

Magic Knight of the Old Ways

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“I will become
a great king.”

Magic Knight *of the Old Ways*

“A warrior living by the rules of the past”



A Knight Tells Only the Truth

Their Bravery Glimmers in Their Hearts

Their Swords Defend the Defenseless

Their Power Sustains Virtue

And Their Anger... Destroys Evil

Prologue: The Final Moments of a Certain Knight

It was a tale from long, long ago. Strewn on a vast plain were tens of thousands of corpses and countless swords, spears, and war banners that stood from the ground like gravestones. In the dead center of that battlefield was the sight of a knight and king leaning on one another.

"It's all right, Arthur...my lord."

"S-Sir Sid?" The king's blade was pierced deeply into the knight's chest. However, the knight smiled as he gazed at the king who took his life, while the king gazed in tears at the knight whose life he took.

"Heh... Don't worry about me." With blood trailing from the corner of his mouth, the knight gave another carefree smile. "I'm your knight, and you're my king. It was only natural it would end this way."

Then, as the knight looked up at the sky above the red, sun-scorched battlefield, he said, "I have no regrets. For all of the trouble I've caused, this death...it suits me." After he spoke, he lost strength and slumped.

The king desperately caught the knight in his arms and cried out, "Sid! Sid! How? How could this happen?!"

Gradually, life drained from the knight's body, and almost as if to try and stop it, the king clung furiously to him. "Don't leave me! What will I do? What will I do without you?"

As Arthur wept like a lost child, Sid raised his trembling hand and stroked the king's face.

"It's all right. My sword and my spirit shall always be with you. Because," he paused, "I am your knight."

The king fell into shocked silence.

"Even if death were to try and tear apart my fealty and our friendship...I will forever...be your..." The knight's final words were left unspoken, and the hand

that caressed the king's face dropped lifelessly to the ground.

"Sir Sid?" By the time the king realized it, the knight was already dead in his arms. Peace and content graced the late knight's face. "Sir Sid... Sid... Sid!"

At that moment, memories ran through Arthur's mind—the days he had spent adventuring with the knight and the glory that would never return.

Why had it come to this? Was there no other way? Then, as if to purge himself of the overflowing sadness, pain, and anguish...

"Ahhh!"

As the sun set, the king's soul-piercing wail echoed throughout the battlefield.

Nearly a millennium ago, there was once a brilliant age of legend when kings, lords, and knights—renowned heroes—rivalled one another. In that glorious age of long ago, there was a knight named Sid. He served under the banner of the rightful holy king, Arthur. He was praised as the strongest knight of the legendary age, with countless military exploits and unparalleled valor. However, his true nature was cruel and inhumane. He was considered a man without a shred of chivalry, and in the epic poems and tales passed down throughout the ages, he was almost always made the villain. He was a barbaric knight and vicious scoundrel who tormented the people with his mischief, ran about the battlefield without a care for others, and killed as he wished. He was called Sir Sid "The Barbarian." However, it is said that the end of this arrogant and evil knight was brought about by his own lord, the Holy King Arthur, in the name of justice.

Then, time passed, eras changed, and the glorious old days of the legendary era came to an end. With the passage of time, the heroes disappeared, and their spectacular tales of adventure faded away. In time, they only existed in stories. And then...

Chapter 1: The Reincarnation of the Barbarian

Year 1446 of the Fairy Calendar

In the center of the Alfeed continent, there was the Kingdom of Calvania. Its capital, the royal city of Calvania, was ruled by the royal family and had been founded by the Holy King Arthur. To the northeast, in the depths of the forest of Shaltos, there stood the tombstone of a certain knight, and here in this forest, a new legend would begin.

“Yah! Yah! Yah!” somebody was yelling.

It was the night of a violent storm. Rain and tremendous gusts of wind swirled and blew wildly as lightning cut through a night sky dark as the ocean’s depths. A single horse galloped through the groaning trees that were battered by the wind and rain. Straddling the horse’s back and holding its reins was what looked to be a boy. He had clear blue eyes and short blond hair that was soft like cotton. The boy’s age was about fifteen or sixteen years old. His smooth and porcelain-white skin, somewhat small and dainty body, and delicate features were androgynous, or shall we say, feminine. However, he gave off no hint of cowardice or unreliability. The boy exuded the kind of dignified spirit and elegance one couldn’t hide and could make those who faced him kneel before him. He wore a cloak over a gorgeous surcoat, and on his waist was a rapier. His attire was the uniform for students, or squires, at the Calvania Royal Fairy Knight Academy.

“I can’t die now!” The boy laid into the horse with his whip and desperately raced through the forest. “I have to summon him!”

What he pictured in his heart, seared by the fires of urgency, was the legend of a certain knight, the knight called Sir Sid “The Barbarian.” The stories passed down about the man were those of a cruel and inhumane knight who was a disgrace to chivalry. However, ever since the boy was a child, his father told him about Sid’s true nature.

It was about a thousand years ago, in the age of legend. It is said that the greatest heroic king of the legendary age, the Holy King Arthur, pacified the chaotic warfare-ravaged continent, prevented the invasion of the demon lord, and saved the world. In the royal family of Calvania, there are unwritten instructions that their founder, the Holy King Arthur himself, entrusted to future generations...

“My children, those who have received the blessing of Éclair, the fairy god of light, heed my words. One day, a great calamity shall befall you and your land. But do not fear, for you shall have a knight to protect you. In the depths of the sacred forest of Shaltos is where he sleeps. When calamity befalls you, when you are in your time of desperation, offer onto his gravestone your blood and call his name. He is my loyal knight and my vassal. Call on the true name of my most beloved friend. He shall awaken by the ancient pact and will surely answer to you.”

The boy suddenly came back to his senses and pulled on the reins to stop his horse. It neighed and raised its forelegs, so the boy soothed it enough to dismount. There was an open spot in the midst of the dense forest. It was a small hill, and at the top was something rectangular. Right then, a flash of lightning pierced the night sky, and a thunderous roar shook the air. The world turned white for a moment. However, that bright light was blocked by the object standing atop the hill, which cast a black shadow that stretched and engulfed the boy.

“It’s really here...” He walked up the hill half in a daze. The object was a grave. Transcending time eternal, and on the brink of decay, the grave stood in isolation on top of the hill. Only the name carved onto the gravestone could be read—barely.

It was the name of the legendary knight that, for better or worse, shined brilliantly in the history of old: “Sid Blitz.”

“The royal instructions passed down from the founder, Arthur. The magic of resurrection and reincarnation...” he muttered to himself and drew the rapier that was at his hip, grasping the blade with his left hand. He pulled the sword, leaving his hand with a shallow cut from which blood flowed. Then, as he touched the tombstone with his bloodied palm, he said pleadingly, “I’m sorry. I

know I shouldn't awaken you from your peaceful slumber, but right now I must implore you." The rain washed away the blood on his hand and the surface of the tombstone. "I know I'm asking for a lot, but please lend me your strength!" The boy knelt before the tombstone and hung his head in prayer. "Please answer my call and save this dying country! I, Alvin Noll Calvania, descendant of the founder, Arthur, beseech you!" Alvin chanted the knight's name, his true second name that was lost long ago: "Sir Sid Blitz, the Lightning Knight! Awaken now from your long slumber and fulfill the ancient pact!"

As he shouted, the sound of thunder once again cut through the night as if it were heralding the end of the world. Lightning branched into multiple strands and split the sky into pieces, scorching his vision and turning the world white. Eventually, the light subsided and darkness returned.

Silence.

In front of Alvin, there was only the tombstone, unchanged. Nothing happened. No one answered Alvin's call; there was only the sound of rain. As he realized this cruel reality, Alvin released his hands that were still held in prayer and felt weak.

"H-Heh heh...of course." He laughed. "In the end, it was just a legend. There's no such thing as magic that can bring the dead back to life." Alvin rested his head on the tombstone and pounded it weakly.

At that moment, there came the sound of horse hooves approaching from behind and something heavy falling.

"What?!" Alvin instantly stood up and turned around to brace himself. It was then that he could see his poor horse had been cut down at the foot of the hill.

"Hey, Prince Alvin! Short time no see, eh?! How ya been?" A single knight clad in black armor rode atop a black horse known as a phantom steed. The knight carried a sword on his shoulder, and his wicked face was twisted in amusement. "How about we end our little game of tag? Eh, Prince?"

"A dark knight!"

"That's right. It is I, the great Jeeza of the Dark Order of Opus. No hard feelings, but I'll be the one killing you this evening!" the man, Jeeza, said as he

nimbly dismounted from his phantom steed. The Dark Order of Opus was a forbidden, heretical religion dedicated to the dark fairy god, Opus. They possessed a powerful force known as the dark knights, and it is said that they are behind every crime that occurs in the country—murder, kidnapping, slave trading, drug trafficking.

Earlier that day, Alvin had taken a small entourage on a patrol around the surrounding area of the royal capital. During the patrol, this man, the dark knight Jeeza, suddenly attacked. Alvin's entourage was no match when faced with his overwhelming ferocity and were quickly wiped out. Alvin barely escaped and ended up here.

"No more games. It's time to face the music, Prince Alvin." Jeeza spoke casually but gave off a chilling aura and murderous intent as he focused on Alvin.

"My employer wants you dead. So, I'm sorry, but I just can't let you off the hook. You should curse your misfortune for being born in this era as a boy in the royal family," he declared. The next instant, Jeeza ran up the hill—a predator chasing its prey—and closed in on Alvin. Using this momentum, he slashed up from below. With no time to flee, Alvin swiftly brought his rapier to bear and guarded low, clashing violently with Jeeza's blade. Considering the difference in their skill, it was a miracle that Alvin's defense made it in time.

"Ahh!" Alvin's body was thrown into the air by impact of their blades clashing. Alvin's dainty frame hit the ground over and over as it rolled down the slope on the opposite side of the hill.

"Hmm?" As Jeeza looked down on Alvin, he tilted his head to the side as if he had noticed something. "Hey...why did you sound like a woman just now?"

In stunned silence, Alvin quickly used the rapier like a cane to once again stand and looked up at Jeeza with defiance. Jeeza looked down and stared at Alvin's figure. Alvin's clothes and cloak stuck firmly to his rain-drenched body, partially revealing a frame that, for a guy, was a little...

For a moment of silence, Jeeza stared impolitely at Alvin's body, but he soon let out a vulgar laugh as if he had realized something. "Hey, 'Prince.' Is that what's going on?"

"Wh-What do you mean?!" Alvin said as if he didn't know what Jeeza was saying. However, the slightly nervous expression that showed for a moment on Alvin's face didn't go unnoticed by Jeeza.

"Ha ha ha! Now that's a surprise! Talk about unheard of, eh, Prince?! Well, not like it matters to me. It doesn't change the fact that I'm going to kill you, right?!"

Alvin couldn't bring himself to say anything.

"But before I do, it looks like I get to have some fun." As Jeeza looked at Alvin, his expression changed. He no longer looked like a cruel assassin. His eyes shone like a hunter who was targeting the finest of prey. Alvin felt an instinctual fear and disgust as Jeeza stared and licked his lips.

"I thought this assignment was going to be boring as hell," Jeeza said, "but it looks like I'm going to get an unexpected bonus! Ha ha ha!"

Alvin's body, which had been sturdy until now, trembled helplessly. He was too shocked to say anything. An end more painful, cruel, and humiliating than death awaited him just moments away. His assured fate and inevitable despair plunged his vision into an illusion of darkness. Still, he couldn't give up.

"I..." Alvin grabbed his rapier with a trembling hand. He desperately suppressed his fear, for that would only bring about a deeper despair and a crueler end. He had to fight. He swore an oath to protect this country, to change it. He swore to his late father, the king...

"Ahhh!" Alvin bellowed like he was admonishing himself for his weakness while also invigorating his will to live. Then he ran toward the man on top of the hill with his sword at the ready.

There was nothing. Until now, this man had nothing. No mind or body to feel, and no consciousness to think. Nothingness. Darkness. Zero. Sky. White. Emptiness. He was merely part of these concepts, forever wandering and adrift in nothingness. However, when someone suddenly called his name, a change occurred in this man of the void.

"Sid."

By being called by that familiar name, the man who was a concept of the void took on an outline. His self took shape, and the next thing he knew...

"Hmm? Where am I?" The man, Sid, was standing in a strange space. It was a silent world composed of only black and white. There was a pitch-black sky and pouring rain. Plains spread out in a wide expanse with gentle hills that rose up in the distance. The corpses of countless knights were folded on the ground, continuing to the end of the horizon. The swords, spears, and war banners that were stabbed in the earth acted as their gravestones. Occasionally, lightning would seep through cracks in the sky and illuminate these grave markers in the darkness.

"There was a battle here?" He took in the desolation of this place. It was a dead world—a stagnate place where the march of time had ceased. Sid was somehow convinced that this was his world, but on this ruined landscape, there was one thing that was different.

In this black-and-white world, a young man who still retained his color stood silent with his back to Sid. Clad in a magnificent cloak, the young man had blond hair as soft as cotton and a regal stature. Sid stared at his back in disbelief.

"So, you've awakened, Sir Sid," the young man said with his back still turned. A strange feeling welled up in Sid's chest. It was a feeling that resembled nostalgia.

"That voice. Is that you, Arthur?"

In response to Sid's question, the young man spun around and revealed his worried face.

"It's been a long time, Sid."

"It has, Arthur. I'm glad to see you." Having been separated from him for so long, Sid gave a sentimental smile. At the same time, though, he was perplexed.

"I should have died when you attacked me. Why am I in this place?" Sid asked.

But Arthur didn't answer, and with a grave expression, continued. "I'm sorry, but there's no time. I'll be brief. Sir Sid, I want you to return to the world of the living—a second life."

"Huh? What? A second life?"

"In the world of the living, a thousand years have already passed since your death. I want you to serve as a knight to my descendant living there now. I want you to protect them."

"Hmm? You want me to honor a king other than you?" Sid closed his eyes and thought for a while. He eventually opened them, looked down a little sadly, and shook his head. "No. I'm sorry, Arthur. I can't do that, not even at your request." Sid looked around at this lonely world and said, "I'm not interested in a second life. I lived my life to the fullest, and even though it ended the way it did, I was able to live chivalrously. I have no regrets."

"Sid..."

"Besides, what would you expect me to do in a world without you?" Sid said jokingly and shrugged his shoulders. "I mean, you know me, right? I'm a natural-born demon. You were the person who gave me a reason to wield a sword. I was able to be a knight because of you. Because you were there..." Sid looked straight at Arthur. "Anyway, I was just your knight. I have no intention of offering my sword to any other lord but you. I'm sorry, but please let me rest in peace," Sid said and started to close his eyes.

"Even so, I implore you, Sir Sid—I have no choice but to do so," Arthur pleaded. "If you still consider this fool to be your lord, please live once more. I want you to help my descendant who is summoning you now."

Sid said nothing.

"The truth is, I wanted to let you rest in peace too. However, I must protect them...for the sake of the world."

Still, Sid was silent.

"I'm not asking you to swear fealty. I just want you to protect them. They are the hope of this world. So..."

Sid stared at Arthur, who looked like he was on the verge of tears. "Hey, come on," Sid said, his lips twisting into a thin smile. "I don't want the person who's supposed to be my lord to have such a sorry look on their face."

“Sid?”

“Ha ha ha. Fine, I get it, my friend. How can I say no when you’re this persistent?” Sid gave a mischievous smile and quickly looked over his former lord. “If that is your wish, then I’ll do my best to fulfill it—because I am your knight.”

“Th-Thank you, Sid.”

“However, Arthur,” Sid said in a carefree manner as Arthur smiled. “I’m sorry, but I’m going to need to find out for myself whether or not this descendant of yours is a king worthy of my blade.”

At that moment, a powerful bolt of lightning cut the darkness of the night and struck the gravestone standing on the hill. With a roaring sound, it turned the gravestone to dust and scorched the earth. The world was turned incandescent, and when the light had subsided, there was a figure crackling with electricity. He seemed to be around twenty years old. He had black hair and black eyes. His body was thin but sturdy, and he wore simple old-fashioned knightly garb.

“All right, so who am I pledging my sword to this lifetime?” the man, Sid, said firmly. Then, with a flick of his cloak, he stood up.

“Huh?!” Alvin was shocked by the man apparently summoned by lightning on top of the hill. Presently, Alvin’s entire body was battered, and Jeeza was holding him up in the air by his collar. However, all of that instantly vanished from his mind.

Jeeza was licking his lips as he finally planned to—“Wh-What?” His attention was completely stolen by the man who suddenly appeared.

The man in question was on top of the hill quietly opening and squeezing his hand like he was making sure of something. Though, he soon looked at his surroundings and noticed Alvin and Jeeza.

“Who the hell are you?! Wh-Where the hell did you come from?!” Jeeza howled, but the man ignored him and locked eyes with Alvin. Then, he squinted as if he realized something and vanished.

“Huh?” Alvin’s body was suddenly yanked away from Jeeza’s grip. For an

instant, his body was weightless, and everything around him was a blur. By the time Alvin realized what was going on...

"Are you all right?" the man asked as he carried Alvin.

"Um..."

"Wh-What was that?! H-How did you move so fast?!" Jeeza yelled, as he was now a dozen or so meters away from them.

The man didn't have an ounce of hesitation and was completely on guard as he held Alvin and glared at Jeeza. Also—

"M-My hand?!" Suddenly, Alvin felt a scorching-hot sensation on the back of his right hand. He looked, and there was a crest in the shape of a sword that felt like fire.

"You're the one who summoned me, right?" the man said as he showed Alvin the back of his own right hand, upon which the same sword crest had emerged. Alvin felt himself connected to the man through this crest—it was something like a spiritual channel.

"Wh-Who are you?!" Alvin hastily asked, still being held by the man.

"When you ask someone else's name, you should say your own first. Isn't that right, boy?"

"Y-Yes! I'm sorry!" Alvin said and shrank in fear as he introduced himself. "I'm Alvin Noll Calvania, descendant of Arthur, the founder of my lineage."

"Alvin, huh? I see... It's a good name." Sid grinned and said, "My name is Sid, Sid Blitze. The first knight of the great holy king, Arthur."

"Y-You're Sid? You're really the legendary Sir Sid?"

Sid smiled gently at Alvin's inquiry. "Yes, I am. I answered your summons and came here. That man is your enemy, right?" Sid asked and looked over at the speechless Jeeza, who was standing a dozen or so meters away.

"Y-Yes! He's my enemy."

"Then stand back. I'll take care of this quickly," Sid said and set Alvin down, but his injuries were so severe that he couldn't stand and slumped to the

ground. Sid then stepped forward as if to hide Alvin behind him. "I'll protect you."

"Th-Thank you, but please be careful! The enemy is a dark knight," Alvin shouted nervously.

Sid spoke firmly and said, "Hmph, relax. I'm pretty strong myself." Then, with his back to Alvin, he faced Jeeza head-on.

Jeeza clicked his tongue in disgust and became obviously wary. His prior carefree attitude was nowhere to be seen, and he now had the eyes of a warrior and ruthless killer. However, Sid didn't waver or flinch under his gaze.

"Just where the hell did you crawl out of?" Jeeza said.

Sid answered with only silence.

"Still, that's some pretty big talk. Sid? That's the name of that knight from the legendary era a thousand years ago, isn't it?"

Sid didn't speak.

"It's said he was the ultimate knight—even better than the three great knights. His twin blades were unmatched. You've got to be pretty cocky if you're calling yourself the cruel and inhumane Sid the Barbarian, huh?!"

"Ha ha ha!" Sid laughed at Jeeza's words. "Cruel and inhumane? Is that what I'm being called these days? That is rich! It's an honor for a knight to leave his mark on history, but being infamous isn't so bad either!"

"Ha! Yeah, you just keep talking!" Jeeza said, and then shouted in the fairy tongue, "Yates Slaatz!" which meant "feed and tear." Irritated by Sid's aloof attitude, Jeeza made his move toward him. While shouting in the ancient fairy language, he flourished his sword and made a sharp left diagonal slash at Sid from overhead. Sid reacted effortlessly and moved to dodge the attack. Even though the slash completely missed him, a diagonal wound was carved into Sid's chest.

"Sir Sid?!" Alvin cried in distress.

"Ha ha! That's what you get!" Jeeza sneered and then his onslaught continued. "Ha ha ha! Here I go!" Jeeza attacked Sid ruthlessly like a storm,

slashing upward, cleaving to the side, and arcing the blade around. The tip of his sword was like a flash of lighting as it slashed, but Sid narrowly avoided his attacks with precision. However, Sid's body was sliced again and again, and blood spilled from his wounds.

"Hey, what's the matter?! Ha ha ha!" Jeeza's sword howled like a whirlwind as it flashed a dozen or so times. When there was a break, Sid jumped back, landing right beside Alvin and putting some distance between him and Jeeza.

"S-Sir Sid!" Anxious, Alvin saw that Sid had been slashed all over and reduced to a wretched state.

"Ha! You're so weak. You're calling yourself the legendary Sid when that's all you got?" Jeeza boasted triumphantly.

Unfazed by Jeeza's mocking, Sid said, "I see. Your sword...is a fairy sword?"

"Good guess," Jeeza said, with a huge grin. He showed him the ominous curved blade of his sword. A pitch-black darkness oozed from the blade like droplets of water and trickled down. "This is the dark fairy sword 'Violence' and its dark fairy magic is called 'shadow blade.' It creates blades from shadows that I can fire at high speed, which is how I was able to cut you from outside of striking distance. In fact, if I felt like it..." Jeeza casually swung his sword, and with a loud slash, a gash was carved into the ground next to Sid and ran in a straight line far into the distance behind him. "I could just slice off your head from this distance."

Hearing Jeeza's words sent Alvin into shock. *In the dead of night, like this, those shadow blades are practically invisible. His fairy magic is truly fearsome!* Alvin thought.

Knights all use special weapons known as fairy swords, which are swords created from the fairies that dwell in all things in the world. They amplify the wielder's physical and regenerative abilities and have the power to manipulate the "concepts" that each fairy controls. That power is known as fairy magic, and through the use of their fairy swords, knights are able to use this magic. It's one of the main reasons why a fairy knight's fighting ability is a cut above an ordinary warrior's.

Judging by the power of his fairy magic, that man's sword rank must be

considerably high, Alvin thought as he stared at Jeeza's blade. Only a fairy sword can compete with another fairy sword. But Sir Sid is the most powerful knight of the legendary era. Surely, his fairy sword's rank must be impressive. As long as he has that, he can compete with Jeeza.

"Sir Sid, your fairy sword you once wielded in the past!" Alvin shouted as he stared at Sid's back. "A knight and their fairy sword are one and the same! If you call out its name, it will transcend space and appear before you! Now, quickly, please summon your sword! If you do, then—"

"Fairy sword? I don't need that," Sid replied casually.

"What?" Alvin was speechless as Sid calmly removed and threw away his now mangled cloak. Sid then grabbed the spare dagger that was hanging from Alvin's hip and spun it around in one hand.

"I'll be good with this for now."

"What?!" Alvin shouted upon seeing this strange behavior. He pleaded with Sid. "W-Wait! You do know that's a regular dagger with no powers at all, right?!"

"I do. That's why I want it."

"Th-This is no time for jokes! Hurry and summon your fairy sword! You'll be killed if you don't!" However, it seemed as if Sid was serious about fighting with the small dagger. So without summoning his fairy sword, he loosely held the blade in his hand and stared at Jeeza with composure.

"Y-You can't be serious!" Understandably, Alvin's mouth hung open in shock.

"Ha ha ha!" Jeeza's laughter echoed loudly throughout the battlefield. "What is this?! Are you telling me some idiot who's using a dagger against a fairy sword is calling himself the legendary Sid?! Ha ha ha!"

Sid chose to silently accept Jeeza's mockery. All the while, an intense regret overwhelmed Alvin.

I was too naive and got carried away! I thought that if I could just summon the legendary Sir Sid that things would somehow work out! I wanted to believe that's what would happen!

Sir Sid, the most powerful knight of the legendary age. However, in truth, he was just a third-rate knight lacking too much common sense to battle another knight.

I can't believe this. He's going up against a fairy sword with just a dagger! What kind of crazy person is Sir Sid? In the end, was his legend nothing more than a lie?! Alvin's fascination with the legend of Sir Sid, passed down in the royal family, had led him to make the wrong decision. He shouldn't have relied on someone from the past for help. He should have let him sleep peacefully. As Alvin's regrets consumed him, a hand pressed tenderly on his head and gently ruffled his hair.

"Sir Sid?" When he looked up, Sid had a fearless smile on his face and was patting Alvin's head.

"A knight speaks only the truth.' I said I'd protect you, didn't I?"

"Huh?"

Sid gave the astonished Alvin a backward glance and once again proceeded forward. It was strange. Even though Sid was trying to recklessly use a simple dagger against a knight wielding a fairy sword, Alvin still felt like he could truly rely on this person.

"But I'm sorry. It looks like I made you uneasy with all of this," said Sid.

"What?"

"Well, it seems like my current body is far from perfect, you see. I wonder if it's an effect of my resurrection. Both my physical strength and the mana that flows through my body are weak. That's why my actual movements don't quite match up with the image I have of them in my mind."

Then, as Alvin blinked his eyes, Sid declared, "But there's no problem. I'm already used to it."

"Used to it? What are you saying?!"

Sid left Alvin's question unanswered as he faced Jeeza with the dagger at the ready. As he did, Jeeza was already annoyed at Sid's mysterious composure.

"A small fry thinking he's some knight in shining armor—it's not funny

anymore," Jeeza spat out, and the next moment his presence and the pressure it exuded became even greater. His fearsome killing intent seeped from his whole body and was thrown directly at Sid and Alvin.

This must be a joke! You're telling me this man wasn't even being serious until now?! Realizing this horrible fact, Alvin's face turned pale and he shivered.

"I'll show you what hell is!" In an instant, Jeeza swung his sword and let loose a shadow blade. In the darkness surrounding them, it was barely visible, but it flew at great speed toward Sid. The next moment, Alvin saw Sid's head fly through the air and roll on the ground...

But he was only imagining that terrible future. The scene that actually played out before his eyes was much more unexpected.

"Ahhh!" What was actually thrown into the air and rolling around on the ground in a sad state was Jeeza.

"Huh?" Alvin said, befuddled. Before he realized it, Sid had closed in on Jeeza, followed through on a strike with his dagger, and was now rigidly on guard. His majestic appearance was as beautiful as a scene from a solemn painting of a knight.

"Gaah! B-Bastard! What did you just do?!" Jeeza said as he shakily stood up, coughing blood.

"I just smacked you with the flat part of my dagger," Sid said as if he were surprised he was even being asked.

"That's ridiculous! When did you even get close to me?! My sword attacked from completely outside of your range!"

"I mean, I could dodge something that obvious with my eyes closed."

"What?"

"You're some kind of squire who's still just starting out with a sword, right? You seem to be full of yourself because you got your hands on a fairy sword, but a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing, you know? You should give up quickly before you get yourself killed." Sid's words were simply a warning without a hint of provocation or insult. However...

"Y-You bastard! Who are you calling a squire?!" It looked like those words were enough to deeply wound Jeeza's self-esteem. "Die, you bastard!" He kicked the earth and charged at Sid. He swung his sword down with a fierce overhead strike to split Sid's head open, but Sid swiftly found an opening and deflected Jeeza's sword with his dagger. He then struck Jeeza sharply in the face with the flat part of the weapon.

"Ahhh?!" There was a thud, and the incredibly heavy impact threw Jeeza backward, screaming. It was unbelievably powerful. Just how could a dagger that small and that light produce such force?

"Okay, now here I go." This time it was Sid making the first move. What happened next was like a replay of the scene from earlier—a one-sided beating that couldn't even be called a fight. However, this time, the roles were reversed. Sid swung his dagger while moving at high speed around Jeeza, leaving afterimages of himself. He completely dodged Jeeza's defense and struck sharply and powerfully all over his body. His head, right arm, left leg, torso, right shoulder, left arm, right shin, back, waist. Sid's strikes landed over and over again like he was fighting a wooden training dummy. Every time a strike landed, Jeeza's body flew awkwardly to and fro, almost comically.

"Gaah! That hurts! Ahh!" Jeeza desperately tried to defend by shooting off shadow blades, but he didn't land even a scratch on Sid, who was moving like a whirlwind. He was barely even able to slash Sid's afterimages.

"No way. How?" Alvin muttered, dumbfounded in front of such a scene. "You should only be able to counter the power of a fairy sword with a fairy sword!" No, that wasn't true. Their caliber was fundamentally different from one another. It was simply that the tremendous difference in their abilities couldn't be overcome by just having a fairy sword.

"I-It's amazing..." Alvin gazed at the scene. His heart trembled with admiration at Sid's swordsmanship and fighting skills. "So this is a knight who lived the age of legend?!"

The story of Sir Sid that Alvin heard from his late father, the king, and admired since he was a child—it was all real. Watching him now gave his heart the exact same thrill as when he first heard the story. He was enthralled by the fight and

wanted to see more of the legend. Eventually, though, much sooner than later, the battle raced to its conclusion.

“Ha!”

“Ahh!” Jeeza was blown away by Sid’s right-upward slash and rolled away on the ground.

“Just give up. Knights don’t kill for no reason.” Sid declared casually to the exhausted Jeeza.

“This strength! I can’t believe it!” Jeeza said, coughing and tottering as he used his sword like a cane to bring himself to his feet. “Dammit. I had heard rumors about a knight who rested in the forest of Shaltos. Are you telling me that you’re really Sir Sid the Barbarian and that you actually rose from the dead?! Just what the hell kind of magic did you use?!”

“Who knows? I’m curious about that myself.” Sid’s laid-back presence alone was enough to overwhelm Jeeza. Completely outmatched, all he could do was feebly withdraw.

“Ha ha ha. You got me. If you’re the infamous barbarian, there’s no way I could beat you no matter how hard I try.” Jeeza smiled wickedly as he dripped with a cold sweat. “But you should have finished the job!” Suddenly, Jeeza swung his sword again, casting another shadow blade, but as it cut through the rain, it didn’t fly toward Sid.

It was aimed at Alvin. He couldn’t even react as it came at breakneck speed, invisible. Just then, there was a splash of blood. “S-Sir Sid?!” Sid had moved like the wind to reach Alvin and protect him by taking a shadow blade to his back.

“Hee hee hee! Oh, how tables have turned!” Jeeza howled.

“You...” Sid turned around, and Jeeza didn’t miss the anger on his face.

“Hee hee. Nice reaction. The cruel and inhumane Sid the Barbarian is a lot more of a softie than he was in the legend, so I figured that would work!”

Sid stood, silent.

“I’ll only aim at the prince. If you try to defeat me and move even a little bit away from his side, I may die, but at the same time, the prince’s head will go

flying! So can you do it? Can you abandon the prince and take me down? You can't! After all, you're such a splendid knight, aren't you?! Ha ha ha!"

Then, almost as if to prove Jeeza's point, Sid continued to protect Alvin, unmoved.

"Now...just how many strokes from my sword will you last against, mister legendary barbarian?" With a sickening smile, Jeeza slowly raised his sword.

Oh no! I'm holding Sir Sid back! Due to his injuries, Alvin was still unable to move or stand. This meant that Sid couldn't move from in front of him either. Alvin couldn't help but be horrified as he was thrown from hope into the depths of despair. *Sir Sid?!* He looked up at Sid with desperation, but Sid just continued to stand there protecting him and staring at Jeeza. Alvin thought to himself and decided that even if he was a legendary knight, Sid couldn't attack and protect at the same time. So with determination and resolve, he shouted, "Sir Sid, don't worry about me. Just defeat him!"

Sid narrowed his eyes at Alvin's words.

"He's going to kill me anyway! So—"

"Shut up, kid! Don't talk nonsense!" Meanwhile, Jeeza made an X with two strokes of his sword, and then that same shape was carved into Sid's body as he stood firmly in front of Alvin.

"S-Sir Sid!"

"Ha ha ha! This is too good. He's actually just standing there! Now here's an example of a splendid knight!" Jeeza gave a triumphant laugh that echoed around them.

"S-Sir Sid, please. I'm begging you, please don't worry about me!" Alvin said and directed a pleading gaze at Sid. However...

"Jeez, I already told you again and again, didn't I? A knight speaks only the truth," Sid said in a small voice.

"What?"

"I told you I'll protect you." In front of a stunned Alvin, Sid threw his dagger to his feet where it stuck in the ground. Then he raised his now empty right hand

to the heavens. Alvin didn't understand the reason for why he felt it, but in the midst of this raging downpour and storm, Alvin certainly sensed something quietly and powerfully rising around Sid.

"I'll tell you something, scum," Sid said and glared at Jeeza with angry eyes.

"H-Hey! D-Don't try anything funny!" Jeeza barked and was about to send out another shadow blade to end it all. That's when it happened.

"And their anger destroys evil," Sid declared and swung his right hand down. At that moment, something unforeseeable happened. There was a deafening roar and a single flash of light. The lightning that came flying from the heavens far away split the atmosphere and made a direct hit on Jeeza's fairy sword. The power and impact of the lighting shattered it into pieces.

"Ahhh!"



A massive bolt of lightning tore through Jeeza's entire body, causing him to fall in agony. "A-Are you...some kind of monster?!" he said in the end, his eyes full of disbelief. Charred black, Jeeza collapsed in a wretched heap to the ground and completely expired.

"Just now...was that fairy magic? B-But I've never heard of any fairy magic that controls lighting. Also, you didn't wield your fairy sword in the first place, Sir Sid..."

The only people who can use magic without the aid of fairy swords or magical tools are the mysterious half-human, half-fairy female race known as the Nimue.

"Could it have been a coincidental lighting strike?" Unsure of what had happened, Alvin stood in amazement. Meanwhile, Sid stared at his right hand and didn't even notice Alvin. He opened and squeezed his hand, making sure of something. His expression was hard to read—squinting slightly.

"U-Um, what's wrong?" Alvin asked. For a moment, Sid remained silent.

"No, there's no problem," Sid muttered to himself and then turned once again to look at Alvin. "I'm more worried about you than myself. Are you okay?"

"Oh, yes. I'm fine. If I can just get some rest..." Alvin noticed that the rainstorm had subsided and so had the lightning, but the remaining wind was still blowing around the area. Then, Sid came over and kneeled down on one leg in front of Alvin, who was sitting down on the ground.

"Now, boy, you said that your name was Alvin, yes?" Sid asked calmly and then peered at Alvin's face.

"Um, yes...that's right." For some reason, Alvin felt his cheeks becoming warm.

"I see. It's a little faint, but you do look alike."

"L-Look alike?" Alvin said, blinking.

"Yes, you look just like him—Arthur." Sid put his hand on his chest, looked straight at Alvin, and swore proudly. "I shall once again tell you my name. I am Sid Blitze, and by the order of my eternal lord and best friend, Arthur, I have

come back to this world and to your side. From this moment on, I will protect you. Any tribulations, hardships, or suffering that may befall you, I will dispel with my sword,” Sid said and looked deeply into Alvin’s eyes.

Shocked, Alvin’s pulse felt like an alarm bell, and his cheeks became even hotter than before.

“Show me your kingship, and let me see if you are a king worthy of pledging my sword to as a knight.” As Sid continued to speak, his words simply didn’t register in Alvin’s mind. Inside of Alvin’s head was a kind of fluffy euphoric feeling that made it difficult to have a proper thought. Alvin couldn’t take his eyes off of Sid, and it felt like his heart had been snatched away. It was almost as if Alvin’s very soul was being sucked into Sid’s eyes.

What?! Wh-What am I thinking this kind of girly stuff for? After thinking about it, Alvin realized that the answer was obvious. After all, in truth, he was...

“S-Sir Sid, I’m...” Alvin’s heart beat fast, his thoughts were feverish, and he had a feeling that something was about to happen. With a strange yet exciting feeling, Alvin continued to stare at Sid.

And so, this was the meeting of the knight from the legendary era who transcended time eternal and the young prospective king. Thus, a curtain rose on a new legend.

Chapter 2: Sid the Instructor

On the northern tip of the Alfeed continent, there was a vast land of permafrost surrounded by steep, towering mountains. It was entrapped by hellish freezing air, snow, and ice all year round due to its geography and spirit veins. In the era of legend, this land—known as the demon kingdom of Dachnesia—was ruled by a single human who was called the demon king. The capital of the former demon country is now an abandoned city where no living thing exists and only frozen, decaying ruins spread endlessly.

In the throne room of Dachnesia Castle, which stood in the center of the city, towering like a horrific giant, there was a somber figure who sat on a cold stone throne in the darkness. It was a girl with long silver hair, clad in a gothic dress. She was about fifteen or sixteen years old. Her devilish beauty would send shivers down a person's spine if they looked at her closely, and her aura of intimidation sucked all the life out of the air just by her standing there. This uncanny presence didn't belong to a person—or perhaps even to a living being. As someone who had given up their humanity for extraordinary power, the word demon fit her perfectly. She was an abnormality, and human in shape only. She wore a crown, and her somber regality certainly gave her the presence of a "king."

"Unbelievable! How could he fail?!" the girl wearing the crown shouted. Her expression was twisted in frustration as she pounded the railings of the throne. "The sheer incompetence! The Dark Order of Opus is more useless than I thought!"

"Oh my, such harsh words when you were the one who mobilized a dark knight of the Order all by yourself." A single shadowy figure emerged from the darkness near the throne, and her bewitching figure was obvious even through her robes. It was difficult to determine her age since over half of her face was hidden by her hood.

"So what?! The Dark Order of Opus are my loyal servants, aren't they?!"

"Yes, of course we are, my adorable master," said the witch.

"Then I can use you all how I want!" the girl wearing the crown shouted hysterically at the witch, who only chuckled. "It was the perfect chance to kill Alvin too! I won't stop until I make his life a living hell!" The girl wearing the crown shook as she bit her nails. It was a mystery what kind of fate could have caused her to be so consumed by such a dark and heavy hatred.

"Master, I understand your hatred for Prince Alvin very well. However, now is an important time for us and our plans for the royal capital. So please refrain from getting swept up by your impulses and acting so rashly in the future," the witch said to the girl as if to calm her down.

"B-But!"

"Don't worry. There will be plenty of opportunities to kill him after the plan is completed. Also, wouldn't you prefer to do it yourself rather than have someone else do it for you, my master?"

The witch's admonishment caused the crowned girl to go silent with a bitter look on her face. Before long, the girl said, "Hmph. It's as you say." Surprisingly, the girl turned her head and backed down easily. "You're right. I'm sorry. I was being a bit rash."

"You are very wise indeed, my master." The witch smiled suspiciously at the submissive girl. "However, there is something that concerns me."

"What is it?"

"The knight who saved Prince Alvin..." The witch traced her lips with her fingers as she thought about it. "Even though the knight you sent to kill the prince was the least powerful of the dark knights, he should have been more than the present era's weakened knights could handle, so I'm curious about the one who defeated him."

"That's true. That forest is a sacred ground for the royal family, isn't it? There shouldn't have been anyone there in the first place, so a knight just showing up to save the prince is too convenient. Do you know who the knight is?" the girl asked, and the witch once again smiled faintly and answered.

"I can think of one person..."

"Hmm? Who?"

"There is an old legend that has been passed down in the Calvania royal family."

"Legend? What kind of legend?"

"Deep in the forest of Shaltos, there is the tombstone of a certain knight. Should a descendant of the royal family's founder, Arthur, offer their blood onto the tombstone, the knight shall once again awaken from his slumber...or so the legend goes."

"Reincarnation magic? You're saying he revived a dead knight from the past? And? What's the name of the knight in that grave?" the girl wearing the crown asked—surprisingly, with stars in her eyes—and the witch answered her question solemnly.

"Sid. Sid Blitze. The famous Sir Sid the Barbarian."

At that moment, the girl went into a panic. "What?! Sir Sid the Barbarian?!" she said, standing up abruptly and giving the witch a fierce look. "That's impossible! There's no such thing as magic that can bring the dead back to life in the first—"

"We can't say that for sure," the witch replied calmly just as the girl was getting excited. "The founder of the royal family, Arthur, is one who has received the blessing of Éclair, the fairy god of light. During the legendary era, Arthur may have secretly received some kind of special magic from this god."

The girl wearing the crown gulped upon hearing the witch's suggestion.

"The truth is still unclear." The witch paused. "But if that knight is indeed the legendary Sir Sid and he's joined Prince Alvin, then he could be a considerable threat to us."

"Wh-Why does Alvin get all the good stuff?!" The girl wearing the crown bit her nails, her face full of rage. It seemed like the hatred that poured out of her was so venomous it could kill. "Hmph! Even if he is the real thing, a knight from ancient times is no match for us!"

"It's fine to get upset, but finding out the truth is our top priority," the witch

said, calming the girl as she became more enraged. “First, let’s find out whether or not that man is actually Sir Sid and if he is a threat to us. I’ll look into this knight while I’m preparing for the ongoing plan.”

“I’m counting on you.”

“Yes. Everything is for your sake, my master, and I will spare no effort,” the witch said and smiled. For a second, the witch’s eyes, which had been concealed by her robe, became visible. Those eyes held a dark, swirling emptiness, the bottom of which could not be seen.

It was daybreak after Alvin and Sid’s hapless meeting. They relied on the morning sunlight filtering through the trees, and Alvin led Sid as they walked. During their journey, they discussed much.

“I’m truly very sorry for forcing you to awaken,” Alvin said as he stared downward. “There is a secret magic that has been passed down in the royal family from my ancestor, the Holy King Arthur. It says to turn to you should misfortune ever befall the royal family.” Alvin looked back and forth at the sword crests on both of their hands. His was full of a strange mana and gave off a slight glow.

“I see. So that magic is what shook me awake from my thousand-year deathly slumber,” Sid said jokingly as he walked next to Alvin. “Still, to think that there’s magic that can revive the dead. I can’t believe it.”

“I think there is probably some kind of ancient magical contract that was made between you and Lord Arthur before you died. Do you have any memory of it?”

“Nope, none at all. My memories of the past are a little fuzzy.”

“I see.”

With a sidelong glance, Sid could see that Alvin was a little listless, so he changed the subject. “So, what was the deal with that guy who attacked you?”

“He was a dark knight from the Dark Order of Opus. They are an order of knights and a forbidden, heretical religion dedicated to Opus, the fairy god of darkness. They’re from the northern demon kingdom of Dachnesia that was

once ruled by the demon king.”

“Jeez, they’re still going at it even though we crushed them in the past, huh?” Sid said, annoyed and shrugging his shoulders.

“In recent years, their order has suddenly resumed activities. It seems that they’ve been hiding underground this entire time,” Alvin said with a pained expression.

“They’re like cockroaches.”

“The order has restored the demon kingdom of Dachnesia, once again established a demon king in the north, and is trying to take control of the world.”

Sid was silent.

“They are enemies of this world, and their revival is a matter of national importance. Now is the time for the nation to come together and fight them but...unfortunately, our kingdom isn’t aligned.”

“What do you mean?”

“The three major dukes, namely the ducal families of Durande, Ortol, and Anthalo are the worst kind of people, preying on this country with their greed and ambition,” Alvin said with a quiet anger. “The Kingdom of Calvania has been supported by the royal family and the three dukes. However, now that the previous king has passed away, the royal family is weakened, and no one sits on the throne of Calvania. The current heads of the three ducal families are now trying to control the country by themselves and are keeping each other in check. Right now, the Ladies of the Lake are acting as representatives of the king based on the ancient pact they have with the royal family. However, their authority is limited, and they can’t completely keep the power of the dukes under control. I’m the only member of the royal family now. If I take over the throne, I can suppress and consolidate the power of the dukes to protect this nation, but for generations the king of this country has traditionally been a knight. According to the law, in order to be crowned king, one must first be knighted. In two years, I’ll graduate from the Calvania Royal Fairy Knight Academy and officially receive my knighthood. My very existence is an obstacle for them, so in the meantime, the dukes will most likely try to prevent my

knighthood at any cost. Sir Sid, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“Yes, I know. Don’t worry. I’ll protect you from all kinds of trouble,” Sid said as soon as Alvin looked at him.

“I-Is it really all right, Sir Sid?” Alvin blinked in surprise as he looked up at the side of Sid’s face. “I mean, even though I didn’t have any other choice, I selfishly brought you back to life.”

“A knight speaks only the truth.’ I’m sure it’s what Arthur wants.”

“Oh, thank you! I’m so happy to have a knight like you!” Alvin suddenly had a huge, joyous smile on his face.

“However, I’m sorry, but I’m protecting you because I’m Arthur’s knight,” Sid said with a bold smile, killing the mood and shocking Alvin. “It’s not like I swore loyalty to you or became your knight. I’m doing this because my lord, Arthur, asked me to. You understand?”

Alvin went quiet.

“The only person I’ve ever wanted to offer my sword to is Arthur. In other words, I don’t acknowledge you. Also, I don’t plan on spoiling you because you’re a descendant of Arthur either, okay?”

These harsh words made Alvin feel depressed. “Y-You’re right. You’re Lord Arthur’s knight, Sir Sid. Just having you protect me is extraordinary enough,” Alvin said and sounded somewhat sad, looking at the ground and slumping his shoulders in disappointment.

Sid chuckled as he gave Alvin a sideways glance.

“S-Sir Sid?”

“Hey, come on, Alvin. What’s wrong? You’re going to become the king, aren’t you? This is a good opportunity to call me an insolent fool and take a slash at me. I mean, the king was just told off by some random knight, you know?” He laughed.

“Ah...” Alvin was suddenly at a loss for words, but Sid placed his hand on Alvin’s head and ruffled his hair.

“So, I’m guessing you didn’t want me as just a bodyguard but as a knight,

huh?"

"W-Well, I..." Alvin gulped and nodded sadly.

"You're quite the strange one. Would you usually want a knight you just met to swear loyalty to you? Though, if that's what you want, then show me the path you take as king," Sid said and gave Alvin a gentle smile. "If the time comes when I truly wish to dedicate my sword to the path you, the king, are taking, I'll be your knight. That is, if you're okay with your knight being the Barbarian."

Suddenly, Alvin's face lit up. "Y-Yes! I'll do my best! I would love to have you!"

"Come on. A king shouldn't bow his head so easily. Your crown is going to slip off, you know?"

"Oh?! Y-Yes! I-I'm sorry!"

"Ha ha ha. It looks like you got your work cut out for you—an apprentice candidate to be my future lord."

"I-It's going to be that hard to prove myself?!" Alvin said with tears in his eyes.

As they talked like this, the two of them proceeded through the forest. Eventually, the forest came to an end, and they arrived at a cliff where their field of vision suddenly opened up.

"Oh, Sir Sid, I can see it. That's Calvania Castle," Alvin said and pointed to the horizon. Some distance from the cliffs, there was a huge castle built between a series of mountains and a vast town spread out around it. It all shined in the dazzling light of the dawn. Calvania Castle was made up of several towers, buildings, and walls. Its imposing majesty was beautiful.

"So this is Calvania Castle, huh?" Sid mumbled as he gazed at the castle and town in the distance.

"I heard that the castle has been around since your age, Sir Sid. Are you feeling nostalgic?"

"My memories of the past are so vague. I'm not sure. It's just..." Sid narrowed his eyes as if he was thinking about something far away and important. "I had a king I served, allies I stood shoulder to shoulder with, people I protected...and I

guess they were all in that castle. That's all in the distant past now, though." Sid's face became somewhat sullen as he talked. Sid's lord and his friends were no longer alive. Now he was all alone. Alvin stood close to him, somehow knowing what he was thinking.

"Is it lonely?"

"I'm not sure."

"I'm sorry."

"Heh, you have nothing to apologize for," Sid said and ruffled Alvin's hair.

"In that case, at least let me thank you. For now, I'm just infinitely grateful that someone from the good old days of legend, from a world of spectacular stories woven by strong and noble knights, is by my side." For a little while, Alvin and Sid continued to gaze at Calvania Castle. Alvin then turned to face Sid again and said, "Sir Sid?"

"What is it?"

"The truth is...I have one more request for you, Sir Sid." Alvin started to say something when just then—

"Alvin!" The sound of many horses' hooves was coming closer and closer from their right side. A platoon of about a dozen soldiers on horseback were flying the Kingdom of Calvania flag and were coming toward Alvin along the cliff road. Being cautious, Sid moved quickly to protect Alvin by keeping him behind his back. However, as soon as Alvin saw the girl on horseback at the head of the platoon, his expression brightened.

"Tenko! Oh, you're here!" he shouted. The girl at the front of the group hurried to his side, jumped off her horse, and gave Alvin a flying embrace.

"Alvin!" she said, sobbing. "I'm so glad you're okay! I'm sorry! I'm so sorry I'm late! I'm so sorry I couldn't do anything for you when you needed me the most!"

Tenko was a girl whose white hair, which looked like the finest silk thread, was tied up at the nape of her neck, and her golden eyes were slightly slanted. She was around the same age as Alvin—fifteen or sixteen years old. She was a

demi-human, a Cerian, and was probably from the group known as the noble-tailed people. Tenko had long ears and a tail reminiscent of a fox. Despite her wild appearance, in the place of savagery, there was a cold beauty and nobility that seemed to shut out others and gave her an air of royalty. She wore the same uniform as Alvin and was a squire just like him.

"I'm all right. I'm sorry I made you worry." Tenko was in tears, and they hugged each other.

"Prince! You're safe!"

"Now, let's return to the castle!" The soldiers surrounding them also expressed their joy one after another. They were all happy that Alvin was safe, but their attention eventually turned to the stranger at his side. Sid looked calm and composed, radiating mystery.

"Relax, everyone. He saved my life. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be alive," Alvin quickly explained as everyone looked suspiciously at Sid. "I would like to invite him to my castle as a guest, so everyone please be polite."

"If you say so, then it shall be as you wish, our Prince," a soldier said, and without any particular arguments against Sid coming, brought spare horses for both of them. It seemed only Tenko remained suspicious of Sid, and she peeked over at him and whispered to Alvin.

"Um...Alvin? Just who is this person?"

"Ha ha. I'll explain more later but that man is..." Alvin gave a slightly mischievous laugh as he answered Tenko.

After being escorted by Tenko and the kingdom's soldiers, Alvin and the others arrived at the capital of the Kingdom of Calvania, the royal city of Calvania. In the castle town that spread beyond the gates of the city walls, stone houses and buildings with sharp-angled roofs stood side by side, and open squares were scattered here and there. There were temples, universities, assembly halls, trading companies, markets, plazas, taverns, and bathhouses all over the city. The main street leading to the castle was lined with various shops, stalls, and food stands and bustled with people coming and going. Alvin's group proceeded down this road toward the center of the royal capital where Calvania

Castle stood towering like a mountain.

Calvania Castle was composed of countless towers, annexes, and walls arranged around the huge main castle building in the center, and its structure was divided into four broad layers. The upper level functioned as the center for national politics and contained the royal quarter, imperial court, and audience hall. The middle level contained the temple of the Ladies of the Lake, courtrooms, military facilities, the hanging gardens, and the residences of the knights and ministers in charge of state affairs. The Royal Fairy Knight Academy of Calvania—where future knights were trained—and its training grounds, dormitories, courtyards, gardens, moats, waterways, stables, and other facilities were located on the lower levels. The basement level contained a warehouse, archives, a jail, an execution site, an arena, and other facilities.

It is said that when the Kingdom of Calvania was founded, the Ladies of the Lake and the artisans of the Titan race joined together to build this castle, and through ancient magic, its insides were transformed into another world whose area was much larger than what it appeared to be. It was as if the castle itself was one huge city. After crossing the drawbridge over the moat, Alvin immediately invited Sid to the temple of the Ladies of the Lake.

“No matter what you say, Alvin, I’m absolutely against it!” Tenko’s shrill voice echoed through the space. Alvin and the others were at the temple’s ritual site, which was made up of several stone pillars and arches with an altar at the back.

“Now, now. Calm down, Tenko,” Alvin said.

“No, I will not calm down! You don’t know what you’re talking about.” Even though Alvin tried to pacify her, Tenko stubbornly refused to calm down. “I mean, he’s Sir Sid ‘The Barbarian,’ isn’t he?!” Tenko said, aggressively pointing her finger at Sid, who looked like he was having fun watching her.

“He’s cruel and inhumane! He’s a fiend who, in the end, was punished by the Holy King Arthur! I don’t care how strong he is. I am against having such an evil person by your side! What’s more, I can’t believe you want to make him an instructor knight for our class at the Royal Fairy Knight Academy of Calvania!”

Alvin had explained the details and circumstances surrounding Sid and

expressed a desire to make him their instructor knight. However, since he said that, Tenko had been completely opposed to it.

"Wh-What are you saying, Tenko?!" Alvin said, raising his voice. "I told you many times! The real Sir Sid isn't like that! The real Sir Sid is—"

"That nonsense again?! It's obviously a bald-faced lie!"

"I-I told you that's..." Alvin gave Sid an imploring look. "Sir Sid, please say something! You weren't that kind of person, right?!"

"Was I a villain, or wasn't I?" Sid chuckled and folded his arms. "Hmm. I wonder what I was really like. I don't really remember, after all. What do you think, Alvin?"

"S-Sir Sid?!" Sid dodged the question for some reason, and just as Alvin was about to ask more, there came a voice.

"Come now, what are you two doing? You're making Sir Sid uncomfortable." A woman appeared, so beautiful she was almost like an illusion or a dream. She looked to be about eighteen or nineteen years old. She had long, shining blue hair and clear marine-blue eyes. She had pointed ears, and her skin was as white and translucent as fresh snow. It was as if a divine sculptor spent their entire life finely carving the shape of her countenance. Her bewitching body was the gold standard for the womanly form, lacking for nothing and possessing no excess. She wore an ultra-thin dress and an angel's raiment that was like feathers and barely concealed the lines of her graceful body. She also exuded a mystique that couldn't be hidden.

"I heard about what happened, and I apologize for the unpleasantness." The woman bowed her head in front of Alvin and Tenko, who were now silent after being reprimanded. "Also, thank you so much for saving the prince. With neither Tenko nor myself by his side, it truly was a dangerous situation."

"Oh? Are you a Nimue?" Sid asked as if he were feeling nostalgic about something.

In spite of the rude question, she smiled and introduced herself without hesitation. "Yes. I am Isabella, the current head of the Ladies of the Lake. I am the protector of this country in accordance with the ancient pact with the holy

king, Arthur."



There are many different races: humanity; demi-humans known as Cerians; the race of giants known as Titans; and the half-human, half-fairy race known as Nimue...among others. The half-human, half-fairy Nimue are considered to be the apostles of Éclair, the fairy god of light, and are a mysterious race of only women, with beauty, mana, and longevity unmatched by humans. Those among the Nimue who have made an ancient pact with the Holy King Arthur and lend their strength to the royal family and the kingdom are called the Ladies of the Lake.

"I see. So the pact between the royal family and the Ladies of the Lake is still in place?"

"Oh my. I heard that your memories of the past were limited, but you still remember?"

"Yes, partially." Sid glanced at Tenko and somewhat amusedly asked Isabella, "Am I really seen as such a bad guy in this era?"

"It's way worse than bad!" Tenko interrupted. "It's said that Sid was cruel and inhumane. He was a fiend, a disgrace to chivalry who tormented the weak, had his way with women, caused pointless slaughter on the battlefield, and left heaps of bodies in his wake. If you listed all of the terrible legends and anecdotes passed down about Sid 'The Barbarian,' there'd be no end to them!" Tenko asserted.

"Ha ha ha." Despite her words, Sid only laughed and seemed somewhat happy.

"Wh-What's so funny?!"

"No, it's just that during the time you all call the legendary era, we knights fought with the dream of having our names left for posterity and having our exploits celebrated by poets but..." Sid looked at Tenko with a bold smile and said, "It's a dream come true."

That instant, Tenko's face turned red with anger. "I can't believe someone who calls themselves a knight is proud of such infamy and wrongdoings! I understand now! I hate you! I don't know if you're the strongest knight of the legendary era, but as a fellow knight, I will never accept you!" With a terribly

menacing look, Tenko started to come at Sid, who was acting aloof. That's when a determined Alvin intervened with a stern expression.

"I believe you," Alvin said firmly to Sid, his words filled with a strong will.

"Oh?" Sid said with amusement as Alvin looked straight up at him.

"There's a reason that you can't confirm or deny what's been said about you, isn't there?" Alvin asked.

"Who knows?" For a second, Sid was at a loss for words, then he shrugged his shoulders and replied. "It could be that I've simply forgotten all about my past."

"Even so, I don't believe you're the kind of person they talk about in such a slanderous way," Alvin said and Sid was silent. "Last night, you answered my call when I was at the edge of despair, Sir Sid. You awoke from your deathly slumber and fought for my sake. I believe in you, and I believe that you are a knight among knights!" Alvin expressed his innermost feelings directly to Sid, who blinked in surprise. "And that's why I want you to teach me." Sid continued to blink as Alvin stared at his own hands with zeal and frustration. "In recent years, monsters have become more active, and the threat from the demon nation to the north has left the people of the kingdom in a constant state of fear. This peace is nothing but a tower in the sand that could crumble at any moment," Alvin said, and Sid still remained silent. "Eventually, I will become the king of this country. I must protect it and its people from every kind of hardship. So, I want to become stronger. Not just me, but each and every one of us must become stronger to protect this land. That's why I'm asking you! Please become our instructor! Please train us!" Alvin desperately appealed to Sid and stared at him. Alvin believed in Sid. Even if no one else believed in him, Alvin of the royal family of Calvania would believe in Sid. He had his reasons.

Sid stared back in silence at Alvin. Eventually, the resurrected knight grinned and in a nostalgic tone said, "Yeah. You really do resemble Arthur."

"What?"

"Jeez, be careful though, okay? If you trust people so easily, you'll get duped by some nasty woman just like Arthur did."

"What?!"

"He was good looking, but on top of having the absolute worst luck with women, he was gullible. If I wasn't around, he'd be taken advantage of right away."

"Th-That's a side of my great ancestor that I never wanted to know about!"

"Still." Sid placed his hand on Alvin's head and caressed it gently. "Thank you, Alvin."

"Oh..."

Sid's smile was as gentle as it could be as he looked at Alvin. "If I didn't help you after being told all that, it'd hurt my reputation as a knight. All right, just leave this instructor business to me."

"Th-Thank you. I'll be in your care."

"Come on now. I told you, didn't I? A king shouldn't bow their head so easily."

"Even so, I want to," Alvin replied with a smile that he felt deep in his heart.

Isabella, who had been watching the two of them, gave a wry smile and looked over at Tenko, who was right next to her. "Well, it looks like it's been decided."

Meanwhile, all Tenko could do was growl and grind her teeth in frustration.

It was a moonless night in a certain corner of the southern district of the royal city of Calvania. In a deserted alley, there was a man walking unsteadily while holding a lantern.

"Weee! Hicc." The man was Ivan Stad, a skilled member of the royal city's stonemason guild. He was a stubborn but magnanimous and caring man who was passionate about nurturing the growth of his juniors. As such, many people adored Ivan. His dedication to his work resulted in him remaining single for most of his life, but he recently took a young and beautiful wife. His life had been smooth sailing, and his days were happy and content. That was why he forgot that darkness awaited just around the corner.

Ivan noticed something as he walked with a drunken stagger. Normally, after he turned right at the intersection ahead, the house where his lovely wife was

waiting for him was just around the corner. It was a road he knew well, and no matter how inebriated he was, there was no way he could mistake it. However, today for some reason there was a dead end.

"Wh-Wha? Am I drunk or something?" Suddenly, a fog had settled around him and the scenery became strange. Ivan wondered if the alleys in this area were always this complicated and mazelike. Then he noticed something else. There was something written on the wall of the dead end. "Wha? What is this?" Ivan pointed the lantern at the wall. Drawn there was a Torah-style magic circle with a triangle in the middle and some kind of spell written in the old fairy language. It wasn't just the wall in front of him either. Countless magic circles drawn in multiple layers on the walls on both sides of him—and the floor—created a terrifying scene. There were still empty spaces here and there with half-finished magic circles. Ivan had no idea what they could mean. "M-Magic? Hicc, oh, it's the thing that those Nimue ladies always use. Hicc, what're they doing here?"

Just then...

Without warning, there was a cold voice whispering in Ivan's ear. "Thank you for coming, little lost lamb of the night." A hand suddenly reached from behind, covering Ivan's mouth, and he felt a searing pain in his back. It was a sword, and its bright red blade, stained with his blood, stuck out from his chest. Blood sprayed from the wound, coating the magic circles. It was all so sudden. Ivan had no idea what was going on. Then, without a single yell, his life came to an early end.

"You shouldn't go out on a night with no moon. The night is a different kind of world. The kind of world of deep abysses where inhuman beings wriggle about rampantly. That's how you get summoned by bad witches—like me." A witch stood behind the fallen Ivan. She was wearing a jet-black hooded robe that covered her entire body. She looked down at the now dead Ivan with no emotion, just a cold gaze. "But don't worry. Your death won't be in vain. You shall become sustenance and sacrifice for the great secret arts of ancient times." The witch then said in the ancient fairy language, "Gifuth Yus Lams," which meant "I offer you the flesh of the lamb." Then a thick darkness like a swamp spread out underneath her feet. From it, countless hands emerged and

pulled Ivan's corpse below. Then, from the swamp's darkness, came the repulsive sound of something being chewed. However, the witch showed no interest in the man who had been dragged into the dark. She placed her finger on the wall and began to finish the incomplete magic circles. "I'm almost finished with this as well. The more I toil, the more joyous it shall be." The witch giggled with a cold smile as she continued to draw the magic circles. "Now, after tonight's work is done, the next step is..."

The Calvania Royal Fairy Knight Academy was located in the lower levels of Calvania Castle and divided into several classes. There was the Durande class, which respected strength and honor; the Ortol class, which respected wisdom and intelligence; and the Anthalo class, which respected law, order, and virtue. Traditionally, students of the Knight Academy would be divided into these three classes and live together in the dormitory as they trained and studied every day in the hopes of becoming knights. However, a fourth class was newly established starting this semester. It was the Blitze class, a place for students who—for various reasons—couldn't get into any other class. It was inferior to the other classes and ridiculed as the "garbage-heap class." The Blitze classroom was located in a small remote mansion that faced the castle's courtyard. Currently, just before morning drills, the classroom held six students dressed in squire's formal wear. Among them was Alvin, who was talking with his classmates.

"Hey, Alvin. Starting today, this class is going to be getting an instructor knight too, right?!" one of the students said.

"Yes, that's right," Alvin said.

"All right! Now we can finally begin training seriously to become knights!" an excited boy with short brown hair said.

"That's true," a girl with gray hair in pigtails replied sullenly. "It's already been half a year since we entered the Knight Academy, but we've basically just been practicing on our own or with Lady Isabella when she takes time away from her political duties."

"Thanks to the three dukes, this class hasn't had a single instructor knight until now," the boy with short brown hair replied.

"And we even have the prince in class too. This country's corruption runs deep," the girl with gray pigtails said.

"Well, that doesn't matter anymore, right? Either way, we have an instructor now!"

They talked until another girl joined in. "U-Um, yeah, but...I don't really like scary people!" the girl said in a frightened voice. She had flaxen hair in loose waves.

"What are you saying, Lynette? We're going to be knights, aren't we?! Anyone is welcome to teach us as long as they're strong! Right, Theodore?!" the boy with short brown hair said to another boy sitting in the corner of the classroom.

"Hmph, I wouldn't count on it," a sarcastic voice answered. Everyone's gaze shifted to the boy wearing glasses who was resting his chin on his hand and facing away.

"Our sword ranks are low, and everyone has a reason for being here. There's no way a knight who's coming to a place full of garbage-heap failures would be a decent person."

"B-But," the boy with short brown hair said, still clinging to hope.

"Theodore's right. We can't get our hopes up," Tenko the noble-tail said haughtily, leaning against the wall with her arms folded. "In any case, our instructor's name is Sid Blitze. As in, Sir Sid the Barbarian."

"Huh? Sid?" the students said in unison, immediately confused.

"W-Wait a minute. When you say Sir Sid the Barbarian, you don't mean that Sir Sid, right?"

"Ha ha ha, of course she doesn't. He's been dead for a thousand years."

"It's not another person with the same name, is it?"

"Jeez, he sure is bold, calling himself Sir Sid like that." Every student was trying to make sense of the situation in their own way.

"Unfortunately, he's the very person from that legend. It seems that he came back to life after a thousand years just the other day," Tenko said, thrusting the

reality of the situation on them.

After a brief silence: “What?! You’ve got to be kidding?!”

“Alvin, what does she mean?!” The students suddenly made a commotion as their gazes turned to Alvin all at once.

“U-Um, well you see...ha ha. Where should I start?” a troubled Alvin said and scratched his cheek.

“I’m interested in that story as well.” A gentle voice came from near the entrance of the classroom, drawing everyone’s attention to it. Standing there was a girl of breathtaking beauty, with luxurious blonde hair, eyes as red as blood, and white skin.

“Good morning, everyone, as always.” As Alvin and the others blinked in surprise, she greeted them all with a small yawn and rubbed her sleepy-looking eyes.

Alvin narrowed his eyes in annoyance and let out a sigh. “You’re late, Flora. The eight o’clock bell has already rung.”

“Oh, really? Sorry, I’m not really a morning person.”

“What kind of carefree talk is that for an aspiring knight? You’ve been like this ever since you enrolled here!” Tenko said and put her hand on her sword.

“Come on, you two. She’s always like this, right?” the boy with brown hair said.

“Yes, I don’t think there’s much you can say to Flora at this point,” the girl with pigtails chimed in. While everyone talked about her, Flora remained completely unfazed, smiling as she casually walked among the other students and took her seat. Then, with a somewhat mischievous smirk, she clasped her hands and urged Alvin to continue his explanation.

“So? What were you saying about Sir Sid?” Flora said.

“Oh, yes. That’s right. I’m sure you know that a dark knight attacked me the other day. Well, a lot happened and...” So, with a smirk on his face, Alvin told the story.

"H-He's really the real Sir Sid the Barbarian?!"

"Th-This is way too unexpected."

"Yeek! Th-This is so scary!"

As Alvin finished his story, the students began to tremble with fear.

"Sid the Barbarian. According to popular belief, he was a fiend, a disgrace to chivalry," the boy with glasses said, looking slightly tense.

"Yeah, there are too many terrible stories about him to even count," the pigtailed girl said and nodded, looking a little pale.

"I-I heard that S-Sir Sid killed all the innocent people in a village just to try out a new sword! Yeek!" the flaxen-haired girl said as she trembled just from remembering the story.

"That's still one of the tamer stories. I heard that he cut down a hundred enemies on the battlefield and slayed a hundred captive women with the sword below his belt," the brown-haired boy said and gulped.

"A sex drive like that is just too much. Are knights from the legendary era monsters or something?" The boy with the glasses moaned as a cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

"H-Hey, everyone! You're being rude!" Alvin puffed out his cheeks and began to protest. "Sir Sid is not like that! He's a true knight among knights!"

"And here Alvin goes again with his delusions," an exasperated Tenko muttered. "Why is your image of Sir Sid so out of sync with the rest of society?"

"Th-That's because..." Alvin stopped talking and didn't object.

Tenko didn't dig any further into the issue and instead sighed and said, "Well, putting that aside for now, isn't Sir Sid running late? I'd say it's been quite a while since the eight o'clock bell. I mean, it's almost nine o'clock."

"N-Now that you mention it..." Puzzled, Alvin tilted his head to the side. "Hmm, I wonder if he's lost. This castle is as big as a town. I wonder if I should have come with him."

"What are you going to do?" Tenko asked.

Alvin thought for a moment and then said, “I don’t have a choice. I’ll summon him.”

“Summon?” Tenko inquired.

Alvin showed everyone the sword crest on the back of his right hand. “Isabella said that Sid is like my familiar. So, if I think hard enough, it seems I can summon him with the power of magic,” Alvin said.

“Th-That’s convenient, having him come when you summon him,” the girl with flaxen hair stammered.

“It’s almost like a knight and their fairy sword,” said the girl in pigtails.

“Just as a sword serves a knight, a knight serves their king. I see. That’s a good way of putting it,” said Theodore.

“Hmph.” Tenko blatantly frowned at the students’ chatter.

As he gave the endlessly upset Tenko an awkward smile, Alvin stretched his right hand forward with the back facing up, then prayed silently.

I, Alvin Noll Calvania of the lineage of the Holy King Arthur, beseech you.

Suddenly, the soft light of mana danced around Alvin, and the crest on the back of his hand began to glow with heat. Fluffy dancing particles of light poured onto the floor, forming a Torah-style magic circle with a triangle in the middle. Gradually, the presence of mana grew in that place, and a miracle from ancient times manifested before their very eyes, and everyone watched with bated breath.

“Sir Sid the Lightning Knight, answer my call. Show yourself before me!” Alvin called out intensely. “Now, appear!” At that moment, a dazzling white light burst from the magic circle that formed on the floor and blinded everyone temporarily. Then, when the light subsided...

“3,843! 3,844! 3,845!” Sid had appeared. “3,846! 3,847!” He was swinging an iron stick—that looked more like a log—with all of his might. He readied the stick, adjusted his breathing, relaxed, and slowly raised it straight above his head. He smoothly transmitted his energy from his shoulder to his elbow and then his wrist, took a step, and then swung down sharply with a piercing

energy. All the while, he never relaxed his guard. He repeated this rough, yet somewhat sophisticated, style of sword strike over and over again. Each stroke was filled with a tremendous amount of concentration. Sid's entire body was drenched in a waterfall of sweat, making everyone wonder just how long he had been immersed in his exercise. The series of swings was like a beautiful dance that one could watch forever. However, the biggest and only problem was...

"Um, excuse me, Sir Sid?" Alvin called out to him apologetically.

"3,975! Hmm? Alvin?" When Sid finally realized what was going on, he stopped his swinging practice and looked back at Alvin and the others. "Is this? Shoot. Is it time for class already?" Sid said as he wiped the sweat from his forehead and lightly caught his breath. "Ha ha ha. Sorry about that. I've always had a bad habit of losing sight of my surroundings when I'm focused on one thing."

"No, it's fine. More importantly—"

"Oh, you want to know what I was doing? Well, it's just like what it seems. I was practicing my sword strokes. Maybe it's because of being reincarnated, but my body has become pretty weak, so I thought I'd try to get some of my strength back."

"No, that's fine too. It's just...why?" Alvin's face turned red as he looked at the ground with his shoulders and fists shaking. Eventually, he couldn't take it anymore and screamed out, "Why are you naked?!"

"Hmm?" Yes, it was as Alvin pointed out. Sid was completely naked without a thread of clothing on him. His body was thin, but well conditioned. He lacked any reservations, as his beautiful body looked like an ancient sculpture made with the proportions of an inverted triangle. Sid was silent as he looked down at himself for a moment and then said, "It's just common sense to practice sword strikes naked, isn't it?"

"On what planet is that common sense?!" Alvin immediately retorted, blushing red like a tomato.

"Y-You pervert!" Tenko's face had also turned bright red, and her eyes swirled around in confusion as she screamed. She then pulled out her sword, kicked the

floor and lunged at Sid, stabbing with her left hand.

“G-Get away from Alvin!”

“Whoa there.” Sid grabbed the oncoming point of her sword with the fingers of his left hand and in a fluid motion turned his body to the right, disorienting the trajectory of the thrust. At the same time, while he grabbed the back of Tenko’s neck, he swept her legs out from underneath her, pulled her to the ground as he wrapped his body around hers, and straddled her.

Tenko let out a small shriek as she was rolled onto her back, completely immobilized while Sid held down her hands and feet with his own.

“Oh no, I ended up using my wrestling skills,” Sid said as he looked down at the pinned Tenko. “Tenko, that was pretty dangerous, wasn’t it? Slashing at someone out of nowhere isn’t okay. If it was anyone else, they would have gotten really—” Sid started to give a very sensible lecture, but...

“Ahhh! No, someone save me!” Pinned down and unable to move, Tenko was in no mood to be lectured. All she could do was shake her head and flail about in a half-crazed frenzy with tears in her eyes.

“Um, please stop,” Alvin said to the two of them as he sighed and slumped his shoulders. As for the other students...

“Th-This is the legendary Sir Sid?!”

“The first thing he did when summoned to the present day was push down a woman. They were right about his sex drive.”

“No! This guy is just a perverted sex fiend!”

“At this rate, it’s seeming like the stories might be true.”

The students were saying anything they wished as Flora watched the whole chaotic scene. “Ha ha ha. Sir Sid is quite the interesting person.”

“Flora, as always, you’re way too casual about this,” an exasperated Alvin said as Flora just smiled brightly, unaffected.



Chapter 3: The World of Fairies

There are two worlds: the material world where physical life like people and animals exist, and the fairy world where conceptual life like fairies and monsters exist. These two worlds, the material world and the fairy world, are both adjacent to and superimposed on one another. So, it could be said that the fairy world exists outside of the material. Normally, the two worlds are like two sides of the same coin, but they are separated by a boundary called the “curtain,” and they do not mix. However, there are places where the curtain is more blurred, and the material world and fairy world are mixed together. These places are called “the fused world.” In fact, where Calvania Castle stands was once such a place where the two worlds intertwined. Calvania Castle is a magical structure that was built to draw a line between the material world and the fairy world, and the castle itself serves the role of the curtain. Therefore, there are various entrances to the fairy world that exist here and there in the castle.

One of those entrances was the pond in the castle courtyard that Sid and his class were standing in front of. The water, which created a kind of boundary just by being there, was the most popular entrance to the other world.

“Okay,” Sid said. He was now dressed in a knight’s garb and dove into the pond. His students followed after him. With a splash, a column of water shot up as their bodies sank into the darkness. When they opened their eyes, they could see a light below them. They turned their bodies upside down and dove deeper, heading for the light. Even though they were diving downward, the bright light gradually revealed itself as a second surface. When they reached the water’s edge, the scenery had completely changed. Unbelievably, the huge castle had disappeared. Spread out around the pond was a small field, and surrounding it was a sea of green trees that shone in the sunlight. There was the smell of greenery and earth. Birds chirped, and treetops were rustled by the wind. The field was filled with colorful flowers in bloom, and tiny flower fairies, hidden in

the shadows of the flowers, watched the students. When they climbed out of the pond, for some reason their bodies weren't wet. Everything about this place was strange.

"Wow, it's been such a long time since I've been here," Sid said. It was the first layer of the fairy world, the Sunlit Sea of Trees, and it was one of the training grounds for the Calvania Royal Fairy Knight Academy. Eventually, Sid spoke up and said, "Without further ado, starting today, I am the new instructor of Blitz class, Sid Blitz. I look forward to teaching you all." Sid introduced himself to the students as they lined up in front of him. "Speaking of, why does this class have my name in it?"

"Well, you see...there are a lot of reasons, and it would take a while to explain it," Alvin answered vaguely.

"Hmm? Well, whatever. Anyway, a lot has happened and from now on, I plan on training you squires to become full-fledged knights." Without pursuing the issue any further, Sid looked straight at everyone and continued speaking in earnest. "In my life, I was just a man who was only good at fighting. I pledged my sword to the king and continued to be his sword. To others, the way I lived probably seemed terribly warped. However, I can teach you about fighting precisely because I have lived such a life. Its power, its meaning, and...the fear of it." The class was silent. "'A knight's power is used for good.' Even if you become a demon, there are things that must be done. That's what it means to be a knight. I will do my best to keep you from becoming a mere demon and guide you to have the soul of a knight who isn't just focused on power. The training may be rough, but follow me. I'm counting on you guys." Sid said, concluding his dignified speech. However, when Alvin glanced at the other students, they were silent and everyone aside from Flora was looking at Sid as if he were an unholy sexual predator. "I see that didn't work. Yeah, I kind of thought it wouldn't," Sid said.

"Of course it didn't. Did you think you could fool us?" a displeased-looking Tenko suddenly retorted. It seemed that, contrary to Alvin's expectations, Sid's dignity and his students' trust in him had quickly hit rock bottom.

"U-Um, we have a lot of work ahead of us, but why don't we get started with training?" While urging Sid to begin, Alvin looked around at his fellow students

in the Blitze class.

Tenko was Alvin's closest friend since childhood, a member of the noble-tailed people. Her fairy sword was a katana. Flora was a girl with a unique and carefree attitude. Her fairy sword was a longsword. Elaine was a girl with pigtailed hair who acted just like nobility. Her sword was a bastard sword. Christopher was a boy with brown hair who seemed to get excited easily. His fairy sword was a claymore. Lynette was a girl with flaxen hair who was always afraid like a small, timid animal. Her fairy sword was a spear. Theodore was a boy with glasses who seemed to have a harsh personality. His fairy sword was a short sword.

Including Alvin himself, there were seven students in total. All of them had different looks, different weapons, and different personalities.

"All right, where should we start with your training? Um, when I was a squire..." Sid stood in front of Alvin and crossed his arms as if he was thinking about something.

"First, please show us your strength, Sir Sid," a goading voice said from behind him. It was, of course, Tenko. Her arms were folded and she aimed to provoke him. "In order to become knights, we have to be strong enough to pass the final trials. This class already has several handicaps, and if we can train ourselves better than you can train us, we don't have time to deal with you."

"Hey, Tenko! You shouldn't say something so—" Panicked, Alvin tried to pacify Tenko to no avail and she only continued.

"Can you please show us your fairy sword and your fairy magic?" It seemed that everyone was interested.

"Indeed, I'd like to see it as well."

"Y-Yes! You could say that the strength of a knight is represented by how strong their fairy sword is!"

"You're a legendary knight, right?! Your fairy sword's got to be awesome!"

Alvin was also curious about Sid's fairy sword and his fairy magic. *I don't know why he didn't use it during his battle with the dark knight the other day. And since he's become our instructor, I'd like to see it at least once.*

They all looked at Sid, their eyes filled with anticipation.

"Hmm? A fairy sword? I don't have one of those," he said bluntly, and everyone uttered a stunned "Huh?" in unison.

"What?" Alvin was also surprised and stood there with his mouth agape. Sid just shrugged at them all and continued.

"Since you're all knights with fairy swords, you should know. A knight is guided to their fairy sword by a Lady of the Lake in the Lake of Swords. Isn't that right?"

"Huh? Oh, yes. We all received our swords at the Lake of Swords when we entered the Calvania Royal Fairy Knight Academy," Elaine said.

"Yeah. You call out to the fairy swords sleeping at the bottom of the lake, and you form a pact with the sword that answers your call. I did it too," Christopher chimed in.

"And? Go on," Tenko said.

Sid just shrugged under Tenko's scornful gaze. "I was rejected," he said, and all his students were speechless.

"Huh? Does that mean none of the swords responded to you, Sir Sid?"

"No way. No matter how much of a joke the knight may be, there's bound to be at least one sword that answers."

"I was totally rejected. Not a single sword answered me. Seriously, it hurts to be this unpopular," Sid said jokingly, and once again his students were at a loss for words, looking at their instructor in disbelief.

Eventually, Alvin couldn't control his inner turmoil and how dizzy he felt. *You've got to be kidding. I just thought that when he fought that dark knight the other day, he didn't use his fairy sword for some reason!*

The thought of a knight without a fairy sword was beyond unexpected.

"U-Um, instructor? What do you do without a fairy sword?"

"Precisely. Just how exactly is a knight supposed to fight without a fairy sword?"

As the students expressed their frustration, Sid said, "Hmm? What do you do? I mean, you don't need a fairy sword, right?" Sid proudly declared. "After all, I am the sword." Having no clue what he was talking about, the students found themselves speechless for a third time.

The power of a fairy sword represented the power of its knight, and the value of a fairy knight without one would be questionable. At that moment, everyone aside from Alvin had come to the same conclusion and decided that Sid was a lost cause.

"I can't take it!" The first one to come back to their senses was Tenko, who turned her face away with a scoff. "You don't even have a fairy sword! Some legendary knight you are! I've had enough, and we're going to just train by ourselves! So, please leave!"

"T-Tenko, how could you say that?!" Alvin said. "Sir Sid is really strong even without a fairy sword!"

"Th-That's not possible! You understand that, don't you, Alvin? The strength of a knight is the strength of their fairy sword!"

"That's true but..." Alvin glanced over at Sid as he spoke. "But I told you, didn't I? Sir Sid had an overwhelming victory against the dark knight who tried to kill me, and he did it without a fairy sword."

As soon as the other students heard this, they were shocked. They knew just how powerful the dark knights of the Dark Order of Opus were. Unlike the Calvania fairy knights who wielded red, blue, and green fairy swords derived from the household of the fairy god of light, Éclair, the dark fairy knights wielded dark fairy swords derived from the household of the dark fairy god, Opus. They were unmatched in their strength and possessed terrible destructive power. A regular fairy knight couldn't even compete with the lowest-ranking dark knight.

"You really won against a dark knight of the Order of Opus?"

"N-No way. How could you do that without a fairy sword?" The students' suspicious gazes all fell on Sid.

"You see? Even without a fairy sword, Sir Sid is a knight of the legendary age. I

know there's something he can teach us," Alvin said, defending Sid with his complete trust.

"Hmph! That dark knight was just really weak, or he was just caught off guard, right?!" Tenko said, doubling down and staring knives at Sid. "I'll say it again and again! The strength of a knight is essentially the strength of their fairy sword! Isn't that right?!"

"Well, I won't deny it. Even in the age I lived in, most of the really strong knights had a fairy sword," Sid said, scratching his head as Tenko glared at him.

Tenko then began to explain fairy swords. "Fairy swords are, as the name implies, the incarnation of fairies that have taken the forms of swords. These 'Good Fellows,' our friendly neighbors, become swords in the hope that they can benefit us. Mana is the power that forms all life and matter, and fairies are the result of that mana becoming self-aware. In other words, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that a fairy sword is a very strong mass of mana. Therefore, by being supplied with mana from the fairy sword, the wielder gains unparalleled physical enhancement, resilience, and self-healing." Tenko glanced at the sword hanging from Sid's waist. "Sir Sid, can you draw that thing at your waist and hold it at the ready?"

"Hmm? Sure. Like this?" Sid drew the sword and held it in one hand. The sword was one issued by the castle. It was of good quality, but it was just a plain steel longsword.

Tenko then declared the name of her sword and pulled her from its scabbard. "Red fairy sword, Red Moon." Tenko's fairy sword was a katana with a slightly curved blade. The design and decoration of the cross-shaped guard and hilt were from the West, but the forged surface and shape of the blade were of an Eastern style. The blade pattern resembled a flickering flame.

"Huh?" Sid was completely absorbed in the beauty of her sword.

"Banig." Tenko spoke to the sword in the ancient fairy tongue, telling it to burn, and the blade turned red hot as flames flared forth from it. Then, with a slight yell, she swung the sword unceremoniously, and with a loud clash, Sid's sword was burned and cut away by Tenko's katana.

"Oh no, what a waste," Sid said.

"This is red fairy magic, Homura Tachi, or flame-sword style. You understand now, don't you?" Tenko swung her katana, extinguishing its flame, and returned it to its sheath with a fluid motion. "A wielder of a fairy sword can use powerful fairy magic. A normal weapon is no match, and a fairy sword can only be countered by another fairy sword. That's why a fairy sword is a knight's strength." Her katana made a metallic sound as she fully sheathed it. She gave Sid a piercing gaze with eyes full of a rejection and said, "We want to be knights no matter what. We need to become more proficient with our fairy swords and stronger with fairy magic! And yet, our instructor doesn't even have a fairy sword!" Sid only stood there in silence. "I don't care how strong you are. There's nothing we can learn from you! Please leave!" Tenko shouted.

"Sh-She's right. If he doesn't have a fairy sword..."

"It's hard to believe that he's strong without a fairy sword in the first place."

"Yeah. I mean, it's getting hard to believe that he actually beat a dark knight."

"Alvin, did you make that story up?"

One by one, the students started to regretfully agree with Tenko. After all, nothing she said was incorrect. All of them wanted to gain stronger fairy magic. They wanted to learn from a fairy sword professional. However, no instructor would teach those things to the Blitze class. Due to the unwillingness of the upper echelon, a decent instructor had never been sent their way, and now the instructor who finally came to them was a knight who didn't even have a fairy sword.

"Ha ha ha!" Just when they had all thought Sid was no good after all, he laughed wholeheartedly in amusement. "You want to be strong? Really?" Sid asked as all the students looked at him in surprise.

"Wh-What's so funny?" Tenko yelled.

"What do you mean?" Sid responded, laughing loudly and egging on a furious Tenko. "It's like you're all proudly saying, 'We're being carried by our fairy swords! Can you show us how to piggyback even harder?' Aren't you ashamed to be knights?" he said, and his students' expressions froze from his remarks.

"How many times do I have to tell you?! I already explained to you that a fairy

knight's strength is the strength of their sword, haven't I?!"

"I won't deny that. But you guys are just playing knights, wielding these slightly powerful weapons because you want to show off. It's ridiculous," Sid said, shrugging his shoulders.

"P-Playing around? You take that back! Take it back!" Tenko's face became red, and she started to tremble. Then in a rage, she readied her sword and was about to slash at Sid.

"W-Wait, Tenko! Just calm down!" In a panic, Alvin clasped her arms behind her back and restrained her.

"Let go of me! I'll never forgive him! He knows nothing! He knows nothing about my drive to become a knight!" It seemed as though he truly ruffled her feathers, and her ears and tail stood on end. She had tears in her eyes as she bared her canines and glared at Sid.

He looked at her with amusement and said, "Hey, Tenko. Can I ask you something?"

"What?!"

"What is the rank of your fairy sword?" At that moment, Tenko froze as if she were struck by lightning. "I'm not going to ask you all why you want to become knights. However, you'll never become stronger by just relying on your fairy swords, you know. Your sword rank represents your limit as a knight." Before his eyes, Tenko changed from looking angry to looking absolutely crushed. Dazed and confused, she stared at the ground as her ears and tail drooped lifelessly. All the other students became silent, as it seemed that Sid's words had resonated with them as well.

"S-So in that case!" Tenko gritted her teeth like she was biting down on something, looked up with an eager gaze, and pointed her sword at Sid. "If that's what you think, then I request a duel!"

"Hmm? Duel? Why?"

"It's obvious, isn't it?! You've insulted us this much! Show us how strong you are since you can talk so big without a fairy sword! Duel me!" Tenko's declaration turned the mood tense and struck a chord with everyone.

"T-Tenko what are you saying?! You shouldn't do this!" said Alvin.

"Alvin, please be quiet! I can't just take being made fun of like this lying down! Now, prepare yourself! The first one to land a strike wins!" Sid stood calmly in front of the tip of Tenko's sword. The students watched nervously in anticipation as the scene played out. Sid, this man that Alvin had brought along with him, was being hailed as the strongest knight of the legendary era and had trounced a dark knight. If that was true, then all would be made clear in this battle with Tenko.

Almost as if he was pulling the rug out from underneath them, Sid let out a huge yawn. He then leaped up and grabbed a branch that was far above his head with one hand. With a quick flip, he landed on top of the branch and lay across it to rest. "I'm going to bed. You guys just do your usual training for today."

For a moment, Tenko stood dumbfounded, making a face like she didn't understand what she had just been told. "Wh-What are you doing?! Are you running away?! Are you making fun of me?! Get down here! Duel me! Duel, duel, duel!"

"Yeah, you called it a duel, but it's just until someone lands a strike, right? In that case, it's impossible. Right now, you're so weak. If I messed up, I'd kill you," Sid said very apologetically as he scratched his head. He didn't mean to be insulting, but that made it all the more infuriating to Tenko.

"What?!"

"I'm sorry, but there's just a limit to how much I can hold back. I'm really sorry."

"D-Damn you!" Tenko yelled, her face bright red. Sid, however, was already passed out and they could hear his breathing as he slept. It was like Tenko wasn't even on his radar. The students watched Sid's whole reaction with indescribable gazes.

"We've got a lot of work ahead of us," Alvin said and sighed.

It growled as it approached, getting closer and closer. With its wild and nimbly

moving limbs, the shadowy jet-black canine demon known as a black dog was drawing closer, and its bloodthirsty red eyes glowed brightly. It leaped, and its sharp fangs and claws reached for the throat of its prey.

“Ha! Banig!” Tenko yelled as she intercepted the beast. Her hands moved like a blur and worked in gorgeous coordination with her quick footwork as her upper body rotated sideways. She removed her katana from its sheath, and it accelerated explosively, reaching the speed of sound on its horizontal trajectory. It was a way of striking one’s opponent as they drew their own sword and was a technique from the East. Combined with her fairy magic, flame-sword style, the arc of her blade blazed with a crimson red color. Her flaming sword accurately struck the black dog, which came at her like an arrow, and cut it in half from top to bottom. The black dog let out a death cry, dissipated into a kind of black mist, and then disappeared.

A moment later, another black dog came at her from the right, its fangs closing in on her throat. “Hmph! Ixplode!” Using the ancient fairy tongue to tell her sword to “blast and shatter,” Tenko spun on her left foot to make her blade meet with the creature’s fangs. The moment they made contact, the canine demon was mercilessly blown away at point-blank range by the flames and the pressure of an explosion that emitted from the blade. It was a type of red fairy magic called “baku ken,” or “exploding sword,” which blasts an opponent who touches the blade. Surrounded by sparks, Tenko remained on guard. The red fairy sword she grasped fed her with a constant supply of mana, sharpening her senses and making her body feel as light as a feather.

“Seriously, what is his deal?!” Tenko said, still on edge from earlier.

“Come on, calm down, Tenko,” Alvin said. His whole body was surrounded by a powerful wind, and he rushed forward at high speed, making a sharp thrust. A black dog that was unable to avoid Alvin was pierced in its flank, and it turned into a black mist, disappearing. Alvin held a green fairy sword. The magic he used was called “gale” and had created a powerful tailwind to accelerate him forward. “There aren’t any strong monsters around here, but if you keep complaining like that, you might fall behind, you know?” Alvin said, and Tenko only mumbled back a response.

Alvin and the others were in the first floor’s sea of trees hunting monsters like

they always did. Just as there were fairies like the Good Fellows who lent their power through fairy swords, there were hostile fairies who committed acts of evil. These fairies were the Unseelie Court and what people called monsters. If the fairy world was the home of fairies, then, naturally, it was also the home of monsters. If left unchecked, these monsters would eventually make their way into the material world and attack people, so they were regularly exterminated to prevent this from occurring. This was an important duty of a knight. The deeper one went into the layers of the fairy world, the more powerful the monsters became. Students who weren't officially knighted were mainly in charge of the first layer where the danger level wasn't high. However, for an ordinary person without a fairy sword, even the low-level monsters in the first layer were a deadly threat and not something one could let down their guard against.

"There's no way I'd fall behind against first-layer monsters," Tenko said as she exhaled and looked around the sea of trees. Just like her, the other students from the Blitze class were mopping up black dogs. Christopher, Elaine, Lynette, Theodore, and Flora all wielded their fairy swords and fairy magic to dispose of one black dog after another. Before long, the pack had been wiped out without any particular danger, and the area became tranquil.

"Finished over here, Alvin," Christopher said with ease.

"Over here as well," Elaine also said calmly.

"Th-That was so scary," Lynette said.

"Oh my, good work, everyone," Flora said, laid back.

Meanwhile, Theodore gave a "Hmph." They had all returned from their respective assignments.

"Okay, everyone. You must be tired from all that fighting, right? Let's take a break for a while," Alvin, who was the head of the class, suggested and sat down on a nearby stump.

"Oh, yeah, sure."

"Yes, let's do so."

The other students answered Alvin curtly and then fell silent.

“What’s wrong, everyone?” Alvin asked.

“It’s just—”

“Will we truly be able to become stronger this way?”

Alvin then understood why they were being so somber. *Your sword rank represents your limit as a knight.*

Sid’s words from earlier probably still lingered in their minds. Also, they all realized that even if they continued to train, the way they were now, they would probably—

“Wh-What are you saying?!” Tenko said, scolding her fellow students who had become discouraged. “Up until now, we’ve worked so hard and come all this way together, haven’t we?! These monsters on the first floor gave us such a hard time in the beginning, but lately they’re a piece of cake! I’m sure that if we keep training like this, we’ll become strong—”

“You won’t.” The fiery passion of Tenko’s words were doused by a cold answer from above. When they looked overhead, they could see Sid sitting on a branch with his legs crossed. At some point, he had started looking down on the students as he chewed on an apple. “Right now, you’ve all reached your limit. Just give up. You won’t get any stronger at this rate.”

“Sir Sid!” Tenko’s face turned bright red as she looked up angrily. “I’ve had enough! Just what do you know anyway?!”

“I know that after watching you guys fight, even though you have room for improvement with your swordsmanship, as knights who wield fairy swords, you’ve reached your peak.”

“You are making fun of us?!” Tenko snapped and gave Sid a biting, hateful glare.

“No, I’m rather impressed,” Sid said, surprisingly, with a carefree smile.

“Huh?”

“Even though you’re all being carried by your fairy swords, you’ve come all this way on your own. You guys really want to become knights, huh? Especially...” Sid paused and looked down at Tenko.

"Wh-What is it?"

"Tenko. Aside from your fairy magic, your swordplay is beautiful. Even in the legendary age, there weren't many who could wield their swords as exquisitely," Sid said with sincere admiration.

"What?!"

"Your feelings come out in your swordplay. Perhaps you've been training hard all these years to become stronger in order to protect something important. It's for that one purpose that you've worked so hard training all this time, isn't it? Even on days when it rains and the wind blows hard. Phew...I'm honestly smitten with your sword."

"S-Smitten?!" As Tenko blushed a little and started to panic, Sid threw away the core of his apple and once again lay down on the branch and shut his eyes.

"Sir Sid?" Alvin asked.

"I'm going back to bed. I've just about figured out what you guys are capable of and what you need to do. For today, just do whatever in the first layer. Starting tomorrow, I've got a lot to teach you," Sid said without a care and quickly fell asleep again.

"Wh-What is his deal?!" Tenko said, gritting her teeth as Sid was now snoring overhead. "I have no idea what he's thinking! What does he mean 'teach'?!"

"I'm not sure." Alvin was feeling the same way. He couldn't help but stare at Sid, who was sleeping carefree above.

"So, what shall we do now?" Elaine asked Alvin. "Do you plan to continue clearing out monsters on the first layer?"

"Hmm." Just as Alvin was pondering what to do about their training, he heard a mocking voice from behind, aimed at the class.

"Just listen to all that squawking. It looks like it's business as usual at the garbage heap, huh?"

"It's you guys." Alvin turned around, and a group of squires led by a blond-haired boy appeared from the depths of the sea of trees. The emblem on their chest was different from the dragon emblem that Alvin and his class wore.

Theirs was an emblem of a lion.

“Gah!” Christopher exclaimed.

“Damn, it’s Durande class!” Theodore said, clicking his tongue. He and Christopher immediately became alert and prepared themselves.

The fairy swords of Éclair, the fairy god of light that Alvin and his classmates used, had three different color attributes. There were red fairy swords that controlled heat and fire, blue fairy swords that controlled water and canceled others’ magic, and green fairy swords that controlled the power of nature. Excluding the newly established Blitze class, the Calvania Royal Fairy Knight Academy traditionally had three classes, one for each color of sword. The Durande class was made up of red fairy sword users, Ortol class was made up of blue fairy sword users, and the Anthalo class was made up of green fairy sword users. Within the fairy knights, they formed the ducal factions of Durande, Ortol, and Anthalo. The Durande class specialized in offensive fairy magic, and they were the most combative of the three traditional classes.

“Come on, Alvin. How long are you going to keep playing king of the mountain with your group of low-rank losers? Well, then again, you’re a loser with a pathetic sword rank too, huh?”

“Gato!” Alvin said and glared with a sharp expression at the blond-haired boy.

“Normally, people with low sword ranks like you guys wouldn’t be able to get into any classes here at the academy. You’d be on the fast track to becoming regular soldiers if it wasn’t for that brand-new Blitze class, you know?” Gato said.

“Did you really want to be knighted and become the king of this country that badly?” said another.

“If you wanted to be king so badly, shouldn’t you have just curried favor with one of the dukes so they’d take pity on you and put you in one of the classes?”

“That’d be so lame!”

All the Durande students scorned Alvin, but he took it all in silence. His classmates did the same, enduring the humiliation. They couldn’t say anything back to them, and if they got into a fight with the Durande class, they would

have no chance of winning.

In descending order, the ranks of fairy swords were Atzilt, or divine spirit rank; Beriah, or spirit rank; Yetsera, or majestic spirit rank; and Asher, or Earth spirit rank. Naturally, the higher the rank, the more powerful the sword. Also, the power of the fairy magic they used would be that much stronger. Only a squire's innate nature and compatibility could determine the rank of the sword they were chosen by, and the difference in sword ranks was essentially an impassable barrier. As a requirement to be admitted into each of the three traditional classes, one must be ranked Yetsera or above. Blitze class was the receptacle for students who were chosen by Asher rank swords and couldn't make the cutoff during entrance exams.

"Oops, we don't actually have time to chat with you guys. We've got monster-slaying to do in the second layer. Also, today we're supposed to get our feet wet in the third layer," Gato said.

"You're going to the second and even the third layer?" Alvin said and blinked in surprise. In the fairy world, the strength of the monsters rose exponentially with each layer. It was said that if you could fight the monsters of the third layer, you're practically a full-fledged knight. In other words, there was already that much of a difference between Gato's class and Alvin's class, who had their hands full in the first layer.

"Yeah, that's right. Well, it's no big deal for us. I mean, right now everyone here is a Beriah, you know?" Gato said and showed off his axe with a mocking laugh. "Ha ha ha, you Asher losers have fun here forever in the first layer. See you later!" Gato said, and he and the rest headed into the sea of trees.

Alvin watched in silence as they walked away, then sighed. He once again unsheathed his fairy sword and stared at it. It was a green fairy sword of the Asher rank called "Daybreak." The royal family of Calvania had been chosen by swords of the highest rank, Atzilt, for generations but for some reason, Alvin was chosen by an Asher sword of the lowest rank. If there were any other candidates for the throne, Alvin could give up being knighted and yield the throne to them. However, now he was the only one who could take over the throne and protect this country. That's why Alvin pushed himself so hard and had created the Blitze class. He had worked so hard but...

Overthrowing the ranking system, becoming king...I wonder if it's all just absurd, Alvin thought.

Since the beginning of the term, the gap between them and the other classes had only been growing. Not having an instructor to properly teach them was a major factor, but the biggest problem was their sword rank. After all, the strength of a fairy sword is the strength of its knight. As he thought it all over, Alvin let out a sigh.

"Alvin, let's take on the second layer too," Tenko suggested.

"What?"

"The Durande class seems to believe that sword rank is some kind of absolute difference, but I don't. If you work hard, you can overcome it!" Tenko then looked back at everyone and said, "In fact, we've worked so hard that now we can defeat these monsters on the first layer with much more ease. At this rate, we can even defeat enemies in the second and third layers! So, let's give it a shot, Alvin!"

"Y-Yeah! We've been working hard too!"

"Yes, we can't possibly back down after they've shown us such disrespect. Let's show what we can do when we put our minds to it."

"Hmph. Well, we should be fine as long as we know when to quit."

Christopher, Elaine, and Theodore responded to Tenko's plea with enthusiasm. Apparently, Durande class's ridicule didn't sit right with them, and they were also probably rebelling against Sid for his insensitive comments earlier.

"What? You guys can't be serious!"

"Oh dear."

Lynette was reluctant, and Flora was her usual self.

"Lynette, don't you want to be a knight?!" Christopher said.

"I-I mean..."

"If we can't get past monsters on the second and third levels, we'll never pass

the final trials for knighthood! It's time for us to aim for the next level!" Christopher had a point. In order to graduate from the Calvania Royal Fairy Knight Academy and officially receive knighthood, you had to first pass the final trials. If you couldn't do that, you couldn't become a knight. In other words, Alvin couldn't become king either, and the country would be taken over by the three dukes.

"Okay," Alvin said and nodded his head. "We can't just keep muddling about in the first layer forever. Today we're going to try taking on some enemies from the second layer together."

"Yeah! Now you're talking!" Tenko said, nodding enthusiastically and wagging her tail at Alvin's determination.

"We'll prove that even with low sword ranks, we can fight as knights," Elaine said.

"All right! Let's do this!" Christopher added.

When Alvin looked around, he could see that everyone aside from a teary-eyed Lynette was sufficiently fired up.

"Okay, in that case, I'd like to get going right away, but..." Alvin glanced overhead, and he could see Sid snoring loudly, still asleep on the tree branch above. He seemed to be completely oblivious to the conversation. He looked so defenseless that if Alvin stealthily climbed up the tree, he could attack him in his sleep.

Hmm... That stormy night when we first met is starting to feel like a dream, Alvin thought with a grimace.

"Let's leave Sir Sid behind," Tenko whispered. "He'd just stop us. It'll be fine. If we think it's dangerous, we can just turn back immediately."

"Okay." Alvin had a twinge of guilt. It felt like he was fooling Sid.

"Okay, let's go, everyone. We're heading for the second layer." Just like that, Alvin and the others quietly departed, leaving Sid behind.

Alvin and Tenko talked as they walked through the sea of trees toward the

second layer.

"According to the map, we're almost at the second level," Alvin said.

"Yeah, I'm itching to start."

"Do you think our powers will work on monsters from the second layer?"

"From what I've read in books, they should be able to. Though, it won't be as easy as with monsters in the first layer."

"Either way, we can't let our guard down. I'm counting on you, Tenko."

"All right! Leave it to me! I am your knight, after all!" They walked and talked at the head of their group, and a certain someone watched them, chuckling.

Then this person began to chant a spell in the old fairy language quietly so that no one could hear them.

"Kam Kam Kam Preze Ans Rei Yuneme—" Her words meant, "Come, come, come...answer my thrice-made call. Thy name is—"

When explaining the structure of the fairy world, people often compared it to a stack of gold coins. Each one of these coins was a level of the fairy world, and they all possessed vast areas of land. However, in the middle of these gold coins was a hole where a deep, thick fog was always present. These holes were entrances to the higher levels. Strangely, the holes in the middle of these coins were adjacent to the outer edge of the topmost gold coin. In the material world where ordinary people lived, this would be physically impossible and hard to imagine. However, it was a rule that operated in a realm beyond human comprehension. In short, the more one headed for the middle of each layer, the higher the layer one would arrive at. Of course, there were various restrictions on the terrain and exceptions, so it was difficult to say that this would always be the case. Basically, the fairy world's structure was such that the more you aim for the center, the higher the layer would be.

"It's getting foggy."

"It seems like we're finally approaching the center of the first layer." As they proceeded through the overabundant sunlight and greenery of the sea of trees,

a fog began to fill the area.

“Everyone, stay close so we don’t get separated!” Alvin ordered, and under his command they moved together as a single unit. As they did so, the white fog gradually became thicker and thicker. Eventually, the area around them had become so white it was as if they were moving through a sea of milk. Soon, they couldn’t even see the face of the person next to them.

“Is everyone okay?”

“Y-Yes, I’m okay...” As they called out and encouraged one another, they continued forward.

Suddenly, they made it through the fog, and the scenery around them changed completely. The first layer had been a sunlight-filled sea of greenery and flowers. Now, however, the trees were much denser and far more overwhelming than they had been in the first layer. The trees surrounding them were so thick and tall you had to look straight up to see the tops of them. The sky was completely blotted out by the treetops and leaves. Sunlight was almost completely blocked, and it was as dark as before dawn. Occasionally, a thin ray of sunlight reached the ground through the dense treetops above them, leaving a trail of light here and there on the damp, mossy ground. The silence was also a considerable change from the first layer. Darkness spread out in the distance. This was the second layer of the fairy world, the “Twilight Sea of Trees.” After gaining such confidence in the first layer of the fairy world, this training ground, the second layer of the fairy world, began to make them feel discouraged.

“Everyone’s here, right? Let’s keep our eyes open and keep going,” Alvin said, and they began their journey through the second layer.

“Ha ha ha!” Ear-splitting laughter echoed through the sea of trees. The voice’s owner was a short, oddly shaped old man. He had long eerie hair, fiery-red eyes, a hooked nose, protruding teeth, and sharp claws. Wearing a red hat and wielding a rusty axe, he ran through the sea of trees while using the trunks as footholds. He flew through the forest like a shadow as he bounced through the trees and couldn’t be caught by the average human eye. “Ha ha ha!” What’s more, this demonic gnome known as a “red cap” was making its way with

incredible speed toward Alvin, who stood with his rapier at the ready.

"Weald!" Alvin yelled in the old fairy tongue, ordering the wind to protect him. He also swung his sword above his head, and there was the sound of an impact. Alvin's green fairy magic, "Wind Shield," created a barrier from concentrated wind and stopped the blow of the red cap's axe as it yelped in surprise. However, the red cap remained persistent. It quickly jumped backward, and its hand filled with flame, readying its fire magic. However, it was suddenly extinguished by a rush of freezing air.

"I won't give you the chance! Saifreeze!" Elaine said, her chant meaning "freeze into silence." She was pointing her sword toward the red cap and had used her blue fairy magic, "Winter's Breath," which could offset and cancel all kinds of magic.

"Oh jeez, oh jeez! Legtop!" Lynette had stabbed her spear into the earth, telling it to "stop him in his tracks." In an instant, the red cap, who was dumbfounded from having its magic canceled, had its legs bound by ivy that stretched out from underneath its feet. It was the green fairy magic, "Ivy Entanglement."

"D-Do it now, Tenko!"

"Thank you! Haa!" Tenko didn't give the red cap a chance to slip away as she kicked the ground and pounced on it. Her sword burned a crimson red as she used her red fairy magic, Homura Tachi, to mercilessly send the red cap's head flying from its shoulders. With a death squeal, the now headless red cap dissolved into a black mist and disappeared.

"D-Did we win?!"

"Phew." An air of relief came over everyone.

"The strength of the monsters really is different in the second layer. What was the deal with how fast it was?" Christopher said.

"Seriously, I could barely follow its movements," Theodore said, mirroring Christopher's sentiments.

"So this is the second layer. It sure is tough," Alvin said and let out a deep breath as he trembled from how different this environment was.

"But, hey. Don't you think we're all fighting really well together?" Flora said in her usual carefree manner.

"Flora's right," Tenko said as she sheathed her sword and headed to where Alvin was. "It definitely won't be easy, but swords are working. All of our hard work wasn't in vain."

"Yes, you're probably right, Tenko," Alvin said and gave a short laugh.

"So, Alvin, what do you want to do? Do you still want to continue?"

"No, let's just call it a day and head home," Alvin answered. "It's good that we now know our power can be adequately effective against enemies in the second layer. Besides, Sir Sid is probably awake now and worried about us."

"Yeah, I don't really care about him," Tenko said, and Alvin gave her a wry smile.

He then gave orders to his class. "Okay, everyone. Let's take a short break and then move out."

"Understood."

"Gotcha." Everyone casually answered Alvin...and that's when it happened.

"Ahhh!" From deep in the forest, there came the sound of not just one, but several people screaming.

"Alvin?"

"I don't know. But someone's probably hurt from fighting a monster. Let's go check it out." After quickly answering Tenko, Alvin took the group and headed in the direction of the screams.

"Wh-What is this?" The class couldn't believe what they were seeing at the water's edge after passing through the sea of trees. Sitting there was a very strange-looking demon whose huge body was like a boulder and probably several meters long. It had seven heads, each like a lizard, and each with seven horns and seven eyes. Its body resembled a bird and had feathers like an eagle growing from its waist. It had a thick tail, and its mouth was lined with wolflike fangs. Just by being there, its very presence seemed sufficient to crush every fragile creature in the area. It had the kind of brutal dignity that only an apex

predator could possess in nature, and it felt like the silent forest had become as cold as ice. Its forty-nine eyes were the color of an unfathomable abyss, and they were staring at Alvin and the others. It was their first time seeing it, but there was no mistaking its distinctive look.

“A Kirimu...it’s a Kirimu!” a pale-faced Tenko said shakily as she stood next to Alvin. “No way. Why?! Why is it here in the second layer?! They’re supposed to be much deeper into the fairy world.” Kirimus were ruthless killers from the depths of the fairy world and the kind of powerful monster that would normally take a party of experienced fairy knights to vanquish.

“H-Hey, look there!” Christopher said as he pointed at the bodies of several boys and girls at the Kirimu’s feet.

“It’s...the Durande class?!”

“Even Gato’s there!” Gato and the rest of the Durande class lay pitifully on the ground and were all covered in blood. Their fairy swords had been cruelly broken and shattered. Kirimus had a habit of swallowing their prey alive, so it seemed like, for the time being, they hadn’t been killed. However, they were already at Death’s door, so it was only a matter of time.

“Ahhh!”

“Eek!”

The students of the Blitze class yelled and shrieked at the sight of this unexpected enemy.

“Everyone, calm down.” Alvin rebuked his classmates as he stifled his own fear. “Everyone, work together to distract it and escape when we see an opportunity,” Alvin ordered, but then something happened. Without warning, the Kirimu had disappeared from Alvin’s sight even though he had been keeping a close eye on its movements.

Huh? What’s going on? Alvin thought.

“Ahhh!”

Almost as if to answer his question, his classmates screamed behind him.

“What?!” Alvin said and quickly turned around to see the Kirimu. In an

instant, it had made its way behind them. Despite its huge body, it was unbelievably fast. It had taken Christopher and Theodore into two of its mouths and lifted them up like they were nothing. It swung them furiously in the air and threw them at a large tree nearby. The trunk shattered when they hit it and they fell to the ground, their fairy swords falling away.

“E-Everyone, move! Spread out!” Alvin said, rebuking Tenko and the others who had frozen up. Pushed by Alvin’s words, everyone spread out into the surroundings.

“S-Stop! Legtop!” Lynette thrust her spear into the ground and activated the green fairy magic, “Ivy Entanglement.” Ivy grew from the ground at an incredible rate and entangled the legs of the Kirimu. However, it was torn away when the Kirimu took two or three steps without a care. One of its heads gave a low growl. Then a fierce high-pitched squeal began to echo throughout the area. It was the Kirimu’s signature move, sound-wave magic known as a “Shriek” that paralyzes its prey with a high-pitched sound.

“I-I won’t let you! Saifreeze!” Elaine tried to stop it with her blue fairy magic, “Winter’s Breath,” but it was the wave of freezing air that Elaine released that ended up being canceled. The power of the Kirimu’s magic was too strong to be counteracted. “N-No way!” Elaine said in disbelief. Then the Kirimu’s piercing, high-pitched screech echoed throughout the surroundings, directly tearing into their brains.

“Ahh!”

“N-No!” Taking the brunt of the attack, Elaine and Lynette involuntarily dropped their swords and crouched down as they held their heads in their hands. They immediately started bleeding from their eyes and ears. Unimaginably painful headaches and nausea washed over everyone in the area, and they could do nothing but shed tears of blood and writhe in agony as they lost sensation in their skin. Even Flora, who was normally so laid back, couldn’t help crouching down in pain.

“Y-You! E-Enough!” Tenko said. She clenched her teeth and brought her weapon to bare as she endured the sound waves with her spirit and willpower. “Enough!” she yelled, brandished her sword, and closed in on the Kirimu. The

fact that she was even able to slash at the Kirimu in this situation was truly the fruits of her daily training. Being able to make such a focused strike without compromising the accuracy of her sword technique was worthy of praise. “Banig!” Tenko yelled as she activated her red fairy magic, “Homura Tachi.” Tenko’s flaming sword ripped through space, aiming to cut off one of the Kirimu’s seven heads. However, with a snap, the tip of Tenko’s katana broke in half and was sent flying into the air.

“Huh?” Tenko stood there dumbfounded, still in her stance from after she followed through on her sword swing. Meanwhile, there wasn’t even a scratch as big as a fingernail on the Kirimu’s neck. Tenko’s sword, which had sliced through monsters on the first and second layer like butter, hadn’t worked at all here. “No...”

The Kirimu’s answer to her attack was a powerful blow from a sideways swipe of its tail. Tenko’s body was slapped away in a straight line and slammed violently into the trunk of a large tree.

“Gah!” Tenko exclaimed as the air was pushed out of her lungs all at once. She felt a pain so intense it was like her body had shattered into pieces, and she had likely broken several bones. Tenko’s body succumbed to gravity and slid down the trunk, and she ended up in a seated position. With her back slumped against the tree, she was unable to even move a finger. This cruel assassin, the Kirimu, then proceeded to attack Tenko without making a sound. In the blink of an eye, like a vanishing mist, it closed in on her with incredible speed.

Tenko let out a scream. The seven heads opened their jaws, and with countless teeth, prepared to bite into her entire body. However, a swirling wind suddenly appeared.

“Tenko! Weald!” Alvin quickly intervened, using his green fairy magic, “Wind Shield,” to stop the seven jaws. However, Alvin’s magic was easily crushed and dispersed by the Kirimu’s teeth. The Kirimu seemed to be slightly wary of Alvin, as he was the only one who hadn’t lost his will to fight among everyone else who cowered in fear. It lightly jumped back and observed him with its forty-nine eyes. Meanwhile, a feeling like he was sinking to the bottom of the ocean assaulted Alvin.

He breathed heavily as he readied his sword against the wild, intimidating, and bloodthirsty aura the Kirimu was giving off.

"Wh-What are you doing, Alvin?!" Tenko yelled in her dazed state of consciousness. "Run! Leave me! Hurry up and go!"

"No! I can't just leave you and run away!"

"Alvin!" Tenko painfully screamed, but it was too late. It seemed that the Kirimu's natural wild instincts had told it that Alvin was too weak to be a threat, so it cruelly hunted its prey with a killing intent. Fear stabbed through Alvin's whole body.

"N-No. Alvin. Because of me!" Tenko screamed, and at that moment, the Kirimu kicked the ground and charged. Just like before, its incredible movement was well beyond the limits of a normal human's vision. It was a miracle that Alvin barely managed to try and block the first blow with his "Wind Shield." Alvin understood. In a few seconds, he would be torn to pieces by the Kirimu's claws and fangs.

Even so, I have to... Alvin thought. In the midst of despair, Alvin gritted his teeth and faced the oncoming Kirimu. Its jaws were open wide and lined with knifelike fangs, and they were closing in on him. In the final moment, Alvin closed his eyes and froze. However, his time didn't come, and he heard the resounding sound of something slashing.

The other thing Alvin heard was the Kirimu roaring in gruesome anguish.

"What?" Alvin said and fearfully opened his eyes. He saw the Kirimu with the side of one of its heads deeply slashed open, spewing blood and writhing in pain.

"Are you all right, prince?" It was Sid, and he had his back to Alvin as he stood in front of the Kirimu. His right hand was half open and extended out. Despite Sid not having a fairy sword, the Kirimu was deeply wounded. "Seriously, running off on your own like that—aren't you guys being a little too mischievous?" Sid turned around and smirked at Alvin. "Well, I'm just glad I made it."

"Sir Sid...what did you just do?!"

"No way. How in the world did you cut through the scales of a Kirimu when

even an attack from a fairy sword couldn't do it?!" Tenko cried. She and Alvin weren't the only ones who were astonished. Elaine, Lynette, Christopher, and even the normally carefree Flora were shocked. They all had their eyes wide open and were completely dumbfounded.

At that moment, the Kirimu, who had been writhing around, turned one of its heads to face Sid. It opened its jaw and was about to use its sound-wave magic and let out its strange howl. However, Sid was faster and stepped in sharply, leaped, and swung his right hand in a horizontal flash. An instant later, the head that tried to release the sound waves had been sliced off. Sid then quickly stepped toward the Kirimu's bosom, raised his left fist, and caught it in the torso, smashing its ribs that were harder than steel.

The Kirimu once again roared as it threw its heads back violently and toppled over. The earth rumbled as it writhed in agony. No matter how you looked at it, Sid's strength was inhuman.

"Why?! Why are you able to do that even though you don't have a fairy sword?!" Tenko yelled in disbelief.

"All right. I figured I'd start tomorrow, but since I've lucked out and found such a good partner to lecture with, I'll just teach you guys how a knight from the legendary era fights," Sid said as he kept his eyes on the rampaging Kirimu and shifted to an oblique fighting stance.

"First, all of you take a good look at my body. What do you see?" Sid said as he stepped about lightly and looked back at his students. He was still positioned in front of an opponent that normally took a squad of experienced knights to defeat. His students didn't understand what he meant and looked curiously at one another. "Look closer. You all were chosen by fairy swords, so it should be visible to you. Look, don't just see. Open your spiritual eyes and understand it, and don't just know it." Urged on by Sid, Alvin and the others looked more carefully. They then faintly saw glittering golden particles rising up from Sid's body. If you weren't conscious of it, you couldn't see it. However, if you actually tried to look, it was certainly there.

"I-I see it!"

"I see it too!"

"Wh-What is that light?!"

As the students buzzed about what they saw, the Kirimu made its move and attacked Sid with its frightening agility. However, Sid didn't even look at it as he dodged as quickly as the wind. Then, as the Kirimu was passing by him, he mercilessly cleaved its body with his partially open right hand. Its scales were harder than steel, but Sid's hand sliced deeply through them with ease, and the Kirimu roared in anguish.

"So, you all saw it? That light is called mana," Sid said as the Kirimu made a good amount of distance between them.

"Mana?!"

"Isn't that the power of the fairies?"

"How can a person use mana?"

One by one, the students voiced their confusion.

"Oh, come on. Mana is the power that resides in every living thing and shapes all matter and life in this world, right? So why wouldn't people be included in that?" Sid said and shrugged his shoulders in disbelief as the Kirimu rampaged around in pain in front of him. "You know the phrase 'Fairies dwell in all things,' don't you? Fairies are beings that come from when mana, which exists in nature, possesses form and willpower. Then fairy swords, which are the incarnation of fairies, are a mass of mana. Are you following me so far?"

Thrashing in agony, the Kirimu wildly swung its tail at Sid. Cracking like a whip, its tail gouged out the earth and sent a few trees flying, roots and all. However, it couldn't even touch Sid, who was leaving hazy afterimages of himself as he moved back and forth and side to side.

"In other words, fairy magic is basically the art of one-sidedly borrowing mana from a fairy sword, which is a mass of mana, and unleashing it," Sid said as he continued to dodge all of the Kirimu's attacks with a light step. "But, even fairies come in all different kinds. While some are great fairies that have lived for thousands of years and have acquired great power, others have just been born and have little power." When Sid pointed this out, his students gasped and looked at their fairy swords. "Do you get it now? Fairy swords with low sword

ranks are actually young fairies that have just been born. Though weak, these Good Fellows wished to be of service to people and became swords. That is what your fairy swords are."

Sid casually dodged a fierce tail attack right in front of his nose and countered with a flashing strike from his partly opened left hand. It sliced off the Kirimu's tail, sending it flying through the air. Then, with a leap and a flash of his right hand, he sent another of the Kirimu's heads flying. The Kirimu's roar of anguish grew even louder.

"In other words, while you thought you were getting stronger, you were being carried by these kindhearted fairy children. It's just shameful." As Sid lectured, his students were completely stunned. Then Sid smoothly jumped toward the Kirimu's bosom. "Why did you only rely on your fairy swords and not train yourselves?" Sid asked as he fiercely connected a diagonal slash with a reverse diagonal slash. "I told you, didn't I? Mana is the very life force that's found in all things. Every living being has it. And, of course, people have it too. Mana isn't some special power that just belongs to fairies." Sid then formed a blade with his right hand and filled it with mana. "If you can refine and manipulate your own mana, then you can do a lot of things. It's not all-powerful by any means, but it will certainly make you stronger than you were before." A moment later, he kicked the ground and moved so fast he was a blur. "If you focus your mana into your hand, it can act as a blade sharp enough to rival any famous sword."

An X-shaped slash was instantly carved into the chest of the Kirimu, creating a flashy display with a fountain of blood. After being hurt so much, the enraged Kirimu raised the claws at the end of its log-like arms and slashed.

"If you spread mana all over your body, it becomes sturdier than the strongest armor." With a powerful gust of wind, the Kirimu's claws mercilessly slashed and landed onto Sid, but it didn't make a single scratch on his sturdy body.

Instead, it was the Kirimu's claws that broke and shattered. It roared in agony, then as a reward, Sid's right hand took another of its heads.

"In the age of legends, this system of mana control was known as 'Will.' So, what do you think? I get along pretty well without a fairy sword, don't I?" Sid

said as he looked back at his students with a grin. After having witnessed the incredible spectacle that Sid was putting on, the students were awestruck. As they watched, the Kirimu's remaining jaws rushed toward Sid. "Well, basically what I'm trying to say is—" Sid, who had already dropped back, went around the side of the Kirimu like a flash. "You guys thought you were getting stronger by devising ways to wield your fairy swords better. I'll acknowledge your hard work, but you have an overwhelming lack of self-training." Sid then leaped high into the air, kicked off of a nearby tree branch, and did a flip. "It's ridiculous. No wonder you're all so weak." Using the momentum of his fall, he stabbed his right hand deeply into the Kirimu's back. The Kirimu growled in confusion as it flailed around trying to shake Sid off. However, Sid skillfully balanced himself and continued to stab it with his arm.

"H-He's so strong!" The students were in such awe that they were only able to utter simple, cliched observations. As for Alvin, in the face of such an absurd scene, he found himself absentmindedly thinking about what Sid had said earlier.

"After all, I am the sword."

"Is this...is this what he meant?" Alvin knew nothing of the technique that would allow him to manipulate his mana. It was considered common knowledge that you borrow mana from your fairy sword. Sid fought the dark knight with a dagger when they first met. However, it wasn't because he was forced to use it. It was because he was holding back. It was likely that because of being summoned back to life, Sid's physical and mana senses were out of balance. In that condition, fighting with his bare hands would have been too dangerous for his opponent.

I see. Over the course of time, we knights have forgotten that strength comes from training ourselves. We've been so dependent on the convenience of fairy swords, and somewhere along the way we've forgotten the basics of being a warrior, Alvin thought as he watched the back of Sid, who continued to fight. The way he stood up to his powerful opponent with his well-trained body alone was absolutely bewitching. *It's true that modern knights have probably become weaker.*

But true strength could be revived in the modern age. Alvin stared at Sid with

a hopeful look. While he did so, Sid flew through the sky and unleashed countless strikes. His dance of slashing attacks left the Kirimu's entire body in a carved-up mess. One by one, its heads were blown away, and it was powerless to do anything about it. In the blink of an eye, there was only one head left.

The Kirimu must have realized that it didn't stand a chance against the knight because with a shriek, it abandoned its pride as an assassin from the depths, spread its wings, and took off into the air with a kick. The flapping of its wings created fierce winds that blew across the ground. Sid looked straight up at the fleeing Kirimu and readied his right hand. While taking a deep breath, he slowly raised his arm high. It was as if he were placing an arrow into its bow and slowly, carefully pulling the string. Then, with great care, as if he were aiming at the Kirimu in the distance...

"All of you, take a good look," Sid said with a low breathing sound and tightened his right arm. "The first stop on your journey...is here." With these words, he swung his right hand down as hard as he could with all his might. At the same time, a blade made of mana extended from his right hand. This slash ran at blistering speed over tens of meters and the dull sound of solid flesh being sliced apart echoed throughout the sky above. With that one attack, the Kirimu's wings were cut off from the roots, and its last head flew through the air. It would never again make another sound, as its massive body came crashing down from the sky. The battle was over with an ending that was too absurd to be true. The valor of this man soundly beating a monster that would normally require a large contingent of elite knights to defeat was like something out of a legend. Everyone there was shocked, astonished, awed, and convinced by what they had seen. Alvin, Tenko, and the other students were of the same mind as they stared at Sid's back. They realized this was truly a knight of the legendary era.

Sid exhaled after killing the Kirimu. Then he gazed at his right hand for a little while as if he were making sure of something. "So that's what's going on. Jeez." He then let out another breath and looked around. "Well, that aside, what was the deal with that Kirimu? It's not the kind of monster that should be appearing at such a low level." Even though it had been quickly repelled, the damage it made was still severe. All of the students of Durande class were seriously

injured and unconscious, and the students of Blitze class were all a mess. There were a lot of lingering questions, but for now, Sid scratched his head and concluded by saying, “We’ll take the injured home. I feel bad for them.”

“Sir Sid...” The members of Blitze class gathered around.

“Hmm? What is it?” Sid responded, looking around at the students. They remained silent for a while, their eyes downcast. Eventually, they spoke as if they had to squeeze it out of themselves.

“The truth is...we’re weak,” Christopher said.

“The swords that we were chosen by were swords of a very low rank. Those were the only ones that would choose us,” Elaine said as she and Christopher looked at the ground. The look of anguish on their faces was proof of how hard they had worked to become knights despite the handicap of their low sword ranks.

“Even so, we really want to become knights.”

“No, we have to become knights.”

Sid looked around. Lynette, Theodore, and everyone else seemed to have the same feelings.

“Um, Sir Sid...can we also become strong knights like you?” Christopher asked as if he was speaking for everyone. He was anxious with hesitation.

Sid said, “You can. The word knight doesn’t mean a strong warrior. It’s a way of life. As long as a knight is disciplined and continues to follow their Will, they will be worthy of being a knight,” Sid said, and the class listened in silence. “Of course, being a knight is not for the frail. After all, it is said, ‘A knight’s sword helps the weak.’ It is also important for a knight to be strong as a warrior. So for starters, drop the sword and train yourself.”

The class was silent.

“Relax, Will isn’t some kind of special ability. It can be used by any living being. Naturally, if you guys practice, you’ll be able to control it freely. Well, you obviously couldn’t beat me at it, but if you properly cultivate your mana, eventually even your fairy swords will be able to handle strong fairy magic.”

“Oh...” The students were startled as if they had realized something. “Is that because mana resides in all things and is the power of people and fairies?”

“Yes, it is. In fact, in the legendary era where I’m from, there were a lot of knights who, even with low-ranking fairy swords, were as strong as demons when they used them with Will.” Sid smiled like he was remembering something nostalgic. “Also, leave your training to me. I’ll follow you as far as you go. After all—” Sid looked around at the anxious faces of his students and then firmly said to them, “It seems like I’m your instructor.”

“S-Sir Sid...”

“I-Instructor...”

The students’ eyes immediately filled with hope. Until now, they had been tormented by the fear of whether or not they could really become knights, and finally the light of hope shone in their hearts. They all looked at Sid with reverence.

“He really is a fine man,” Flora said.

“Yes, that’s Sir Sid...the legendary knight,” Alvin said. In a spot slightly away from everyone, Flora and Alvin peacefully watched over Sid and the other students. “I wasn’t wrong after all about my decision that day. The royal family legend, the secret spell of reincarnation and resurrection, the legend of Sir Sid. They were all real.” Alvin gazed at Sid with a dreamy expression. “Yes, if Sir Sid is here, then I’m sure I can...”

Flora laughed. “Why, Alvin, that expression on your face makes you look just like a maiden in love,” she said.

“What?!” Alvin said and waved his hands in a panic. “Wh-What are you talking about, Flora?! I-I’m a boy, you know?!”

“I’m just kidding. Still, with the way you’re panicking, could it be that you swing that way?” Flora said with a squeal.

“H-Hey! Flora!”

Flora giggled as Alvin’s face turned red.

Meanwhile, a little farther away from the two of them, Tenko was staring in

silence at Sid with a complicated look on her face.

It seems that Sir Sid is indeed the legendary Barbarian, Tenko thought to herself. However, there was no awe or respect in her eyes like her fellow students. Her eyes burned with frustration and resentment. *But no matter how strong Sir Sid is, I don't approve! I won't acknowledge him!*

Sid the Barbarian was cruel and inhumane, without a shred of chivalry. The legends that had been passed down throughout the ages told his whole story. If he truly was a righteous person, then why was he still spoken of in such a way? The answer was clear. In the end, Sid was the most unsuitable kind of person to be a knight. Also, most of all...

"Tenko...please take care of Alvin..."

"As a knight, please protect Alvin..."

"I'll be the one to protect Alvin. I'm their knight," Tenko said to herself and squeezed the scabbard of her sword as she continued to glare at Sid with hateful eyes.

Chapter 4: Alvin's Secret

In the land to the north, in the throne room of Dachnesia Castle, which stood tall in the frigid demon city shut in by snow and ice:

"And? How are things proceeding?" the girl wearing the crown muttered, resting her cheek on her hand as she sat on her throne, looking bored.

"They proceed swimmingly." The answer to the girl's question came from a large crystal ball that was set up on the armrest of her throne. Inside of the crystal ball was an image of the witch cloaked in black. "The knight who Prince Alvin summoned a few days ago... There's no mistake. It's the legendary knight, Sid the Barbarian."

"And your reason for thinking so?"

"I have many, but I believe it would be quickest to just watch this," the witch said, and the image in the crystal ball switched to show Sid in his grand stand-off with the Kirimu. Sid was faster than the eye could follow as he cut into the Kirimu over and over again with his bare hands. This image was cut off when Sid easily defeated the monster.

"Ha ha. What do you think?" The crystal ball switched again to show the witch and her charming smile.

"Wh-What was that?! That was ridiculous!" The girl shuddered and moaned as she looked at the crystal ball. "This is Sir Sid the Barbarian, the knight of the legendary era?! Everything about that was insane! What even was that?!" The girl wearing the crown struck the armrests of her throne in a rage.

"You shouldn't be shocked by something like this," the witch said with an amused chuckle. "This isn't his true power. He was far too weak."

"What?!"

"Resurrecting after a thousand years must have been too much. Sir Sid's fighting ability is considerably weaker than when he was at his peak back then. Currently, he isn't at his full potential."

"You mean he's even stronger than this?! What are we going to do?!"

"Ha ha ha. My adorable master, didn't this happen because you wouldn't let sleeping dragons lie? I didn't expect this to happen either."

"What are you so calm for?! We can't back down from this plan of yours now, right?!"

"Yes, that's right. The ritual at the royal capital has been completed. All that's left is to wait for the gate to open. There's no stopping it now."

The girl wearing the crown growled and closed her eyes in frustration as she pounded the armrests of her throne. "Why?! Why is it always Alvin?! This isn't fair! It's unacceptable! It's unforgivable!" the girl said indignantly.

However, the witch answered her in a relaxed manner. "Do not worry. It is true that Sir Sid is likely the greatest obstacle to accomplishing your wish, my king. However, he has a weakness."

"A weakness, you say?"

"Yes, that's right. As long as he has it, you have nothing to fear from Sir Sid." Then with her charming smile, the witch explained Sir Sid's weakness.

"I see. So that's it?" the girl wearing the crown said, sounding disappointed after hearing the witch's explanation. "If that's the case, then no matter what Sir Sid does, it won't interfere with the plan."

"Like I said, it's no problem for us."

"In that case, I'll mobilize my followers as planned. I'm counting on you, my servant."

"Ha ha. Leave it to me, my adorable master," the witch said, smiling at the girl's rude attitude. Just then, the witch suddenly let slip a murmur, saying, "Still, for Sir Sid to resurrect in an age when both you and Prince Alvin are present...it feels like fate."

"What? Did you say something?"

"No, nothing at all. Well then, I'm counting on you to take care of the rest, my master," the witch said, and the image in the crystal ended with their

conversation.

"Hmph." For a short while, the girl stared lazily at the crystal ball. She then stood up and began to walk slowly. She left the throne room and walked through the empty, decaying castle corridors to the terrace.

There was a loud whoosh of air the moment she stepped on the wind-swept terrace, and she was met with a blizzard and its tremendous chill. It was such an overwhelmingly freezing wind that a normal person wouldn't have been able to survive more than five minutes in clothing as thin as hers. The girl was unfazed by this frigid weather and stared at the scene beneath her. Spread out far below were the ruins of what was once called the demon city. Most of the stone buildings had fallen into a state of ruin and were dyed white, as they were half-buried in snow and ice. The ridges of the mountain ranges that surrounded the city were also dyed white. The sky was an oppressive color of gray and filled with darkness, as blizzards of extreme cold hammered the location all year round.

As she looked down at this frozen hell, the girl wearing the crown muttered, "Ristis Yu Mastas Actima Walden," which meant "Heed my words on behalf of your master." The words she spoke in the ancient fairy tongue were immediately drowned out by the snowstorm and swept away. However, for some reason, words retained a strange gravity here as they spread out like an echo in the mountains, through the ruined city shrouded in ice and snow. She then said, "Khamed Ba Orthol Mians Khorne," or "I command you by my authority to answer my call," and something strange happened. Here and there in the dim ruins of the city, blue flames rose like will-o'-the-wisps. At first, there was one, and then they rapidly increased in number from one to ten, then to a hundred, then to a thousand. Then, these flames gradually changed their forms. First, they took the shape of human skeletons. The next moment, darkness spread and wrapped all over the skeletons. Finally, the demonic fires took the form of repulsive knights holding swords and wearing tattered, black clothing. The part of their faces where the eyes should have been instead housed an endless abyss. These ghostly knights appeared one after another throughout the abandoned city, answering the call of the girl wearing the crown.

"Well, that should do," she said as she looked down upon her horde of

knights of the dead. “Hmph, it’s vexing but it looks like this is all I can get to answer me with my current authority. Well, it’s fine. That is what this plan is for, isn’t it?” she said and her lips, like two lines of vermillion in the dark, twisted into a smile. “I can’t leave this city just yet and I’m bored. So, make sure you show me a good time. Okay, Alvin?” The girl giggled and her laughter was carried away in the blizzard. Meanwhile, her ghostly knights started to walk in unison and joined together on the city’s main road to form military-like ranks as they began their march.

In the royal capital of Calvania, around the outer perimeter of the lower level of Calvania Castle, the anguished cries of Blitze class’s students echoed through the air.

“Everyone...do...your...best!” Alvin huffed. With Alvin at the lead, the class was running along the walls of the castle. What’s more, they were dressed in heavy metal full-body armor like that worn by knights from long ago. On top of that, none of them had fairy swords, as they had been confiscated by Sid. In other words, they were completely without the mana provided by fairy swords that normally enhanced their physical abilities. With each step, the ear-splitting sound of metal rattled the students’ brains, and the enormous weight of the armor and hellish lack of oxygen was destroying the students of Blitze class.

“Come on. Run. Just keep running. Take deep breaths and try to imagine you’re taking something shiny into your body from the air,” Sid said as he calmly looked over the students.

“Wait, Sir Sid! What’s the point of this kind of training?!” Tenko yelled with tears in her eyes as she ran next to Alvin. “Ahhh! If I had my fairy sword, this armor would be nothing!” A fairy sword bestowed its user with enhanced physical abilities and unparalleled sturdiness. Just by holding the sword, the user would become more durable and tougher than any poorly made armor. A fairy sword could cut through a set of non-magical armor such as the one she was wearing like a hot knife through butter. In this day and age, it was meaningless to even wear it.

“Hey, what are those guys doing...in armor?”

"Why are they wasting their time with that training and not using their fairy swords?"

"Maybe they realized they're limited by their low sword rank and are getting desperate?"

At a glance, they could see students from Durande class, Ortol class, and Anthalo class looking suspiciously at them as they passed by on their way back from the day's training.

Sid completely ignored these students from the other classes and said to Tenko and the others, "You all rely too much on your fairy swords. Your basic physical strength is terrible."

"N-No way!"

"In our time, squires would run while wearing armor. And they'd go up and down tall mountains and had to swim back and forth in raging rivers while they were still wearing it."

"What?! Are you some kind of monster?! Someone would die if they did something like that!"

"Huh? Of course they would. Weaklings die during training all the time, right?" Sid said as if he couldn't believe someone was saying something so obvious. Meanwhile, his class looked at him horrified. Sid, who had lived in the age of legends, and these students of the modern age both seemed to possess different kinds of common sense and values in regard to human life. "Ha ha ha! I'm a nice guy, so don't worry. I won't train you all to death. So, let's add another fifty laps."

"He is trying to kill us!" Tenko said, and she felt dizzy with despair.

"I'm not bullying you guys just for fun. Like I said before, breathing is the basis of Will," Sid said and pounded his chest. "People are also a part of nature, but they are fragile beings. There's a limit to the total amount of mana inside their bodies. That's why you gather it by breathing in the mana that fills this world and then refine it. However, the mana inside of you and the mana that exists in the natural world are two different things, and you have to change it into a form that you can use. We'll need to do what the fairy swords normally do for

us. That skill is the key to Will,” Sid explained as his students wheezed in the background. “So, what connects mana, the spiritual element of nature, with the physical element of the flesh? It’s Will.”

Sid continued his explanation as his students’ labored breathing also continued. “In other words, you take mana into your body with your breath, use your Will to burn it all at once, and transmute it into your own mana. You know how they tell you to control your breathing when you focus? Well, Will can be controlled by a special breathing technique, and Will breathing is the only catalyst that will burn mana.” While Sid continued, the wheezing of his students became less frequent. “This whole process is called ‘burning one’s Will,’ and to perceive and manipulate its great power is the essence of Will,” Sid said. Meanwhile, the sound of his students wheezing had stopped. “Well, to put it simply, it’s all about the lungs. If you want to use Will, then you have to train your lungs by running and strengthening them. Then you can learn the finer points of Will,” Sid said, and before he knew it, all of his students had collapsed on the ground.

“Jeez, you guys are out of shape. It’s my first day teaching you, so I thought I’d start out with some light jogging, but it looks like you all won’t be able to do any real running for a while,” Sid said as he let out a disappointed sigh and jangled several chains with iron balls attached to them.

We’re going to die, and he’s going to be the one to kill us! Tenko and the others vaguely thought since they weren’t able to speak while they slumped pitifully on the ground.

It was evening a few days after their hellish training had started, and the sun was setting over the distant ridges of the mountains, bathing the surroundings in red and gold.

“Ha ha, good work, everyone,” said Alvin.

“Ahh! Today was rough!” Alvin’s words of encouragement and Christopher’s shout of fatigue echoed throughout the training ground. Having finally finished their training for the day, the students of Blitze were sprawled out in a heap in the middle of the training ground.

"I-I thought I was going to die today," Elaine said.

Lynette coughed. "I-I could see my grandmother waving at me from the other side."

"He's merciless. Are knights from his era heartless or something?" Theodore said. All three of them were exhausted.

"Monster...he's a monster," Tenko said as her ears drooped. She lacked the energy for a better insult. The only thing any of them could do was limply slump down.

"Huh? What happened to Flora?" Alvin said as he lifted his heavy body.

"Oh, her? She went somewhere as soon as training was over today. She said something about wanting to wash off her sweat."

"Seriously, that girl never changes."

"It seems like the training has been tough for her, but she also makes it look easy."

"Just how much stamina does she have? I guess you can't judge someone by their looks."

The students all talked amongst themselves when suddenly Alvin spoke up. "I-I'm sorry, everyone," he said, and everyone looked at him.

"Hmm? What's wrong?"

"Why are you apologizing?"

"I'm just...sorry for making Sid our instructor without saying anything," Alvin said, and everyone blinked in surprise. "Of course, I was prepared. I thought I'd do anything to become strong enough to be king in the future. That's why I asked him to do it." As Alvin spoke, everyone listened in silence. "I'm sorry for making you all go along with this. If it's too much, I'll talk to Sir Sid and ask him to remove anyone from his class who wants that," Alvin said, but everyone just looked at each other and started laughing. "Everyone?" Alvin asked, and it was his turn to blink in surprise.

"What are you saying, Alvin? We're really grateful to you," Christopher said.

"Yes, we are," Elaine agreed.

"What?" Alvin said. Their unexpected response left him at a loss for words.

"I can honestly say it now. Deep down, I thought it would be impossible for us to become knights," Elaine said, shocking Alvin.

"The difference in sword ranks was absolute, after all. No matter how hard we worked, the gap between those guys with their higher-ranking swords and us just kept getting wider."

"Lately, it didn't feel like we were improving—despite our training," Lynette said, looking down.

"But, you know, now we have hope! You saw Sir Sid, right? He showed us you can do all of that without a fairy sword!"

"Will, that lost technique from the legendary age... Indeed, it may be impossible for us to reach that level, but if we could get even a little close to it..."

"Sir Sid assured us! He told us we can surely become stronger! He told us we can become knights! Sir Sid showed us hope!"

"That's right. Compared to our hopelessness in the past, this level of hellish training is nothing!" Faced with their passionate words, Alvin could only look on in amazement.

Then Elaine said, "That's not all, Alvin. It's because of you creating the Blitz class that we are able to pursue knighthood. Even though I come from a prestigious family of knights, being chosen by a low-rank fairy sword cut off my path to becoming a knight, and I was ostracized from my home. I had nothing left but despair, and, for a time, I even considered suicide. But...you saved me."

"Me too. Thanks to you, Alvin, a failure of a commoner like me can still pursue the dream I've had since I was a kid," Christopher added.

"I-I'm similar. Since I was able to become a squire, I got a scholarship, and my family—who are fallen aristocrats—can live without starving," Lynette said.

"Isn't it hard going against the three dukes, Alvin?"

"Yeah, I don't really get politics, but even I understand that much."

"As I recall, the three dukes announced that if the prince wanted to be included in a class for knighthood, he'd have to surrender to their command, right?"

"They're cowards for using this country's rules for royal succession against you like that."

"Still, you defied them in order to protect this country," Elaine said and took Alvin's hand as she looked him straight in the eyes. "Please, have confidence in yourself. If I am to become a knight, I want to be your knight, Alvin."

"Yeah, me too."

"M-Me too! If I'm going to serve, I want to serve the prince!"

"E-Everyone..." Alvin's eyes narrowed, and he was overcome with emotion.

"In other words, don't look down on yourself," Theodore said. He finally spoke up after being silent the entire time. "More than you realize, we're all here of our own choice. There's no need for you to feel guilty because of us. You're a prince and the next king. All you have to do is stand tall."

"Th-Thank you," Alvin said, smiling because of his comrades' words.

"Aren't you glad, Alvin?" Tenko said and hugged him from the side. "Of course, I'm here too! I'll always, always be your knight! I'll protect you from any hardship. So don't worry. It'll all work out fine."

"Tenko, you're right." The words of his fellow classmates, who shared his struggles from the past six months, filled his heart with joy. He was both happy and embarrassed, and he felt that his choice to take this difficult path hadn't been in vain. However, it also pained him. Lately, when he had spent time with them, Alvin felt the weight of heavy responsibility and unbearable guilt that seemed like it would crush his heart. Now was one of those times, and the reason was...

I keep betraying and lying to my comrades...and my people, Alvin thought. However, he didn't reveal to them what was inside his heart.

"Well, it's going to get cold soon. Let's head back," Alvin said, and they headed back inside the castle.

That night, in the top level of Calvania Castle at the far end of where the royal family's living quarters were located, Alvin was in his room unable to sleep. Having extinguished the room's lamp, he lay there in the darkness staring off into empty space. The conversation he had with his comrades that day, and how they supported him and acknowledged him as the future king, filled his mind. No matter how he tried, he just couldn't get to sleep. Occasionally, Alvin would have nights like this, and when that happened...

Without a word, Alvin rose from his bed. The front door of his room led to another room assigned to Sid. So, in order to get to this bedroom, one would have to pass through the other first. It was the perfect place for Sid to sleep as Alvin's bodyguard. Alvin tiptoed to the door.



He opened it without making a sound and checked inside Sid's room. Sid was sprawled out on his back snoring as he slept. Alvin felt like asking him if that was really an okay thing to do as a bodyguard, but after he confirmed he was asleep, he stood in front of the mirror in the corner. He stared at it for a moment and then gently touched the mirror's surface. It rippled like water as his hand sank into it. This mirror was actually an entrance to the fairy world that only Alvin knew about, and he went inside of it without hesitation. Beyond the mirror was a forest filled with clean air and a beautiful silver moon that floated in the night sky. The darkness enveloped Alvin with a motherly embrace, and a pleasant night breeze caressed his cheek. Relying on the faint moonlight for guidance, Alvin quietly walked into the forest. As he proceeded, the scent of fresh, clean water filled the air. Making his way through the forest, Alvin arrived at a small spring filled with clear water in an open area of the woods. The mirrorlike surface shined brightly, reflecting the light of the moon. The scene was magical. Fireflies danced along the water's edge.

Alvin carefully checked his surroundings for signs of anyone else and began to undress in the shadow of a tree. In the silence of the forest, the sound of clothes rustling and Alvin's underwear falling to the ground echoed softly. The lines of Alvin's body, that could be faintly discerned in the darkness of the forest, somehow seemed more feminine than masculine. Alvin then took out a comb that seemed to have magical power to it, and as he combed his hair with it, his hair grew longer. Alvin, now completely naked, stepped gently into the spring, and the sound of splashing water echoed quietly. In the spring there were no longer any treetops to block out the light of the moon shining overhead. Under the pale moonlight, Alvin's naked body was revealed...and it was the body of a girl.

It was undoubtedly a woman's body, not a man's. Long blonde hair like pure melted gold, a charming nape, graceful lines drawn by her body, and taut, lustrous white skin. Although her breasts were a modest size, they were beautifully round and pronounced her femininity in a way that couldn't be denied. Every part of her was like a work of art. Alvin let out a sigh of relief as she finally set free the real her, who she normally kept hidden from those around her. She was like a fairy of beauty who had descended to the spring.

Alvin sat in the shallow end of the spring and splashed as she began to bathe. She scooped up water with both of her hands and poured it over her body and washed her arms and legs. She then doused her head with water and carefully combed her hair. Droplets of water trickled down her pearly white skin, reflecting the moonlight and shining brightly. Alvin then stared at her reflection in the water she had scooped into her hands. From the look on her face, Alvin seemed to truly be at peace as she bathed in this liberating place with no one to see her.

However, she suddenly heard a rustling noise coming from the path she had taken to get here. Alvin's body instantly froze up, and she trembled.

No way! Somebody's here?! I'm the only one that knows about this place! Alvin thought and quickly looked back in the direction the noise had come from. Before she knew it, there was a man leaning against a tree with his arms folded, facing the spring.

"Yo, Alvin. Who would have thought that there was a place like this?" It was Sid. He should have been completely asleep, but for some reason, he was here. "Did I scare you? Sorry about that. No matter how deep asleep I may be, if something strange happens, I wake up right away. Your presence suddenly disappeared, so I came looking for you."

"Ah..."

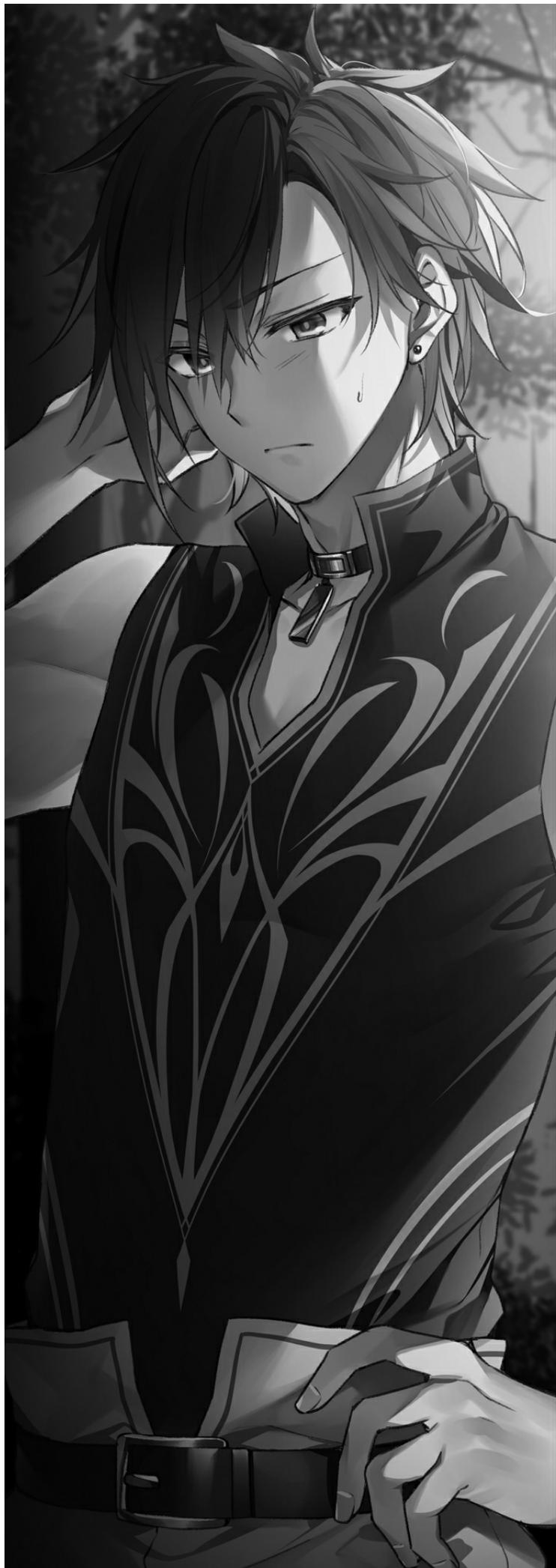
"Still, I'm not happy about this. This is probably a place that only you know about, but coming alone like this is just careless, you know? If you want to go for a dip, just say so. I'm your bodyguard, after all. You can always take advantage—" Sid stopped mid-sentence as his and Alvin's eyes met. Then his gaze scanned Alvin's figure from head to toe. "Huh? Umm...wait, really?" Suddenly, the knight, who had been a part of many battles, became unusually speechless and his eyes widened. He had finally noticed Alvin's body and her true identity. "Ha ha ha. You got me. Oh wow, I can't believe how blind I was."

In a panic, Alvin hid her chest and nether region with her hands and looked at the ground as her face turned red. Sid awkwardly turned his back to Alvin and scratched his cheek. Then, for a little while, an indescribable silence drifted between the two of them.

Eventually, as if Sid had made up his mind, he said to Alvin, “Um, you are Alvin, right? You’re not like his twin sister or anything, are you?”

“Um, well, you see...” All Alvin could do was tremble, and her silence told the truth more eloquently than anything else.

“Goodness gracious, Alvin. You were actually a woman,” Sid said, sounding stupefied, his words disappearing into the silence of the night.



"Can you talk to me about it?" Sid asked, and Alvin, who was currently Alma, nodded in response. Alma had already dressed herself in her usual knight's attire, and after running a strange comb through her long hair, it returned to its usual length. It seemed to be some kind of magic comb—when used on hair, it could change its length. On the edge of the pond, with a large tree to their backs, the two of them sat next to each other as they gazed at the reflection of the pale moon in the water. Then, after making up her mind, Alma spoke.

"There's not much to say, really," Alma said with a lifeless look in her eyes, as if she had given up on something. "Did you know? The kingdom of Calvania has been ruled by a male king for generations. According to the law, a woman cannot become king."

"Hmm? That antiquated rule is still around?"

"The former king, Auld, my father, was a king of the royal family and had become sickly. He was a wise king who kept the three dukes in check and did his best to maintain a good government whenever possible. His only fault was that he was not blessed with an heir."

Sid was silent.

"If the reign of the royal family collapses, then the three dukes will assume sovereignty over the kingdom. Duke Durande is planning on invading other nations, Duke Ortol only thinks of living in luxury by exploiting the people, and Duke Anthalo is trying to sell this kingdom to other countries. If they rise to power, then it's the end for this country."

"Princess Alma. Are you going to assume the throne as a man—as Prince Alvin?"

"Yes," Alma said and buried her face into her knees as she hugged them toward her. Her conflict and anguish could be seen in the way her petite body trembled. "I think it's really foolish, tricking and betraying everyone. But there was no other way. It's the duty of the royal family, and that's why I've pretended to be a boy this whole time."

Sid listened silently with an unreadable expression as his emotionless gaze wandered over the surface of the water.

"Of course, I'm prepared to live my life as a boy. But there are times when I really want to return to normal. There are times where I'm made very aware that I'm deceiving and betraying everyone, and I can't help but feel the urge to go back to being a girl." Alma then looked up with tears running down her face. It seemed like she really wanted to go back to being a girl right now.

"Is there anyone aside from me who knows your secret?"

"Just Isabella and Tenko—she's been my best friend since we were little."

"Is that right?"

"Yes. That's why..." Alma had a brooding look on her face as she took Sid's hand into both of hers. She looked straight at him and pleaded. "Please, please, can you keep this a secret? If the world were to learn that I'm a woman, then that would be the end of the royal family, this country, its people...everything," Alma said as Sid remained silent. "If you can keep this a secret, then...I'll do whatever you ask of me." With a silent determination, Alma moved in front of Sid. She leaned forward, close enough to feel his breath as they gazed at one another. Then, with a determined yet embarrassed look, her face turned red. With a downcast gaze, she brought her hand to her chest, and one by one, undid the buttons on her shirt and began to slowly take off her clothes. "If you desire it, I'll do anything for you. Even..."

"Okay, just hold it right there," Sid said as he reached out and closed her shirt around her exposed chest.

"Sir Sid? What are you doing? O-Ow!" Alma said as Sid gave her a chop to the head.

"Dummy. Someone who's trying to be king shouldn't give themselves away so easily. Just when are you going to prove to me that you can be my future lord?" Sid said, but his expression was gentle and kind. He rubbed her head, and she looked like she was in a daze.

"Oh..."

"It's okay. You can relax. Whether you're a woman or a man, that doesn't change my loyalty to Arthur. I will protect you from all your enemies and those with evil intentions, so don't worry." Suddenly, Alma's eyes and nose felt warm,

and her sight gradually became blurry. Meanwhile, Sid continued to speak kindly to her. “I have the utmost respect for you. I can’t even imagine with my weak brain the pressure of being a woman trying to become king, let alone hiding her identity. You must have been struggling to bear all that weight with that frail body of yours, haven’t you?”

“I...”

“You’re amazing. Be proud of yourself.”

“Sir Sid, can I ask you for something?”

“What is it?”

“For tonight, can I stay a girl just a little bit longer?” Alma asked as her voice trembled.

“Yes, do as you wish,” Sid said. Alma then leaned forward and hugged Sid in a powerful embrace. Her body trembled, and she sobbed into Sid’s chest like a child. As she did, Sid silently stroked her head, her back, and her hair and continued to do so for what seemed like forever.

The next day, Tenko was in a bad mood, and it wasn’t because of the heavy armor she was wearing during their usual hellish running. It was because of Alvin and Sid.

“Yeah, that’s it. Keep it up, Alvin.” Sid was giving Alvin instructions on swordplay combined with Will. Among the other students, Alvin was the most adept at using Will and was a step ahead of the rest of them. “Just like I told you, breathe deeper with more of a rhythm. Feel the flow of mana that you take in from the world around you. Imagine that you’re sending a bunch of air to your Will, which has a small smoldering flame made of mana inside of it. Make that flame burn more intensely. Forget for a moment what it feels like to receive mana from your fairy sword.”

“O-Okay!”

“Let the mana you gain from burning your Will circulate throughout your body. Speed up your blood flow with your breathing, and imagine that you’re using that flow to send mana to every inch of your body.” Alvin’s sword swung

hard under Sid's strict but enthusiastic guidance.

"L-Like this?"

"No, that's wrong. You're wasting mana by releasing it from your body. Okay, now I'm going to channel mana into you. Remember that feeling and imitate it."

"Okay!" Alvin said. "Oh. Just now, for a moment, my body felt hot, and I swung my sword faster than usual."

"It looks like you've already grasped one of the concepts of Will. You've really got a knack for this."

"Huh?"

"That feeling is 'passing mana.' If you pass mana through your limbs, you'll be able to use more physical strength than usual, and if you pass mana through your fairy sword, you can use even stronger fairy magic."

"Th-That's what it was?"

"Yes. However, you've still got a ways to go. Right now, your Will just kind of warms you and makes you feel better, right?"

"Y-Yeah..."

"Will has a number of different fields and techniques beyond that. But, for now, just learn how to burn your Will and pass your mana through your limbs and your sword. That will make you strong enough."

"I-I will!" Alvin replied happily. Then they resumed their one-on-one training as Tenko glared at them with a stern look.

Sir Sid is training Alvin. That's fine. It's just... Tenko thought.

"Okay. Let's take a break for a minute," Sid said to Alvin, who was breathing heavily.

"N-No! I can keep going!"

"Alvin?"

"Again. Again, please! I don't want to forget this feeling!" Alvin said, pressing toward Sid.

"My mana is still too strong for you right now. It'll be a strain on your body if I pour too much into you."

"But I want to get stronger as soon as possible so that I can become a great king. I don't have any time to waste! Please!"

"I guess there's no stopping you," Sid said with a wry smile, giving in to Alvin's enthusiasm. "You shouldn't overdo it, but they do say you should strike when the iron is hot. But only a little more, okay?"

"O-Okay! Thank you very much!" Alvin then turned around and untensed her body, entrusting herself to Sid. From behind, Sid grabbed Alvin's left shoulder and the wrist of her right hand, which was holding her sword, and their bodies drew close to one another.

"All right, here I go. It's going to be a little strong. It might be tough, but try to get a firm grasp on that flow with your spiritual senses. Match the flow of your Will's mana with the mana I'm pouring into you."

"Okay. I-I'm ready." Alvin said, and with her eyes shut, focused her mind and breathed deeply. Then, as Sid's hand guided her, Alvin slowly began to swing her sword.

As Tenko looked closely, she could see that Alvin's cheeks were slightly flushed. However, it didn't seem like it was because of the intense training. Alvin seemed completely at ease with entrusting her body to Sid. This made Tenko feel a strange unease that what they were doing went beyond mere training.

"Wh-What is this?" Tenko said as she glared at the two of them. To put it bluntly, they seemed oddly close to each other. Now that she thought about it, Alvin had been acting strange since that morning. Sid was his usual self, but it felt like Alvin was strangely affectionate toward him. During their break, the other students had noticed this as well.

"Wh-What's going on with those two?" Lynette said.

"You could say it's just because it's that kind of training but..." Elaine said, and they both tilted their heads quizzically. "What do you think, Tenko?"

"I-It's nothing! Alvin is just ahead of us in training and is moving on to the next

step. That's all it is! I'm not even thinking about it," Tenko said like she was trying to convince herself.

"Hmm? Could it be that our instructor and Alvin...are a thing?!" Christopher said with a smug look on his face.

"What?!"

"Huh?! Wh-What are you talking about?! Those two are both gentlemen!" Elaine said, turning pale.

"I-I don't think that kind of thing is appropriate!" Lynette said, breathing heavily as her face turned bright red. She seemed excited for some reason.

"Hey, you never know. I mean, I'm a guy, but sometimes Alvin is so sexy that I can't help feeling a little nervous. Even in old tales of knights, romance stories between the pretty ones were fairly common, so maybe—"

"Maybe what?" Before Christopher could finish, he was cut off by Tenko's voice, which chilled him to his very core. The next thing Christopher knew, Tenko was holding a drawn sword, the tip of which was being thrust at his throat.

"Waah! N-Nothing!"

"Hmph!" After silencing Christopher, Tenko returned her sword to its sheath. *I don't know what happened, but I don't care! There's no way it can compete with the bond that Alvin and I share! After all, I'm one of the few close friends who knows Alvin's secret!* Tenko thought. Then, as if she was proud of her victory, she made a smug yet sad look. Tenko was trying to maintain her sense of superiority and mental balance. However, behind her...

"Oh! Sir Sid! How was that?!"

"Being able to do that much after only a few days of studying Will is pretty good."

"I did it! Thank you so much!" Alvin smiled and jumped in the air after taking Sid's hand.

"Seriously, you're picking this up pretty quick. Even for knights in the legendary age, it usually took them quite a while to get a feel for using Will."

"Ha ha. I'm sure it's because you're such a good teacher!"

"Hmph, what are you so excited about?" Sid said and grabbed Alvin's head. "It'll be useless in battle, where you won't be relaxed and focused like you are right now. You're still stronger while being carried by your fairy sword, so you've got a long way ahead of you, okay?"

"I understand! I look forward to your further instruction!"

"Well, just leave it to me," Sid said and ruffled Alvin's hair. Alvin accepted it somewhat happily.

I-I don't like that barbarian! Tenko thought and seethed in jealousy by herself.

Chapter 5: An Incident at the Royal Capital

“The demon country to the north is on the move?!”

There was unrest in Calvania Castle, and Alvin was currently on its middle floor at a table in the military council room. He was facing vassals, Calvania fairy knight captains, and officers of the royal general corps who had urgently convened. They were all in a state of panic over what a messenger soldier had to tell them.

“Yes, sir! In the northern demon kingdom of Dachnesia, a force of around two thousand phantom knights suddenly appeared! They’ve crossed the Death Palace mountains to the north, broken through the border fortifications, and are advancing on the royal capital at an alarming speed! They are expected to reach the capital within three days!” the messenger said, and their report sent the room into an uproar.

“Phantom knights?! The vanguard of cursed soldiers who serve the demon king?!”

“That’s preposterous! I had heard that the Dark Order of Opus had resumed its activities in the old demon country, but I never imagined that they would begin to move into the kingdom of Dachnesia.”

“But why phantom knights now of all times?! Those cursed spirits of dead knights don’t accept the orders of anyone aside from the demon king!”

“Could the rumors be true that a successor to the demon king has really appeared in the demon kingdom?” As everyone became confused and upset, the head of the Ladies of the Lake and acting leader, Isabella, spoke up decisively.

“Everyone, please calm down,” she said firmly. “Finding out the truth behind the demon kingdom and the Order of Opus will be for another time. Right now, our first priority is to deal with this sudden crisis.” She glanced at the minister of war and asked, “What portion of our military can respond immediately to this?”

"Not taking into account the minimal defenses of the royal capital, we have two thousand fairy knights and around ten thousand regular soldiers."

"With the phantom knights' strength, normal soldiers without fairy swords are useless. Taking that into consideration, we'll just barely be able to push them back with all our strength. All members of the Order of the Fairy Knights are requested to prepare for battle immediately," Isabella said, quickly giving instructions to everyone.

"Looks like we have no choice but to go to war this time. Of course, I'd rather not," said a large, arrogant-looking middle-aged man who was sitting in a chief seat at the war council. He was Duke Durande, leader of the first group of Calvania fairy knights commonly known as the Red Knights.

"Yes, of course. Considering the fighting ability of phantom knights, the only ones who can compete with them are the fairy knights. The ones at the core of this battle, and the ones bearing the brunt of their assault, will be us," a bewitching woman in glasses with a self-satisfied expression added. She was Duke Ortol, the captain of the second group of fairy knights commonly known as the Blue Knights.

"So, the ones inevitably shedding blood will be—I mean, it is only natural that we knights, the shields of the kingdom, should bear the pain of the country in its time of crisis," a blond man of good looks and indeterminate age said as he stroked his hair. He was Duke Anthalo, the captain of the third group of fairy knights, the Green Knights. These three were the current heads of the three major ducal families, who, along with the royal family, were the backbone and guardians of the kingdom of Calvania.

Hearing such words from them at a time like this, Isabella narrowed her eyes at them and said, "What are you trying to say?"

"No, it's just...we're being forced to bear so much for this war. So, I think it would only be fair if the royal family would give us some kind of consideration or favorable treatment as a reward in the future," Duke Anthalo said. The room was immediately abuzz as the three dukes were trying to take advantage of the chaos to further their interests in the kingdom.

"The king is the supreme commander of the Calvania royal army, including

the fairy knights. I would believe it's perfectly natural to deploy troops according to royal decree, don't you think?" Isabella said.

"Yes, that's true. Our positions and territory are granted to us and guaranteed by the royal family. It's perfectly natural that we give our all for the kingdom," Duke Anthalo said.

"But unfortunately, the current head of the royal family, the king, is absent. Granted, there is a successor," Duke Ortol said, glancing over at Alvin, who was sitting in the seat of highest position. All Alvin could do was remain silent and take her gaze.

"Also, while you serve in accordance with the ancient pact as the head of the Ladies of the Lake and currently act in national affairs, Lady Isabella...you are merely the king's representative. In other words, we, the three dukes, have no obligation or duty to respond to your orders of deployment," Duke Anthalo said.

"That's right. We are knights loyal to the royal family and his majesty the king," Duke Ortol added.

"How dare you so shamelessly use sophistry like this? Are you trying to use this national crisis to further your own positions and interests in the kingdom?" Isabella said with a quiet anger.

"No, no it's not that at all. It's just...unfair that we'll be the only ones shedding blood. The king and his vassals should also share in the burden, shouldn't they?" Duke Anthalo asked.

"You would get to be safe while you make us send out our knights and watch us suffer, right? It wouldn't make any sense," Duke Durande said.

"We just want to know how the royal family is going to make it up to us," Duke Ortol said, and Isabella clenched her fist in frustration. This was the kind of country that Calvania was. The king was indeed the supreme commander of the kingdom's armed forces, but for some reason, there were no fairy knights the king could directly command. The Royal Fairy Knight Academy of Calvania was strange, in that students from the Durande class, Ortol class, and Anthalo class were usually directly incorporated into Duke Durande's Red Knights, Duke Ortol's Blue Knights, and Duke Anthalo's Greens Knights after graduation. That

was why, at the suggestion of Auld, the previous king, Alvin established the Blitz class to form fairy knights that could be commanded directly.

"Hmm, yes. When we've overcome this crisis, how about we—"

"So basically..." As Duke Anthalo was about to demand some kind of concession from Isabella, who couldn't say anything back to him, a young knight who stood like a shadow behind Alvin, raised his voice. "If his majesty, Alvin, sends out his personal knight, then there's no problem, right? In that case, I'll go." It was Sid, a knight who had recently awakened from the thousand-year slumber of death and was under the command of Prince Alvin. He was the legendary Sid the Barbarian, said to be the strongest knight of the legendary age, and the upper echelons of the kingdom were already well aware of his presence. Right now, his words had gained the attention of everyone in the room.

"Sir Sid...Sid the Barbarian is going to participate in this war?"

"Rumor has it he single-handedly defeated a Kirimu in the fairy world."

"Foolishness! Not even a knight from the legendary era could do that!"

"We don't even know if he's a knight from the legendary era in the first place." Such whispers could be heard among the vassals and military officials in the room.

"Ha ha ha! Nonsense!" Duke Durande slammed his fist down on the table and glared at Sid. "If you go? You fool. What difference could a single knight make?!"

"Unbelievable. You should think about just how much military force we are sending out there before you speak," Duke Ortol added.

"You alone couldn't match the strength of two thousand fairy knights," Duke Anthalo said. The three dukes took turns ridiculing Sid when, finally, he spoke up.

"I'm stronger," Sid said, completely unfazed.

"What?"

"You couldn't hear me? I said that even with all two thousand of your

personal fairy knights, I'm stronger." For a moment, there was silence, and then the entire room burst out in laughter.

"Ha ha ha. What foolishness!"

"It appears knights of the legendary age were fond of jokes!"

"Maybe you should call yourself the Clown instead of the Barbarian?!" In the face of all their excitement, Sid simply scratched his cheek, troubled.

"I mean, I was telling the truth, but whatever, I guess." Shifting gears, Sid then addressed the three dukes and said, "Well, anyway, I'll fight for the royal family. If I can do better than your knights, how about you cease these scummy negotiations of yours? After all, if we all bleed equally, it 'makes sense,' right? I mean, say what you want, but we're all friends who fight under the same flag to protect the same country. So how about we get along?" Sid said fearlessly. Meanwhile, the dukes, who now sensed he was more than just a mere clown, tightened their expressions.

"Fine," Duke Anthalo responded quietly. "That is, if you're not just all talk and actually manage to accomplish that much on the field of battle."

"Good, so I have your word," Sid said and then turned to Alvin, who had been watching the proceedings. "Hey, Alvin."

"S-Sir Sid?"

"The rest is up to you. What are you going to do? I still haven't sworn my allegiance to you, but I want to help you at least," Sid said and stared straight at Alvin. "'A knight speaks only the truth.' If you order me to, I'll go and get the kinds of results on the battlefield that will shut up these three annoying dukes. However, if you don't believe in my strength, and don't want to embarrass yourself by failing, and don't want to jeopardize your position in the future, then you should refuse," Sid said, and Alvin was silent. "So, what will you do?" he asked and stared at Alvin with a wry smile like he was testing her.

For a moment, Alvin shut her eyes and was silent. Then she opened them and declared, "I believe in you! This is a royal decree! Sir Sid, go forth against this invasion by the demon kingdom and satisfy me with your deeds on the battlefield!"

"Hmph. You're starting to sound a lot like a king, aren't you? That's good," Sid said and grinned at Alvin's order. With that, the tumultuous and chaotic military conference, filled with various agendas and turbulence, had come to an end.

"So that's the danger that the capital now finds itself in," Alvin said, having explained the situation to her classmates. They were all in the remote mansion facing the courtyard on the lower level of Calvania Castle. Having heard Alvin's story, everyone looked at each other nervously.

"S-So that's what that was all about," Christopher said.

"I knew there was a lot of tension in the castle this morning," Theodore said, and he and Christopher both groaned as sweat appeared on their foreheads. The other students had a similar look on their faces, and they all gulped.

Sid then spoke up to add onto Alvin's story. "The fairy knights will leave behind a minimal defense in the capital, and all troops will go into battle to intercept the demon kingdom's army, which is approaching from the north. The squires of the knight's academy—you guys—will form platoons, with each class's instructor serving as commander, and provide rear support for the fairy knights defending the royal capital." Sid slid his gaze to look across at Alvin, who had a somber expression on her face. "However, since I will be going to the front lines as a knight fighting for the royal family, the commander of the Blitze class will be you, Alvin. In the unlikely event that the front line is breached and the enemy forces invade the capital, the fate of your fellow students' lives will be in your hands. Can you do it?" Sid asked.

"Yes, leave it to me!" Alvin answered, nodding firmly.

"Good answer," Sid said and nodded in satisfaction as he tousled her hair. Alvin smiled for a brief moment before she got an anxious expression on her face and looked down.

"What's wrong?" Sid asked.

"I'm just sorry that things turned out like this," Alvin said, her face full of regret.

"What do you mean?"

"Because of my position and my selfishness, you have to go to the front lines, Sir Sid," Alvin said to Sid as he stared at her. "To be frank, I'm... The royal family is hated by the three dukes. As a knight under my command, you probably won't receive any real assistance on the front lines, Sir Sid. I've asked Isabella to help you but..." Alvin trailed off as Sid listened in silence. "Of course, I know how strong you are, Sir Sid! And I'm trying to not have doubts. But there's no telling what can happen on the battlefield, right?!"

"Yeah, you're right. My memory is hazy, but I remember thinking 'There's no way they'll die in a battle like this,' and time and again they did. I've lost many of my comrades in arms just like that," Sid said, and his confession sent Alvin into a shocked silence.

"I'm worried. I can't bear to think about something happening to you, Sir Sid!" Alvin said, and Sid was silent. "I have a bad feeling about this. It's this terrible feeling like something will happen to you in this battle, and you'll disappear," Alvin said, and Sid remained quiet. "If you were to disappear, Sir Sid, I'd just..." Alvin started to say, but she was met with a flick to the head from Sid. "Ow!"

"A commander shouldn't be airing out their worries in front of their subordinates. Just when I thought you'd grown up and become a bit more like a king, you take another step back," Sid said but had a gentle expression on his face. "Relax, I'm not going to die in a place like this. Also, I'm not going to let you guys die. It's just two thousand phantom knights, right? I won't let a single one get through the front line," Sid said and gave Alvin a grin as he stared straight at her. "I still have a lot that I want to teach you guys as knights. And I'm not just talking about simple brute strength."

"S-Sir Sid..."

"That's why no matter what happens, survive. And if something happens, don't hesitate to call me. I'll be there right away and make sure you're protected. You understand?" Sid said.

Alvin took Sid's hand and held it to her chest. "I believe in you, and I wish you good luck."

"You too," Sid said, and he and Alvin looked at each other with the light of trust in both their eyes.

"Alvin..." Meanwhile, Tenko's ears drooped, and her shoulders slumped as she looked sadly at the two of them.

Two thousand of the royal army's troops, with the fairy knights of Calvania as their main force, set out from the royal capital. Their destination was to the north, where a wave of two thousand phantom knights from the demon kingdom were approaching. Based on the speed of their advance, the estimated point of contact would be the Fabome Plains. With cavalry as the main force for both sides, it was expected to be a large-scale battle that would be decided by maneuverability.

With the enemy's attack, the royal capital of Calvania was thrown into turmoil for the first time in over a decade. At the capital, in preparation for the unlikely event that the front line was overtaken by enemy forces, women and children were given priority and evacuated to Calvania Castle. Those among the senior students of the Fairy Knight Academy with high sword ranks went to the front lines as members of the Order of Fairy Knights. All other students were divided by class into platoons that assisted the royal capital defense corps with security and evacuations in the now tumultuous capital. Among these platoons were Alvin and the other students of Blitze class. Though a member of the royal family, Alvin was still a squire who had not yet been knighted. As such, the orders of the senior knights were absolute, and Alvin was on guard duty while under their direction. During the evacuation, an old woman using a cane approached Alvin.

"P-Prince..."

"What's wrong, ma'am?"

"I heard... I heard a terrible enemy is coming," the old lady said.

"Yes. However, the Calvania fairy knights are sending their full force to fight back, so please don't worry."

"Oh, I see. I'm sorry, but I'm still afraid. Do you think we will live to see tomorrow?"

"I don't..." Alvin was at a loss for words and ashamed of being unable to answer her immediately.

"Oh why, why is this happening? If only the old king, lord Auld were here!" Hearing the old lady say Alvin's father's name filled her heart with a bitterness that was hard to contain. Of course, the old lady wasn't saying the old king's name out of malice. She was just worried, and Alvin knew why this was happening. Alvin was still too inexperienced as a king and had yet to earn the people's trust. However, Alvin would not be discouraged. She placed her hands on the old woman's shoulders and spoke to her sincerely.

"Don't worry, ma'am. The pride of the kingdom, the fairy knights, and I will protect this royal capital and the people who live in it with our lives."

"Oh, Prince Alvin..."

"So please, just to be safe, please evacuate. It will all be fine," Alvin said, reassuring her again and again. Alvin then took the old woman's hand and led her along.

"Phew, it looks like the evacuation is going well so far," Alvin said and looked around while guarding the main road with the Blitz platoon. On the main road, the anxious citizens trudged along in a long line toward the most heavily guarded location in the capital, Calvania Castle, while they were being protected by the royal capital defense corps. They all had uneasy expressions on their faces, and Alvin worried about riots starting as she watched her surroundings.

"Alvin," Tenko said as she walked quickly up to Alvin. She was coming back from checking on a dispute between citizens on the opposite side of the street. "How are things over here?"

"No problems here. How about with you, Tenko?"

"No problems."

"So, how's your fairy sword? It was broken pretty badly by that Kirimu the other day," Alvin said, and Tenko partially unsheathed her katana at her hip. Her fairy sword, which had been smashed in two, was now completely repaired without a scratch on it.

"Durga, the Titan blacksmith who works in the castle, repaired it for me in a hurry. I don't think there will be any problems when I fight with it."

"So, they finished it in time. That's good to hear," Alvin said, smiling with relief. "According to Sir Sid, if we keep burning our Will on a regular basis, our total amount of mana will increase, and our fairy swords will become stronger along with it."

"Is that right?" Tenko muttered sullenly. Alvin looked around once more. Christopher, Elaine, Lynette, Theodore, and Flora were all assigned to different jobs, but there wasn't anything particularly urgent. As Alvin was looking over her classmates, Tenko suddenly spoke. "Still, things have gotten pretty crazy, huh, Alvin?"

"You're right."

"Still, it'll probably be totally fine," Tenko said. She spoke like she was sulking. "The strongest knight of the legendary age is fighting on the front line, after all."

"Tenko?" Alvin said, as something felt off about her words. They seemed to have a hidden meaning to them.

For a moment, there was an awkward silence between the two of them until, eventually, Tenko spoke up. "Can I talk to you about something?"

"What is it, Tenko?" Alvin said, tilting her head quizzically, and then Tenko began to lecture her.

"Alvin, haven't you been strangely close to Sir Sid lately?"

"What?! I-I don't think so!" Alvin said as she raised her voice and blatantly diverted her gaze. Tenko drew close and grabbed Alvin's hand. "Tenko?" Pulling Alvin's hand, Tenko led her to a deserted alleyway. Tenko then spoke in a hushed voice so no one around them could hear.

"You understand, right? You're really a girl. So, if you let him get too close to you and he finds that out, what are you going to do?" Tenko said, and Alvin's expression tensed up for a reason that Tenko didn't understand. "Listen. Please don't ever let your guard down. You can't let down your guard with him. Sure, he may be incredibly strong, but...that's it." She drew close to Alvin and continued to talk angrily. "He's the legendary Barbarian. He's the man they call cruel, inhumane, and a disgrace to chivalry. He may be acting like a knight for now, but there is no telling when he'll show his true nature. If he finds out that

you're a woman, he'll use that to make you do all kinds of awful things. He'll demand that you use your body to satisfy his vulgar desires!"

"S-Sir Sid would never do something like that!" Alvin protested, blushing bright red. "Sir Sid isn't someone who would do that kind of thing! Despite how he looks, he's more sincere and gentlemanly than anyone!"

"How can you be so sure?"

"U-Um, well..."

"You can't trust Sir Sid! You absolutely can't!" Tenko grabbed Alvin's shoulders and spoke like she was begging. "I'm the one who's going to protect you! I made a promise! Even if it means giving my life, I'll do it! I'll protect you! So don't let someone like him..."

Alvin couldn't help but notice her friend's strange behavior. "Hey, Tenko...what's the matter?" Alvin gently asked, trying to soothe Tenko. "I can't blame you for not liking Sir Sid, but it feels like you're way more upset...or concerned about something else."

"Th-That's not..." Alvin's observation immediately flustered Tenko. Alvin knew that she was right because of the way Tenko's ears drooped and her tail sagged when she got busted at times like this.

"Hey, Tenko? If there's something you're worried about, can you tell me about it?" Alvin calmly asked Tenko. "We've been best friends since we were kids, right?"

"A-Alma..." Tenko looked at Alvin as if she were in a daze. She had used Alvin's real name. It could only be used when it was just them together. However, after a while, Tenko returned to her senses. "No, Alvin. It's nothing. There's nothing wrong," she answered, with her eyes downcast.

"Tenko." Realizing that her childhood friend had nothing to say to her, Alvin sadly murmured her name.

"Our seniors will be mad if we stay away from our post for too long. Let's go back," Tenko said and was about to leave.

However, just then, fog drifted over the area. "What? Fog?" Alvin said. It

enveloped the entire capital and quickly became thicker. “That’s strange. Early in the morning is one thing, but for it to be so foggy all of a sudden at this time of day?”

“You’re right. It’s strange.” Alvin and Tenko tilted their heads at this strange, unnatural phenomenon. Suddenly, there was a loud noise. From deep in the back alleys in the southern corner of the royal capital, a strange noise like a heartbeat echoed throughout the capital.

Meanwhile, on the Fabome Plains, north of the royal capital, the two thousand phantom knights who crossed the Death Palace Mountains and the two thousand royal fairy knights who came from the south were glaring at each other. The phantom knights of the demon country rode atop black horses known as phantom steeds, and their crimson eyes shone from inside their hoods. They sought to destroy all living things. They were in the kind of dense, no-frills formation that becomes a single mass as it tramples everything in front of it. When considering the fighting ability of each phantom knight, it wasn’t a strategy to be taken lightly. For even with ten times the number of soldiers, normal troops would be scattered and crushed by such a tactic.

The opposing fairy knights were also mounted on warhorses and acted as cavalry. They were in a V-shaped formation and broken into three parts, with a center and two diagonal lines of troops to envelop the enemy. The center troops would catch the enemy while the others would attempt to encircle and annihilate them from the left and right. On a small hill at the tail end of the kingdom’s army, the captains of the first, second, and third knightly orders were gathered.

“It’s almost time,” Sid said as he squinted his eyes and observed the enemy lines in the distance. He wasn’t riding a horse and was the only knight participating as a foot soldier in the battle.

“Yes, it is. This formation isn’t bad, and it just might work,” Isabella said and nodded. She was next to Sid on horseback as she skillfully held the reins of her steed. Isabella, Alvin’s guardian and the royal family’s political representative, was serving as the supreme commander in the engagement. With her expert command and handling of the troops, she had already created a favorable

situation for them in this battle.

"Thank you for all of your hard work, Lady Isabella. However, we'll do as we please from here on out," Duke Durande said from behind Isabella as he rode on horseback. "You are a representative of the royal family, after all. We are under no obligation to follow your command."

"Besides, you're a civil official. You seem to be good at politics, but I wonder about your skill in military affairs. Don't you think it would be best to leave it to us?" Duke Ortol said.

"Well, they say that the experts know best. Good day," Duke Anthalo added.

"You should just do as you wish. That is, if you have a military force to follow you," Duke Durande said. After the three dukes had their say, they headed to the troops they commanded on their own. After seeing off the three selfish dukes, Isabella let out a sigh.

"Well, well. I wonder why they won't listen to their commander." Sid blurted out in disgust as his hands were folded behind his head. "They said all that, but you're quite the military strategist, aren't you, Isabella? There are no flaws in your orders."

"No, I'm just..."

"Ha ha ha. Don't be so humble. A regular civil official wouldn't have been able to handle an army's march and make this formation. Deep down, you're really a military officer, aren't you?" Sid said, and Isabella made a wry smile. Sid then let out a sigh as he cast a sideways glance at the backs of the three dukes. "If they all just moved as you commanded, then even knights of this era would probably be able to overwhelm these phantom knights with minimal casualties."

"For the sake of their reputations and future interests, they probably don't like the idea of a victory under the command of Isabella, representative of the royal family."

"Ha ha, I see. That's so dumb. Though, it is more convenient this way," Sid said, and with a smile, began to stretch his legs to the left and the right.

"What are you going to do, Sir Sid?"

"Hmm? It's obvious, isn't it?" As Sid stretched his legs, he looked back and grinned like a troublemaker at Isabella. "They said we should do as we wish, right? Well, that's what I'm going to do."

Finally, the curtain rose on the battle, and the phantom knights began to move. Whipping their phantom steeds, they charged in unison, and the thunderous beating of their horses' hooves shook the earth. The phantom knights' dense formation was like a black tsunami that was voraciously consuming everything. In response, the three dukes began to move and intercept them together.

A horn was blown, and a battle cry was raised. Every knight drew their sword, grabbed their horse's reins, and rode out. The blessing of the fairy sword was also effective on the horse of a knight, so by sending mana from their fairy sword to their horse, the horse gained incredible speed and sturdiness. Without a doubt, this cavalry with fairy swords was one of the strongest types of soldiers in this era. However, their opponents were phantom knights. A phantom knight on a phantom steed possessed terrifying mobility and close-combat skills. If both sides clashed head on, then a fierce battle was guaranteed to ensue. Even the knights hardened their expressions at the thought of the deadly battle that awaited them.

Just as the clash between the two armies was finally approaching, a single knight burst out from the ranks of the royal army. It was Sid, the only knight in the entire army who was on foot. Still, he moved faster than any other knight on horseback. With unbelievable speed, he ran across the plains and left behind the other knights in no time.

"He's faster than a horse while on foot?!"

"Wh-What the hell?! Wh-What's with this guy?!" The knights Sid was leaving behind stared wide eyed at his shrinking back.

"All right," Sid said, completely unconcerned with the knights who he left behind. Eventually, the encroaching phantom knights who seemed to paint the horizon black with their dense formation grew larger in his field of view. It seemed like they noticed him charging alone, and several phantom knights came at Sid with swords drawn, blatantly aiming for him. "Let's do this!" Sid

said, and without slowing down at all, ran straight for the enemy. With a yell, he fiercely swept his right hand, and a gust of wind mercilessly blew away a section of the phantom knights' front line.

What was happening was unbelievable. In the middle of the battlefield, on the brink of life or death, there was no time to be distracted by anything. The knights of the royal army obviously knew this. Even so, they couldn't avoid having their attention stolen by the spectacle in front of them. As he gave a fierce yell, Sid fought at the center of it all. After charging in by himself, he was isolated in the depths of the phantom knights. Normally, this would be a dead end—the point when a person's fate would be sealed. However, Sid was in absolutely no danger. Countless phantom knights came at him from the front, back, left, and right, trying to crush him. Swords and lances stabbed from all directions, trying to tear him apart and skewer him. However, Sid was completely unscathed. Almost as if he could see all around himself at once, he moved his body to the right, stepped to the left, leaped, did a somersault, and continued to dodge everything. Dodging their attacks with a yell, he swung his arms and legs in a raging assault. With his half-opened right hand, he sent the head of a phantom knight approaching from the right flying. With his left fist, he created an enormous hole in the chest of the phantom knight charging from the left. He then jumped, spun his body like a whirlwind, and delivered an axe kick so fierce to a phantom knight behind him that it cut both it and its horse in half. It was like Sid was dancing swiftly in the middle of the battlefield. With every wave of his arms and legs, phantom knights turned to black dust and disappeared. It was no longer a battle at all. It was just a slaughter.

"What is he?!"

"How is he doing all that without a fairy sword?!"

"That's a knight from the legendary era?!" The royal knights were abuzz, and all they could do was watch Sid's fierce battle from afar. They shuddered and trembled in awe. As they watched, Sid swung his half-opened left hand horizontally, and as fast as an arrow released from its bow, he cut three charging phantom knights in half all at once. At the same time, he floored two phantom knights attacking from the side with a counter from his right fist. The next moment, still on guard, Sid suddenly disappeared in a haze. Then, with a

loud boom in a completely different part of the battlefield, several phantom knights were blown into the sky. There, Sid's one-sided eradication of the phantom knights started again.

"He moved all the way over there in an instant?!"

"He was so fast I couldn't even follow him!"

Sid was destroying phantom knights at an alarming pace. Phantom knights were powerful opponents, with each of them having strength no less than that of the kingdom's fairy knights. Fighting phantom knights required fairy knights to form ranks with their backs to one another in order to provide cover while fighting one on one or, preferably, one versus many. Even then, they rarely took down a single phantom knight with a few sword slashes, and it would sometimes take dozens of strikes to finally destroy one. That's how strong phantom knights were supposed to be.

Sid yelled as he ran through five phantom knights at breakneck speed, zigzagging like a lightning bolt. He was like a flicker of light, only visible for a moment when his speed dropped ever so slightly while changing directions. When he ran through the five phantom knights, after a brief time lag, they fell to pieces and disappeared all at once.

"You're joking..."

"Th-This can't be real." The knights who were witnessing it were slowly starting to realize something. What Sid said before the battle about being stronger than two thousand fairy knights was true.

"Wh-What are you all doing?! What are you waiting for?!" Duke Durande's angry voice rang out from behind the backs of the knights. "Why are you all dragging your feet and letting a single knight get the better of you?! Kill them faster! Kill as many as you can!" Duke Durande was desperately trying to maintain his composure, but his face was completely pale. It was obvious that he was at his limit, and his expression showed that he didn't want to admit the world of difference between the strength of his troops and the knight from the legendary era before his very eyes.

"It can't be," Duke Ortol said.

"I had heard rumors, but I didn't expect...all this," Duke Anthalo said. While not as shaken as Duke Durande, they both gulped and were unsettled as they calmly watched Sid's furious battle from the rear of the battlefield. The two thousand phantom knights that were cut in half by Sid's assault were completely out of sorts and were now nothing more than a disorderly mob. Sid went from one end to the other, picking off and taking care of the phantom knights who had been cut down into smaller groups. By now, it was clear to everyone just who would accomplish the most if the battle went on like this.

Would it be Duke Durande's red knights? No. Would it be Duke Ortol's blue knights? No. Would it be Duke Anthalo and his green knights? Absolutely not. It would be the revived legend, Sir Sid the Barbarian.

"Hmm, it looks like this battle's been decided." About an hour had passed since the engagement started. Having realized that there were no longer any enemies around him, Sid ceased fighting. Thanks to him breaking apart the ranks of the phantom knights and considerably thinning out their numbers, it created an irreversible advantage for the royal fairy knights. In the vicinity, both friend and foe were mixed up among one another and fiercely engaged in combat, but, in general, the fairy knights had the upper hand. Completely clearing out the rest of the phantom knights would still take time, but as long as nothing happened, the royal army's victory was assured.

"Well, I've contributed enough to this victory, so now those dukes shouldn't be able to say anything to Alvin." Satisfied with his accomplishment, Sid turned his back to the battlefield and started to return to camp. However, along with the cacophony of his own heartbeat, Sid's body suddenly lurched, and he fell to the ground on one hand and one knee. His breathing was ragged, his face twisted in agony, and his body shook uncontrollably. He felt an emptiness like his soul was slipping away from him. A cold sweat covered his whole body, and he turned pale. Eventually, this fit subsided, and he staggered to his feet. "You went and overdid it, you damn idiot," he groaned to himself and shook his head. He then walked toward the main camp.

"S-Sir Sid!" From the main camp, a single woman came riding a horse at full gallop toward Sid. It was Isabella. "Excuse me for being on horseback! Are you all right, Sir Sid?" Isabella came to his side and pulled on the horse's reins to

turn it around and steady it. “Your face looks pale, and you seem...” Taking notice of Sid’s unnatural appearance, Isabella’s eyes opened wide, and she gasped. “Sir Sid, don’t tell me that you...?!”

“Yo, Isabella. I thinned out their numbers enough to ensure our victory,” Sid said, ignoring her and smiling impishly. “It will still take a while until things settle down, but we’ve won. There’s nothing more for me to do.”

“Th-Thank you for your efforts. You are indeed a knight of the legendary age. I didn’t think you were this strong.”

“It’s no big deal. There were plenty of guys who could do this level of work back in the legendary era. But putting that aside,” Sid said and looked up at Isabella with a hardened expression. “You didn’t come all this way to thank me, did you?” Sensing the unsettling atmosphere that followed Isabella, Sid urged her to talk. “What happened?”

“R-Right. The truth is, I just received word from the capital by messenger pixie.”

“From the capital?”

Isabella, who had turned pale, nodded. “Yes, right now the capital is in grave danger!” Isabella firmly declared.

The deep and mighty roar of a beast echoed throughout the capital. The sound was terrifying, and it shook the air, split the sky, and made the earth tremble. This wild roar was like a volcano erupting or some other violent force of nature. From it came a shock wave greater than a mountain wind that instantly spread out over a great distance like an arrow shot from a massive bow. The impact of the voice shattered and blew away houses that were unfortunate enough to be hit by it directly. The roar transcended logic and shot directly into the souls of all who heard it, instantly shattering their hearts and minds. The cry belonged to a creature who sat proudly on top of the food chain and whose roar was naturally imbued with a powerful and terrible magic. Among the citizens of the capital hit by the roar’s magic, a third of them instantly fainted, another third collapsed from paralysis or overloaded senses, and the final third found themselves lost in the midst of pure fear and despair.

It was so strong that it possibly sent those with a weak mind or body into an eternal slumber. It was both the cry of a tyrannical beast and a form of magic known as the crushing yell or “Stun Slaughter,” and there was only one thing in existence that could do such a thing.

“Wh-What is that?” Alvin said. She had been performing guard duty on higher ground with the others and was now watching in horror from afar. A huge monster with a body like a mountain had suddenly appeared in the southern area of the royal capital. The Kirimu they encountered before didn’t even compare to the overwhelming size of this monster. Despite being so far away from the beast, they could feel its oppressive presence as if they were right next to it. It was so huge it numbed Alvin’s sense of perspective. Just by looking, she could tell that its arms and legs—thick as large trees—were filled with inexplicable, violent power. The scales that covered its entire body were a shiny black. Its jaws were huge, and its red eyes blazed. It was an absolute tyrant that reigned above humans from its place at the very top of the food chain. It was a dragon, the highest class of monster and a physical manifestation of tyranny born from the awe and fear felt toward nature’s rage.

Almost as if to tear at the heavens, the dragon once again opened its jaws to the sky and let out an enormous roar. It was a massive wave of sound that spread throughout the capital, and after a few seconds, the powerful shock wave hit Alvin and the others head-on. The force of it blew Alvin’s body into the air and sent her rolling helplessly.

“Wh-Why?! Why is there a dragon here?!” Alvin said, trembling on her hands and knees as she looked up and stared at the dragon in the distance.

“It looks like it’s finally happening.” Alvin suddenly heard a voice, and it belonged to a figure who appeared at her side. “Éclair’s blessing is so strong in the capital. I really had a hard time tinkering with it.”

“Flora?” Alvin looked up to see the girl from Blitze class who was always so laid back and casual. Even now, she was smiling, looking as carefree as she usually did, staring at the dragon that had appeared in the distance.

“Flora, What are you saying?” Alvin stood up and readied herself against Flora, who seemed somehow different than her usual self.

"Oh my," Flora said and blinked with surprise at Alvin. "You're able to stand even after taking the dragon's Stun Slaughter. Honestly, I'm surprised. You have a really strong Will, don't you, Prince? You have my praise," Flora said and clapped her hands. The sharp sound of her out-of-place applause echoed throughout the area. She was as casual as she usually was, but there was clearly something strange about her. There was just a sense that something was wrong.

There was something strange about Flora from the very beginning. Alvin's—no, everyone's—perception of Flora was that she was a friend who shared their struggles. Still, somewhere deep down, Alvin had always felt uncomfortable about Flora. However, until now, she wasn't able to question it because the spell didn't allow her to question it.

"Flora, you're..." Now that Alvin's suspicions toward Flora had reached their peak, she was finally able to think about this discomforting feeling. "Flora, we're friends...from the same class." Alvin's memories fractured like a kaleidoscope, gradually leading her to a single conclusion. "No...you're... Who are you?" Alvin said, and Flora responded silently with a cold, coy smile. "Blitze class is just the six of us: Tenko, Elaine, Christopher, Lynette, Theodore, and me. It should just be a small class with only six people!"

"Oh, is that right?"

"A student named Flora didn't exist. Who are you?!" Alvin demanded, and Flora's shoulder slumped with a sigh. She looked somewhat upset.

"You see, in the past, witches used something called 'the line between lie and truth.' It was a type of magic where the user could slip information into the mind of a subject and manipulate their perception of reality. However, I'm not so conceited as to think that I could make such magic work on the mind of a knight from the legendary era. That's why I cast it on you and your friends before I met the great knight." It was just as she said. Even if her magic didn't work on Sid, it would work on Alvin and the others. If they didn't realize they were being deceived by her magic, then there was no way Sid could see through it all and realize that there never was a student named Flora in the first place.

"What?! You mean you cast the spell on us the day Sir Sid first came to our

class?"

"I mean, if I'm being honest, I actually felt like the last few days I spent with you all weren't so bad, you know?" Flora laughed and darkness swirled around her. It was the kind of darkness that was so thick it swallowed everything, and as shadows gathered around Flora, they began to change her appearance. "In school, we all worked hard toward a single goal, and isn't that what youth is all about? Despite how this may seem, I didn't hate it. At the least, I thought we were friends...even if that fake friendship was just a tower in the sand." As she laughed, the darkness around her changed shape into a pitch-black hood and robe, and the existence that was Flora was overwritten by the ghostly figure of a witch. "Now, allow me to reintroduce myself," she said, lifting the hem of her robe and giving a courteous bow. "I am the great witch, Flora, head of the Dark Order of Opus, which is dedicated to the dark fairy god. I'm pleased to make your acquaintance...though it might not be for much longer."

"The Dark Order of Opus?!" Alvin said, jumping back from Flora and drawing her fairy sword. "That dragon is here because of you?!"

"Yes, that's right," Flora answered with a chuckle.



"Did you know that this royal city used to be fused between the material world and the fairy world? In other words, this is one of the places that's closest to the fairy world. So, I took advantage of that." Paying no heed to Alvin and her drawn sword, Flora turned her back and stared at the dragon in the center of the city. "By using old magic, I connected the physical world and the depths of the fairy world by force with a 'gate' and a 'path' to summon the dragon here. I have to say, it was quite a lot of work, preparing the ritual while going unnoticed by the Ladies of the Lake."

"Why did you do that?!" Alvin shouted, as if she was about to slash at Flora.

"I did it to completely destroy the capital, of course," Flora whispered happily, and her cold words seemed to make the temperature drop by a few degrees.

"Destroy the capital?!"

"Yes, this royal capital that was built by the Holy King Arthur and, especially, that castle. It's a hindrance to my master's wishes. So, I'm going to wipe it clean off the map." Flora stared calmly at Alvin, who broke out in a cold sweat and turned pale. "That's why I've been secretly working on this plan for some time now. I used the phantom knights to create a diversion and dragged the fairy knights out of the castle. Now, with the royal city empty, this dragon I summoned from the depths of the fairy world will reduce it all to ash. Simple and effective, wouldn't you say?" Flora said with a chuckle.

"What have you done, Flora?! Tayweed!" Burning with anger, Alvin spoke the ancient fairy word for tailwind to her fairy sword and activated the green fairy magic "Gale." Wrapped in a powerful gust of wind, Alvin moved at high speed and thrusted at Flora.

"Oh my," Flora said, and all Alvin cut was her shadow. By the time Alvin realized it, Flora was standing on the roof of a nearby building, looking down at Alvin with a relaxed expression. "Oh, don't worry. I'm not going to do anything to you here. Summoning the dragon with that magical ritual consumed a considerable amount of my mana. It would be a bother to fight you with how tired I am right now." Flora then said something in the ancient fairy tongue, and a magic circle appeared beneath her feet. The spot slowly filled with shadow, and Flora's figure began to fade away.

“W-Wait! You’re running away?!”

“Running away? I’m letting you off the hook. You still have value as a backup for that girl.”

“Back up?! What are you talking about?!”

“Well, that’s only if you can survive against the dragon,” Flora said and was finally swallowed up by the darkness and disappeared.

Frustrated, Alvin thrust her sword into the ground and grasped it tightly. However, this wasn’t the time to just sit around upset. Right now, something had to be done about the dragon attacking the royal city. Alvin looked toward the center of the capital, which had become the front line where the huge dragon was rampaging at random, with no regard for anything. With a single blow from its claws or tail, it destroyed every single building around it, and the flames it spewed from its mouth set the surrounding area ablaze, turning it into a burning inferno. The evacuation of the area’s citizens was already complete, but there was no telling how many lives would have been lost if it had been delayed just a little longer.

Meanwhile, the fairy knights of the kingdom of Calvania weren’t content to just stand by and watch as this threat assailed the capital. Those who stayed behind in defense of the royal capital were no longer divided into orders of red, blue, or green. They had rallied together before the dragon, prepared to give their life in the struggle to somehow stop its rampage. They unleashed their superior swordsmanship and all manner of fairy magic. Swords of flame, flying balls of fire, freezing blasts of air, countless spears of ice, blades of wind, poison flowers, and boulders came from every direction in an attempt to subdue the dragon. However, none of them could pierce its tough scales. The dragon was simply annoyed at the knights, as if they were like bothersome insects to it. The dragon then made a mess of them with a huge swipe of its tail—as well as its claws and fangs that were as large as logs. This storm of pure violence was unleashed with a speed and agility that was unbelievable for the dragon’s huge size, and, unable to do anything against it, the knights were simply flung about.

“Sir Sid!” Unconsciously, Alvin stared at the back of her right hand and desperately called Sid’s name. There was no response from the crest at all.

Perhaps the fog had temporarily severed Alvin's connection with Sid. She couldn't summon him. "It's only a matter of time before the defense corps is completely wiped out, and when that happens, the citizens living in the royal city will be next!" Just as Alvin spoke those words, the dragon moved its feet and began to charge straight down the main road toward the castle, seemingly unconcerned with the half-destroyed fairy knights.

Whether it was ordered to do so or it was simply on a whim, it was going to attack the castle directly, and it shook the earth with each step as it went. Even for Calvania Castle, if it were to be hit by the dragon's large body, it wouldn't stand a chance. Also, there were the people who had taken refuge inside the castle in case of emergency.

"Everyone!" Alvin said as she turned around to look at her classmates. "We may be squires who have yet to be knighted, but we are still the shields that protect this kingdom! Now is the time to show what makes a knight a knight! Let's go and stop that dragon!" Alvin said, urging on her classmates. They were all silent. Elaine, Christopher, Lynette, and Theodore all just sat there helplessly as if their souls had left their bodies. Of course, it wasn't just the students of Blitz class. Students from all the other classes who had been standing by were just as helpless and trembling. It was the same even for Tenko, who was in tears and hyperventilating as she held herself, shaking uncontrollably.

"C-Could it be?!" Shocked, Alvin realized what was wrong with everyone. It was the dragon's Stun Slaughter. Dragons were an absolutely superior species to humans and were like the fury of nature if it had taken shape and materialized. The roar of the dragon had completely shattered the minds of the weak and coated their hearts with pure fear and despair. The dragon's roar was like a curse. With a single cry, it kept all those who heard it chained down, unable to even think of rising up. Aside from Alvin, all the other students were under the influence of Stun Slaughter's profound magical power. Their spirits had been broken, and they had lost the will to fight.

"F-Fight that? A-Are you serious?" Tenko said, trembling as she looked up at Alvin with tears in her eyes. "Th-There's no way we can win. We'd be crushed and eaten, right?" Shocked by Tenko's words, Alvin squeezed her eyes shut. All of the other students were likely in a similar state of mind as Tenko.

What should I do? What should I do? Alvin thought. Right now, the situation was desperate, and there wasn't any time to hesitate. Unable to make a decision, Alvin gritted her teeth.

"A-Alvin...let's run away," Tenko whispered.

"Tenko?"

"I-I understand that you want to fight to protect the capital because you're the prince of this country. B-But how do you plan on realistically fighting that thing!?" Tenko yelled, pointing a finger at the dragon that was making its way to the castle. "You can't win! There's no way you can win!"

Alvin fell silent.

"You'll be killed if you fight that thing, Alvin. You'll die for sure, and I don't want you to! So, abandon your people and let's run away tog—" Just as Tenko was about to utter the kind of words that would spell the end for someone as a knight, a sharp sound echoed throughout the area. Alvin slapped Tenko's cheek as she cowered in an unsightly heap.

"Huh?" Dumbstruck, Tenko pressed her stinging cheek. Meanwhile, Alvin glared at her sternly before her expression changed to a sad smile.

"That's no good, Tenko. You'll cease to be a knight if you talk like that." Alvin said as a startled Tenko opened her eyes.

"I... I was..."

"It's all right. I understand. I'm sure you didn't mean what you said. It was just a temporary reaction to the dragon's magic," Alvin said, gently admonishing Tenko and putting her hands on Tenko's shoulders. "But a knight should never say that. You want to become a knight, don't you? The kind of great knight who would serve a wonderful king like my father, King Auld?"

"I..."

"I'm sure you'll become a splendid knight one day. So, you shouldn't say that," Alvin said and then stood up.

"Alvin, wh-where are you going?"

"I'm going to fight the dragon. Even if everyone else in this country runs away,

I can't. And that's because I'm its king." With a determined will, Alvin turned on her heel with no hesitation in her step.

"W-Wait! Please wait!" Tenko cried, still on the ground and reaching for Alvin. "Don't go! You can't go! If you do, you'll die! You'll be killed!"

"Yes, I'll probably die in this fight. But if it were my father, he'd surely stay and fight till the end. The main reason I fight is because I want to save this country." In shocked silence, Tenko's eyes opened wide at Alvin's words. "In the end, I love this country. You and everyone else are here. There are many adversities, but I love this country because we can all smile and be together. So, I want to save it...even if it costs me my life. I suppose this is my path to the throne," Alvin said as she walked with an unwavering step. Then, after leaving with only those words and a flip of her cloak, Alvin bravely charged forward. Drawing mana from her fairy sword, Alvin cloaked her body in wind magic. Accelerated by the tailwind of her fairy magic, Alvin soared through the skies of the royal capital and headed straight for the dragon, running along the roofs of the city's buildings.

"A-Alvin...Alvin!" Tenko could only cry out as she reached for Alvin's back.

Chapter 6: The Lightning Knight

"The situation is dire." On the northern plains of Fabome, Isabella was showing a crystal ball to Sid that displayed the situation in the capital. "Someone has completely sealed off the royal city in a separate world. It's covered in a magical fog. Escape from the inside and infiltration from the outside are impossible. You may think you're heading for the inside of the capital when you enter it, but you just wind up back outside, it seems."

"That's a problem. In that case, Alvin probably can't summon me."

"What's more, a powerful monster from the depths of the fairy world, a black dragon, has been summoned to the southern section of the city. With its current limited defenses, it will only be a matter of time before it becomes scorched earth. And, of course, Alvin and the others will be..." As Isabella trailed off, Sid listened in silence. "Neither of these spells are simple, and they appear to be powerful magic used by witches long ago. They were probably prepared little by little over a period of time...along with the invasion by the demon kingdom." Isabella said, and Sid continued to listen in silence. "We've completely lost. With the main force of the fairy knights cut off from the city, there's nothing we can do. The Kingdom of Calvania...will fall." Isabella sank down in despair at Sid's feet. "What will I say to my ancestors? If only...if only I realized it sooner."

"It's still too soon to give up," Sid said. He dropped to one knee, coming to Isabella's eye level, and placed his hands on her thin shoulders. "Is there no other way, priestess? What about sneaking inside?"

Isabella was silent but eventually answered in a small voice. "There is a way..."

"Oh, so there is a way. Tell me."

"The royal city and the fairy world are two sides of the same coin. The dragon was summoned by directly connecting a path to the depths of the fairy world. In theory, it would be possible for us to dive to the deepest part of the fairy world

and use that path to enter the capital.”

“Well, then it’s simple. Just open the door to the fairy world for me then. You can do it, can’t you?”

“I’m able to, but I just can’t do that!” Isabella said, refusing Sid as she shook her head. “Down there, it’s crawling with terrifying monsters that can bend nature and the rules of this world! Do you actually think you can just go into that place and come back alive?!”

“What’s so bad about some monsters that can bend the rules of this world? I can do it,” Sid proclaimed.

Then, after gritting her teeth for a moment, Isabella said, “I-If you were as strong as you were in the legendary era, it would be possible for you to pass through the depths of the fairy world. But not with the way you are now!”

“I knew you’d notice,” Sid said as if he wasn’t really hiding the fact. “Yes, that’s right. I’m not going to be around much longer,” he said as casually as if he were talking about what he would have for dinner.

“Sir Sid... When I first met you, you were overflowing with an unbelievable amount of mana. You had so much it’s hard to believe that you were weaker than you once were,” Isabella said, but Sid was silent. “And what about now? You pale in comparison to when I first met you. I heard that you use a technique called Will where you take in mana from outside your body and turn it into your own, but...could it be that you aren’t actually able to take in mana?”

“So, you’ve found that much out, huh? Good grief,” Sid said, wincing. “Will isn’t a special skill. As long as they train, it can be used by any living being. So it seems like someone dead like me isn’t able to do it. Well, a dead man coming back to life is already pretty unnatural. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust and all that.” That meant that up until now, Sid had been using the mana of his own life force and, in other words, was reducing his very life as he fought.

“You’ve been fighting like that this whole time...”

“It doesn’t matter. Now, Isabella. Lead me to the depths. Time is of the essence, right?”

“Please wait! If you went there in your current condition, you’ll surely wither

and die! In the depths where the dragon lives, there lurks monsters so terrible they make even the Kirimu seem like an infant, yet you still plan on going?! I don't understand. Why?! Why are you going to such lengths to help Prince Alvin and us?! You have the right to enjoy your second life! You have no obligation or duty to go this far. So why are you?!"

"Because I'm a knight," Sid answered naturally with no hesitation. The look in Sid's eyes was intense, and in his gaze, there burned a straightforward conviction. Seeing his expression, Isabella was no longer able to object.

"Fine. I'll open the gate to the depths of the fairy world and do my best to assist you. Please save Prince Alvin and this country," Isabella said.

"Leave it to me. I'll run straight through, so just follow me," Sid said, giving Isabella a huge smile.

Sid had told Alvin, "Your Will is still too untrained to be used in a real battle." However, as Alvin raced through the city toward the dragon, she took a deep breath to burn her Will like she always did, and it exploded with an overwhelming force. Perhaps it was because the royal capital was on the edge of destruction or because Alvin had a desire and a mission to protect everyone, but this time, its force was unlike any Alvin had felt before. An incomparably large amount of mana was sent from her Will to her entire body, and it seemed like it was on fire. Right now, at the eleventh hour, Alvin had grasped onto something.

"Whoa!" Alvin said in surprise. Though bewildered, Alvin desperately operated the flow of her mana like she did in practice and sent it to her limbs so as not to waste it by letting it go outside her body. As she did, a strange sensation suddenly struck her again.

"Is this..." Alvin's body was hot like it was on fire, and she felt as light as a feather. She could feel an unbelievable amount of power in her thin arms and legs. "This is Will. This is a glimpse of the world that Sir Sid sees?!" Alvin had thought that the very idea of fighting the dragon was foolish, but with this, perhaps she could handle it. *Thank you, Sir Sid. Thanks to you, I can fight!* Alvin thought. She then took a deep breath and burned more Will. She sent a large

amount of mana into her sword and spoke to it.

“Tayweed!” Alvin said and activated the green fairy magic, “Gale.” That next moment, with a roar, an incredible gust of wind pushed Alvin forward, and her running speed increased. Alvin’s fairy sword glittered from the mana it received and was so vibrant it looked like it was alive. “Daybreak, lend me your power!” Alvin prayed to her sword. With the strong wind at her back, Alvin leaped and flew across the rooftops of the buildings of the city.

“Over here!” Alvin was fighting against the dragon all by herself. Using the green fairy magic Gale with all her might, she moved just like the wind as she fought the dragon. However, truthfully, it couldn’t be called a fight. The only way to really describe it was that she was running away from the dragon.

With a swing of its huge tail, the dragon created a tornado. Alvin quickly jumped onto a nearby roof and leaped even higher into the sky to get out of the way. The dragon’s tail whip smashed several buildings at once and sent the rubble flying. She darted away as soon as she landed, and the dragon’s arm smashed down on that spot half a second later, blowing it to smithereens and creating a huge crater. Relying on her tailwind, Alvin ran along the wall of a nearby building. The dragon snipped at her again and again, its jaws chomping at the spots where Alvin was just an instant earlier. The dragon then looked up at the sky for a moment before snapping its neck like a whip, opening its mouth and spewing forth a fearsome blaze that could make stone boil red hot.

The swirling whirlwind of scorching hot flames was coming to swallow Alvin whole, but she activated her wind shield right in front of her. It split the oncoming ocean of fire apart, and she barely dodged a direct hit, but intense heat still mercilessly scorched her entire body. Now wasn’t the time to be distracted by pain. Alvin jumped away as quickly as she could, and the dragon roared again, swinging its tail from the side and crashing down from the heavens with its feet to try and crush her. The dragon’s movements were so agile. It was unbelievable that they were coming from its mountain-like body, and all the fairy knights who underestimated the dragon, expecting it to be slow, were completely taken out because of their overconfidence. Alvin continued to dodge the dragon’s attacks, albeit just barely. Truthfully, the only

reason Alvin was able to take on such a superior opponent was due to her speed and evasion-based fighting.

Using Will is working after all! I can manage to fight! Alvin thought. Yes. Right now, Alvin was actually fighting while using Will. Her Will was burning inside, and she was producing more mana than she normally did. By sending the mana to her fairy sword, its output of fairy magic was far greater than usual. Although it was still unstable, this Will was Alvin's lifeline—but that's all it was. Even if Alvin burned her Will with all her might, she still wouldn't be able to take one step within striking distance of the dragon, and even if she did manage to, she wouldn't have any way to defeat it. It would be one thing if it were Tenko's sword, which had great offensive power, but Alvin's blade probably wouldn't even be able to pierce the dragon's most vulnerable part, its eye. What's more, Alvin wouldn't be able to keep going all out in this soul-consuming battle for very long. She would inevitably reach her limit, and it wasn't very far away.

"It's getting hard to breathe!" Alvin said, panting and coughing as she jumped and dodged multiple strikes from the dragon's tail. She couldn't hear anything aside from the sound of her own heart and breathing, and it was like all the blood in her body was boiling hot as it rushed through her. Her body hurt like it had been shattered to pieces, and her vision was slowly turning bright red. Alvin had a strong feeling that, at this rate, she'd be dead before the dragon killed her.

"I won't retreat! I can't retreat! There's no way I'm going to!" Alvin brandished her sword and continued to challenge the dragon. "I can't lose. I won't lose! I'm a king! I'm the king of this country! I'm going to protect everyone, so I can't lose!" Alvin said, shouting her determination between coughs while nearly out of breath. She continued to fight the dragon as she burned her Will. Meanwhile, Alvin was being watched.

"M-My word. It's the prince..."

"Poor Prince Alvin!"

"King Auld...Éclair...please protect the prince." Those who hadn't been able to evacuate and were left behind in the royal city were watching from afar and praying for Alvin.

“The prince is fighting all by himself.”

“Dammit, what are we doing, letting a child fight for us?”

“I have to get up. I have to move.”

“Our factions don’t mean anything right now, but I can’t.” The fairy knights, who had been scattered and were lying on the ground on the verge of death, looked on in frustration.

“What the hell is he?!”

“How can he fight an enemy this powerful?!”

“But he’s just supposed to be the king of the garbage-heap class!”

“There’s no way he can win, so why is he fighting?!” The squires of Durande, Ortol, and Anthalo class were stunned as they looked on from a distance, and everyone in the capital burned the image of Alvin into their eyes and hearts.

Tenko Amatsuki was a member of a proud clan of Cerians known as the noble-tails. She was the daughter of a noble warrior family. They served the royal family that ruled the small nation of noble-tails known as Tenkagekoku. However, one day ten years ago, when Tenko was five, her country was attacked by the knights of the Dark Order of Opus. In one night, without so much as a thought, the kingdom was destroyed. Looking back on it now, it happened so fast it was like a bad dream. The royal family was killed, and the citizens were slaughtered. The few people who survived, especially the noble-tail women, were sold to slave traders—it was their beauty that they valued most. Of course, Tenko was also treated like merchandise, and she went from being a high-class warrior noble to a slave of the lowest order in one wretched night. Even among her people’s beautiful women, Tenko’s looks were exceptional, and as such, she sold for an exorbitant price to a rich person with a fondness for demi-humans. She was chained up, thrown into a cage, and transported to her buyer.

At the time, she felt nothing but despair. She had lost her country, her people, her family, and even her freedom. Because of the “mark of servitude” engraved on her body, she couldn’t even end her life by biting her own tongue. She was

going to be stripped of all dignity, and her life was about to become the saddest kind of existence in the world. She no longer even had the energy to cry about her misfortune. However, as she sank into despair in the corner of her cage, she was saved...by Alvin's father, Auld, the now former king of Calvania. Despite his sickness, the king himself led the fight in exposing all those who engaged in illegal acts of slave trading in an effort to save even one of the survivors of his ally nation.

After he cut down the slave traders and saved Tenko, he hugged her. In tears, he said, "I'm sorry I'm late, and I'm sorry I couldn't do anything. Even still, I'm happy I was able to save at least you." The king welcomed Tenko, who no longer had a family, into his own. He raised her as if she were his own daughter, and Alma also treated Tenko like her own sister. Tenko, who had lost everything, including the will to live, was saved by King Auld and Alma. She owed a great debt of gratitude to the king, and when he was on his deathbed, he said to her, "Please take care of Alma...of Alvin. Please protect Alma and be by her side."

I was supposed to become a knight, a knight who would protect Alvin...who protects Alma, Tenko thought as her face was wet with tears. She lifted her head and could see from her place on the high ground Alvin fighting with the dragon in the central square. *Why am I not right next to Alvin? Why am I so far away, just sitting here pathetically?* Tenko thought.

"I-I..." The harsh truth of what was happening to her was as clear as day. Tenko's body wouldn't move, and she was afraid. From the depths of her soul, she feared fighting the dragon. More than wanting to protect, she wanted to be saved. Tenko no longer had any right to be Alvin's knight. Upon realizing this, Tenko sank to her hands and was about to cry out when she heard a voice.

"Jeez, you guys are a sight for sore eyes. You're shaking in your boots from one little old lizard," the voice said, and a hand was placed on Tenko's head. "It's said, 'A knight's bravery glitters in their hearts.' So, getting over your fears is something a knight should do, right?" It was Sid, and he stood there looking into the distance with a fearless smile.

"Sir Sid?!"

"A-All right, Sir Sid is here! We can win!"

"The dragon won't be a problem for Sir Sid!" The students of Blitze class, whose spirits had been devastated, were now excited from Sid's arrival. At least, they were until they noticed his appearance.

"Huh? Sir Sid? What's going on with you?" They were all shocked by what they saw. Sid looked like a ghost. Particles of mana were spilling from his body and appeared to be fading away. His whole body looked ragged, as if he had gone through battle after intense battle to arrive here.



"Sorry to keep you waiting. Everything's okay now," Sid said and smiled as if nothing was wrong. However, Isabella, who came with Sid, stood behind him and shook her head with a look of anguish. It was then that the students realized what was happening. They didn't understand exactly what was going on, but they knew that Sid was going to disappear soon. It wasn't anything strange. After all, it was unnatural for someone from the legendary age to be resurrected in the present day. Things were just returning to their natural state.

"You can't do it after all?" Their faces once again transformed into a look of despair.

"It's okay. Don't worry," Sid said firmly to put his students at ease. "I have enough strength to take down one or two of those baby lizards in a flash. After that, I'm going to leave the rest to you guys. So long," Sid said and was just about to head off to fight the dragon when he was stopped.

"P-Please wait! Sir Sid, do you intend to die?!" Tenko shouted, and Sid halted in his tracks. "What are you doing?! Even I can see that you're dying right now, Sir Sid! You've already lost so much mana. There were problems with bringing you back from the dead after all, weren't there?!" Sid answered only with silence. "Why are you still trying to fight?! You're just going to die!" Tenko ranted and raved like a child. "But why?! It'd be okay if you ran away, right?! There's nothing wrong with that! There shouldn't be anything wrong with that!"

It was hard to tell what Sid was thinking as he turned around toward Tenko. However, he looked straight at her and said, "Look, Tenko. Who are you—no—who are you all making excuses to? Why are you lying to yourselves like that?" Sid said, and Tenko froze at his words. It wasn't just her. Sid's words struck a chord in the hearts of the students who were watching Tenko and Sid with bated breath. Even though they didn't say it out loud, what Tenko was saying represented what everyone was feeling inside. We're weak. We can't win. We'll just die in vain. We have no choice.

However, after Sid looked around at the students trapped in such weakness, he clearly stated, "A knight tells only the truth. Their bravery glimmers in their hearts. Their swords defend the defenseless. Their power sustains virtue. And their anger...destroys evil."

Everyone listened to Sid's poetic words, and they stood there dumbfounded. It was like a list, where each string of words was just some flimsy, cheap ideal. However, the words had a power to them, and they lit a mysterious flame in the hearts of those who heard them.

"What was that just now?" Tenko asked, puzzled.

"They are the ways of an old knight," Sid said a little proudly. "A knight isn't just some vassal who blindly serves the king—or a mere professional soldier. Knighthood is a way of life. A knight is one who lives righteously without any pretense in their heart and soul." Sid looked around at his students and questioned them. "Aren't you knights? When you look at Alvin, you don't feel anything? Is nothing burning in your souls? Does nothing tremble when you see the will and determination of this young future king who is trying to save everyone?" Tenko gasped, but Sid was indifferent as he looked at Alvin fighting far away. "I'm sure Alvin will be wise and kind, the perfect king, and his light will shine hope into everyone's heart. But reality is infinitely cruel. No matter how many noble ideals a king may have, there is only so much one person can do. The perfect king needs a knight. It is a knight's duty to bridge the gap between the king's ideals and reality." The students were silent. "So, I'll ask you all again. What are you?"

Alvin had finally reached her limit. Considering the difference in power between her and her opponent, it was a miracle it hadn't happened sooner. A strike from the dragon's tail, which swung like a mighty storm, finally caught Alvin. Of course, it was not a direct hit but a hit through Alvin's wind shield. However, Alvin was unable to take the impact like she did before and was blown away like a ball hit by a bat. She slammed into the wall of a nearby building, which collapsed from the impact. The building instantly became a mountain of rubble, and Alvin lay on top of it, powerless. Her entire body hurt like it had been shattered into pieces. The consequences of burning her Will and moving her body past their limits had caught up with her in a terrible way. Something inside Alvin severed, and the heat from her body drained out all at once. Alvin could barely move a single finger and was unable to fight.

"I still..." Even so, Alvin tried to use her sword like a cane, urging her

trembling body to stand. No matter how many times she tried, she couldn't do it. Every time she tried to stand up, her legs would lose strength and she would collapse in a heap on the ground. Then, with a roar, the dragon leaped high into the air and in an instant landed right in front of Alvin. The impact caused the royal capital to shake violently, and Alvin's body bounced around helplessly. The dragon roared at the sky and pointed its open jaw toward Alvin as it prepared to devour her once and for all. The dragon's mass of swordlike fangs in its large open mouth filled Alvin's dazed vision as it drew closer and closer.

I had a dream, Alvin hazily thought while on the verge of death, gazing at her impending doom like it was happening to someone else. Indeed, ever since Alvin was a child, she had a secret dream. It was a childish dream where Sir Sid, whom she idolized from the tales passed down in the royal family, would serve her as her knight and be by her side when she became king. Having to live her entire life as a man, it was the one dream she was able to hope for. *I've idolized Sir Sid in those stories ever since I was a child. I was in love with Sir Sid long before I met him,* Alvin thought. Looking back, he was probably her first love. It was silly, falling in love like a character from a story like that but...that was how she truly felt in her heart. So, when her first love really came back to life just like in the royal stories passed down, her heart leaped. She was so excited it felt like her chest was going to burst. *But Sir Sid isn't my knight. He's the knight of my ancestor, Arthur,* Alvin thought. Of course. Sid had once offered his sword to Arthur from the bottom of his heart. His loyalty was always to Arthur, and it was only out of this devotion that Sid protected Alvin. *Still, if I could one day become a king worthy of your sword, then...* Alvin believed that if she did that, then Sid would swear allegiance to her as her knight. That was the only salvation and only hope for this girl who couldn't even wish for a normal love. *But it looks like this is it...*

Alvin's first love, and the dream she always held, was coming to an end. On the path to her goal, she was going to be eaten alive by this dragon. She had so many regrets. What would happen to the royal city after she died? What would happen to her friends? However, what she regretted most of all was being unable to gain Sid's loyalty as a knight.

I regret it. I truly do. Alvin couldn't help it when tears slowly began to roll

down her face. *Still, this is okay, isn't it? The knight of my dreams came back to life and stayed by my side. He protected me, and that's all that matters, isn't it? After all, that in itself was a miracle that should have been impossible. I should be satisfied with that. I was able to stick to my path to the throne. Everything was unfinished and half-baked, and, in the end, I didn't accomplish a single thing. Right now, the only person who might praise me in the afterlife is my father,* Alvin thought in a daze. At last, the dragon's opened jaws, which were like a cauldron from hell, closed in on Alvin. If the dragon snapped its jaws shut, Alvin's upper half would be finding its way to the dragon's stomach. *Goodbye, Tenko, everyone, and Sir Sid.* As to be expected at one's final moment, Alvin tensed up and closed her eyes.

However... "Hey, it's a little early to be closing the curtain on your path to the throne, isn't it?"

Following those words was a resounding crash, and the dragon's howl of pain echoed throughout the royal capital.

"Huh?!" Alvin opened her eyes and exclaimed in surprise. Standing right in front of Alvin was the knight she had wanted to see more than anyone else right now. It was Sid, right in the middle of her blurry vision. Sid had dealt a blow to the side of the dragon's head, and the impact sent it reeling. The dragon was so shocked that it took several steps backward as it shook its head. "S-Sir Sid, what are you doing here?!"

"It's not just me," Sir Sid said with a grin.

"Alvin!" At that moment, several figures rose up around the dragon, and with a yell, Tenko boldly leaped from the side and fiercely thrust her sword into its right eye. The sharp edge of the sword pierced the eyeball, and it began to flail its arms and legs in more and more of a frenzy from the intense pain. Just then, Christopher, Elaine, Lynette, and Theodore all appeared with a battle cry. They surrounded the dragon and slashed at it from all directions with mortal determination. The dragon was dazed from Sid's first attack, which had given it a severe concussion, and Tenko had crushed its right eye. This combination of attacks had put the dragon into a complete state of confusion, and it was completely unable to catch the students who were attacking it like winged

insects.

"E-Everyone?! Why?!" Alvin said, astonished at what she was seeing. Alvin's friends then all spoke.

"Alvin, sorry we're late!" Christopher said.

"We're truly sorry and ashamed of our weakness!" Elaine added.

"W-We'll fight too!" Lynette stammered.

"Yeah, this is no time for aspiring knights like us to just stand back and watch!" Theodore exclaimed.

As they all spoke, they desperately attacked the stumbling dragon. Carelessly getting caught by the dragon's feet as it writhed in pain meant instant death. However, despite these deadly circumstances, and despite everyone being pale with fear, they were fighting with all their courage.

"Alvin! I'll fight too!" With tears in her eyes, Tenko shouted as she released a series of furious attacks. "I may not deserve it anymore, but please let me be your knight! Right now, I'm weak, but one day I'll be a great knight like Sir Sid!" Tenko said as she and the others fought their desperate battle against the dragon.

"Thank you...everyone," Alvin said as her heart became full.

"You've done well too, Alvin. Great job," Sid said. "Now it's time for me to do my last job."

"Y-Your last?"

"Yeah. It was short, but living for a second time wasn't so bad."

"Sir Sid...your body?" Alvin said, finally noticing that there was something wrong. Sid didn't answer, and for a while, the two of them were silent. Eventually, Alvin realized something else. "I see... Yeah, that's right," Alvin said, and her gaze fell sadly. "The truth is...I knew that there was no way a dead person could truly come back to life. No matter what kind of miraculous magic you use, it's impossible."

"Yeah..."

"So, you're going to disappear..."

"I am."

"But I finally got to meet you. No, I hate this. This is...this is..." As Alvin hung her head, large warm tears spilled from her eyes and soaked the ground.

Sid looked down at Alvin as she cried and said, "As for your battle just now, you really aren't fit to be king," Sid said harshly. "Why would the king charge in all alone by themselves? If the king is killed, then that's it for their country. That's why you should have sacrificed everything else to escape." However, despite Sid's harsh words, he gave Alvin a gentle smile. "But I like it."

"What?"

"I've seen the path you're taking to the throne. You are no less than Arthur. You're a king worthy of my service."

"S-Sir Sid?"

In front of the confused Alvin, Sid kneeled down and placed his hand on his chest. He then swore an oath to Alvin. "Please forgive my rude words and actions up to now. I hope that you will allow me to be among the knights who serve and dedicate their sword to you. From now on, my sword, my soul, and my everything belong to you. And please, give me your final command. Soon, I will leave you behind to depart to the afterlife, but I swear to you on my name, Sid Blitze, that I will fulfill your last command with all my might, my lord."

"Y-You mean..." Sid's words left Alvin temporarily stunned, but she did her best to give him a smile. "I'm really glad I got to meet you. And I'm truly happy that I got to become a king with you as a knight! Thank you, Sir Sid...my knight," Alvin said, and then something happened. Inside of Alvin and Sid, something started to resonate. "Huh? What's happening? I feel hot!" Alvin exclaimed.



“What the hell is this?!” Sid said, and they both felt a burning sensation on their right hands. When they looked at their hands, they were shocked to see that the crest of the sword was burning brightly. The crest had changed—a crown now appeared over the sword. Then a large amount of mana rose up from Alvin and became particles of light.

“Huh?! Wh-What’s happening?!”

“This is...” The sword crest on Sid’s hand also began to glow and had changed shape in the same way.

“S-Sir Sid! Your body!” Something strange was happening to Sid’s appearance. The mana that came from Alvin floated down and was pouring into Sid. After just looking like he was going to disappear at any second, Sid’s figure returned to normal. His depleted mana was replenished, and Sid regained his original power. “Wh-What is happening?” Then, an unfamiliar image and unfamiliar words played in their minds like some kind of flashback or memory of unknown origin.

“That is the crest of the bond between a king and their knight. When the king has true faith in their knight, and the knight holds true loyalty toward their king, the crest will show its true power, and you will be truly revived.”

As Alvin was dumbfounded next to him, Sid opened and closed his fist. For a while, he continued to do this, like he was thinking about something, before eventually speaking up. “I see. So that’s what it was, Arthur,” Sid murmured like he had figured something out and turned to look at Alvin again. “Alvin, there’s nothing to fear anymore.”

“Sir Sid?”

“I take back what I said. I won’t be heading to the afterlife for a while. You have me, and I am your loyal knight now. I will absolutely live up to your expectations and lay the path for you to walk to the throne. Give your first royal decree now that I am your knight,” Sid said, and Alvin was at a loss for words.

However, Alvin gradually understood what Sid was saying. As her body trembled, she smiled happily and said, “I am honored and proud to have earned your loyalty. Please lend me your strength! Protect everyone! Protect this

country! My knight, Sir Sid!" Alvin said with tears in her eyes.

"Yes, my lord," Sid answered with a grin. A new lord and servant had been born. Just then, Sid jumped high into the sky and leaped at the dragon.

As Tenko and the others were desperately fighting the dragon, their eyes went wide with surprise. Suddenly, several lightning bolts fell from the sky with a mighty roar and pierced the dragon's entire body. Then a burst of blinding light caused their vision to flicker black and white. Sid descended from the heavens and slammed his right fist into the dragon's skull. As soon as he made contact, the dragon let out a roar of anguish and stood on its hind legs, throwing its head back from the unbearable pain.

"A-A lightning strike?! What was that just now?!" Tenko said.

"Jeez, you guys are pretty good when you put your minds to it," Sid said, landing softly. "Still, a monster of this class is too much for you guys to handle. Leave the rest to me."

"Sir Sid?! I-Is your body okay?"

"Yeah, thanks to Alvin," Sid said, and his students gave him a confused look. "All right. I was burning a lot of my life energy till now, so I was sealing this away. But now I'll show you all magic from the legendary age...and just how a magic knight fights."

"A-A magic knight? Wh-What is that?" While Sid and his students were talking, the dragon had righted itself and rushed toward Sid in a rage. It shook the earth as it charged forward with its tremendous mass, aiming to crush and destroy everything in its path. Seeing this, Tenko and the others instinctively cowered at the sight of the dragon. Sid, however, chanted some old fairy words in rapid succession. With a buzz, purple lightning sprouted from under his feet, drawing countless lines around the dragon, like a spider's web or a birdcage. The next moment, Sid suddenly disappeared, and a fierce flash of light erupted along the lines of the lightning web.

"What?!" Tenko said, and her eyes widened even more, but before she could even blink, the dragon had been slashed deeply all over its body. The dragon roared and writhed in agony from the dozen-plus deep blows it had been dealt in an instant.

"Lightning Step," Sid said. However, despite being by Tenko and the others' side half a second ago, he was now on the other side of the writhing dragon with his right hand swung out and half open. None of his students could figure out what had just happened. Of course they couldn't. Sid had drawn a path made out of lightning and rode on it at super high velocity as if he were gliding on a track. Then he cut the dragon while moving along this track—literally at lightning speed. There was no one in this world who could track such speed with their eyes.

The dragon roared, and its eyes burned with rage as it glared at Sid and prepared to bathe his back in flames. However, the purple lightning appeared again, this time with two tracks running over the dragon's head. A moment later, Sid's body flew through the air as if he were tracing the trajectory of the lightning bolts, and moving just as fast. Then, before the dragon could spew its flames, its lower jaw was lobbed off and the dragon screamed in even greater agony.

"Hey, I'm back," Sid said as he returned to Tenko and the others in an instant.

"Wh-What was that? Fairy magic? But you don't have a fairy sword."

"Look, I said it before, right? Fairies reside in all things. If you look hard enough, if you listen hard enough, they're everywhere. I mean, who said that magic is something exclusive to Nimue—or that people can't use magic without fairy swords?" Sid said, and once again, lines of lightning appeared from under his feet and were drawn around the dragon. A moment later, a flash of light cut through the world. That flash was Sid. He had become one with the lightning and used it to freely run around the dragon and cut it to pieces with both his hands. With a flickering flash, the dragon's tail was cut off its body, and its right leg was severed. Its scales were being torn apart like paper, and the dragon couldn't even follow Sid's movements with its eyes. It was becoming a one-sided assault that was laying waste to the dragon. It was as if the lightning that shook the heavens themselves was being sent down to deliver a wrathful divine punishment upon the dragon.

"Incredible." Tenko and the others were awestruck at what was unfolding in front of their eyes.

"Tenko..." Just then, Alvin finally caught up with them and shakily made her way over to Tenko's side.

"A-Alvin, are you all right?" Tenko asked and ran up to lend Alvin her shoulder.

"I'm fine. More importantly..." Alvin trailed off, gazing with a far-off look at Sid's battle. The dragon showed its resolve as an absolutely superior species and tried to bite Sid. However, a purple track snaked between its feet. A second later, Sid zigzagged with tremendous speed underneath the dragon on a flash of lightning.

"Lightning Legs," Sid said, and the dragon roared in agony. Countless slashes from his half-open right hand carved the dragon's legs, chest, and abdomen into a mess. A shock, like it had just been hit by a thunderbolt, ran through the dragon's body and a shower of red burst from its wounds. Without a moment's hesitation, another bolt of lightning ran along the dragon's back, and Sid moved at breakneck speed on top of it, cutting deeply into the dragon's flesh. All the while, the speed and power of Sid's strikes and steps increased without limit.

He was doing the unimaginable and overwhelming the dragon. Countless thunderbolts ran freely through the sky and struck the ground, and Sid could be seen there moving at lightning speed. Sid had become a flash of light, and the slashes from his hands mercilessly cut into the dragon. The whole scene was intense and majestic as it played out. It truly was the return of the battles from the legendary era. It was as if this battle between a knight and a dragon was a legendary painting that had been brought to life or the kind of classic staple you could expect from a knight's tale. However, the power, majesty, and bravery witnessed in this battle were far greater than the scale written in those tales. Everyone witnessed Sid's battle in silence. The two who were closest to Sid as he fought, Tenko and Alvin, also watched. It was all they could do. Sid's fighting and swordsmanship were so beautiful that it left them awestruck and stole their hearts.

"Th-This is the real Sir Sid?" Tenko said. She was mesmerized by the sight of Sid's otherworldly battle. It was like watching a dream. "I want to be this awesome of a knight too." She watched Sid as tears ran down her face. However, her tears didn't come from a place of bitter opposition or jealousy.

Alvin said, “Hey, Tenko, did you know?”

“Know what?”

“Sir Sid has another name aside from the Barbarian. It’s one that no one knows anymore and has been lost to the ages.”

“What is it?”

“Sir Sid the Lightning Knight,” Alvin said, truly understanding for the first time the meaning behind Sid’s other name. This short battle, that felt like it had gone on for much longer, was finally about to come to an end.

“I wouldn’t expect anything less from a dragon. Truly, the top species in nature,” Sid said fearlessly as he moved at breakneck speed along a lightning bolt drawn on the ground. “Even after being hacked apart this much, you haven’t lost any of your fighting potential. Impressive.”



On the contrary, the dragon was gradually getting used to Sid's lightning-quick movements and began to bite at Sid. At this rate, it could eventually catch him.

"Let's end this," Sid muttered to himself. He calmly crouched and stared at the dragon. Just like before, a line was drawn underneath the dragon's feet and stretched far out. Another line ran all over the dragon's body, from its head to the tip of its tail. A tremendous amount of lightning swelled up in Sid's hand until, with a buzz and a blinding flash of light, it exploded out from him, turning the area all white. The dragon once again let out a roar that shook the city and charged. It was likely that its pride as a conqueror was on the line with this attack, and no one could stop its stampede. It was a charge that oozed the dragon's desire to kill. It sought to crush and trample everything in its path. The dragon's charge was like a great wall of overwhelming mass, and Sid faced it head on. Then, he moved. Sid became a single flash of lightning and flew blindingly fast along the line on the ground. Sid followed the line drawn along the dragon's body, and his right hand, full of lightning, cut through the dragon at thunderous speed. It was a lightning-quick strike carried by a lightning-quick movement—a fearsome blade that was unavoidable. The lines drawn on the ground were like a musical score, and his movements were like a song that rang throughout the heavens.

"Heaven's Song," Sid said as a deafening thunderclap rang out for miles. Sid had gone through the dragon and was now standing behind it, posed with his right arm extended. Meanwhile, the dragon's huge frame had stopped moving. For a moment, there was silence and everyone watched with bated breath. Before long, the dragon's body split down the middle. Following the line that Sid had drawn from its head to its tail, the dragon's body separated in half. It had been carved into two mounds of flesh that hit the ground hard with their tremendous weight, and at the same time, turned into a huge amount of black mist that quickly disappeared. "That was a good fight to the death," Sid said and swung his right arm to fling off the blood. Then, Sid slowly closed his half-opened right hand into a fist as if he were sheathing a sword. "Dragon, you have become the foundation for my lord's path, which I have carved open with my sword. Rest in peace," Sid said, whispering a small prayer. For a while, Alvin, Tenko, the students, and the capital's citizens stared in silence, dumbfounded.

Time, which felt like it had stopped, began to move again, and a great cheer filled the capital city. The battle for the survival of the country had finally come to an end.

Final Chapter: The Dawn of a New Legend

When I was a child, and whenever my father had the chance, he would tell me the story of a great hero.

It went, “Long, long ago, there was a knight named Sir Sid. It was a time of turmoil. As the continent was being torn apart by war, King Arthur threw himself into the conflict for the sake of peace for the people. And Sir Sid was always by his side. If it was for the king, he would take on an army of thousands. If the king was in trouble, he’d give his life to protect him. This knight was faithful and valiant. He possessed the kindness to protect the weak, the integrity to stand by the good, and a passionate hatred of evil. His feats and accomplishments as a knight were endless.”

The Sir Sid in the stories was truly a knight among knights, and I always listened to them with a twinkle in my eye. However, that day was different.

“And after all these adventures, the knight was to be honored as Sir Sid Blitz, the Lightning Knight. What’s wrong, Alma? Oh, are you bored? Ha ha. Well, I have been telling you these stories over and over since you were little,” my father said. Seeing my gloomy expression, he patted me on the head.

“No, that’s not it,” I said, shaking my head. I loved my father’s stories about Sir Sid. I loved them so much that there was no way I would get bored—no matter how many times I heard them. However, I had heard something I didn’t like.

“Sir Sid...is called a barbarian?” Yes, I had found out that my father’s tale of Sir Sid was very different from the story of Sir Sid that everyone else knew. The Sir Sid everyone else knew was savage, cruel, and a very bad knight. It made me absolutely depressed when I thought about how this kind of person might be the Sir Sid I loved so much.

My father looked at my sad face, patted my head, and said, “Which of those do you think is the real one, Alma?”

"The Sir Sid you talk about, Father," I answered in a heartbeat.

"I'm glad," my father said and smiled as if he were deeply relieved. "That's good, Alma. That's good." I didn't really understand the reason for my father's relief. "That's right, Alma. We, the royal family of Calvania and lineage of the Holy King Arthur, must tell the true tale of Sir Sid. No matter how much the world may speak ill of Sir Sid, we at least must pay him respect. We must..."

"What do you mean?" I asked, but my father didn't tell me much.

Instead, he patted me on the head and said, "One day, Alma, a great evil will befall our family. It might happen to you, or it might happen to your child, or maybe another descendant. However, there is nothing to fear. For we have our knight—a true knight who has promised to protect us even in death. Yes, Sir Sid is with us."

My heart would always pound from my father's words. Oh, if only Sir Sid would become my knight. How wonderful that would be.

"Well then, it looks like you'll have to become a great king, Alma," my father said. He was afflicted with a deadly disease, and my mother had passed away, so he was unable to have any more children. My father understood how cruel it was to make me, a woman, king. Fully aware of all his failings, he still urged me down this thorny path. "If you become a good king, I'm sure Sid will help you," my father said and patted my head. That's why I promised him that I would definitely become a good king. A king so great that if I met Sir Sid, he would want to serve me as my knight.

"Come on. Run. Run like your lives depend on it," Sid said, and everyone moaned. He and his students were at the training ground in Calvania Castle and, as always, the cries of the Blitze class students echoed in the air. All the students were clad in heavy full-body armor as they ran, and Sid watched them leisurely from the edge of the training ground. Starting today, he had decided to attach an iron ball and chain to his students' legs and make them run. Surely, it was more hellish than anything they had experienced before. However, no one was complaining. Alvin, Tenko, Elaine, Christopher, Lynette, and Theodore's faces were all twisted in fatigue and agony, but there was a serious look in their

eyes. Each of their faces were filled with ambition. It seemed like something had changed inside all of them after the battle in the capital.

"Hmm, I guess they've matured," Sid said to himself as he watched his students. Of course, in order to become true knights, they still had much to learn and much more training to do. The sword, the heart, and the soul. The path to becoming a knight was still a long and rugged one. Even so, if the experience from that battle could serve as a catalyst for something else or become their first step on this long and excruciating journey, then it surely had meaning to it. "I'll take care of you. I am your instructor, after all."

After the incident in the capital, the upper echelon of the kingdom was busy with sorting out a practical mountain of issues. Postwar cleanup, reorganizing the orders of knights, rebuilding the destroyed parts of the royal capital, compensating the citizens whose homes had been taken from them, reevaluating the movements of the demon nation to the north...there were many things that needed to be done. In particular, the fact that a great witch of the Dark Order of Opus had used magic to infiltrate the Fairy Knight Academy was a great shock to the upper echelon. There were those among the factions of the three dukes who tried to use the situation to sway the public's opinion on the royal family's ability to rule. Most people laughed it away. After the battle, the political representative of the royal family, Isabella, with her perfect political finesse, quickly compensated the citizens. Most importantly, the people had seen the young prince risk her life and face the dragon with her allies. They had been witness to the battle of the knight from the legendary era who served the prince. Everyone praised them as a king among kings and a knight among knights, and the opinions of the three ducal houses were completely dismissed. In the first place, the three dukes had failed to do better than Sid all by himself on the Fabome Plains in the north, so they couldn't say anything toward the royal family.

The day's running had ended, and Alvin and the others panted as they removed their armor and collapsed in a corner of the training grounds.

"Good job. You worked hard today." Somebody threw a towel at Alvin's head,

and when she looked up, she saw Sid standing there by her side.

"Th-Thank you," Alvin said, smiling. She was slumped over but looked up with her sweat-covered face and smiled.

"You're all working pretty hard lately. When I first laid eyes on you all, I couldn't believe such a group of weaklings were trying to become knights, but you're gradually getting stronger," Sid said and looked around at his students.

"It's because everyone, including myself, was made painfully aware of how inexperienced we are," said Alvin. "Even if only a little, we're doing our best to catch up to you, Sir Sid."

"Is that so? Well, it's a good attitude, so keep it up."

"Ha ha. Okay."

"Okay, then how about tomorrow we add one more iron ball?"

"P-Please, go easy," Alvin said with a smirk as Sid pulled out another ball and chain with a clank. They shared a passionate gaze, and Sid, taking notice, chuckled.

"What's up, Alvin? Your training is about to become even harder, but you look like you're in a good mood."

"What? W-Well that's because..." Alvin's voice trailed off, and she muttered in embarrassment and lowered her gaze. "I-I'm happy that you're going to be by our side like this," Alvin said, and Sid was silent. "I'm really glad that...you didn't disappear after the battle, Sir Sid," Alvin mumbled, sounding truly relieved as she looked at the back of her right hand with the sword crest on it.

"Apparently, this is Arthur's will."

"My ancestor's will?"

"However, what really kept me connected to this world was you, Alvin," Sid said, looking back at her. "You've shown me your determination and worthiness as a king. As such, it's only natural that I offer you my sword."

"N-No, I'm still not..." Alvin panicked and tried to be humble.

"Yeah, you're not much of a king yet," Sid said with a gentle smile. "Jeez,

you're just like your ancestor—just like Arthur. Even though you talk big, you're naive, sloppy, and careless."

"U-Um..."

"But that's what drew me to him. Well, I'll be watching over you by your side for a little while. I am your knight after all," Sid said and smiled at Alvin, who was starting to get a little depressed. For a moment, Alvin's eyes fluttered.

"Ha ha, thank you very much," Alvin said as they smiled at one another. "Sir Sid?"

"What is it?"

"Thank you for becoming my knight," she said, leaning slightly forward and looking at Sid. Alvin felt her cheeks become warm, but she didn't care about that. She just had something she wanted to tell him. "I'm...really happy. Thank you so much."

"No need to thank me. I did it because I wanted to."

"Still, I'm happy. I mean, I've been dreaming about this day ever since I was little."

"Alvin?" There was silence between the two of them, but it wasn't an awkward one. It was the kind of gentle silence that made one feel at ease.

"I've... Ever since I was little, I've—" Alvin began to say something, but she was interrupted. "T-Tenko?!" Without a word, Tenko had made her way between Alvin and Sid. "What are you doing all of a sudden?"

As Alvin panicked, Tenko remained silent and puffed out her cheeks in a somewhat unhappy manner. Eventually, she exhaled like she had given up and started to speak. "Um, Sir Sid..."

"What is it?"

"Um, it's just...I missed the opportunity to say this after the attack, but...there's something I wanted to tell you," Tenko said. Sid, however, tilted his head, puzzled at how odd Tenko was acting. "I'm very sorry for all of the rude things I've said to you!" Tenko's ears flattened, and her tail drooped as she bowed her head in apology.

"Hm? I wasn't really worried about that, but what's with this all of a sudden?"

"You're not a barbarian. You were a knight. More than any of us, more than anyone, you were a true knight." Tenko raised her head and took Sid's hand like she was pleading with him. "I want to be a knight like you! I want the strength to protect someone and the strength of mind to be a knight. So please teach me! I ask you, as a knight who lived in the legendary age, to guide and encourage me through my inexperience. Please, master!" Tenko desperately implored.

For a while, Sid was silent, but before long he said, "Sure, all right. Leave it to me, apprentice. But I'm warning you, I'm tough. Do your best to keep up."

"M-Master! Y-Yes!" Tenko's face broke out in a smile as her ears perked up and her tail wagged. "I-In that case, master, from now on, please leave all of your personal care to me! As your apprentice, it's only natural, right?! A-Also..." As Tenko got carried away, she proceeded to suggest how she should behave as Sid's disciple.

"H-Hey, Tenko?! Just so you know, Sir Sid is my knight, okay?!" Alvin protested, puffing out her cheeks.

"B-But Sid is also my master!"

"What?!"

"I think of you as my best friend, Alvin, and I really care about you, but I won't give up when it comes to this!"

"Huh?! What?! Wh-What are you saying, Tenko?!"



"Huh?! I-I wonder what! Ha ha ha." The two of them began to have a big vague argument. As they fought loudly, Sid looked up at the sky. It was a brilliant blue as clouds slowly drifted by, and sunlight poured out from overhead. It was almost as if it was blessing the path that Sid was about to take.

Yeesh. So, are you telling me to live a second time, Arthur? Sid lifted his right hand to the sky like he was trying to reach his old friend and lord who lived deep in his memory and asked, *Why did I come back to life? Why do I have to live a second time? Just what happened between you and me?* Sid still couldn't remember. He didn't know, but...*Well, at any rate, it looks like I won't be bored.* He smirked as he looked at Alvin and Tenko quarreling by his side. *Sure, okay. I'll live. Just watch, Arthur. Watch me walk this new path of chivalry,* Sid thought as his determination reached out far, far beyond the sky.

Afterword

Hello, I'm Taro Hitsuji. For those of you who don't know me, it's nice to meet you! And for those of you who know *Akashic Records of Bastard Magic Instructor*, thank you for all your support! It's finally been decided that my new work, *Magic Knight of the Old Ways*, is going to be published! Thank you very much to my editor and everyone involved! Also, a very big thanks to my illustrator Tosaka Asagi for bringing this sheep's grandiose delusions to life with such wonderful illustrations.

Now, if I had to describe this work in one word, it would be a story of "chivalry." Knights magnificently playing an active role in the world is now a thing of the past, and as time has gone by, the strength and ideals of knights have been completely lost and forgotten. Our hero, Sid, is a knight from the legendary era who has come back to life in this modern world. He questions aspiring knights about what it means to be a knight and shows them the true way of chivalry. That is the kind of passionate story this is. Also, most importantly, it's about a knight who quietly protects and fights for the heroine who is trying her best to become king by faking her gender for the sake of the world and her people! So, of course, my Will would be on fire while writing this kind of story! Yahoo!

Cough. Sorry, I kind of lost control of myself there. Anyway, I wrote this work with all of the passion I could muster. Sometimes I would talk passionately about this work with my editor, sometimes my editor and I would curse each other out, sometimes I scrapped with my editor, sometimes my editor rejected my work and I had to rewrite half of it, and sometimes I'd say, "Oh god, I don't want to write a knight story anymore! I'm going to make it about pirates!" and then my editor would powerbomb me saying, "That's enough!" Sometimes I'd play mahjong with my editor, and I'd lose my confidence when I got my butt kicked. Looking back, writing the story was a pretty intense experience. So much so, I felt like I was going to turn into Genghis Khan. So, I would feel very blessed if my readers could feel even a little bit of this passion.

Also, I've been posting status updates and reports of my survival on Twitter, so if I could receive any words of encouragement or opinions about my work, it would make this little sheep very happy, as they work hard. My username is @Taro_hituji.

Thank you, and please look forward to my work!

Taro Hitsuji









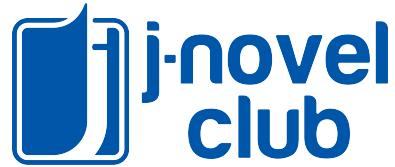
Magic Knight of the Old Ways

Taro Hitsuji
Illustrated by
Asagi Tosaka









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