the other knights who will be going with us to the capital.'

'Is that so?'

'Yes. I think the Vice Captain is responsible for it.'

'I got it Hans. You can stop worrying about it.'

Cale thought about Hans's report and felt bad, not for Choi Han, but for the Vice Captain.

'Soon enough, he'll realize that his eyes were not just at the ground, but completely underground.' [2]

It'll be fine as long as he doesn't do anything to get beaten up.

Cale did not choose to try to resolve their issues.

The Vice Captain will not be able to sleep properly once he sees Choi Han's real skills. How could he sleep when he is extremely scared?

"Young master, shall we leave now?"

The Vice Captain asked Cale, and Cale closed the carriage door as he answered.

"Yes. Let's go."

15 soldiers, 5 knights, and one special guard. Cale's envoy, which consisted of this protection squad and then some other people, finally started to head toward the capital.

Of course, as with most fantasy world travels, it was not a very uneventful trip.

Nobody dared to touch Cale's carriage in the Henituse territory. The carriage did not have the flag that represented the family, but the carriage itself had the Golden Turtle, the symbol of the Henituse family, drawn on it. It was representative of the Henituse family's love for wealth and longevity.

However, as soon as they left the Henituse territory, they ran into a situation.

'As expected, they really do show up.'

While they were rushing through a mountain range, tens of people suddenly showed up in the valley.

"Pay the toll if you want to cross this mountain!"

“Take out everything you have! If we find anything after you claim to have taken everything out, it will be 1 slap for every 1 bronze we find!”

Yes, it was the bandits.

There were bound to be bandits in a fantasy story, but the fact that there were tens of them was surprising. They probably relied on their numbers to attack this carriage, which only had 5 knights. Cale looked toward the kitten On, who was yawning and asked.

“You think they can’t see the symbol on my carriage?”

“I guess so.”

“Idiots! Beginners!”

Cale nodded his head at Hong’s assessment. He was not afraid of bandits. Why would he be?

Knock Knock.

The knocking came from the small window by the driver’s seat before the window slightly opened, and Ron looked inside.

“Young master, it looks like we will need to take a break. There seem to be quite a lot of rabbits here.”

Rabbits. Cale shook for a moment. Ron went, ‘Ah!’ before smiling and added on.

“Ah, this rabbit is different from the rabbit I was going to catch for you, young master. Of course, these rabbits will not be caught by me but by other people.”

Cale was being protected by someone who was scarier than the bandits. He listened to the sound of the bandits’ screams coming from outside the carriage, as he started to calculate the time.

“About a day and a half.”

In about a day and a half, they would arrive around the area where the Black Dragon

was being tortured. It was earlier than when Choi Han arrived in the novel. This was the reason he had made them rush forward without taking any breaks.

1. Looking really calm even though he still has a strong desire for revenge internally.
2. Been really blind.

Chapter 15

Heading Out (2)

In order to achieve the results he wanted, Cale had to choose to camp outside.

There were no villages along the way until the village near the hidden cave of the Black Dragon.

Meeeeeeow.

The red Cat Tribe kitten Hong meowed and wagged his tail, as if he was excited. It was because of the delicious smell filling the area.

‘The joy of the day comes from eating a delicious dinner.’

That was what Cale was thinking. A warm dinner was the signal to end the long and tiring day, and start a relaxing night. Tonight’s main course was a soup with rabbit meat.

“Damn it.”

It was not Ron’s doing. Cale turned his gaze to the side. Choi Han, the person who had caught the rabbits, was happily eating his soup.

Meeeeeeow.

Tap. Tap. On and Hong were tapping on his leg, asking him to give it to them if he didn’t want it. Hans had a wide smile on his face as he cautiously approached the two children.

“Would our precious kitten-nims like to eat the jerky that I prepared for you? It is very healthy, without any salt or preservatives.”

Naturally, On and Hong ignored Hans. Hans, who did not know they were part of the Cat Tribe, found that sass to be cute as well and continued to linger around them.

Contrary to the fact that they had their first battle, it was a very relaxed and peaceful environment. However, the atmosphere around the knights seemed to be a bit odd. They kept peeking toward Choi Han, who was eating his soup next to Cale. The Vice Captain seemed to be full of agony.

“Tsk.”

Cale clicked his tongue.

Cale’s party had to fight off tens of bandits today. The one to handle most of those bandits was naturally Choi Han. He did not kill the bandits. However, he had no issues cutting off a limb or leaving them a deep scar. Not only that, he did it in an unbelievable speed too.

‘Young master, the battle is over.’

The Vice Captain had reported this to Cale with a shocked expression on his face. He had not expected it to end so quickly. The bandits were ones who were pushed out of power in a different area nearby. The bandits they had thought were stupid were at their limits and felt that they could handle five knights because of their numbers.

Unfortunately, their first target ended up being Cale’s carriage with Choi Han. The reason the Vice Captain’s face was completely pale was not because of the strength of the bandits. Choi Han approached next to the Vice Captain and added on.

‘It was a light battle. Not even enough for a warm-up.’

Cale could see the Vice Captain slightly flinch after hearing Choi Han’s words. He could also see Choi Han smirking while looking at the Vice Captain flinch.

‘He really isn’t the type to let people do as they please with him.’

There was no way that someone like Choi Han, who had no issues beating up the Count’s son, would be nice and let people just continue to mess with him.

“Do you have no appetite?”

Cale seemed to be frustrated, as Ron approached him with his usual benign smile. He

looked back and forth between the rabbit soup and Ron, before suddenly realizing something. This old man enjoyed making fun of him.

“Yes. None at all.” Choi Han responded to that statement.

“Are you feeling unwell?”

“No, nothing like that.”

‘I would have no issues if you caught anything other than rabbits.’

Cale looked toward Choi Han, and waved his hand to tell Choi Han to not mind him.

However, Choi Han continued to look toward Cale with a serious gaze.

“What are you looking at?”

“...Was that your first time experiencing a battle?”

Cale just casually responded back to Choi Han who asked with a serious expression.

“What battle? You mean with the bandits earlier?”

“Yes.”

“Of course. I’ve never seen so many bandits before.”

“I see.”

Choi Han nodded his head and quietly mumbled to himself.

“...Must have been your first time facing potential death.”

Ha. One of the soldiers let out a gasp.

Ha! Cale let out a loud gasp as if he was completely shocked.

‘First time facing potential death my ass. Do you know how nervous I’ve been the last few days because of you?’

That wasn't even it. Ron's smile as Choi Han brought back the rabbits, the sight of Beacrox sharpening his cooking knife, Cale was also nervous because of them. Cale started to think about all of the nervous moments he has had since they left the Henituse territory.

'Now I really have no appetite.'

He had lost all of his appetite. Clang. The spoon in Cale's hand just fell onto the soup bowl. That was why he didn't realize that the soldiers were looking at him with an understanding gaze, or that Choi Han had stopped paying attention to everyone around him as he nostalgically thought about the past.

"Cale-nim."

"What?"

Cale was thinking about how he didn't need to be so nervous anymore because he managed to avoid getting beaten up and also got the Indestructible Shield, when Choi Han's voice snapped him back to reality.

'Why does he keep talking to me?'

"The first time is always difficult to handle."

"What are you talking about?"

As Cale stoically asked back, Choi Han had a slight smile on his face before he asked in a stoic expression. The gaze in his eyes was extremely serious.

"Cale-nim, do you not study any martial arts?"

"No need."

"Shouldn't you at least have the strength to protect yourself?"

There was concern in that seriousness. Cale wondered why Choi Han was suddenly becoming so serious, but decided to answer the question anyways.

“I have plenty of ways already.”

Cale took his gaze off of Choi Han and looked around. 15 soldiers who were stronger than him, and 5 knights who would do well no matter where they went. There were only a few servants aside from them, but Ron, Beacrox, the two kittens, and even deputy butler Hans were much stronger than himself.

Cale made eye contact with each of the people before turning back to Choi Han to ask.

“You can see them too, right?”

‘This is the protection for a wealthy Count’s son.’

Cale started to smile. He knew that they would all protect him. Of course, he wasn’t sure about Ron or Beacrox, but they would at least prevent him from getting killed by someone.

‘And they are not the only protection.’

Cale decided to be a little more honest to Choi Han, who was sitting there looking at him. He patted his heart as he answered.

“I trust my heart. I will live.”

Of course. The Indestructible Shield surrounding his heart will protect him. Well, as long as he avoided people like Choi Han that is...

Choi Han looked toward Cale with shaky eyes.

Meeow.

Meow.

“Hmm? What are you doing?”

On and Hong approached Cale and started to push on his legs with their small paws. The claws on their paws hurt, making Cale frown, but the Cat Tribe siblings stopped eating and started to rub their cheeks on Cale’s leg.

Clack. Choi Han put down his empty soup bowl and stood up from his seat.

“...I’ll be practicing with my sword now.”

“Right after eating?”

“I feel like I need to get stronger.”

‘...Scary punk. Are you trying to get strong enough to blow the whole Earth away?’

Cale turned away in disgust. At that time, Beacrox approached him with a new dish.

“Please enjoy.”

“Oh! Thanks.”

Cale looked at the plate that was filled with the highest quality spices and highest quality beef steak, and started to smile.

“Bitter food and drinks like lemonade are best to restore your appetite.”

This was the first time Ron had handed him a lemonade since their interaction at the tea shop. Cale just ignored the lemonade because he was excited about the steak.

“If everyone has finished eating, we will start our evening training session soon.”

Cale could hear the Vice Captain’s loud voice and started to think.

‘The Vice Captain must have been motivated by Choi Han.’

Cale looked at the fired up knights and soldiers as he chowed down on the steak and even the rabbit soup as well. The rabbit soup was pretty good once he tried it. Of course, he adamantly declined the jerky the kittens offered him. There was no seasoning on it so he wouldn’t even touch it.



‘3 days.’

Cale calculated as they entered the village.

‘The Black Dragon will cause a mana explosion in 3 days.’

They were now in a Viscount’s territory that was right next to the Henituse territory. A villa belonging to the Viscount was built in the mountain on the right side of this village a few years ago.

Naturally, while it was labeled as the Viscount’s villa on the outside, in reality, it belonged to Marquis Stan, the person responsible for making the Black Dragon go crazy. The viscount of this territory was nothing more than a dog of the Marquis.

‘And in the mountain behind the villa hides the cave with the Black Dragon.’

The Black Dragon causes a mana explosion and sends the cave and the mountain flying. Cale looked at the small peak to the right of the mountain he crossed, and clicked his tongue.

Venion of Marquis Stan’s family. Cale was thinking about the Marquis’s second son. He was a crazy psycho who crippled his own older brother to rise to the position of heir. That psycho visits the villa every so often to torture the Black Dragon for fun.

“Tsk.”

Hans flinched at Cale clicking his tongue, and quickly brought Choi Han over and started to speak.

“Young master, I will take Choi Han-nim and quickly look for an inn. Please wait a moment.”

The carriage was currently stopped outside of the village entrance.

“Whatever.”

“We will be right back.”

Cale nodded his head at Hans’s statement while observing Choi Han. He had a nostalgic look in his eyes. Just why would Choi Han fight with an existence that caused a mana explosion? It was because he could not throw this small and quiet village away.

Harris Village. This village was similar to the village that taught him about both love and hate. That was why he made a move to save the lives of these village people that he did not even know. Cale started to frown as he called Choi Han over.

“Choi Han.”

“...Yes?”

“Hurry back.”

Ah. A small gasp came out of Choi Han’s mouth. This 17 year old boy who had lived for tens of years started to have an innocent smile on his face as he nodded his head. ^[1]

“Yes sir. I will be right back.”

Cale motioned as if he was annoyed, but Choi Han bowed before quickly starting to walk toward the village with Hans. Cale, who preferred this focused Choi Han to the one who had a blank expression, continued to watch him before suddenly starting to frown.

He could see a carriage quickly heading in their direction.

‘I have a bad feeling about this.’

Cale felt like someone with extremely sweaty hands was handing him a poisoned apple. It was a really bitter feeling. The cause of that bitter feeling was soon to be revealed.

“Such-”

Cale could not believe it.

He could see an old man who could not manage to avoid the carriage, fall down on the road. He could also see Choi Han rushing toward the old man, as well as the carriage continuing to travel down the road like it was not going to stop.

‘Such a cliché!’

There was a flag hanging on that carriage. A red snake. It was the symbol of Marquis

Stan. Cale's eyes started to shake. It was about to happen. An incident was about to happen.

Bang!

Choi Han flung himself to rescue the old man, and the momentum forced him to smash into a building wall. Only then did the black carriage belonging to Marquis Stan finally stop.

"Sigh."

Cale let out a sigh as he opened the carriage door. It looked like he had no choice but to head over to the site of that cliché event.

1. Remember, Choi Han really doesn't age

Chapter 16

Heading Out (3)

“Young master, are you heading over there?”

Ron approached him as soon as he stepped out of the carriage.

“Who will go if I don’t?”

Ron and the Vice Captain started to chase after Cale, who was heading toward the incident location without any hesitation. The two surrounded Cale, as if the world was going to end soon, but Cale did not care.

A man slowly walked out of the other carriage. Venion Stan.

Cale started to frown deeply as soon as he saw him. There was only one line in the file that his father Count Deruth gave him regarding Venion Stan’s personality.

[A typical and authoritative noble]

Cale, well, Kim Rok Soo, could also use the information from, ‘The Birth of a Hero,’ to evaluate Venion.

Your typical villain.

However, it was quite a headache to meet that typical villain in real life, than it was as a character in a novel. Cale could not beat someone up for doing something bad or because he didn’t like them like Choi Han could.

The situation had already escalated a bit by the time Cale arrived. In those few short moments, Choi Han had already become so angry that his shoulders were shaking violently.

“How can you get in the way of a noble person like that?”

“What the hell are you saying when someone could have gotten hurt? Who was in the

way? This only happened because you were driving the carriage like a maniac!"

"Peasants should move out of the way when they see a noble's carriage. It is not my fault that this peasant was so stupid he just stood there without moving!"

Choi Han was arguing with one of Venion's lackeys, and Hans, who had been standing next to Choi Han, had a frown on his face as he approached Cale and whispered into his ear.

"Choi Han-nim seems to be extremely agitated."

Hans seemed to have already realized that the owner of the carriage belonged to the Marquis's family. He also seemed to have realized that the person standing behind that lackey was none other than Venion Stan.

That narcissist probably only stepped out of the carriage because he saw the symbol of the Henituse family on Cale's carriage.

"Enough."

Venion, the man with beautiful blonde hair, gently spoke to his lackey. As soon as Venion's words came out, the lackey quickly moved behind Venion, as if he had never been angry in the first place. Only Choi Han was left huffing and puffing while consoling the scared old man.

Tsk. Cale clicked his tongue.

The lackey wasn't actually angry. He was pretty far away from Cale's carriage, but just like Venion, he probably saw the Golden Turtle on Cale's carriage. That was why he was exaggerating, being extremely loud while scolding Choi Han, so that it will draw Cale out to the scene. Hans knew what the lackey was doing, which led him to frown while waiting for Cale to arrive.

Cale glared at Venion and the lackey before putting a hand on Choi Han's shoulder.

"You too."

"But-!"

Cale knew why Choi Han was angry. This place was very similar to Harris Village, his second home. He was angry at the fact that these people put someone else's life in

danger but didn't show even an iota of remorse, or any signs of apologizing.

However, the victim in this, the old man, was unable to get angry. It was because he did not have anything to support him like Choi Han had.

"They could have used another road, but decided not to do so and could have hurt someone. How can I just let this be."

"Choi Han."

Cale put some pressure to push down on Choi Han's shoulder.

"Calm down."

Choi Han's black pupils looked directly at Cale. Cale could see the angry Choi Han, no, to be specific, the Choi Han that was being held down by the memories of Harris Village, starting to calm down.

After verifying that Choi Han was calming down, Cale turned his gaze to look at Venion Stan.

Beautiful blonde hair and a slight smile on his lips. Perfectly ironed attire without a single wrinkle. Boots without a single scuff mark. However, the thing that caught Cale's attention was the small amount of red at the tip of Venion's white dress shirt.

'Some blood must have landed on him while he was enjoying watching the Black Dragon being tortured.'

A crazy bastard. This Venion Stan was someone who enjoyed his meal while watching the torturer whip the Black Dragon until it was covered with blood.

"Nice to meet you. Are you someone from Count Henituse's household?"

"Yes. Nice to meet you, Young master Venion Stan."

As expected, the other party knew of Cale. Venion was not someone who had an easy life in reaching the heir position. The problem was that he was a quite a bit rude.

"Mm."

Venion Stan was the type that could gently smile at you, but you still feel nothing but

disgust for him.

“I have not had any reason to come to this area, and have only heard stories, but I heard there was someone in the Count’s family who was a free spirit and did not seem like a noble.”

Venion smiled as he observed Cale. It was a very annoying look, as if he was trying to start something.

“I heard that young master Basen Henituse had been taking part in all of the gatherings of the nobles since last year-.”

‘Why ask something you already know about?’

Cale was not talented in these kinds of small talk. That was why he smiled brightly and respectfully answered.

“Yes. I am indeed that trash.”

Trash. The moment that word personally came out of Cale’s mouth, Venion’s lackey flinched.

“One of the trashiest of all of the trash probably.”

The corner of Venion’s mouth started to twist up. His expression seemed to say that he had never seen such a crazy person before, but Cale did not care.

Marquis Stan was someone who was strong enough to lead a faction, but Venion could not do as he pleased with other nobles until he was officially proclaimed as the future successor of the Marquis title.

A Marquis would normally officially proclaim a child as their successor in order to provide protection to that child, as well as have that child start building their network at an early age. However, Marquis Stan had not done that yet.

‘There are still three other children.’

Venion had two younger sisters and one younger brother. The Marquis enjoyed watching the competition between the siblings. Venion enjoyed watching the Black

Dragon being tortured in order to destress from the competition with his siblings. The Marquis considered the competition between his children to be like an exciting sport. Naturally, the crippled eldest son was the result of this competition.

It was a completely crazy household.

‘Our Henituse family is an extremely great family in comparison.’

“You’re a very interesting person.”

Venion just casually responded to Cale’s statement.

The wealthy Count, who resided in the outskirts of the northeast without being a part of any faction. Who would try to develop a relationship with that family? If anything, people would just be greedy to take that land as their own.

However, Venion didn’t like Cale as a person. The trash eldest son and a pretty smart younger son. Knowing about Cale and Basen’s relationship made Venion think of his own older brother when looking at Cale.

However, Venion kept up the act of a proper noble, and handed the reigns of this incident to Cale.

“An unexpected obstacle has made me waste time, but I guess it was a pretty good thing since I got to make your acquaintance, young master Cale.”

An unexpected obstacle. Venion was referring to the old man. He was disappointed at the fact that his time was wasted because of this old man, and wanted to finish this on a happy note.

“But it looks like you need to teach your subordinate to clearly distinguish between the people who have the right to travel across this road and this earth, as well as the people who have the right to make them stop.”

As a well-known Marquis’s unofficial successor, this was the most he could do to the trash of a Count’s family. His tone was saying that, although they were both young masters, their statuses were completely different.

Of course, Cale was quietly listening, but he wasn’t the type to pay attention to a dog’s

yapping.

Venion finished what he had to say and looked toward the most uncomfortable looking person in the group.

Plop. The old man kneeled on the ground once Venion looked in his direction and bowed his head.

“M, my apologies.”

The hands of the old man, who was bowing so low that his head could touch the ground, were shaking. Choi Han’s hands were shaking as he watched the old man apologize.

Each territory’s residents would be shaped by the personality of the reigning noble. With the Viscount of this territory being one of Marquis Stan’s dogs, they were also very authoritative and looked down on the commoners.

The corners of Venion’s lips started to go up. He was satisfied. After observing Venion, Cale called out to him.

“Young master Venion.”

Once Venion turned his head, Cale asked him a question.

“Are you done?”

“...I am.”

Cale crouched down. His expensive clothes started to touch the ground. He then looked toward the shaking hands of the old man.

‘It’ll be dangerous if this continues.’

Cale was certain that he heard it.

“Huuuuuuuu~.”

The sound of Choi Han taking a deep breath. That had to be the sound of him holding back his anger. The moment Cale heard it, he could feel chills on the back of his neck,

and felt that if this continued any longer, the one to get beaten to a pulp would not be himself, but Venion. It didn't matter to him whether or not Venion was beaten to a pulp, but Choi Han could not punch a noble while he was associated with him.

Cale put a hand on the old man's shoulder. Venion's eyebrow started to twitch. A noble's hand was on a commoner's shoulder.

"Old man."

The old man seemed to be extremely shocked as he lifted his head to look at Cale.

"Y, yes?"

Cale casually asked.

"Where's the bar?"

"Excuse me?"

"Where can I get some delicious alcohol? As you've heard, I am trash. I don't feel refreshed in the morning if I don't have something to drink. I need to drink to make sure tomorrow is another great day. So."

Cale lifted the old man's upper body up. Venion, who had been watching Cale, quietly judged Cale and shook his head after hearing Cale mention alcohol.

"Lead the way."

Making eye contact with the shaking pupils of the old man, Cale started to frown as he continued.

"Are you not going to get up?"

The old man hesitated and looked back and forth between Venion and Cale. Cale just ignored him as he got back up and reached out the hand that had been on a commoner's shoulder toward Venion.

"It was nice meeting you today, Young master Venion."

Cale was asking for a handshake.

Venion quietly stood there and looked at Cale. At that moment, one of Venion's servants urgently approached them and whispered quietly to Venion. However, it was loud enough for everyone to hear.

"Young master, we have been delayed enough already."

"...Do not interrupt a conversation between nobles."

Venion looked down at his servant without a smile on his face, and the servant quickly bowed. Venion smiled once again as he grabbed Cale's hand.

"I will just be on my way then, as I am very busy."

He then let go. It was a very short handshake. Cale started to smile like a drunk person, as he responded back.

"If we happen to meet in the capital, let's have a drink together."

"...I do not think we would appreciate the same thing, but sure."

Venion's smile was lukewarm. Cale decided to do something big to finish this conversation.

"Yes. Based on our interaction today, it truly looks like only young master Venion deserves to be the future patriarch of the Stan family. You are a very cool person."

Patriarch. That word made Venion's eyes get cloudy. As Cale expected, Venion started to smile brightly once again, and offered praises for Cale as well.

"Young master Cale is also a very interesting and free-spirited person. Let us meet again in the future."

'No. I have no desire to see you ever again. Even if I do, it will be from far, far away.'

Cale hid his true feelings and nodded his head. Venion quickly got back on his carriage, as if he was truly busy, and disappeared.

Cale watched the carriage disappear before patting Choi Han's shoulder.

"Half of the nobles are like that."

Choi Han's shoulders flinched at Cale's words, but Cale was already crouching in front of the old man again.

"Old man. You can't get up? Did you hurt your leg?"

Pat pat.

Cale inspected the old man's body as he said that. He did not seem to be injured. Cale started to observe the man with a confused expression. He then called Choi Han over.

"Choi Han."

Instead of responding, Choi Han just looked at the back of the crouching Cale.

"You take this old man home."

"N, no, I am okay. That bar you were talking about."

"No need. I'm not in the mood to drink."

Cale stopped the old man from trying to lead him to a bar, and looked toward Choi Han, who was standing next to him.

"Since you saved him, might as well do it all the way and take him safely back home."

Choi Han's mouth opened and closed a couple of times, but he could not say anything. At that moment, the old man's voice filled Cale's ears.

"My place sells alcohol."

"Hmm? Old man, your place was a bar?"

Cale's eyes showed that he was really surprised. The old man awkwardly smiled, but continued to speak in a slightly more relaxed expression.

"Yes, sir. It is this village's only inn. It has a bar and a restaurant as well."

"Since it is the only inn, that must be the best place. Hans!"

Even without Cale saying anything else, Hans quickly approached the old man and helped him up, before starting to ask about the inn. Once the two of them started to move, things started to get rowdy around them.

Ron quickly approached Cale and brushed the dirt off Cale's clothes. The Vice Captain and the rest of the group headed toward the village entrance. The only people left there were Cale and Choi Han.

"...Cale-nim."

"What?"

"Are you not angry?"

"About what?"

Choi Han hesitated for a moment, and could not continue speaking. Cale shrugged his shoulders as he started to speak.

"The fact that he looked down on me? Or how he made such an unbelievable statement to you? How he almost killed that old man and, instead of apologizing, said that he was an obstacle?"

Cale's voice was calm and firm. He did not seem angry at all. In fact, it sounded indifferent. Cale continued to speak.

"Do you have to keep moving when you see someone in front of you? Why didn't you try to avoid him? Don't you see that you could have hurt the old man? How can you casually say that a person was an obstacle when you almost killed him?"

Choi Han paid attention to Cale, who was looking at a faraway mountain range. At the same time, he made sure to listen to Cale's every word. Cale continued to speak firmly.

"Venion, why is the old man apologizing to you? You should properly apologize to him."

Cale could speak like Choi Han, and there were times he wanted to do that. But.

"I am not someone who can speak like that. Nor do I want to. I'm also not that angry."

But this was not the time. Cale knew that this was one of the things that made Choi Han look cool, but he did not want to look cool like that.

The old man wasn't injured, and he didn't do anything that would get the blade pointed toward his family. The fact that he himself looked bad would be beneficial to Basen, so it was good anyways.

“Also.”

Cale was someone who always returned the favor, no matter how long it took. If someone looked down on him or does something to him, he will always get his revenge.

“That bastard will probably soon be kicked out of his house.”

“...Huh?”

Choi Han could tell that the bastard Cale was referring to was Venion. That was why Choi Han showed a rare shocked expression on his face, as he looked toward Cale.

Cale had a mischievous smile on his face. The two kittens, who were approaching him silently, halted their movement.

Cale’s smile grew larger as he continued to look toward the mountain to the right of the village. He thought to himself the thing he could not tell Choi Han.

‘I plan on snatching that bastard’s dragon.’

Once the dragon is gone, Venion will have to face the wrath of the Marquis, and would have a new obstacle in his way of becoming the family patriarch. Shouldn’t someone who doesn’t know when to stop on the road face at least one obstacle?

Cale was willing to put a large obstacle in Venion’s way. Of course, it would be done in secret. He casually spoke to Choi Han, who was looking at him with curiosity.

“If you’re curious, you can help me out.”

“Whatever it is, I definitely want to help.”

Choi Han started to smile as well. It was a pretty evil smile for such a good-natured person, but the kittens were intrigued by that smile as well.

Cale looked toward the mountain that was supposed to blow up in three days time, and started to mumble. The fact that he was looked down upon by Venion, as well as the blood on Venion’s sleeves and the sight of the old man bowing to Venion were all still on Cale’s mind.

“You won’t regret it.”

He will be able to pay him back for it.

“You definitely won’t regret it.”

Chapter 17

Heading Out (4)

“Young master, this is the best room we have.”

“Seems acceptable.”

The old man led Cale’s group to his inn. The exterior of the inn looked as rustic as the village, but it had everything you would need, probably because the merchants visiting the Henituse territory stayed at this inn on their travels.

“This is the first time we have had a noble staying with us. Please look favorably upon us, even if it is lacking quite a bit, and just consider it as a place where lesser beings live.”

Cale stared at the old man. He seemed more comfortable than when talking to Venion Stan, but he still seemed scared at the fact that a noble would be staying at his inn. It was fine for him to have a little bit of anxiety, but too much was uncomfortable for Cale as well.

‘It’s no good like this.’

Cale patted the old man’s shoulder and tried to calm him down.

“Old man. Relax. I don’t like people who put themselves down like that. This is the place that people who come and go from our territory stay to rest. There is no way such a place will be lacking.”

The old man’s pupils started to shake. He wet his upper lip with his tongue, before finally starting to speak after a bit of hesitation.

“Young master, are there a lot of good people like you in the Henituse territory?”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Excuse me?”

“I am the biggest trash in our territory. Almost anybody you find will have a better personality than me.”

“Ah.”

The old man let out a gasp. On and Hong, who had taken control of the couch in the room, were meowing and shaking their heads, but nobody seemed to notice.

“You can go do what you have to do.”

The old man bowed deeply at Cale’s dismissal and left the room. Cale found it annoying that the old man still seemed to be stiff, but decided not to care.

Knock knock knock.

Someone else was knocking on the door.

“Come in.”

The door opened, and deputy butler Hans brought a small box inside.

“Young master, you asked only for this box, right?”

“Yes. Hand it over.”

Deputy butler Hans showed curiosity as he handed the box to Cale. It was the only luggage Cale personally brought with him. He would just assume there was alcohol or snacks inside if it was a normal box, but this box was not normal.

It was the highest quality magic box with a magic lock on it. The seal on the magic box was the logo of the Flynn Merchant Guild, one of the three large merchant guilds, and one that had an intimate relationship with the Henituse family.

Cale casually commented while looking at Hans.

“Isn’t a butler not supposed to show their emotion on their face? Especially curiosity?”

“One of the proper etiquettes of a butler is to show all of their emotions to their master.”

“Funny man.”

“I guess I am a bit funny.”

For someone who didn’t want to go to the capital other than for the kittens, Hans was a bit impudent, but Cale still thought he was much more personable than the other

butler candidates. Seeing Hans starting to get used to him, Cale just responded like normal.

“Get out.”

“Yes, sir.”

And Hans left immediately, as usual. However, he had a question about their travels before closing the door.

“Will we be staying here for three days?”

“Yes. Take care of everything.”

“Yes, sir.”

Hans responded as he closed the door. Other than the Vice Captain taking charge of the envoy’s safety, Hans was responsible for everything else. However, he did not show any struggles in doing so, and efficiently took care of everything.

“He seems like a good butler.”

The silver kitten, On, said that as she approached Cale. Cale nodded his head. Then, the red kitten, Hong, followed behind.

“It doesn’t seem that hard for him either.”

Cale agreed with that statement as well. Ron was one thing, but other than Ron, Hans was the one who had the least difficulty dealing with Cale. He was scared of Cale, but did not find him to be difficult.

‘He’s a pretty decent butler.’

Cale brushed aside the kittens coming toward him and opened the box. The method of opening a box with a magic lock was simple. Cale’s fingerprint. That was the only key that could open this particular box. Cale put his index finger on the center of the magic seal.

Beep. Click.

The box made a small noise before opening.

Inside the box were the items Cale had prepared during the four days prior to leaving

for the capital.

“I’m really curious about what this is.”

“Really curious.”

Cale ignored the two pairs of golden pupils looking at him, and just vaguely answered.

“Things that will help rescue a poor soul, screw over some douchebags, and prevent me from getting hurt.”

On and Hong looked up at him with curiosity, but Cale just caressed the items inside the box with satisfaction. He recalled the conversation he had with Billos, the Flynn Merchant Guild’s bastard, before he left.

‘Young master, just where do you plan on using these things?’

‘I don’t see why I have to explain that to you.’

‘...I see. But it is going to cost quite a bit to purchase all of these items.’

‘...Is it possible to rent them?’

‘For you, of course, it is possible.’

The majority of the items inside the box were magic tools. Cale had expected them to be expensive, but it really was too much. Cale had to use up all of the allowances he had earned from his father. He also had to return it all to Billos once he got to the capital.

‘Annoying. I didn’t want to get involved with him at the capital, but I have no other choice.’

‘Two of the items are not able to be rented out to outsiders. I rented them in my name, for you. So you must return these to me at the capital. In person.’

‘Sure.’

Cale grabbed one of the items in the box. It was a round, black orb with a lot of symbols engraved on it. The red kitten Hong put his paws on Cale’s knee to ask.

“Really curious about this.”

“A Mana Disturbance Tool. It is worth almost a billion gallon.”

Gasp. Both On and Hong let out a gasp.

“It cost 20 million gallons just to rent it.”

Hong slowly lowered the paws that were on Cale’s knee, before going toward the corner of the bed with his sister, On. They were trying to keep as much distance as possible from the black orb.

Cale recalled the information about the orb. Billos had found exactly the item Cale was looking for.

‘It causes a disturbance in the flow of mana within a certain range, making all magic tools stop working. It is also sturdy enough that, even if something like a mountain blowing up happens, it will not break.’

‘Something like a surveillance tool will break right away then?’

‘Of course. However, you do need to install this 27 hours in advance. It is created to slowly infuse a force that will disrupt the mana flow so that it will not be noticed by mages.’

‘How long will it last?’

‘40 minutes. Isn’t it great? Of course, if there are mages nearby, they will be able to resolve the issue within 5 - 10 minutes.’

‘I will keep that in mind.’

The corner of Cale’s lips started to go up. It was the most expensive item he rented from Billos, but he will have many uses for it on this trip.

‘I really like how durable it is.’

The Flynn Merchant Guild was a very useful place. Cale smiled with satisfaction, before throwing this black orb, that was smaller than the size of a toddler’s fist, toward the kittens crouching in the corner.

“Huk!”

Meeeow!

One of them gasped, while the other meowed and avoided the black orb, but in the end, they had to sit quietly in front of Cale with the black orb in front of their eyes.

“You know how to read a map right?”

On tapped her tail on the ground in response.

“Of course. We were potential successors to the Fog Cat Tribe at one point.”

“Right. My sister is right.”

Cale took out another important item, a map, from the box. It wasn't very detailed, just having the general landmarks around the Henituse territory. Most of the merchants going to and from the Henituse territory used this map.

“We are in this village right now.”

Cale pointed to the mountain to the right of the village.

“You see this mountain?”

“I see it.”

“Very easy to see.”

This was what Billos had said.

‘Ah. The range is similar to the durability.’

One mountain.

“If you go toward this mountain, you will see a villa in the distance. Behind that is a cave.”

There were no mages around the Black Dragon right now. The people of the Magic Tower respected Dragons as the greatest magic race, and did not wish for humans to torture and domesticate a dragon. They considered it to be a big disgrace to magic.

The people around the cave and the villa were knights and soldiers that the Marquis trusted, as well as the people who do the dirty work for them.

“Don't go near there at all. You cannot get caught.”

Cale had heard about these two children's situation. That was why he was confident they could do this, but he still wanted to give them a warning. It would be bad if their curiosity led them to go around the cave.

“There is something being tortured in there. We’re going to rescue him, so you have to be careful.”

“Something?”

“Yes. It is even younger than you, Hong.”

“...Even younger than me?”

“Yes. 4 years old.”

Of course, that 4 year old was strong enough to send On or Hong flying once the mana restriction chains were removed.

“We’re going to save him?”

On and Hong’s eyes lit up as they pressed down on the bed with their paws.

“Save? Sure. Just stay in your cat form and go bury this orb in the mountain without getting caught.”

There should be close to no chance of getting caught in their cat forms. Cale put the black orb in a small pouch, before putting it over On’s neck like a necklace.

“Where should we bury it?”

“Anywhere on the mountain.”

“Really, anywhere?”

“Yes.”

The siblings looked at each other before nodding their heads.

“Easy.”

“We even managed to get past our Cat Tribe’s elders to escape.”

Cale agreed with them.

“It should be easy for the two of you. You two have enough skill for it. I wouldn’t ask someone useless to do something like this in the first place.”

The two kittens looked up at Cale with their golden pupils again. This pair of siblings, who were almost killed by their own tribe for not having abilities, even though they never got a chance to learn, were starting to get emotional. Their tails were wagging, and they crunched their noses to hold back their tears.

Cale understood what these two were thinking and sternly continued.

“I will give you as much beef as you want once you successfully return.”

The two siblings immediately jumped through the window and stealthily headed into the mountain.

Naturally, the siblings did as Cale expected and earned their reward. They were able to have a 10-tier beef steak to themselves. The next day, Cale drank the lemonade that he had now gotten used to drinking, and asked Choi Han.

“Have you ever seen a dragon?”

Chapter 18

Saw A Dragon (1)

“...A dragon?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve seen something similar once.”

‘Similar, my ass.’

Cale knew what Choi Han was talking about when he said something similar. Forest of Darkness. He was talking about the vicious monsters deep inside the Forest of Darkness. Among those terrifying monsters were creatures that were somewhere between lizards and dragons.

Choi Han had killed that dragon-like monster as soon as he advanced from the middle stage to the final stage of his Dark Destruction Sword Art.

“You did? How was it?”

Cale pretended to not know about the event, and asked Choi Han. Choi Han was the only other person in Cale’s room right now.

“...It was a monster.”

“How so?”

“Its appearance, its strength, everything. It was a monster in all aspects.”

“Is that so?”

Cale nodded his head and continued to speak. But his actions and his words were completely opposite.

“Then you have not seen a dragon.”

“Excuse me?”

“Dragons are like people.”

Clack. Cale put the cup with the lemonade that was both sweet and sour down on the

table. He then responded to Choi Han, who was looking at him with curiosity.

“Dragons, Beast people, Dwarves, Elves, they are all like humans. Why? Because they also have emotions and lives.”

That aspect wasn't important to Cale. His main point started from here.

“However.”

Choi Han might have noticed Cale's sudden change in demeanor. He sat up straight and focused on what Cale had to say.

“Such an existence has fallen into darkness since it was born. The only thing currently lighting up the darkness in its life is torches, and it has never even seen the light of the sun. What kind of life do you think it is having?”

Tap.

Cale tapped the table with his index finger.

“It is being forced to become an existence without rationality.”

Tap.

He tapped on the table once again.

“It has had to suffer through its loneliness, without any family or anything to lean on.”

Tap.

Choi Han's gaze fell every time Cale's finger tapped the table. Choi Han's fists were clenched underneath the table, to the point you could see his veins starting to flare up. Cale did not know about this, as he continued on.

“It is tortured and abused every day, and is only left alone when it is barely alive.”

Choi Han's expression stiffened, and anger was in his eyes. Cale knew Choi Han would react this way. There was no way a good person like this would not get angry after hearing such a story. He should also have figured out why Cale brought up such a story

in the first place.

Cale took another sip of his lemonade, before finishing up his story.

“And that existence is nearby.”

A short silence filled the room. Cale looked out the window, before slowly turning his gaze to look at Choi Han. He didn't know what Choi Han was thinking about, but his whole body was surrounded by a bloody aura.

‘Is he getting angry at the fact that it is abused because he is a good person?’

Contrary to Cale's hypothesis, Choi Han was currently recalling the tens of years he had to survive on his own in the Forest of Darkness.

That was why the silence continued for a while. Finally, Choi Han made eye contact with Cale and asked.

“Will you save it and try to tame it?”

“Are you crazy?”

“Excuse me?”

Cale acted on reflex, and asked back in shock. Choi Han also became shocked at Cale's questioning his sanity.

“Why would I try to tame it?”

Cale waved his hand around like Choi Han was crazy.

There was no way that a dragon that was abused by humans would be willing to serve a human. In fact, it probably was full of hate and disgust for any and all humans. Even if that human was the person that saved it.

Dragons believe that they are above all creatures, including humans. This is a natural instinct for dragons, so, even without being in contact with any other Dragon in its whole life, it will still feel this way.

That was why dragons cannot grow under humans. This attitude makes it impossible to domesticate and train Dragons without using torture and abuse to break down its

mind.

‘Dragons are born extremely arrogant. But, most importantly, if I raise a dragon...’

Cale could feel it. He felt like he would get wrapped up in some annoying incidents if he raised a dragon.

There were less than twenty total dragons in the Eastern and Western continents combined. Raise one of those dragons? That was pretty much the same as saying, ‘I will be at the center of all the happenings of the continents.’

It was also a dragon that was supposed to die. It would be better for it to go off into its own little world and not get in anyone’s way.

Cale was definitely against this dragon coming with them. As long as he gets rid of the mana restriction chains, this four year old dragon will live a much better life than Cale. Dragons weren’t called the kings of the world since birth for no reason.

“Then?”

“Why are you asking such an obvious question?”

Cale laughed at Choi Han’s question before he answered.

“Let it go so it can live a free and peaceful life. Shouldn’t a dragon live like a dragon?”

“...I see.”

Choi Han’s clenched fists slowly started to relax.

“Then will we be saving that dragon?”

“Yes. So I need your help.”

“Anything. I really will do anything to help.”

Cale was worried that Choi Han would escalate the situation, and shook his head.

“No need to go overboard. I have no plans to kill anybody, if possible, either. We will do it as quietly as possible.”

“Cale-nim, you really-”

Choi Han started to speak with admiration, but Cale looked at the clock, before cutting

him off and saying what he needed to say.

“Go tell Ron to prepare some alcohol on the first floor.”

“Are diff- what?”

Cale was prepared to drink first.

He started drinking even though it was the middle of the day. Choi Han just sat there with confusion on his face while looking around. Everybody other than himself looked peaceful.

In the middle of that peaceful environment was Cale Henituse, drinking bottle after bottle. The growing flush on his face made anybody who was watching him know that he was drunk.

“Is it okay to let him drink so much?”

Choi Han looked toward Hans, who was next to him, and asked. Deputy butler Hans was delivering food to On and Hong, who were in their cat form. He still did not know that they were part of the Cat Tribe. He then refreshingly answered Choi Han’s question.

“Yes! There is nothing in his hand. Thus, it is safe! He promised he won’t throw any bottles!”

Choi Han was talking about Cale’s safety, but Hans was referring to themselves. Choi Han just shut up after seeing the conversation take an odd turn, and moved away from Hans. It was better to leave Hans alone when he was next to the kittens. Instead, Choi Han looked toward Cale to make sure he was safe.

“Owner. Your alcohol tastes great! Much better than I expected.”

Cale didn’t seem to know that Choi Han was looking at him, instead focusing on just praising the alcohol. They had been drinking for two hours already. There were some who were not drinking, just in case something happened, but the majority of the envoy was enjoying the festive atmosphere.

‘They were all so nervous for the first hour, tsk.’

When Cale had ordered them to gather, as he would be drinking, the soldiers showed up with their helmets on. Cale couldn't believe it, but told them that he will not throw any bottles to help them relax.

"This village may be small, but there are a lot of mountains around it. The alcohol is a special alcohol I made with fruit and herbs from the mountain. That is why it is a bit expensive."

As the old man mentioned, the alcohol really did taste great. Cale admired the alcohol, and lifted the bottle up to the old man.

"Do you have a lot of these?"

"Yes. Quite a bit."

"Then get some more and send it around to everybody here."

"Young master, you don't need to-"

The Vice Captain shouted out with a flushed face, but his eyes were focused on the bottle in Cale's hand. The rest of the soldiers were looking at the same thing. Naturally, Cale was aware of what they were thinking.

"Just drink. I'm telling you to drink. Got it?"

The eyes of the soldiers who were present all started to sparkle. It was the first time they became excited to see a bottle in Cale's hands.

Cale watched the excited inn owner bring alcohol and snacks for everyone there with a sharp gaze.

Cale Henituse. This human had a strong alcohol tolerance. Everybody thought he had a low tolerance because his face flushed easily and he caused a ruckus whenever he drank, but the truth was that he did all those things without being drunk at all.

That was why Cale's head was perfectly clear right now. He drank for another thirty minutes or so before looking toward Choi Han and starting to speak.

"Choi Han. Come support me. I'm going up to rest now."

"Young master, I will do it."

"It's okay. Vice Captain, rest a bit today. The rest of the soldiers as well. Didn't you fight in a battle yesterday? This is not a dangerous area, and I feel bad for the soldiers on

guard duty, but the rest of you can relax and enjoy yourselves.”

“Young master-”

“I’m tired. Bye.”

It would become complicated if the Vice Captain or the others followed him. Thankfully, none of them approached after seeing Choi Han supporting him. It was probably because Choi Han did not drink at all, and was also the strongest person there. They had nothing to worry about since such a person was going to be guarding Cale.

‘Just one person left.’

It was easy to avoid the guards at the gate and around the inn, but Ron was still left. Hans and Ron would never come into the room if he told them not to come in. However, the difference between the two was that Hans was not skilled enough to know if Cale was still in the room, while Ron was so skilled that he would easily be able to tell if Cale snuck out.

‘It’s not like that old man will care about what I am doing.’

Realistically, Ron would not care whether Cale snuck out and what he did once he snuck out. That was how he had been until now. However, Cale didn’t want things to get annoying in the future, so he decided to tell Ron in advance.

Seeing Ron follow behind Choi Han, Cale quickly informed Ron.

“Ron, I’m going to go out to play. It’s a secret. Got it?”

This old man liked to drink, but did not drink a single drop tonight. Instead, he was just staring at Cale all night. He really was a scary person. This benign smile that Ron was giving him right now was even scarier.

“I understand. I will be waiting for you.”

“Don’t.”

‘Wait for me, my ass.’

As expected, Ron agreed without saying anything else. Cale continued to be supported by Choi Han as he went into his room.

"I'm going to be resting. Hans, Ron, don't come in to wake me up unless it is an emergency. You know how I get when someone messes with my sleep, right?"

In the past, a servant received a barrage of swearing when they had to wake Cale up in Ron's place. Although Cale did not physically hit anybody, that servant went around the estate telling all the other servants about how he felt like he was hit by a flurry of swear punches.

"Of course I do, young master. Please rest well."

"Young master, this Ron will be standing right outside your room."

Cale's expression stiffened at Ron's response, but he watched the two of them leave, before stealthily giving an order to Choi Han.

"Use the windows to quietly come back to my room."

Choi Han nodded his head and quickly followed the other two out of the room and closed the door.

Meeeeeeow.

"Is it time now?"

Cale nodded his head at On and Hong, who followed him up to his room, and immediately opened the box.

Click.

The magic lock clicked open, and Cale removed an outfit from inside the box. Once he finished changing, Choi Han entered through the window, and then his eyes opened wide in shock.

"Cale-nim?"

Before putting on the mask, Cale threw the black outfit in his hand toward Choi Han.

"You wear it too."

The orb from yesterday should temporarily stop the magic recording devices, but that was not enough. Cale did not want to get caught. That was why he had been drinking since the middle of the day and prepared these outfits.

“What is this?”

The black outfit had a single red star and five smaller white stars surrounding it on the chest area.

‘What is it? The outfit of the secret organization.’

‘The Birth of a Hero’ novel clearly and accurately explained the outfit of the secret organization that Choi Han runs into time after time. This outfit was specially ordered by Cale following the explanation as accurately as possible. Just to be on the safe side, Cale even had the outfit created separately, and personally added the stars.

That was why it was a bit crude up close, but it was pretty decent from a distance.

People who see this outfit will not remember the crudeness of the stitching, they will just remember that it was, ‘A black outfit with one red star and five white stars.’ For Venion, who has not personally met the secret organization like the Marquis did, the report from the subordinates who saw this outfit will definitely give him a significant headache and anger.

“...Are we doing something bad?”

Choi Han asked once more after seeing Cale not respond. Seeing Cale with the black mask on as well definitely made him seem like a villain.

“Yes. We are doing something bad.”

Cale started to smile underneath the mask.

“We’re doing something bad to Venion.”

“Ah.”

Choi Han seemed to finally understand, as he quickly pointed to the other mask in Cale’s hand.

“Please give it to me.”

Even good people will have someone they don't like and want to screw over. That was no different for this 17 year old, who spent tens of years alone in this world.

“Ah, and these kids are from the Cat Tribe. They are beast people.”

Cale casually introduced On and Hong to Choi Han as if it was nothing, and they just simply exchanged greetings as well. The Cat Tribe children, who were sensitive to a person's true character, already had a good idea about Choi Han's strength, and Choi Han had noticed they were not your average cats during their travel.

“He's Choi Han, this is On, that is Hong. End of introductions. Everybody get ready.”

There was a short time to get ready before Cale ordered Choi Han, who had just come out of the restroom wearing the same black outfit and black mask.

“Let's go.”

He then added on, as he stood in front of the second story window.

“Carry me when you go out the window. I can't jump so far down without getting hurt.”

Choi Han let out a sigh for the first time in front of Cale. On and Hong approached Choi Han and patted him with their paws to console him. Cale urged them on once again.

“Let's hurry.”

The group that safely exited the inn headed for the mountain with the Viscount's Villa and the Dragon's prison.

Chapter 19

Saw A Dragon (2)

The location that the kittens, On and Hong, buried the black orb was out of Cale's expectations.

The Viscount's villa was 30 meters away from the dragon's cave. On and Hong had buried the black orb 50 meters away from that cave, in an area filled with trees and shrubs, making it very difficult for the orb to be located.

"You two are kind of amazing."

"Something like this is a piece of cake."

On was saying it was easy, but Cale could see On's nose twitching in joy.

Cale, Choi Han, On, and Hong crouched around the location that the black orb, officially known as the Mana Disturbance Tool, was located, and looked toward the cave entrance that was 50 meters away, as well as the Viscount's villa that was farther away.

"You remember the plan?"

Cale had explained the plan on their way over. Realistically speaking, there wasn't much of a plan.

"There are a total of 6 people on guard at this time."

Cale recalled the information he read in, 'The Birth of a Hero.' The Black Dragon was smart, like most dragons. It had been gathering information for the four long years it was held captive, and there was a reason it attempted its escape two days later at around this time.

There were, approximately, a total of 30 people residing in the villa. Originally, there were close to 100 people, but it slowly went down as they realized during the last four years that nobody really came to this area.

Of course, among the 30 people, there were 3 high-leveled knights at the Vice Captain's level, as well as 7 mid-leveled knights. There were also soldiers, the torturer, and

random laborers. The number of people here showed just how much attention the Marquis has been putting onto this location.

However, Cale had Choi Han. Choi Han was someone who could take down the strongest knight in the Roan Kingdom in 10 moves. Someone like that was on their side.

“Let me explain one more time. There is one high-leveled knight and two mid-leveled knights at the cave entrance, as well as two soldiers. Inside the cave, there is just one high-leveled knight, and the torturer is at the end of the cave.”

Choi Han flinched after hearing the word torturer, but Cale did not care. Cale did not care to know about the things that were going through Choi Han’s mind right now. The important thing was that the black orb will activate soon, and that they needed to move quickly in response.

“The magic recording devices located from the villa to the cave entrance will not work for 40 minutes thanks to the black orb that On and Hong buried. That is the same for the alarms, magic traps, and anything else. Nothing will work for 40 minutes.”

They needed to domesticate this dragon, the greatest magic using creature in the world, but they could not ask any mages for help. That was why Marquis Stan chose to fill this area with magic items instead. The reason that there were only a few guards around the entrance was also because they trusted their magic items.

That was why the dragon had no choice but to cause a mana explosion to escape.

‘An eye for an eye, and money for money.’

Since the Marquis used money, Cale used money as well. Cale patted the magic bag on his waist. This was a magic bag that allowed you to store a lot of items. Inside this bag were all sorts of magic items, useful tools, and objects.

“I just need to take out the guards?”

Naturally, Choi Han would be doing the battling. Why would Cale even try to fight when such a strong person was next to him? Cale thought paper-cuts hurt a lot, so he didn’t want to even think about getting cut by a sword.

“Yes. You are the only one I can rely on to cover my back.”

‘At least for now.’

Cale looked at Choi Han with a serious expression, and Choi Han nodded his head and sincerely responded back.

“I will definitely live up to your expectations.”

“Yes. As I mentioned, make sure they see our outfit and then knock them out. Don’t kill them, and don’t show them your sword art. You remember what to do after that, right?”

Choi Han’s unique transparent black aura should be easily camouflaged by the darkness, if he uses it carefully. Cale believed Choi Han should understand, since he had already told him many times.

“Yes, I remember it all.”

“Good, I’ll leave it to you.”

Cale patted Choi Han’s shoulders, before handing him the voice changing device. It would be bad if he had to talk during the fight and they recognized his voice.

“It’s expensive, so don’t break it.”

“Got it. You do not need to worry about it.”

Cale then looked toward the kittens. Cale responded to their wagging tails, that seemed to be asking for something.

“I will give you meat once it is over.”

That did not seem to be the right answer, as they snorted and turned away. Cale didn’t think much about it, instead verifying the time with his watch.

‘Five minutes left.’

The sky had already gotten dark, and it was night time.
Cale then recalled the conversation he had with Billos.

‘The magic items that have been influenced by the Mana Disturbance Tool will

instantly stop working, and most of them will turn off to prevent it from blowing up. However, the highest quality magic items will start beeping to signal that they are broken. It isn't like alarm magic, instead, it is more like a clock alarm.'

'It will probably be loud?'

'I don't know where you plan on using it, but it should be loud enough for the enemy to hear.'

Billos started to smirk and continued on.

'However, if there are a lot of magic items in the area, it will probably get chaotic with all of the alarms going off at the same time.'

Chaotic was enough for Cale.

"Get ready."

The kittens also covered themselves with charcoal to cover the color of their furs. They then left Cale's side and disappeared into the darkness, such that Cale could no longer see them. The two of them would not be showing themselves in front of the enemies today.

However, Cale knew that they would follow the plan and be around him.

Choi Han folded up the handkerchief he was using to clean his blade, and put it in his pocket.

Once all of the preparations were finished, Cale stood up.

Brrrrrrrrrrrrring.

Something started to vibrate right underneath where Cale had been sitting. The black orb had started to activate.

Click. Click.

The seconds hand of Cale's watch slowly approached the set time.

And finally, the last click.

“Let’s go.”

At Cale’s order, Choi Han followed the plan and ran ahead quickly, while On started to create fog in the area. Cale was at the center of the fog, making it difficult to see him. At the same time,

Brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrring-

The black orb finally activated.

“I guess they aren’t all highest quality magic items.”

Some of the magic items started to ring loudly to sound their status. Cale followed behind Choi Han with the fog surrounding him, and headed toward the cave.

Starting now, it was a battle against time.

Choi Han was already fighting against the knights in front of the cave.

‘Scary bastard.’

In that short amount of time, the soldiers already had injuries on their arms and legs, and were knocked out on the floor.

“Who are you? How dare you come to this place!”

Choi Han easily dodged the attack of the high-leveled knight. He then took a step forward and made a deep cut on the side of the knight. He then avoided the blood spurting out of the cut, and used his elbow to attack the knight’s back, followed by the back of the knight’s neck. The knight fainted instantly.

“Shit! What the hell is going on?!”

The high-leveled knight inside the cave soon showed up as well.

“Poison.”

Cale spoke through the voice changing device. The fog surrounding him started to expand, and Hong started to stealthily move around and spread the poison to paralyze the enemy. The fainted individuals would not be able to move for a while, even if they

did wake up.

Cale then made eye contact with the high-leveled knight and said one word.

“Cover.”

Choi Han instantly stood in front of Cale and darted toward the cave entrance. Cale followed behind him.

“Block them!”

At the high-leveled knight’s shout, two mid-leveled knights immediately charged toward Choi Han. Their swords started to glow, showing that the knights had inputted their aura into their swords. However, those two swords were instantly cut down.

Clang. Clang. The upper half of both swords fell down to the ground.

“W, what the? Is he a swordmaster?”

Both shock and despair was in the voice of the high-leveled knight. The only thing that could cut through an aura-filled sword was a swordmaster’s aura blade. After instantly cutting through the enemy weapons using his aura, which was camouflaged in the darkness, Choi Han used his sword and scabbard to attack a mid-leveled knight’s neck and stomach at the same time.

“Ugh!”

“Guuh!”

‘...He just needs one hit per person.’

Cale could not hide his amazement as he crouched behind Choi Han and continued to move. At that moment, they could hear some ruckus from far behind them.

“Intruders!”

It was coming from the villa. Cale turned his gaze back forward.

The mid-leveled knights staggered before falling down. Cale made eye contact with them. They had been poisoned by Hong’s paralysis poison.

“P, poison...!”

“A, assassin!”

Choi Han made them faint before quickly rushing toward the charging high-leveled knight and swinging his sword. Cale used that opening to go through the cave entrance. Even while he was doing that, he made sure the mid-leveled knights who called him an assassin saw the six stars on his outfit before fainting.

“Ugh! Where did these people come from!”

“So loud.”

Choi Han easily avoided the mana-filled sword of the high-leveled knight. He was dragging this out on purpose.

While Choi Han was acting as the distraction, Cale entered the cave behind the Cat Tribe children, who had stealthily entered earlier on. After verifying that Cale had entered, Choi Han moved to the front of the cave entrance.

He then called out to the high-leveled knight.

“Come.”

Of course, his gaze was not looking at the knight, but all of the enemies coming from the villa with torches.

“I leave it to you.”

Choi Han could hear Cale’s changed, yet still calm voice behind him, and started to smile. However, he quickly focused on releasing only some of his strength. Dark Destruction Sword Art. This sword art consisted of two components, darkness and destruction. Of the two, the force of destruction started to surround Choi Han.

“Nobody can get past this spot.”

He was someone who always kept his word.

While Choi Han was protecting the entrance, there was someone else protecting something in a different manner in the cave. That person was none other than the torturer. He was the one to protect the dragon’s prison. By the time Cale arrived inside, he was already in a state of chaos.

“Why, why?! Why is the Magic Crystal Ball not working?!”

The Magic Crystal Ball that the torturer held onto was one of the emergency backups that Venion had prepared in case something went wrong.

“D, don’t come here! Do you know what is in here?!”

The torturer was shaking violently while looking at Cale. He had no choice but to be scared. If the torturer received an attack higher than an average person’s strength, he would instantly blow up.

It was one of Venion’s safety measures as well. The strength of the blast would make the prison key and the prison itself blow up with the torturer as well. Naturally, the torturer knew about this.

“If you come, everyone here will die!”

Tsk. Cale waved his hand while looking at the shaking torturer. Once he did, fog started to form in the air and headed for the torturer. On, the owner of the fog, was hidden in the shadows of the cave and still hidden.

“A, aaaaaah! Go away!”

The sounds of battle from the cave entrance. The approaching fog. Of course, the inside the fog was completely filled with poison. The paralyzing fog quickly surrounded the torturer.

“Just what, ugh, p, poison...!”

Ugh. The torturer’s body started to shake as he fell to the ground. The torturer looked so terrible, being unable to speak or move as he forcibly shook on the floor. Cale approached the torturer and rummaged through his clothes.

If you could not attack him, you just had to hit him with poison. Either that, or make a deal with him to hand the key over. However, he didn’t want to use the latter method.

‘Here it is.’

Cale grabbed the key and closed the eyes of the torturer, who was starting to lose consciousness from the poison. Cale wondered if they had used too much of the poison, but didn't really care.

'I don't think he will die, but if he dies, oh well.'

Cale snapped his fingers. Two little black bundles fell from the ceiling almost instantly. It was On and Hong. Once they came under the torch that Cale was holding, he could finally see the two of them clearly.

Cale verified that On and Hong were safe before heading to the farthest corner of the cave.

Once he arrived, he could see a curled up black existence inside this now-useless magic prison. It was the dragon. The thing that shocked Cale more than the dragon itself was the blood covering the dragon and the scent of blood in the air.

Cale quickly approached the prison.

The dragon continued to keep its eyes closed, even as Cale approached. The dragon was probably in a state of chaos right now.

Cale put the key into the lock and opened the door.

Click. It unlocked with a light noise. Cale slowly opened the iron gate, and entered into the prison.

It was pretty large to be called a prison. There were whips and other torture tools, as well as the luxurious couch that Venion sat on to watch. Cale headed to the corner of the prison.

A small figure about 1 meter long was laying on a stack of hay in the corner. The inner eyelids of the dragon were shaking as it laid there with its eyes closed. There were chains on all of its limbs, and the mana restriction chain was on its neck, making it unable to use any strength.

"Hey."

Cale crouched in front of the dragon. The dragon did not open its eyes even after Cale called out to it. Cale verified his watch. It was time to leave. He continued to speak to the dragon.

“Let’s leave.”

Cale used the key he had obtained from the torturer to undo the chains. The dragon opened its eyes at that moment. Cale started to smile after looking at the dragon’s eyes.

It was still a very strong gaze. It had not lost its will to live just yet. It was not the dying gaze that Choi Han had run into in the novel. It was still a gaze with a strong desire to live. That was why it was filled with energy, anger, and resistance.

It was the gaze of a dragon.

“What a nice gaze.”

Cale lifted the dragon into his arms.

Chapter 20

Saw A Dragon (3)

After coming out of the prison, Cale put the dragon down in front of the two kittens.

“That looks like it hurts.”

“So sad.”

On and Hong circled around the still silent dragon. The dragon started to show its teeth and growl at them. This was probably the first time in its life it ever saw anything other than humans.

Cale verified the time on his watch. It looked like they had just enough time to escape.

“It looks like it hurts.”

On approached Cale and tapped his leg. She seemed to be thinking about the potion Cale brought in his magic box. She couldn’t ask him for it, so she could only act this way.

“Hold on.”

Cale had brought that potion to use it. However, he needed to wait until the mana restriction chains were off. The potion would only work properly if the mana, which was practically as important as a dragon’s heart, was no longer restricted.

Cale started to head toward the opposite side of the prison, the location the torturer seemed to be guarding. It wasn’t very loud, but he could hear Choi Han fighting in the distance. Cale presumed that Choi Han’s battle would end soon as well.

“Let’s see.”

Cale started to pat the cave wall with his hands. He kicked the torturer with his foot to get him out of the way, and continued to pat every aspect of the wall. The dragon growled after seeing the torturer, but stayed still and continued to focus on Cale.

‘Venion’s last line of defense should be around here somewhere.’

Like all of the members of Marquis Stan’s family, Venion was extremely worried about someone intruding while he was inside. He had created a secret tunnel to use as an escape route if something like that ever happened. If the torturer knew about it, he probably would have used it to escape earlier, but, sadly, even the torturer did not know about this escape route.

‘The novel said there was a flat area on this bumpy wall-, ah here it is.’

There was a flat area about the size of a person’s hand on this bumpy cave wall. Although Venion looked like he had OCD and would never do anything like training, everyone in the Marquis’s family had learned martial arts.

‘If you use a strong enough force on that location, the wall will open.’

It was not a magic device. Instead, the force of the impact made the device move. Cale turned his head to look toward the person who entered and asked.

“All done?”

“Yes.”

Choi Han lightly swung his sword in the air to get rid of the blood on it and then approached Cale. His gaze soon turned toward the dragon, and started to frown. It was a natural reaction to seeing such a small creature being covered in blood. The glare in Choi Han’s eyes as he stared at the torturer was vicious.

“Choi Han.”

That was why Cale had called out to Choi Han. Choi Han was still glaring at the torturer as he reported.

“As you ordered, I left the escaping workers alone. I also made sure that all of the strong individuals would not be able to fight.”

“Good job.”

Cale praised Choi Han before pointing to the flat area on the wall.

“Punch this spot.”

“As strong as I can?”

‘Are you planning on destroying the cave?’

“No. Control your strength. Just pretend you are creating a 10cm dent in this wall.”

“Mm. So, very lightly.”

“Sure.”

Very lightly? Cale quickly stepped away from Choi Han after hearing Choi Han call something that was impossible for Cale to do as only using a tiny bit of his strength. Choi Han understood that to be Cale telling him to hurry, and immediately punched the wall with his fist.

Boom!

“Wow.”

“Oh.”

Cale picked the dragon back up while the kitten siblings were admiring what happened.

Screeeeeeeech-

A chilling screeching noise came out of the wall, and an area the size of an adult male appeared to one side of the cave wall. Choi Han quickly picked up the torch.

“Let’s go.”

At Cale’s command, the kittens got on Choi Han’s back, as Choi Han stepped into the tunnel first. Cale followed behind him. The dragon remained quiet in Cale’s arms, with only the sound of its breathing coming out of it. However, the eyes that were staring at Cale were still extremely vicious.

Rather than any gratitude for saving him, it seemed to be filled with thoughts of terror about being tortured by someone else, as well as anger and resentment toward humans.

“Stop staring at me like that.”

Cale casually talked to the dragon in his arms.

‘Ah, I’m a bit out of breath.’

Cale was out of breath as he tried to keep up with Choi Han, who seemed to have no issues running.

‘Should I have made Choi Han carry the dragon?’

The 1 meter long dragon was pretty heavy. It would not be this hard if he was able to get his hands on the ancient power called the ‘Vitality of the Heart.’

Cale held the dragon tightly in his arms, so that he would not throw it away in anger. There was no way he could leave it here after spending all that effort to rescue it.

The dragon just continued to watch him. Cale’s black clothes started to become covered in the dragon’s blood.

After running through that dark and narrow tunnel for a few minutes, Choi Han suddenly called out to Cale.

“There is a wall in front of us.”

“Hit the center of the wall with your fist with the same strength as before. Then we will continue to run as discussed.”

“I understand!”

The kittens jumped off of Choi Han’s shoulder and started to run. Choi Han put some strength into his fist and hit the center of the wall with the same strength as earlier.

Boom!

The wall almost instantly collapsed, and they could see the night sky. They were outside the cave. This time, Cale took the lead as he looked around.

This was the reason they needed the Mana Disturbance Tool to work on the entire mountain. Venion had put a magic recording device on this secret tunnel entrance as well. He was a very thorough person.

Cale didn't know exactly where this entrance was located, necessitating the Mana Disturbance Tool to work on the entire mountain.

They did not have much time left. They needed to get out of the range of the magic recording device in the next one or two minutes. But it should not be a problem.

Choi Han followed behind Cale and made new traces of their presence, or erased some traces as they passed. After surviving in the Forest of Darkness on his own for so long, he was an expert at creating and following tracks. After running away from the secret tunnel entrance for about two minutes, Cale looked at his watch.

“Stop.”

The alarms that were going off in the area suddenly stopped blarring. The Mana Disturbance Tool had stopped working.

“Huuuu~.”

Cale took a deep breath, calming his rapidly beating heart. The Indestructible Shield around his heart was gathering strength every time his heart beat like that, just in case an emergency situation happened.

‘I have no plans to use it right now.’

However, Cale was not planning on using this shield just yet. After freeing this dragon and saying goodbye to Choi Han in the next city, he was planning on gaining the ancient power, ‘Vitality of the Heart,’ To strengthen this shield. Only then would he use the shield.

Now that he had the time to look around, Cale looked down toward the dragon. He then started to smile.

The rebellious gaze was gone, and the dragon was looking up at the night sky in admiration. This was the first time the dragon saw anything other than the cave walls in its four years of life. Cale understood what the dragon was feeling, and wanted to give it some more time, but he could not do that.

He put the dragon down on the grass and continued to look at it. The dragon looked right back at him. Its eyes were once again filled with anger and resentment, as it curled its body up and looked ready to attack.

‘No wonder it continued to get tortured for four years. It won’t back down at all.’

That was why Cale personally liked this dragon. It was different from himself. Growing up being abused as an orphan, Cale, well, Kim Rok Soo, had given in. After that, he didn’t want to be the main character of a story, like Choi Han. After giving in at a place he called home, he didn’t think he had the strength to fight against the world.

“Hey.”

Cale made sure the dragon was looking at him, then took out a pair of gloves and some scissors-shaped cutting tool. There were a lot of magic seals on both of the blades for cutting. He then put on the electricity-resistant gloves.

This cutter was one of the two items that had to be rented in Billos’s name. This was not something you could borrow with money.

‘I don’t know why you need this, but, young master, I hope to see you alive in the capital.’

‘You think I’m going to die?’

‘All I know is that you plan to cause a commotion.’

‘...Shut up.’

Cale was thinking about the conversation he had with Billos, before realizing that his surroundings suddenly became extremely quiet. Choi Han was looking at the cutter with chaotic eyes, while the kitten siblings had moved away from Cale and were hiding behind Choi Han.

The dragon was still just staring at him.

“Tsk.”

Cale clicked his tongue at their response and approached the dragon. The mana restriction chain was made with something similar to rubber. If it was made of metal, it would not have fit the growing dragon. That was why it was made of something with some elasticity.

He then grabbed the dragon’s neck.

“Gasp.”

The kittens took in a deep breath. However, Cale ignored them as he continued onward, since it was better to do this as fast as possible. The cutter headed for the dragon’s neck. The sharp blade shone under the moonlight, and the dragon just paid attention to Cale’s eyes. Cale’s eyes were emotionless and peaceful.

The dragon closed its eyes.

At that moment, they all heard the snapping noise of something getting cut.

Sizzle. Sizzle.

The mana restriction chain was causing sparks in Cale’s hands.

“What are you looking at?”

Cale scoffed at the dragon that had opened its eyes back to look at him and took off one of the gloves and handed it to Choi Han. Choi Han put the glove on and Cale handed the chain to him before taking the potion out of his pocket.

It was a highest grade potion. Even this cost quite a bit to purchase. It made Cale feel bad for asking for an allowance the last few days before he left. Cale clicked his tongue and sharply stared at the dragon.

“Do you know how much money I spent on you?”

The dragon could hear the same words he heard quite often. He had heard it almost every day since he was born. Why do you not listen to me when I spent so much money on you? Guess you need to be beaten some more. Then he was beaten. They said that he needed to stop thinking for himself and listen to them as they continued to beat him.

However.

“Since I spent so much money on you, you better heal properly, you stupid fool.”

The dragon did not feel any pain.

Cale poured about half of the potion onto the dragon’s back, and poured the rest into

its mouth. Thankfully, the dragon did not resist, and swallowed it down.

After a few minutes, Cale could only think that it really was a dragon. The mana, which was the equivalent to the dragon's heart and the source of all of its power, started to move in its body.

All of the injuries on the dragon's body instantly disappeared, and a blue aura that seemed to be the dragon's mana surrounded its body like the wind.

This change that occurred in an instant made Cale think about just how scary and powerful of an existence dragons really were in this world.

"Hey."

The dragon should have no reason to get injured anymore. The smart dragon seemed to understand what had happened to its body, as its eyes came completely back to life.

Cale took a step toward the dragon. The baby dragon curled up while continuing to observe Cale. Cale ignored the dragon and asked.

"What do you want to do now?"

Cale started to smile while looking at the dragon that remaining silent.

"I know you can speak the human language. You are a dragon. The smartest and strongest existence in the world."

Cale asked once more.

"What did you want to do once you got free?"

"...I."

The dragon started to speak. The dragon really did know how to speak the human language. It was much smarter than humans. There was no way it did not learn the human language in the last four years.

"I."

The dragon could feel it in his heart. With his current strength, he could easily kill the

man in front of him. He was scared of the man in the back, but it would be possible for him to escape alive. He had gained the strength he had waited for so long to obtain.

That was why the dragon finally said the thing he had thought to himself over and over for the last four years. However, this was the first time he had ever he said it out loud.

“I will live.”

He will live, no matter what it took.

“I will go away.”

He was going to go away from here.

He revealed his inner thoughts.

“I will not be tamed.”

“Yes. You are right.”

Cale was saying the dragon was right.

“You are a dragon. A DRAGON. You have the right to live freely.”

Even a four-year-old dragon was stronger than most of the animals in the world. It had enough strength to survive on its own, and, normally, dragons were extremely independent and prideful. They generally wanted to create their own lair once they turned about two years old. It was completely worlds apart than a human two-year-old.

Cale looked into the eyes of the dragon, that still did not trust humans, and sternly started to speak.

“I will not take care of you.”

Cale did not have a reason to look after something that was stronger than him. There were also too many potential headaches to keep him around to pay back for Cale’s help. It was different from the children from the Cat Tribe, On and Hong. A dragon was beyond Cale’s limits.

The dragon could not trust Cale.

“Liar. Humans are good at lying.”

There was now anger in the dragon’s eyes. That anger was not directed at Cale, however. Dragons were naturally born with a lot of pride. This anger came from the years that his pride was trampled upon by the humans.

“I guess that is true. I do lie quite a bit as well.”

Cale easily accepted the dragon’s words, and continued to speak.

“Live however you want to live. What is it you want to do?”

“I-.”

The baby dragon lifted its head to look at the night sky. It was different from the darkness inside the cave. It was dark, but there was still light.

“I hate humans. I want to be free.”

“Good.”

Cale got up from his seat. He then took out some mid-grade potions and a smaller pouch from his magic bag and put the potions in the bag before handing it to the dragon.

“Live freely.”

The dragon’s black pupils enlarged and started to shake. However, there was still doubt and resentment in its eyes. Naturally, Cale did not care.

‘This should be enough.’

He freed the dragon, screwed Venion over, saved the village, and helped Choi Han understand what freedom means thanks to the dragon.

Most importantly, he did not need to take responsibility for the dragon. He could see in its eyes that it did not want to follow him. It was a very good conclusion. Cale spoke to his party members in a satisfied tone.

“Let’s go.”

He turned his back to the dragon with no regrets, and started to walk. Choi Han silently followed behind Cale and focused on altering their tracks. The kittens, who hesitated for a moment, saw the dragon turn its gaze away from Cale before following behind him.

Once even the Cat Tribe sibling turned away from it, the dragon lifted its head and watched them walk away.

“...I hate humans... they are evil...”

For some reason, the dragon was paying more attention to the back of the human, the race that he was annoyingly used to and hated, rather than the night sky that it was seeing for the first time.

Hong slowly approached his sister On as they followed behind Cale.

“Noona, I think he’s going to follow us.”

“Uh huh. I think so too.”

“Am I going to get a younger brother?”

“It looks like it.”

The kittens were conversing with themselves, but Cale scoffed at them and retorted back.

“No way. Dragons are extremely prideful and will never accept being under a human. Furthermore, this dragon hates humans.”

On’s expression seemed to disagree. If a cat had a mocking expression, it would probably be the one of On’s face right now. On shook her head and quietly mumbled.

“...I don’t think so.”

“...Uh huh.”

Hong looked behind him before agreeing with his sister. The Black Dragon was still looking in their direction. Hong was now sure. This dragon will enjoy its freedom for a bit, before sharing some beef with him in the future.

Cale ordered the two kittens who were whispering to each other.

“Go get the orb back.”

The two siblings went to get the orb so that they could eat some more beef. Cale did not even look at the siblings, as he patted Choi Han’s shoulder.

“Good work.”

Today should have been the first time Choi Han ever saved anything. There was that battle with the bandits earlier, but that was more protecting than saving.

Of course, the actual events changed from saving the village people from the dragon in the novel to saving the dragon that he actually had killed in the novel, but the important thing here was that he, ‘saved,’ someone.

“Cale-nim.”

“What.”

Choi Han was silent for a while after calling out to Cale’s name, before he finally started to speak once again.

“What if the dragon decided that living as it wants was to follow you, Cale-nim?”

“That will never happen.”

“What if. Just hypothetically speaking.”

‘Hypothetical?’

Cale thought about it for a while, before lightly responding.

“I don’t think about what ifs or the past.”

But for some reason, Cale suddenly got the chills and looked behind himself for the first time since walking away from the dragon. Thankfully, the Black Dragon was not visible.

Cale sighed in relief, before returning to the inn and falling asleep. That was why he did not know that the dragon used magic for the first time to become invisible, and sat at his window sill for a long time before leaving. The dragon was tightly clutching the bag of potions that Cale had given him.

The next day, Cale had to deal with Choi Han's questions from early in the morning.

"Cale-nim. There is a city coming up in a few days. Is that the middle point?"

It was almost time for Choi Han to finish making up his, 'payment,' that Cale had talked about.

It also meant that Cale was getting closer to receiving another ancient power for himself. Originally, in the novel, the eldest son of Marquis Stan's family, the one who was pushed out by Venion, would find this ancient power in about a month. It was his last glimmer of hope, but, unfortunately, it ended up being a power that he could not use.

Chapter 21

Returning the Favor (1)

Cale just casually nodded toward Choi Han on this early morning and picked up the glass of cold water that Ron had prepared for him. Cale recalled what Ron had said earlier, as he felt the cold water flow through his body.

‘Young master, it is not good to take such a long night walk. This Ron was very worried about you.’

It made his mind clear up, even without the cold water for some reason. Cale carefully put the water back down and started to speak to Choi Han.

“You took care of everything properly?”

“Yes, Cale-nim.”

After Choi Han had brought Cale back to the inn, he immediately went back to erase their tracks and create a new set of fake tracks heading toward the west.

Meeeeeeow. Cale looked toward the kittens that were eating jerky and yawning, and started to explain to Choi Han about the city that they would soon reach.

“The name of the next city is Puzzle City. That is the middle point in our journey.”

Once you get out of the Henituse territory that is surrounded by mountains, all the roads are well-paved from this small city in the Viscount’s territory to the capital.

‘That’s the reason that the Henituse territory has been safe until now, even if it is a bit annoying for the merchants.’

Even if you have a lot of goods to sell, it would be difficult for merchants to travel to buy those goods if the roads were rough. However, the merchants pushed through this inconvenience because the roads were paved as soon as they left the Henituse territory.

Furthermore, these paved roads allowed for the influential powers in the eastern half of the Roan Kingdom to gather frequently. That was why people in the capital were able to discuss many of the issues in the east, even though there were no nobles with a higher nobility than the rank of Marquis in this the east.

“It took a while to get this far because our territory has a lot of mountains, but it will not take very long from here.”

Puzzle City was not the middle point in terms of distance, but in terms of time.

“But Cale-nim.”

“What?”

“I went to check the Viscount’s villa on my way back.”

“And?”

Looking at Cale’s stoic expression, Choi Han had a slightly bitter expression as he responded.

“They all seemed to be in a state of chaos. There were also soldiers and knights leaving the village.”

“I’m sure they went to report.”

After regaining their consciousness, they probably sent people to Venion and investigated the area around the cave. However, that did not seem to be the end of Choi Han’s report.

“However.”

“Just say it.”

Cale started to frown, and bluntly retorted to Choi Han. Choi Han still seemed to have a bitter expression, and slowly started to speak.

“A part of the exit route we took from the cave was blown up. Even the trees, grass, ground, and everything around it was a mess.”

Plop.

The kittens dropped the jerkies that were in their mouths. However, Cale was still relaxed.

"I'm sure the dragon did it."

Choi Han just stood there silently. Cale saw that, and started to smile as he stood up from his seat.

Even if it is only 4 years old, the dragon was still extremely smart. It knew someone may come to the escape route, and probably decided to blow it up. Since dragons are also very sensitive to mana, it probably destroyed everything around it to destroy the magic tools in the area as well.

"It's good enough that it didn't kill all of the fainted people. It's probably holding back because it is still young and still has some fear."

"I see. I did feel a strong amount of mana there."

"Don't look down on the dragon just because it is small. You'll regret it."

Dragons were said to be large animals that were extremely petty. Cale praised himself once again for leaving the dragon instead of bringing it with him, before asking Choi Han a question.

"You can get out now. Are you going to be sleeping until we leave?"

"No. I need to go help Beacrox out."

"Who? Beacrox?"

Cale gasped in shock, and quickly asked.

"Oh, I guess you are close now?"

At that moment, Cale saw Choi Han have a stoic expression for the first time. Choi Han answered very sternly.

"No. We are not close at all."

"...I, I see... okay then."

Cale responded back with a similar expression on his face, and Choi Han silently bowed before heading out of the room. Cale gave Choi Han an order as he was opening the door to leave.

"Ah. Tell Hans to prepare some drinks on your way out."

"Excuse me?"

Choi Han's eyes opened widely in shock as he looked back at Cale. He looked back and forth at the relaxed Cale and the clock that showed 7:00 am. Cale refreshingly answered Choi Han's silent question.

"Haven't you ever heard of a hangover drink?"

Choi Han left without saying anything else, but Cale did not care. Even On and Hong were looking at him and seemed to be asking if he really was going to start drinking this early, but he also ignored them, and looked into the mirror.

"What a wonderful expression."

His face seemed to be extremely tired, and still slightly drunk. Cale nodded in satisfaction, before heading down to the first floor.

'As I expected.'

7:00 am was early, but the day was not yet over for some people. The Vice Captain was standing there, looking like he had never even drank last night, and was having a serious conversation with someone.

Cale could see a stiff Choi Han nearby. It was because the person speaking with the Vice Captain was one of the knights that Choi Han had defeated yesterday. It was only normal to stiffen up.

Cale approached Choi Han, and kicked Choi Han's foot.

"Why are you stiffening up like that?"

"Ah."

Choi Han flinched for a moment at Cale's stealthy whisper, before smiling awkwardly and quietly responding back.

"I thought I had used enough strength to make them unable to fight for about a day, but they are up and moving much earlier than I expected. I guess I thought the human body was much weaker than it actually is. I guess I can use more strength against humans in the future."

Cale turned his gaze away from Choi Han. Choi Han really fit the model of a normal main character who would happily destroy anything in his path toward justice. There was also other existences who were outside of Cale's expectations.

On and Hong had followed him downstairs. The kittens had smirks on their face as they wagged their tails and peeked at the knight. Anybody could see that they were enjoying this situation.

'...Am I the biggest coward here?'

As Cale was thinking about that and sat down at his table, the inn owner brought a bottle of alcohol to him.

"Young master, I prepared the same alcohol you drank last night."

"Old man, there is something that keeps coming to my mind whenever I see you."

"Yes?"

Cale smiled at the nervous old man, and continued to speak.

"I think you are a really smart vendor. It's a compliment. This is perfect for a hangover drink."

Pong.

The alcohol bottle opened with a refreshing sound, and Cale immediately poured a cup and downed it. His face almost instantly started to turn red. Cale purposefully made his eyes only half opened, and looked toward the Vice Captain. The Vice Captain was still talking to the other knight.

"Yesterday, we had a party to relax after a long journey until here. Everybody was drinking and relaxing. Nobody left the inn. But I still don't understand why someone from the Viscount's estate would be curious about that."

The knight from the Marquis's estate seems to have introduced himself as someone from the Viscount's estate. The knight smiled at the Vice Captain's suspicious gaze, but the knight still answered back with a serious expression.

"There was a thief that broke into the Viscount's villa yesterday. A couple other knights and myself were on guard, but we lost a few items to the thief. After hearing that people from Count Henituse's estate were here in the village, we came to see if the

thief had stolen from the Count as well.”

‘Thief my ass. Well, I guess a dragon thief is a thief as well.’

Cale took a gulp directly from the bottle while thinking about that. At that moment, he made eye contact with the knight who was at the Viscount’s villa yesterday.

“What are you looking at?”

The knight immediately bowed and turned his gaze away. The Vice Captain looked toward Cale awkwardly, before letting out a fake cough and then confidently and loudly answering.

“Ahem. Our young master is drinking because his day turns out better if he drinks in the morning. Furthermore, it is a hangover drink. He is the type of person who drinks to cure his hangover caused from drinking too much the night before.”

Cale glared at the Vice Captain, because he could not tell whether the Vice Captain was mocking him or coming up with an excuse for him, before taking another drink.

“I see. What an interesting young master.”

The knight responded to the Vice Captain’s words positively, before respectfully bowing toward Cale.

‘I guess this should lessen their suspicion of us.’

Cale felt like they should no longer have any reason to be suspected by the Marquis’s knight who came to the inn so early in the morning. The dragon happened to disappear while Cale’s envoy was here, and they were leaving the morning after, but there weren’t many reasons to suspect them.

Venion’s remaining subordinates here will think about the six starred outfits that the attackers were wearing, the ones that seemed to represent a certain organization, as well as the tracks that were leading to the west. Most importantly, however, is that they would never think that someone like Cale, who was called a trash, would be able to do something like that.

“Then I wish you a safe journey as you continue on today.”

In addition, there was no way they could hold the eldest son of a Count from leaving when they didn't have the Marquis, Venion, or even the Viscount with them. Especially when that noble was heading to the capital under the order of the crown.

'Who would think that a noble that is drinking on his way to a summons from the crown would be normal?'

It really was good to be trash. Cale continued to drink with satisfaction.

'I'm sure Venion would not suspect us, even after finding out what happened.'

Venion and Marquis Stan were probably the people who knew better than anyone else that there was absolutely no relationship between Count Henituse and the secret organization. That was especially the case when it came to the dragon.

Cale watched the knight leave the inn before drinking the honey lemon tea Ron had put in front of him.

"Ron."

"Yes, young master."

"Honey tea really seems to be the best to cure a hangover."

"Isn't it?"

Ron smiled as he looked at Cale, but Cale looked away and tried to calm his stomach. Once Cale no longer felt sick from drinking too much, they started on their way once more.

Their next destination was Puzzle City. It was the city that was the center of the transportation of goods in the East, and it was pretty famous for the number of rock towers around the city.

Cale needed to find an unfinished rock tower in Puzzle City.

"Are we camping out today?"

On took a bite of the jerky as she asked Cale. Cale nodded his head.

"Yes. Starting today, we will be camping outside every so often."

Cale had set a pretty filled schedule from here on as well. It was because he wanted to have enough time in Puzzle City. He turned away from the kitten siblings, who were whispering quietly to each other, and looked outside the carriage window.

‘The Vitality of the Heart.’

That was the name of the ancient power that would strengthen the Indestructible Shield. This was a power that was focused on restoration and vitality.

‘That was why the eldest son was looking for it.’

Taylor, the eldest son of the Marquis, who had lost his position as heir. He was the only good person in the Marquis’s family, but the lower half of his body had become paralyzed because of Venion’s schemes.

Taylor had rummaged through all sorts of texts to find a power that would cure him. He happens to find an ancient text in an old bookstore in the process, and, although it was difficult to decipher the ancient text, he manages to decipher a few words after putting in a lot of hard work.

Restoration. Rock Tower.

Those two things became clues for Taylor who immediately headed to Puzzle City, which could also be called Rock Tower City. He was probably at Puzzle City right now. In the novel, he would find the ancient power in about a month from now.

‘But it was useless.’

The, ‘Vitality of the Heart,’ was unable to restore an already injured body. It only was able to restore any injuries recieved after earning the power. There was also a limit on how much could be restored, as well as a cost to pay for any restorations.

Taylor fell into despair after learning about that fact. He had no time, and that ancient power was his last hope. It was because Taylor did not know when Venion would come to kill him.

‘He dies a month after finding the power.’

Taylor ends up dying by an unknown organization while the capital was in a state of

chaos from the terror incident. Of course, Venion was responsible for sending that organization after Taylor.

The reason Cale remembered this side character, that seemed to have an even smaller role than the original Cale in the novel, was because of the strong friendship Taylor had with his friend.

The crazy priestess. She was Taylor's friend and the only person who survives Taylor's assassination. She kills half of the assassins in anger, and ends up becoming excommunicated by the temple. She ends up with a large injury on her back from the incident and confidently tells the temple about what she had done.

'I acted as a human rather than following the will of the lord. I believe that is the right thing to do.'

She then continued on after that.

'I am now free!'

That is when she starts to be called the crazy priestess by others. Her specialty was using the strength of the God of Death for curses. The temple had excommunicated her, but her god did not throw her away.

When the war broke out in the novel, she became famous, even though she was not a hero, because of how she helped to heal the injured.

'I think it will be different this time.'

There was a good chance that Taylor would not die in a month. Venion was going to be busy dealing with the dragon incident and sucking up to the Marquis. He probably would need to focus on his younger siblings rather than his paralyzed older brother to maintain his status as the heir to the Marquis title.

'And since I will be taking Taylor's last hope away, I will need to give him a new hope.'

Although the Vitality of the Heart was an ancient power that Taylor did not need, Cale was not such a bad guy to take someone's last hope away.

Cale was also curious to know about what that combination of Taylor and the Crazy

Priestess could achieve if they managed to live longer. He thought that the two of them could change the Marquis's estate. If that could happen, that would be better for Cale in the long run.

However, something that he suddenly thought about made Cale stiffen his expression.

'Even Beacrox struggled under her curse right?'

Once Cale thought about the struggles the torture expert Beacrox had with the priestess, he stopped thinking about her right away. He decided to stop thinking about the good-natured and citizen-caring noble Taylor as well.

'They don't mesh well with me.'

They were different types of people than Cale. They were good people who were loyal and trusted each other deeply. Cale preferred Ron or Beacrox to those kinds of people.

'...No. How could I ever think about such terrible thoughts.'

Cale quickly stopped thinking about Ron and Beacrox as well.

At that moment, Cale looked down after feeling something tapping at his leg. He could see the golden pupils of the kittens shining, as the kittens started to speak.

"I heard from Hans earlier."

"Hans said."

Hans still didn't know that the kittens were Cat Tribe kittens, and continued to say all sorts of things in front of the kittens. The kittens seemed to want to tell him something they had heard Hans say.

"What?"

The siblings seemed to have gotten used to Cale's rude way of asking, and started to speak.

"If you make a wish at a rock tower, it will come true."

"He said the rock towers were pretty."

"I want to go. But it's okay if it is too annoying."

“I want to go with you, but it’s okay if it is too difficult.”

Cale blankly stared at the fidgety kittens before casually asking.

“What kind of wish do you have?”

Hong shook his fur, that was now healthier and shinier thanks to getting good treatment from Hans, and shouted out with excitement.

“That everybody, including my new little brother-”

“Dismissed.”

Cale immediately started to ignore the kittens, and turned away from them. The carriage stopped at the same time. They had arrived at the location of their campsite for the evening.

“Looks like we are camping out again starting today.”

“Indeed.”

Cale answered Hans’s statement, before looking around their campsite. The wind from the forest blew by his head. Cale spent the night with a pretty relaxed mind.

The next morning.

“Young master.”

“...What is this?”

Cale stared at the dead deer that was at the border of their campsite. It had been hunted recently. Hans reported to Cale, who just continued to stare at the deer.

“Someone left it here on our campsite.”

Hans pointed next to the deer. Cale was looking at that spot as well. On the ground was a drawing of a fork and a knife.

It was as if someone had left the deer there for them to eat. Cale suddenly had an odd thought. He then turned his gaze toward his companions. The kitten siblings in Choi Han’s arms, as well as Choi Han himself, were all smiling while looking at him.

‘...I have a bad feeling about this.’

He had a really bad feeling about it.

An individual that could speak, but could not write, had left the deer for them.

Also, it was an individual that Choi Han, the person on watch last night, clearly knew was there, but pretended not to see.

‘...I have a bad feeling it was the dragon.’

He turned his head back to look at Choi Han, On, and Hong, who were still looking at him, and seriously warned them.

“We are going to pretend like we don’t know.”

Meeeow.

Meeow.

The two siblings seemed to be mocking him, but Cale pretended to not know about it. However, a new ingredient was delivered to them every time Cale and crew camped outside. Wild hog, rabbits, and all sorts of fruits. Cale was now sure about the existence of the dragon following behind him.

Cale then arrived at Puzzle City with that confirmation in his mind.

Chapter 22

Returning the Favor (2)

After easily passing through Puzzle City's gate, the Henituse family's Golden Turtle carriage followed the lead of deputy butler Hans to the inn.

"It is smaller than Western City."

"Right. Small."

Cale nodded at On and Hong's words, and looked outside the carriage.

'It won't follow me into the city, right?'

According to Choi Han, the Black Dragon would follow them from a far distance, before coming by in the early morning to drop the food off and then running away.

"Isn't it cute? The dragon seems like a little kid that hasn't lost its innocence, even after living such a terrible life."

'...Not really.'

That was what Cale was thinking as Choi Han spoke to him with amusement. If Choi Han had seen the dragon blow a mountain away, he would not be saying things like, 'Cute,' to describe it.

Cale didn't know why the dragon was doing this, even though it said that it hated humans. It was really overwhelming for Cale. This was not the way he was expecting things to go.

Since it was still young, Cale thought the dragon would stay away from the Marquis's territory and create its own lair to develop its strength. Cale was hoping that, after growing stronger, that the dragon would destroy the Marquis's estate before the war broke out in the continent.

That would be helpful in keeping the Henituse territory peaceful for a longer period of time.

“Tsk.”

Cale clicked his tongue, and the kittens, who were excitedly looking out the window, flinched before approaching him. It seemed like they had seen something odd outside, and had come to ask.

“Each house has a rock tower in front of it.”

“Very very weird.”

Cale just casually answered.

“This is the city of rock towers.”

Puzzle City was famous for the ancient ruins with a lot of rock towers, but it was also famous for the fact that each house had small rock towers in front of them.

The people in this city made a small groove outside of their windows to put a small rock tower on top of it. It really shouldn't be called a rock tower, because it was made with less than ten rocks, but the rock towers were formed in different shapes based on the personality of the home owners.

That was why it was only natural that the luxurious inn that Cale arrived at also had a rock tower in front of it.

“Will we be staying here?”

Hans quickly responded to Cale's question, as they followed behind the inn owner. Hans seemed to be very excited, as he was walking with the kitten siblings in his arms.

“Yes sir. We have reserved two days for Choi Han-nim, and have agreed to pay for the rest of the group depending on how long we end up staying here.”

Ron flinched for a moment at Hans's words before quickly following behind with the magic box in his hand. Hans continued to speak.

“We arrived right before the Rock Tower Festival season, so the room was not that expensive.”

The Rock Tower Festival. Puzzle City was currently busy preparing for next week’s Rock Tower Festival. Cale just let out what he was thinking without giving it any thought.

“It’s not like there are a lot of rocks here, but the rock towers are quite interesting. Very odd.”

“I know the reason for that.”

‘Huh?’

Cale peeked toward Hans, who had responded to his mumblings.

“There is a sad yet thought provoking story that has been passed down through the ages.”

“Stop right now if it is going to be long.”

Cale really didn’t care about it. However, Hans continued to speak, as he had probably determined that the story was not very long. The group that had entered Cale’s room watched as the attendant stepped out of the room and then had to listen to Hans’s story.

“This story, well, this legend, is about something that happened in ancient times.”

“Ancient times?”

Click.

The attendant had closed the door behind her and only Cale’s group was left in his room. Cale responded to the words, ‘Ancient times.’

“Yes. Ancient times.”

“Go on.”

The kitten siblings in Hans’s arms were wagging their tails, as if they were interested in the story, and looked up at him. Ron just silently poured a cup of lemonade from the bottle he carried in with the magic box and handed it to Cale.

Cale held the cup of lemonade in his hands and sat down on the couch with his legs crossed and motioned to Hans with his chin. He was telling Hans to hurry up and speak.

“Ahem. This city supposedly fell out of the grace of a god in the past.”

‘Falling out of grace?’

Cale did not know anything about this story.

“This is my first time hearing about it.”

“That is because young master has not studied history.”

“...You seem to enjoy talking back to me these days. Are you going to keep talking back like that? Hmm?”

Hans quickly turned his gaze away from Cale.

“It is only natural for a great butler to inform their master about things that the master does not know.”

Hans started to speak about the ancient times.

“I do not know why this city fell out of the grace of a god. However, that is apparently when some of the people in this city started to gather together to build rock towers. It seemed to have been an act of worship to reach out to the god that had abandoned them.”

“Did it work?”

Hans sternly responded to Cale’s question.

“No.”

The god did not listen to them.

“Apparently, none of the prayers went through. That is why the present day Puzzle City does not have a single temple.”

“There’s no reason for me to worship a god who has abandoned me. Is that it?”

“Ding ding ding! Our young master truly is smart and does not need to study at all.”

“...You want to get punched?”

Hans turned away from Cale to look at a far away mountain and continued to speak.

“Ahem. Anyways, they have rock towers instead of temples. The rock towers represent a promise that the people made after all of that. It was a promise between the people, as well as a promise with themselves.”

“What kind of promise?”

Hans started to explain an odd rule that was followed in Puzzle City.

“A human who has had their wish granted will destroy their rock tower.”

Cale started to smile.

“What an interesting city.”

“Isn’t it? Since they were abandoned by their god, they needed to achieve everything with their own strength. The act of destroying their rock tower represents, ‘overcoming the odds.’

Cale liked the act of destroying the rock tower very much. He then recalled the numerous rock towers in front of the houses.

“The rock towers are not created to seek help from a god.”

“Right. It is more of a representation of their own determination.”

This kind of rock tower held a lot of importance, even if you never got to destroy it.

“I guess it wasn’t the god granting their wish in the end.”

“Yes. You are right. Although it is sad that they were abandoned, this story also gives people a lot of hope.”

Cale casually gave an ordered to Hans who was responding to him.

“Look down.”

“Excuse me?”

Seeing Hans looking confused, Cale pointed to Hans’s chest with his finger.

“Looks like the kittens are angry.”

“What?”

Gasp. Hans looked down and gasped as his eyes opened widely. The kittens were showing their teeth in anger. The golden pupils staring at Hans were vicious.

“Aigoo. Why are our kitten-nims so angry? Should I go bring you some more jerky?”

Hans started to smile as he put the kittens down from his chest. Since he still had no idea that they were beast people, he just assumed they were angry because they were hungry. However, the kittens were not angry because of that. Cale recalled the things that the siblings had told him earlier.

‘I heard from Hans earlier.’

‘Hans said.’

‘If you make a wish at a rock tower, it will come true.’

‘He said the rock towers were pretty.’

Tap. Tap.

On seemed to be angry, as she was tapping on the floor with her paw, while Hong was tapping on the floor with his tail. They were angry that Hans had lied to them about the rock tower, but Hans seemed to have gotten the wrong message.

“Aigoo, our precious kitten-nims. I will go get some delicious snacks for you! Young master, may I go get something for them?”

“You can stay out as well.”

“I will be back really quickly.”

Hans said that he would hurry back, but he still made sure the things he brought for Cale were neatly organized, before heading out like the wind as soon as it was done.

“Ron, you can go rest as well.”

Ron was still left in the room. Ron turned toward Cale and started to smile.

‘I have a bad feeling about this.’

Cale really hated that old man’s smile. His smile made Cale even more uncomfortable than normal. Ron approached the couch Cale was on, before starting to speak.

“Will Choi Han-nim be leaving in two days?”

“Yes.”

Cale suddenly had a thought and started to smile as he asked.

“Why? You don’t want to send him away? Do you want to go with him?”

Ron’s benign smile became even bigger.

“Why would I leave you behind and go somewhere else, young master? I like being next to you.”

This gave Cale the chills.

“It is just that it is disappointing that Choi Han-nim will not be going with us all the way to the capital. I will need to speak with him as much as possible before he leaves. Beacrox will probably be sad to see him go.”

Cale’s expression became a bit better after hearing the rest of Ron’s words. He didn’t really pay attention to it because it was annoying, but it looks like a level of friendship had developed between Ron, Choi Han, and Beacrox.

Choi Han was difficult to read, but if he really hated someone, he would not even speak to them. Cale thought about his plan, and started to smile mischievously as he answered.

“Well, you can see each other again at the capital, since you’ll be moving together.”

‘The three of you can leave this kingdom and go to Rosalyn’s kingdom. What do you think? Wonderful, right?’

Cale did not say that part out loud, as he started to smirk while Ron started to smile even brighter.

“I look forward to when we are all together with Choi Han-nim in the capital. This old man’s wish is that everybody arrives there safely.”

Cale did not believe anything Ron was saying. ‘Looking forward to it,’ or, ‘wishing that everybody arrives there safely.’ Those type of emotions would not fly with this old man.

The kittens also snorted while looking at Ron. On and Hong found it annoying that Ron kept trying to teach them assassination skills that they already knew behind Cales back.

“...You can leave now.”

Cale easily got rid of Ron from the room.

“Hans is a liar!”

“I trusted that butler!”

The kitten siblings finally let out their anger while Cale was ignored them by looking out of the window.

Cale was looking in the direction of a cave in the corner of Puzzle City. This cave was the location of the incomplete rock tower and the, 'Vitality of the Heart.' There should be a small house in that cave.

'Didn't it say the person lived until they were 150 years old?'

This was a power that an ancient being left after naturally dying from old age. The deceased person thought his power to be a curse. Cale got up from his seat, fixed his clothes a bit, and opened the door.

"Aigoo!"

Hans happened to be right outside the door. Seeing the deputy butler, who had run back with his arms full of jerky, Cale started to speak.

"Let's go see the rock tower."

The kittens' ears started to twitch. Cale smirked internally at the kittens, who ran toward him like they were never angry to start, and picked the people that would go with him.

"It will just be us and Choi Han. Oh, bring On and Hong with you too."

The human who died at the age of 150 had wanted to finish a rock tower in this Wind-Gathering Cave.

'It was wood last time, now it is wind?'

The center of the cave has a hurricane that seemed to have appeared out of nowhere. The old man had spent over 100 years trying to build a rock tower in the eye of that hurricane. However, he failed.

Well, the old man always destroyed his rock tower whenever it looked like he was going to finish. He repeated that over and over until he died one day after stacking it back up about half way.

Just what wish did that ancient old man have? Cale didn't really care. He just planned on carefully looking at one thing while they were out looking at rock towers today.

'Might as well make it look good if I'm going to build it anyways.'

Since he had to do it anyways, he was going to make it look good. He also had to pay attention to some people, just in case, at the Rock Tower Ruins.

A bit later, Cale, the two kittens, Choi Han, and Hans arrived at the entrance of the Rock Tower Ruins. They didn't bring their carriage that showed the symbol of the Henituse family, and Cale had a hat on as well, using the excuse that he did not like the sunlight.

'They really are still here.'

He was able to locate the people that he was looking for as soon as they entered into the ruins. Cale stealthily hid behind Choi Han and Hans.

At a bit of a distance was a casually dressed man and woman. The man was in a wheelchair, with the woman pushing the wheelchair and heading out of the entrance of the Ruins, which was also the exit.

They didn't notice Cale's stealthy gaze and casually left the ruins. The man turned his head slightly toward the woman and asked.

"Why did you want to come here today?"

"I don't know if it is a message from the lord or just complete bullshit, but I've had the same dream for a couple of days that I needed to come here. My dream said that our future benefactor will show up if we came to the ruins. Something about how even the lord didn't know how that benefactor will act, other than the fact that they will be coming to the ruins today."

"There's even a person that the lord cannot predict?"

"Who knows? Half of the things the lord says is bullshit. Complete bullshit."

The woman with short brown hair vented with annoyance.

"Bullshit? It is the word of the lord. Plus, wasn't it a secret that you can hear messages

from the lord?”

The responding man was the eldest son of Marquis Stan’s family, Taylor Stan.

“It’s not like there are any priests in Puzzle City. And who cares about the word of the lord? Does the lord feed us? How can there be a benefactor for people like us? Absolutely bogus. I’m hungry. Let’s go eat.”

The woman who looked annoyed was Taylor’s close friend, Cage, the woman who will eventually be called the Crazy Priestess. Taylor responded back to Cage with a serious expression.

“Cage, I suddenly feel like drinking beer.”

“Really? I’m craving smoked pork.”

They looked at each other with serious expressions. Taylor pointed forward with his finger, and seriously responded to Cage.

“What a wonderful combination. Let’s go. Push! It’ll be my treat!”

“Aigoo, your treat?! This priestess will do her best to escort you there.”

The two of them started to laugh as they started to move.

Cale could not hear their conversation because he was far away, but he was doing his best to remember the faces of these two individuals, who were still able to laugh while in the middle of some terrible situations.

‘Now that I’ve confirmed what they look like, I just need to make sure to avoid them.’

Since they didn’t know who he was, Cale just had to make sure he avoided them in the future.

Chapter 23

Returning the Favor (3)

Of course, he planned giving them their new hope anonymously. It was something he had learned from the dragon.

‘Unless their lord has nothing to do and reveals me to them, there is no way that they will recognize me.’

It was impossible for them to learn of his identity. How great was that? He should have done everything anonymously until now. Cale stepped into the ruins feeling like a massive weight had been lifted off his chest.

He could see people praying all around the area.

At that moment, Hans stealthily approached Cale and whispered to him.

“I just saw the eldest son of Marquis Stan’s household.”

“...How do you know about that person?”

Cale was truly surprised. Hans smiled before pointing to his eyes.

“Pretty much any and all information about the nobles is in my head. I could see a man being pushed on a wheelchair. It was weird that there was only one person with him, but I was able to see that there was a red snake crest on the wheelchair.”

“Hans.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re better than you look.”

“Thank you?”

Hans shrugged his shoulders with a satisfied expression as he finished his report. He then asked Cale.

“What do you plan on doing?”

Cale could feel the left side of his face heating up, and looked in that direction. Choi Han was looking at him. Cale shook his head and answered both of them.

“Ignore them.”

Both of them nodded their heads without saying anything else. Only then did their tour officially start. After looking around, Cale was shocked at the appearance of the rock towers in the ruins.

“They are...”

Cale seemed to be in disbelief.

“Uglier than I had expected.”

Cale could not understand the ancient sense of style. He was expecting piles of rocks, but there were rock towers of all kinds shapes in the ruins.

They looked interesting. However, they were definitely not beautiful. Cale peeked at the kittens in Hans’s arms. They seemed to be extremely disappointed as well.

However, there was someone who seemed to be more serious than Cale expected. Choi Han had his head bowed like the other people who were praying, and seemed to be praying as well.

‘I’m sure he’s praying to return to Korea.’

Choi Han had grown up in a happy family environment. He was a different kind of person than Cale, Kim Rok Soo. Choi Han had grown up in a happy family with positive influences. That was why he was able to survive in a disastrous situation while still remaining a good person.

Cale was staring at Choi Han when Choi Han lifted his head up and made eye contact with him.

“Cale-nim.”

“What?”

“I have a question and something to report.”

Cale had a bad feeling about this.

“Start with your question.”

Choi Han seemed to be thinking about something, as he looked toward the rock towers standing in this wide plain and started to speak.

“Cale-nim, are you not going to make a wish?”

‘Is that what he wants to know?’

Cale just casually answered.

“I don’t do things like making wishes.”

“Why not?”

“It makes you have higher expectations.”

Choi Han, Hans, and even the kittens all turned to look at Cale. Cale looked at the rock towers like Choi Han had done, and slowly continued to speak.

“It’s so much easier to live without high expectations.”

It feels great if you scratch a lottery ticket hoping for \$1 and end up winning \$5, but if you scratch it hoping to win the grand prize and only end up with \$5, you are bound to get annoyed.

Tap. Cale turned his gaze after feeling the tap on his shoulder, only to see deputy butler Hans smiling and starting to speak.

“You are right, young master. There is no such thing as dreams or hope in this world.”

“...Just stop talking.”

“Yes, sir!”

Hans responded loudly, but seemed to be a bit disappointed as well, as he took the lead with the kittens. Cale leisurely followed behind Hans, when Choi Han quickly approached him and whispered in a voice that Hans could not hear.

Choi Han had not given his report yet.

“The dragon has entered the city.”

“Ignore.”

“I understand.”

Cale took a look around. The dragon must have made itself invisible, as he could not see it. The only thing he could see was the people praying toward the rock towers. The Rock Tower Festival was still a week away, but there was still a large amount of people here. Cale’s gaze turned to the opposite direction of the rock towers in the plains.

The upscale area, the area that the wealthiest citizens in Puzzle City resides. Behind that area was a small mountain, and somewhere on that mountain was the grave of the person who had lived until they were 150 years old.

The next day, Cale was ready to head to the grave. Naturally, he had to get rid of the humans and the kittens who wanted to follow him. Thankfully, everybody stopped voicing their complaints once he said only a single person was going to come with him.

“I will only be taking Choi Han with me.”

Choi Han was the strongest person there. With Choi Han tagging along, both the Vice Captain and Hans had nothing to say.

The Vice Captain just frowned and said he needed to train the knights, before he quickly started to gather them. While Cale was watching the knights who were following behind the Vice Captain with looks of despair on their faces, Hans just said one more thing before disappearing.

“I will take care of our kitten-nims.”

Cale turned away from Hans, who seemed to be very excited about being with the kittens, and headed out of the inn. Choi Han followed behind him.

“Are we doing something again today?”

“Again? Someone might get the wrong idea if they heard you.”

Choi Han did not respond. Cale did not care however, and just headed toward the mountain behind the upscale area and continued to speak.

“I need to go to that mountain over there. You can just wait for me at the mountain

entrance.”

“I understand.”

Choi Han did not say anything else. Cale preferred someone like this. Choi Han did not ask Cale any questions. He was someone who seemed to follow Cale, but did not have any curiosity about what Cale did. This was probably only possible because Choi Han thought that he could figure it out if he really wanted to, and because he thought that he would not be in danger no matter what Cale ended up doing.

Cale arrived at the small mountain after passing through the stereotypical upscale area, before stopping after hearing Choi Han call out to him.

“Cale-nim.”

“What?”

“I’m leaving tomorrow.”

“I know. I was the one who told you to leave tomorrow.”

Choi Han made eye contact with Cale, who was standing impatiently at the mountain entrance. Cale was someone who said that he, Choi Han, was enough for protection. Choi Han had been thinking about this act of protecting the last few days.

“I’ve been debating this for a while, but there is something I need to tell you.”

The report about the dragon yesterday was not really what Choi Han had wanted to report. He hesitated for a moment, before looking back toward Cale and starting to speak. Choi Han’s gaze was looking past Cale’s shoulder to a tree near the entrance of the mountain.

“Mr. Ron is a dangerous person.”

Cale flinched for a moment at this straight that landed on him without any warnings. Should he pretend to know or pretend not to know? He quickly made up his mind. Cale had not expected a question like this, but he calmly responded back.

“Is that so?”

“You are not surprised? There is a dangerous stench of blood on him. He is a strong person who has shed a lot of blood. At first, I thought that Cale-nim knew about it already and still had Mr. Ron by your side.”

But if Cale had known, he would have taken the strong Ron with him to rescue the dragon. But Cale had not done that. Choi Han thought that to mean that Cale either did not know about Ron's strength or did not trust Ron, but there was no way Cale wouldn't trust someone who had been with him for 18 years.

That was why Choi Han had come to the conclusion that Cale was not aware of Ron's strength.

"But neither Cale-nim nor anybody else seemed to know about Mr. Ron's strength."

Choi Han had debated about this for a while. Honestly speaking, the fact that Cale had said that he did not have any expectations made him decide not to say anything about Ron. However, the fact that Cale had chosen him to be the guard today made Choi Han feel guilty.

"That was why I thought I needed to tell Cale-nim."

"Oh really? I didn't know Ron was strong."

Choi Han asked once more after hearing Cale's calm response.

"Will you still keep him around you? He seems like he is an evil person."

Cale snorted at Choi Han's words. Keep Ron around him? Cale was planning on pushing Ron over to Choi Han the moment they arrived at the capital.

"Whether it is you or Ron."

"Excuse me?"

"You say that he has a dangerous strength, but why do you leave Ron alone?"

"That is because-."

Choi Han suddenly could not say anything.

"It is probably because he has not done anything to you."

Choi Han could not retort Cale's words. There was the initial misunderstanding that led to their small battle, but Ron had helped him find a sword after that, and even helped take care of the issue with Harris Village.

Cale silently observed Choi Han.

It was not just to Choi Han. Ron did not do anything to anybody. The only thing that Ron did was giving Cale lemonade every so often or making fun of Cale with rabbit meat. But that was nothing.

“Ron has been my servant for 18 years.”

No matter what, Ron was dedicated to his act as a servant. Even the Vice Captain, who cared a lot about hierarchy, did not get angry when Ron, a servant, was walking shoulder to shoulder with him. Even deputy butler Hans did not get angry when Ron did his job for him.

It was because Ron was skilled and well-liked throughout the estate.

“Do you hate Ron?”

Choi Han shook his head after debating it for a moment.

“No.”

“Then?”

“I just thought it would be better for you to know that he was a dangerous person, and thus decided to report.”

“Whether it is you or Ron.”

Choi Han looked at Cale after hearing that once more.

“You are both the same to me. In that aspect, you are dangerous as well.”

Cale looked at Choi Han with a stoic expression and continued to speak.

“You are strong as well.”

“Ah.”

Choi Han let out a gasp. Cale didn’t know the reason behind it, but continued to speak.

“It’s all the same to me.”

He didn’t know the reason, but Ron, who had come over from the Eastern Continent, was living in the Henituse territory while hiding his identity. If someone like that was to touch the son of the Count? That would spread like wildfire in the kingdom.

Ron was someone who did not care about anything or anyone else, other than his son and himself. So why would someone like that cause a ruckus? Cale was just scared because he knew that Ron was a dangerous old man. He wanted to get rid of that dangerous old man as soon as possible so that he could live in peace.

“As long as he is my servant, he is just my servant. Just like you are Choi Han, who needs to pay me back.”

Cale checked his watch. The strength of the wind in the cave was different based on the time of day. He needed to hurry.

“You have nothing else to say, right? Don’t follow me.”

Choi Han silently nodded his head in respond. Cale did not even look back as he headed to the small mountain.

After seeing that he could no longer see Cale, Choi Han looked back at the tree at the mountain entrance and started to speak.

“You heard him, right?”

Ron smoothly jumped off the tree. He glared at Choi Han and started to smile. A blunt voice started to flow out of Ron’s mouth.

“I changed his poopy diapers and raised him since he was young.”

That was the truth.

Choi Han stood in front of the path to the mountain and started to speak.

“Cale-nim had said that nobody is to follow him from here on.”

“I know, you little punk.”

Ron turned his back to the mountain with no regrets. After hearing that Cale was only going with Choi Han, and even leaving the Cat Tribe children behind, Ron had followed, just in case something happened.

“I shouldn’t have come.”

They say that you get more fickle the older you get, and this fickleness was such a pain.

Ron walked back to the inn at a much slower pace than when he had left, and Choi Han watched Ron disappear before sitting down on a boulder to wait for Cale to return.

Cale was standing in front of a cave just off of the mountain path. The cave entrance was covered with vines, such that it would be difficult to find unless you were looking carefully.

“Damn it.”

Cale started to frown.

The cave entrance was pretty small. He looked down at his clothes. He had worn simple clothes, but they were still baggy.

“Sigh.”

Cale let out a long sigh before crawling into the cave. Whether it was the man-eating tree or this cave, everything related to ancient powers seemed to be crazy. The ground by the cave entrance now had the traces of Cale crawling in.

A moment later, there was a small reptile footprint on the same spot.

Cale could see the cave becoming wider after crawling in for about five minutes.

‘Taylor must have been really desperate. He crawled all the way in here, even with his disabled lower body.’

Since you had to stack the rock tower with your own strength, the eldest son Taylor had to personally come here. What took Cale five minutes to do probably took Taylor much, much longer.

Cale stood back up once it was wide enough and started to walk farther in. The farther he went in, the clearer the noise in his ear became.

Swiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiish. Swiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiish.

It was the sound of the wind. The sound that appeared when the winds were hitting each other became louder as he walked farther into the cave. Finally, Cale located some cloth and a pillar that was probably a hut a long time ago.

After taking a single look at it, Cale continued to walk farther inside.

Swiiiiiiiiiiish.

The sound of the wind became even stronger. Boom. Boom. He could even hear the wind crashing into the cave walls like a giant fist. Cale started to walk even faster.

‘The wind. I wonder if it will sound like this when I get the, ‘Sound of the Wind,’ ancient power later.’

Shield. Then Recovery. Then quick feet. That was Cale’s plan of action. Cale finally had to stop walking after thinking about the next ancient power he would be trying to get.

It wasn’t that he stopped walking, it was that he was forced to stop walking.

“Wow.”

This was even worse than Cale had expected.

A large underground area had appeared in front of Cale. At the same time, a vicious wind tornado filled his gaze.

Boom, boom!

The rocks on the cave walls were slowly crumbling because of the tornado. There were quite a bit of rocks on the ground that let Cale know that this area was consistently getting larger.

Cale looked back and forth between the underground area and the path that he traveled to get here. He felt like he would be pushed back by the wind if he went inside. Well, not just pushed back, but smashed against the wall, which would probably seriously injure him.

That was how strong the wind was.

“Mm.”

Of course, the center of that tornado will be calm, as it is the eye of the storm.

'I guess it would have been impossible for Taylor without Cage's help.'

He now understood why the novel said the two of them had struggled for a whole week. However, Cale started to smile. It was now going to be a battle against time.

Cale stepped into the underground area, into the vicious tornado, without any hesitation. Cale's red hair started to flutter along with his clothes.

At the same time...

"N, no! You will get hurt! You are extremely weak!"

The dragon appeared at the back of the path and shouted urgently.

Also at the same time...

"...Huh?"

The dragon could see a large shield with silver wings appear and surround Cale.

The wings, that were shining so brightly that it could be called holy, surrounded Cale while the large shield blocked the wind. The shield and the wings were keeping Cale safe.

Cale turned around. His eyes opened widely as his gaze landed on the dragon.

"What the hell are you doing here?"

The Black Dragon could not say anything in response.

Chapter 24

Returning the Favor (4)

Instead, the Black Dragon just slowly crawled back into the path. While Cale was watching the dragon in disbelief, he could hear a quiet voice piercing through the wind to reach his ear.

“...I was... just passing by.”

“Tsk.”

The Black Dragon’s back flinched after hearing Cale click his tongue, but Cale did not have time to pay attention to the dragon. The cave’s wind had a cycle of 3 hours of strong wind and 3 hours of weak wind. This was the moment that the wind started to get weaker. Of course, it would still become stronger the closer he got to the center.

Swiiiiiiiiiiiiish.

“Quite scary.”

The wind was still pretty strong to be called the, ‘weak phase.’ The novel mentioned that the 150 year old man walked through this strong wind to get to the rock tower.

Cale turned his gaze back to the center of the cave. The large underground area. In the middle of the tornado was a half-stacked rock tower. It looked like there were no winds over there. Next to the half-stacked rock tower were numerous other rocks.

‘I need to stack all of those rocks up.’

The issue was getting to the tower. Stacking the rocks would not be a problem. Cale looked over the shield and the wings surrounding him, before taking a step forward.

Tang. Tang. The rough wind clashed against the shield. Even though the silver shield was transparent, it sounded like the wind was hitting a real metal shield.

That noise made the Black Dragon that was looking away slowly turn around to look at Cale.

“...But you are weak...”

The Cale that the dragon could see was having a difficult time, even though the shield and wings were protecting him. The wind that could not be blocked by the shield and wings was making his clothes flutter. The wind that seeped through the bottom of the shield made him stop moving every so often as well.

However, Cale continued to step forward one step at a time. Then the dragon saw it.

Cale was smiling. This human, that was nothing compared to that strong tornado, the same human that was weaker than even the kittens he was traveling with, the human that was the weakest out of everybody he was traveling with, was smiling while pushing through this wind.

The dragon had never seen such a silver shield before. He had never seen such wings either. The dragon took a look at his own wings. It was very different from his wings. It was extremely beautiful. The dragon was curious as to what that power might be.

However, the dragon was focused not on the holy and magnificent shield nor wings. Its full attention was on the smiling Cale.

And the target of the gaze, Cale, was continuing to smile.

‘It’s doable. It’s comfortable.’

It was a bit difficult and slow because of the wind, but it was actually a breeze. Compared to how Beacrox was almost killed by Ron while being taught his sword art, this was child’s play.

This made Cale once again feel like it really was best to earn something without putting in much effort.

There were no physical or mental strain endured when using the Indestructible Shield. There would be a short strain if it was to break, but it was not in any danger of breaking right now.

‘It just gets pushed back.’

The shield just got pushed back if the wind was strong. Honestly speaking, Cale had expected to be pushed back multiple times. That was why he had originally lowered the strength of the shield and enlarged it as much as possible. He had been planning on slowly shrinking the size of the shield whenever he got pushed back.

However, this shield was working better than Cale had expected. That made Cale a bit smug, but when he had reached about the halfway mark to the center of the tornado, he had to get rid of all side thoughts.

The novel had said that you would hear a voice once you got close to the center. It was supposed to be the voice of an old man.

Cale was waiting for that voice. The tornado was supposed to get stronger once the voice started to appear.

- I regret it.

He could hear the voice. But it was a bit odd.

- Ahem, I regret it.

It was a sad old man.

“Tsk tsk.”

Cale clicked his tongue. None of these ancient powers were normal. Why did Taylor think the old man’s voice was sincere? Cale could not understand Taylor’s train of thought.

However, Cale stopped clicking his tongue and stopped moving.

- The one that has a power that I am familiar with, I am hoping that you do not get this power.

“Hmm?”

‘The one with a power I am familiar with?’

That phrase had caught Cale's attention. At the same time, the wind started to get stronger and swept through the area.

Tang. Tang. Tang. The wind clashed even stronger against the transparent wind and made loud noises. However, Cale's concerned expression was not because of the wind. His hair continued to flutter in the wind.

'Is he talking about the Indestructible Shield?'

The only thing that Cale could deduce about this, 'familiar power,' was the Indestructible Shield. It had not said anything like that to Taylor in the novel. Did the owner of this ancient power know the owner of the Indestructible Shield? Multiple thoughts flew across Cale's mind at once.

However, Cale still chose to step forward for now. The wind would only get stronger if he delayed any longer.

- I pretty much betrayed my comrades! I was a terrible person! Ahem, I stayed alive on my own and got old. How shameful am I?!

Cale could only hear the old man's voice every so often as he was having difficulty stepping forward one step at a time.

- I was always hoping for everyone to come back to life. However, my wish was something that could not be achieved. I could only lament and cry! That was why I could not finish my rock tower.

"How annoying."

Cale found the old man's lamenting voice to be annoying. Screw sincere, it was like he wanted to die. It was the style that Cale hated. Epicureans were so much better.

Cale centered his body after being slightly pushed back, and put some strength into his legs. He could hear the voice once again after taking another step.

- This restoration strength is useless. It is only capable of protecting myself. It is not helpful in any other way. I am a trash!

Cale ignored the cries of the old man that rang through his mind. The power to protect himself was most important to Cale. Who cares if it made him trash. None of it mattered as long as he could live.

Just five more steps. The center of the tornado was right in front of him.

Boom. Boom. Boom.

The sound of the wind that was clashing became stronger. It was as if a human was punching the shield.

‘It might break.’

Cale thought that the wind might now be strong enough for the shield to break. It should be doing more damage than just pushing him back now. The moment Cale thought that the wind might cut him, he realized something else as well.

- I did not die even when the wind cut me like a sharp blade.

It was the fact that the owners of these ancient powers were all extremely chatty.

Cale immediately curled up and decreased the size of the shield. Boom Boom. The shield was now smaller, but in return, it was much stronger. It was able to push back an even stronger force of wind.

Cale reached out toward the transparent shield and clenched the transparent handle on the inside of the shield as he continued to move forward.

One step.

- Restoration is a cursed power.

Two steps.

- My heart was always beating. But I could not move on.

Three steps.

- It was because I was afraid of death.

Four steps.

- I was afraid of pain because I had always been injured, and I was even more afraid of death, the end of that pain.

And finally.

Cale took the final fifth step.

Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-

The inside of the windless area sounded like it was raining all around Cale. The eye of the storm. The winds were swarming the area outside this calm center. He could hear the old man's voice along with the sound of the wind.

- I chose to throw everything else away so that I could continue to live.

That was the last thing the old man said.

"Tsk."

'Who cares about anything else? Living comes first.'

This old man had a lot of useless things to say. Cale clicked his tongue and returned the shield back to his heart. The silver light surrounding him instantly disappeared.

He headed toward the half completed rock tower and crouched down in front of it.

It was a normal rock tower that you could find at the top of a mountain.

However, all of these rocks were black. Just like the man-eating tree, these rocks that have existed since ancient times were different from normal rocks. Just like the wind surrounding this area.

"Whatever."

Cale, who had been thinking about making it aesthetically pleasing, changed his mind. That would be too annoying. He took out a pair of gloves from his pocket and put them on before picking the rocks up to stack the rest of the rock tower.

Clack. Clack. Clack. The rock tower was being built up, one rock at a time.

It did not take that long. Even Taylor had completed this part pretty easily. However, Cage, who had not come into the central area and had instead waited outside the eye of the storm, suffered quite a bit. This central area, like with all ancient powers, was somewhere that a person could only enter on their own.

“It’s easy.”

Cale picked up the last black rock and gently put it on top of the rock tower. It was at that moment.

Flash!

The black rocks slowly turned white. At the same time, Cale got up and looked around.

The wind was slowly dying down.

“...Huh?”

Cale ignored the confused voice of the dragon and waited until all of the wind died down. He then crossed his arms and listened to the old man’s voice. He had no choice.

- I tried to fight with them. However, I did not know that I was so weak against pain. They were not people who served the lord. I only realized that after we all went our separate ways and I ended up alone.

The words of the old man caught Cale’s attention. He then recalled the words of the owner of the Indestructible Shield.

“The people in the Forest of Darkness who called themselves servants of the lord only gave me terrible food.”

He had a bad feeling that he had learned something he shouldn’t have learned about. He had an odd feeling that the things he just heard were things that he should not tell anybody else about in his entire life.

Cale started to frown even more as the old man continued to speak. That voice was something only Cale could hear, thus making the dragon hesitate while looking at the

silently standing Cale.

- I piled the rocks. I piled them up hoping that I could turn back time, hoping that I could be happy. But then I destroyed it.
- I hated my selfish self for thinking about my own happiness after betraying my comrades and running away.

“Sigh.”

Cale let out a long sigh. This old man really was frustrating. Cale started to speak in frustration.

“It is human nature to be selfish.”

The old man’s voice disappeared for a moment.

‘Is it over?’

Cale started to smile thinking that the old man was finally getting to the end. However, the sobbing voice continued once more.

- Ahem. My older sister said the same thing. She was a really wonderful older sister. She was more reliable than anybody else. Ah, my older sister. Sob!

...The old man was crying.

“I’m going to go crazy.”

Tap Tap. Tap. Cale was impatiently tapping the ground with his foot. Cale did not want to keep standing here like this. After crying for a while, the old man showed his thanks.

- You, the one with the familiar power. That rude personality of yours makes me think of my older brother. I am very envious of how rude you are.

And, finally, the old man said the final words that Cale had been waiting for. These were the same final words the old man had said to Taylor.

- Break it. Then you will, ‘overcome,’ your limits.

Cale started to smile and instantly kicked the rock tower without any hesitation.

Tang. Crumble. Boom!

The white rocks flew away to hit the ground and the wall. The dragon that had been watching Cale flinched and stared at Cale as if he was crazy. However, the following scene made the dragon gasp.

“Wow.”

The broken rock tower.

A white light floated up from underneath the rock tower.

Oooooooooong.

The gentle vibration that pulsed throughout the cave could be felt under Cale’s feet. At that moment, the light rushed toward Cale.

Cale reached his hand out to grab the light. The moment he grabbed it, the light shot toward Cale’s heart like an arrow. The light arrow pierced through Cale’s heart before flashing and disappearing.

“Huuuuu.”

Cale let out a deep breath. He then lowered his head to look under his shirt. The fancy shield tattoo that was over his heart had disappeared and had been replaced by a red heart.

Cale could immediately feel the new vigor inside of his body. This vigor from the, ‘Vitality of the Heart,’ would make the shield even stronger. He would also recover at a much faster speed than normal people, even when he got injured.

Unlike the shield, which was a superpower, this was more apart of the physical strengths of the human body. This regenerative strength was so strong that it managed to last since the ancient times to be passed down like this.

Cale brought forth the shield again.

“Just as I expected.”

Cale started to smile. The pattern on the shield had changed to a heart. The only difference from the tattoo on his chest was that it was silver and not red. He then returned the shield, before immediately starting to walk.

“You.”

Cale had walked toward the dragon, that was pretending like nothing was going on and instead kept staring up at the sky. Cale just continued to stare at the dragon that was crouched down on the ground. He then stoically asked the dragon, as if he was throwing a rock into a lake. ^[1]

“You want to come with me?”

“...You are so weak that you need protection. But I do not like humans.”

The dragon answered, that way before starting to turn invisible. It had used its invisibility magic again. Cale just snorted at the disappearing dragon.

“What a fickle punk.”

He was also fickle for asking the question after telling the others to ignore the dragon, but this dragon was just as bad. However, he could not just ignore the dragon after it had jumped out earlier to try to save him.

Cale looked around the cave, which no longer had any wind storms raging about, before turning around and heading out of the cave. Of course, he had to crawl back out as well. He returned the vines back to their original spots, and covered up the cave entrance properly.

He then turned around and started to speak while walking away. His gaze was directed toward a grassy area.

“I can see you standing on the grass.”

He could see four imprints on the grass, each one representing one of the dragon’s four paws. These paw imprints then quickly disappeared. The dragon had flown up into the sky. Cale shook his head.

‘I guess my family grew in the end.’

Cale could not help but let out a deep sigh. It was obvious that the dragon would continue to follow him in that invisible state. Just why was this dragon such a noob when it knows ancient magic like invisibility? Cale had thought that all dragons were intelligent, but that seemed like it might not be the case.

After walking back down the mountain, Cale could see Choi Han’s judging expression. Choi Han looked at Cale silently, before finally asking.

“Did you... roll around the mountain?”

‘Shit.’

The wind had made his hair a mess, and his clothes were dirty after crawling across the rocky and sandy cave entrance.

Cale sternly responded to Choi Han.

“Yes. I rolled around.”

Choi Han looked toward Cale with concern. Cale just avoided the gaze.

That night, Cale told the kittens to deliver a message. It was a letter that was created with magic, which made it impossible to determine the handwriting of the writer.

“Make sure they don’t see you.”

The letter was the new hope for the priestess Cage and the Marquis’s eldest son, Taylor.

1. Something similar to the English proverb of trying to break a boulder with an egg.

Chapter 25

Returning the Favor (5)

Late at night in a small two story house in the outskirts of Puzzle City. The only light in the area was the light on the first floor of this small house, shining out through the windows. Marquis Stan's eldest son, Taylor, the owner of the house, started to frown.

"What is going on?"

"Damn it. Ugh. Hold on. Don't talk to me right now."

Cage, the priestess of the God of Death, was clenching her head in pain.

Clang.

The beer cup in her hand fell to the ground. Taylor and three of his people approached her quickly.

"What? Is the lord saying something to you again?"

Taylor looked toward her with concern. The God of Death spoke to Cage from time to time. This had suddenly happened one day and would sporadically appear like this. Cage had hidden this fact from the church, and only Taylor and his three subordinates knew about it.

"Ah, so annoying!"

After struggling for a while, Cage jumped up and headed to the back door of the house. She was moving pretty quickly. She was still clenching her head and staggering a bit, but her gaze remained focused on the back door.

Taylor told his subordinates to stay back as he pushed his wheelchair and followed behind her.

'Did someone break in?'

They may be in a small house, but there were magic alarms set up everywhere. Taylor was too paranoid about his younger brother to sleep without these alarms.

After having both of his knees destroyed by a hitman in his own room at the Marquis's estate, there was nowhere that Taylor considered to be safe anymore.

"Cage. What is going on?"

"Hold on."

Slam!

Cage slammed the back door open. Taylor could only see a peaceful backyard. It was calm and tranquil, as always. There were a couple of lamps lighting the garden up, making it the most lit area in the property.

Cage started to rush into the backyard and Taylor followed behind her. Cage walked all the way to the fence at the boundary of the property and let out a gasp.

"Ha!"

This was the location right outside of the range of the alarm. On top of that fence was a small rock tower made of five small rocks.

It was just large enough for the single knight staying at this house to find when he went on his patrol later.

"...Crazy shit. It was real."

Some rough words came out of Cage's mouth. Taylor arrived next to Cage in his wheelchair and started to look at the rock tower on top of the fence with confusion.

"What is this?"

At Taylor's question, Cage read the message that was written in chalk next to it.

"'Break this if you want your wish to be granted.' That's what it says."

Confusion and curiosity both filled Taylor's face simultaneously. Cage let out a sigh after looking at him and pressed her temples with her finger.

“I vote that you break it. No, it sounds crazy, but the lord says to break it.”

“...What?”

“This is the first time the lord has not said some bullshit. Why is he talking so much these days? He usually speaks to me maybe once a year.”

“What does this rock tower have to do with it?”

Cage turned to make eye contact with Taylor.

“The turning point of our lives. That is what he said.”

The God of Death only came to Cage when she was sleeping. Sleep was similar to death. That was why sleep was a path of sorts for the God of Death. However, this time, she had heard her lord while she was drinking.

Cage thought that the God of Death was angry at her for drinking too much beer. That was why she had welcomed it. She wanted this god to stop paying attention to her. However, the God of Death had a different message for her.

“‘The decision is yours to make. However, don’t break it if you want to live a peaceful life.’ That’s what he said.”

She looked toward the rock tower. There was something underneath.

“There is a letter underneath the rock tower. I think they piled this rock tower up for the letter.”

She turned back to look at her best friend, Taylor. He had to look up from the wheelchair, so, although he could see the rock tower, he could not see the letter underneath it.

“I don’t feel any strange powers surrounding the rock tower.”

Although she was not as sensitive as real mages, using divine powers allowed Cage to be pretty sensitive and perceptive toward her surroundings. She would be able to feel if there were any curses or negative energy surrounding an item or a place. She was, after all, a servant of the God of Death.

She was waiting for Taylor’s response.

Taylor looked up at the night sky, before slowly turning to look at Cage.

“Destroy it.”

Cage immediately punched the rock tower in front of her.

Tang. Tang. Tang.

The rocks on top of the fence all fell down. Taylor just blankly watched it happen.

‘Don’t break it if I want to live peacefully?’

Taylor had never lived peacefully. He also had no desire to live peacefully. He was going to find a way to get his legs fixed and continue to push forward. And then-

‘I will overturn this damned family of mine.’

Taylor reached his hand out and Cage handed him the envelope. Taylor immediately opened the envelope and found that letter was written using magic to prevent people from recognizing the sender’s handwriting. Nobles frequently used this item.

Taylor opened the letter without any hesitation. The first two lines of the letter, that were visible through the lamps in the yard, immediately caught his attention.

[The crown prince is in possession of an ancient power. It is called the ‘Star of Healing,’ and is useless to him. It is a one-time use power that can heal any type of injury.]

[He is looking to trade it for a method to hold the second prince and third prince in check.]

Taylor’s hands started to shake.

“What is going on?”

Cage stiffened up after seeing Taylor’s expression and his shaking hands. However, she soon relaxed.

“Ha!”

It was because Taylor started to laugh. He then handed her the letter.

“it will definitely be a turning point in our lives.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Cage took the letter from Taylor and started to read. She stopped for a moment after reading about the ancient power and the crown Prince, but then continued to read the rest. She then jerked her head up after reading the bottom part of the letter.

[Your legs might not move, but your head, arms, eyes, and mouth can. The rest of you is still very much alive.]

[The decision is yours to make, Taylor Stan, eldest son of Marquis Stan.]

Taylor looked toward the darkness at the corner of the yard and started to speak.

“Cage.”

“Yeah?”

“Let's leave this place to the butler, and head to the capital for now.”

“Okay.”

She decided to go along with the decision of the still alive Taylor. She was someone who had experienced death many more times than anybody else because she was a priestess of the God of Death, thus causing her to be very clear about the value of life.

“I'm sure the intelligent Taylor will take care of everything. You're pretty good at that.”

Cage was trusting Taylor's mind and abilities.

“You're right. I used to be pretty good.”

‘Used to be.’ Cage gazed toward Taylor after hearing him use past tense.

“I should have known how to take care of myself.”

Unfortunately, Taylor injured his legs because he did not take good care of himself by letting himself get caught off guard.

Taylor lifted his head to look at the small two story house. He had been frustrated enough being here for the last few months following a lead he didn't even know was real or not. Rather than just continuing this futile effort, it might be better to leave for

a bit.

At least the God of Death did not lie. Taylor was in need of a turning point. He started to speak.

“If it is the Crown Prince, we need to match the timing for the royal event. We need to hurry.”

“Alright. Let’s hurry.”

“Will it be okay? We will run into a lot of the people from the temple if we go to the capital.”

“What can they do? Excommunicate me? That’d be great. I’m just worried about you.”

“Thank you.”

“No need.”

They smiled at each other and spoke at the same time, as Cage lifted up the letter.

“Benefactor.”

Well, they couldn’t be sure if this person was their benefactor or not, but they both had a feeling that the writer of this letter was their benefactor. That meant that, eventually, they would need to find this benefactor and return the favor.

Two pairs of eyes, that were clear and without any traces of drinking just a few moments ago, quietly looked at the letter. It was the gaze of people who had found their turning point.

The red kitten that was watching all of this from the roof of another house whispered to his sister, On.

“Noona, we can go home now, right?”

“Yes. We did our job. Let’s go eat meat.”

“Woohoo!”

The two kittens jumped from roof to roof as they returned to the residence.

The next day, Cale was standing with his arms crossed and a frown on his face. His gaze was looking up and down at the person in front of him.

Cale’s outfit was even more flashy and luxurious than usual.

‘Young master! Even if I, Hans, was not there, how could you go rolling around on the mountain?’

‘This Vice Captain should have escorted you!’

‘Aigoo, young master. This Ron is very sad.’

Cale had dressed up because he was annoyed at the gazes he got after coming back looking like a mess from crawling through the cave. The fancy outfit he was wearing looked quite good with his bright red hair. Cale was definitely not lacking when it came to looks.

But there was another reason Cale was looking annoyed right now.

“You’re going to go like that?”

They were standing in front of the inn. Cale was standing there with his arms crossed and looking at Choi Han. Choi Han had a small bag and his sword with him.

“Yes.”

There was no special feast or farewell party for the leaving Choi Han. Neither Cale nor Choi Han wanted something like that.

That was why this farewell was pretty small as well.

Cale, the kittens, Hans, Ron, Beacrox, and the Vice Captain. That was it. The fact that the Vice Captain was there was a bit odd, but he was standing there with a frown like Cale as he said his goodbye.

“Sigh.”

Cale sighed before taking a small bag out of his pocket and throwing it toward Choi Han. Choi Han easily caught the bag. Choi Han recognized the bag. It was the same size as the bag that Cale had given to the Black Dragon. Choi Han opened the bag to find potions and other types of useful items inside. Choi Han lifted his head from the bag and looked toward Cale. Cale just bluntly spoke when they made eye contact.

“What? What do you want? Just chuck it away if you don’t want it.”

Choi Han did not say anything, but Cale was just saying whatever he wanted to do. He then turned around and headed toward his room.

“Goodbye.”

Cale had a stoic expression as he turned around after saying goodbye. There should not be any more reasons to see Choi Han. Well, that is, after one more time. They will meet again once at the capital, before he sends Choi Han off with Ron and Beacrox, along with a few orders. After that, he planned on having no contact with Choi Han at all.

“I will be back soon.”

Choi Han’s response, that seemed to contain a bit of joy, gave Cale the chills, but he did not look back. Choi Han felt that it was very much like Cale not to look back. His gaze then turned toward the rest of the group.

“See you at the capital!”

“Ahem. I will be training myself so that I will be the young master’s personal guard when we are at the capital.”

Deputy butler Hans cheerfully said goodbye, while the Vice Captain responded in a very annoyed voice.

“I will keep my blade sharpened.”

“See you later.”

Beacrox and Ron said goodbye as well. Of course, the kittens patted Choi Han’s leg with their paws to say goodbye.

Finally, the Black Dragon, that had been using invisibility magic to stay in the yard during the day and lay by Cale’s window at night, sent some invisible mana to Choi Han.

“I’ve already received so much, but I seem to keep being on the receiving end.”

Choi Han put the magic bag in his pocket before starting to smile. Cale could not see it because his back was turned, but this was the first time the rest of them saw Choi Han with such a bright smile.

“I will see you all at the capital.”

Choi Han respectfully said goodbye before heading out of the inn. Someone like him, who had spent tens of years in solitude that felt even worse than death, now had somewhere to return to. He also had people he needed to pay back for their grace.

‘I need to make sure to properly complete this task.’

Choi Han walked away from Cale and the rest, and headed out of Puzzle City.

The next morning, Cale’s group got on the carriage and prepared to leave Puzzle City as well.

“Young master, we are ready to go.”

“Okay.”

Cale nodded his head at Ron’s words, and Ron quickly closed the window and got the carriage to start moving. They were starting back on their journey.

“What are you looking at?”

Cale was staring at the kitten siblings, who were fidgeting while trying to avoid his gaze. The kittens flinched and turned their eyes away. Cale started to smile.

“What? Did you meet a dragon or something?”

Gasp. Cale heard the kittens gasp, but just ignored it. Choi Han may have left, but now a dragon was following them. However, he did not have time to worry about that fact.

After a day’s worth of travel, they were now getting ready to make camp.

“Excuse me, if it is okay, may we share a part of your campsite?”

A carriage arrived by Cale’s campsite area, and the person that seemed to be the driver got off and approached the Vice Captain.

“May I ask who you are?”

The Vice Captain asked, even though he already knew the answer after seeing the red snake on the driver’s armor. The driver bowed to the Vice Captain and Cale behind

him and introduced himself.

“My name is Tom, and I am a part of Marquis Stan’s estate.”

‘Shit.’

Cale almost said that out loud, as he looked at the shabby looking carriage without a crest. The window opened and Cale could see the face of Taylor Stan.

“My name is Taylor Stan. I saw Count Henituse’s crest, and am asking for help, even though I’m sure it is not ideal.”

If it is the strong Count Henituse’s campsite, Taylor thought he would be safe for the night. It was not so good in Cale’s eyes.

Cale had now met Marquis Stan’s eldest son Taylor and the crazy priestess Cage. He thought about the dragon that would be hunting a boar or deer for him right now and started to frown.

‘Damn it.’

One left and three showed up.



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