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Credits

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Prince Revolution!(or PR! for short)was started in late April in 2009 by Erialis for the purpose of translating and sharing the ½ Prince and The Legend of Sun Knight novels (and now many others) with other fans (who unfortunately couldn't read Chinese). PR!'s crew has since exploded to include several translators who double as Chinese to English editors and several Proofreaders. They also have sister sites translating the novels into Dutch, Spanish, Indonesian, French, Portuguese and Vietnamese.

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Side Story #1: “For You All”

“Sun!”

Neo paused in his footsteps and turned around elegantly, exclaiming,

“Ah! Is this not our great and most respected Pope?”

Hearing that, the Pope stopped his movements and cautiously stared at the Sun Knight, who was smiling even more radiantly than usual. With a hint of suspicion, he asked, “Sun, have I angered you recently?”

“Ho ho, how could the great Pope have done anything to infuriate Sun? It’s just that I have been wondering who has been telling my fellow holy knight brothers that I use magic to maintain the appearance of being in my early twenties?”

“...Oh?” The Pope gave a sweet smile and gave a doubtful expression as he said, “Is there really someone saying that? What an ignorant fellow! He doesn’t know that the Sun Knight is actually naturally good-looking. Even if he is turning thirty this year, he still looks exactly the same as when he first became the Sun Knight.”

“Pope, you are also always so young and ‘cute’!”

“Ha ha ha!” The two looked at each other and laughed heartily.

Neo’s face darkened, and he pulled out the Divine Sun Sword. Fiercely, he said, “The next time you dare to leak my age, I will kill you.”

"Who doesn't know that the Sun Knight is turning thirty this year?"

The Pope was so angry that he was shaking. He pointed the scepter in his hands at Neo. "You're not allowed to call me cute ever again, or else I will take you down with me, even if it kills me."

As the two confronted each other, there came a sudden sound of footsteps.

Someone is coming! Neo and the Pope put their weapons away instantly, and adopted their elegant smile and solemn expression respectively. With a curious expression, the Pope asked, "Sun Knight, there are still ten candidates left for this year's Sun Knight Selection. Have you made a decision yet?"

Neo muttered, "This year there are a lot of talented people, but if I really have to pick one of them, I think I need to consider further..."

"Both of you, stop acting. It's just me."

The person who had appeared was dressed completely in black, and even his hair and eye color were dark. He had deep creases between his brows, and looked like he would usually be a solemn person.

However, at the moment there was a helpless smile on his face. He walked up to the side of the two people, and then spoke to Neo, who had withdrawn his smile.

"Sun, there are a lot of talented people among your candidates, but

the number of my candidates is dwindling. All of them are dishonorable, ill-intentioned bad eggs. I'm afraid that if I don't pick the only good child among them, Lesus, the first person that the God of Light would judge would be me."

"Lesus?" Neo revealed a puzzled expression.

The Pope rolled his eyes at him in displeasure and explained, "Last time, when you went to see the Judgment Knight candidates sparring, he was the one who had the best swordsmanship."

"Oh, that child!" Neo nodded his head.

"You! Can't you remember anything else other than swordsmanship?" Judgment said helplessly. Seeing Neo's look of indifference, he could only give a sigh and begin asking about what he really wanted to know. "You have quite a few talented people. Who do you want to pick? Roland? Arthur? Angus?"

It was not only Judgment who showed his curiosity, for even the Pope started staring steadily at Neo. However, Neo just stared back at the both of them expressionlessly.

Judgment, feeling that something was slightly amiss, said, "Don't tell me you don't even remember a single candidate's name..."

Neo shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "I remember Roland. That child's swordsmanship is good."

"You really are..."

Neo said with abrupt realization, "Oh, yeah, and Grisia."

"Grisia?" Judgment questioned doubtfully.

"The child who is very good at holy magic?" The Pope immediately shouted, "No way! I want to drag him into the Church; you're not allowed to pick him!"

A little surprised, Judgment asked Neo, "Did you remember Grisia because of his good holy magic?"

"No, it's because..." Neo frowned as he continued, "His swordsmanship is so lousy that it's difficult for me to forget him, even if I wanted to!"

The Pope immediately gave a smile. "If that's the case, then you better not pick him. His holy magic is so good that I remembered him just by taking a glance at him. He is a cleric! Definitely not a knight!"

One of you only looks at swordsmanship, and the other only looks at holy magic—there's really not much difference between you two. Deep down, Judgment smiled wryly.

"If that's the case, do you intend to pick Roland?"

Judgment nodded his head, full of approval. "I also remember him; his swordsmanship is quite decent, and he looks like an upstanding child."

"So are you going to choose Roland?"

Neo thought about it, and it seemed like there was really nothing wrong with the choice. Then again, other than having good or bad swordsmanship, he really couldn't tell the difference between the children. *However, should the Sun Knight really be judged based on how good his swordsmanship is?*

Looking at Neo's hesitation, Judgment asked in puzzlement, "You feel that he's not appropriate?"

"No," Neo said casually while frowning, "I just need to think it over some more."



"Why do you want to be the Sun Knight?"

For the sake of not letting himself pick a child based solely on their swordsmanship, Neo started asking every candidate questions in private.

For justice.

This was the most common answer. Neo smiled, and asked in reply, "What is justice?"

When they heard this question, the children would hesitate.

Neo secretly ridiculed the answer inside his heart. *For justice? How could a twelve year old child understand the meaning of justice? Most*

likely it was the answer set by the ignorant knights' education.

"Why do you want to be the Sun Knight?"

Neo gazed at the brown-haired boy in front of his eyes, and he really hoped that this child's answer would be different—because this child was Roland. As the child with the best swordsmanship, he was indeed worthy. His gaze was extremely determined and one could tell that it was a gaze that had been trained through long periods of hardship.

"I wish to discipline all of the evil-doers!" The child's eyes revealed resentment.

Neo was stunned for a moment, and then he started secretly laughing bitterly inside his heart. *This answer is one that Judgment would have wanted to hear... Why am I the one hearing it?*

He thought for a moment, and questioned, "Then, what are you willing to lay down your life for?"

Every word of Roland's resounded as he said, "For the sake of disciplining all evil-doers, I would be prepared to do whatever it took, even if it meant I must lay down my life!"

Child, you really have chosen wrongly. You should have gone to compete with Lesus, and given Judgment a few more options. Neo could only continue forcing himself to smile.



"Hey, have you decided who to pick?"

Neo turned around to face Judgment as the man approached him with small footsteps. "I'm not sure," he replied a little helplessly.

"Tomorrow is the selection and you still aren't sure?" Judgment asked, surprised.

Neo remained silent for a moment, and then asked in reply, "Judgment, have you asked your young Judgment Knight as to why he wanted to become the Judgment Knight?"

Judgment nodded his head. "Of course. The reputation of the Judgment Knight has never been very good, and in each generation there are only a handful of good candidates. But Lesus' swordsmanship is good, and his moral conduct is also good. No matter what he does he shows great promise, so I was also very curious as to why he wanted to become the Judgment Knight."

"Wait a moment!" Hearing that, Neo became more curious about other matters and couldn't help but ask, "Since you say that, why did you want to become the Judgment Knight in the first place?"

Judgment laughed. "You've known me for almost twenty years already, and you're only asking that question now? Isn't it a little too late for that? How about we make a trade with our answers, why did you want to become the Sun Knight?"

"I..." Neo looked blank as he replied, "I've forgotten."

"That's really typical of you..."

"I really forgot! And there's really no need for a reason, is there?" Neo said impatiently. "Which twelve-year-old child doesn't want to become the Sun Knight?"

"That's true. The Sun Knight is glorious and impressive, not like the Judgment Knight who will be scorned everywhere he goes."

Hearing that, Neo was silent for a while. At last he asked, "Do you regret it?"

"No! I will never regret it."

Judgment turned around and stared at Sun directly as he elaborated. "My father was a drunkard. If it were just the drinking, then it wouldn't have mattered. But whenever he was drunk, he would want to hit people. First, he beat my mother to death, pushed her into a river, and then claiming that she had drowned. Although I saw it from the beginning to the end, I was only eight years old, and nobody believed me. Afterwards, he lost control again and beat my three-year-old little sister to death. I was twelve at that time, but I didn't say another word about my father's crimes. I just walked to the Judgment Knight Selection, and then got chosen as the young Judgment Knight. After that I told my teacher about the matter, and let him judge my father."

Neo was speechless. He had been colleagues with Judgment for twenty years, but had never known that Judgment had such a past. Was he

really too obsessed in training his swordsmanship?

"As such, when I asked Lesus the question, I was already prepared in my heart to hear that there was a criminal about to enter the Judge's complex," Judgment calmly said. "However, contrary to my expectations, he actually refused to tell me who the sinner was. All he said was that he wanted to become the Judgment Knight, because he hoped that all of the sinners in the world would never have a chance to commit a second sin."

"Then are you satisfied with this answer?"

Judgment gave a faint smile as he replied, "I don't have the right to be dissatisfied, for I'm unable to think of a better answer. So, Neo, have you also asked this question?"

"Yeah!" Neo frowned and then hesitantly added, "But you and I are different. I can't find a satisfactory answer... I...I myself don't know what kind of answer is the correct one."

Judgment asked, "Have you asked all of the candidates?"

"No..." Neo furrowed his brows as he said, "There's still Grisia, but his swordsmanship..."

"Go and ask him!" Judgment said with a smile. "Even I have been able to find a satisfactory candidate amongst a bunch of bad eggs. Don't tell me that you don't believe that you can find your young Sun Knight?"



Neo wordlessly gazed at Grisia, who was a hideous mess from head to toe. His clothes were filthy and torn in several areas, and his face had more bruised areas than unblemished. If you were to ask which part of him looked like a Sun Knight, it would probably only be that head of golden hair that was still incomparably brilliant despite its messiness.

"You were in a fight?"

"I got beat up." Right when Grisia spoke, he irritated the wound on the corner of his mouth. He winced for a moment but then smiled even more brilliantly as he spoke. "But that's okay. Roland helped me hit them back!"

"You sure are worthless!" Neo rolled his eyes at him. "You have to fight your own battles!"

"Why should I?" Grisia immediately refuted vigorously. "They had ten people! Roland and I together still only make two! Two winning against ten is already very impressive!"

"Don't you mean one winning against ten?" Without any mirth, Neo said, "With swordsmanship like yours, you can't even handle a single person."

Although Roland's swordsmanship is good...could he win against ten people? A sliver of doubt flashed through Neo's heart.

"I helped too!" Grisia protested loudly.

Nevertheless, Neo's face was still full of disbelief.

Grisia shouted, "Even though I couldn't help him defeat our enemies, I was able to help him block attacks. I helped him draw the enemies away, and I even found reinforcements! Had I not gone and found Lesus, even Roland wouldn't have been able to defeat ten people!"

"You know Lesus?" Neo couldn't help but sigh. Although this child was not strong, he actually knew all the strong people... *That is a kind of talent too, right?*

"I don't know him," Grisia replied in a firm yet boisterous tone.

"..." Neo fell silent for a bit before he reminded Grisia, "You just said you went to find Lesus."

"Oh yeah!" Grisia said naturally. "The first time I saw that guy, I already knew he had to be a good person. All he needed was to see that Roland and I were just two people, and yet we were outnumbered by so many. No matter what the reason, he'd definitely help us out! So when I saw that Roland couldn't win, of course I left him to find Lesus right away!"

This is also a kind of talent, the talent to be a despicable person...

Neo fell silent for a while, pretty much holding no hope when he asked his question. "Forget it. Let me ask you, why do you want to be the

Sun Knight?”

Once he heard the question, both of Grisia’s eyes started shining.

“Because I want to stand in your place!”

“My place?” Neo furrowed his brow. Did he mean that he wanted the Sun Knight’s position? But this way of putting it sounded a little strange.

Grisia started gesturing excitedly, waving both hands around by his sides as he spoke. “Yup! I want your place! You have a lot of people standing on both your left and your right sides. I counted. There’s eleven! I want them to stand by my side too. It’d be like having eleven brothers. It must feel awesome!”

Neo laughed out loud. “Even if you become the Sun Knight, they won’t be the ones standing by your side. The ones who’ll be standing by your side will be the next generation of the Twelve Holy Knights.”

“Huh?” Grisia asked, looking like he didn’t fully understand. “The next generation? Are there still eleven people?”

“Of course.”

“Then that’s fine!” Grisia replied with a happy smile. “There’s still eleven! I’m fine if it’s eleven altogether, but if there’s one extra, that’d be even better. Six on the left, six on the right, how awesome would that be!”

Neo truly couldn't say what he thought about such an answer, so he could only ask the next question. "Then what would you willingly sacrifice your life for?"

Grisia was like every other twelve year old child who had never given thought to such a question. He lowered his head, deep in thought with his eyebrows furrowed. Neo wasn't in a hurry, so he patiently waited for Grisia to finish thinking.

Finally, Grisia smiled as he lifted his head. By chance, the noon sunlight struck his golden hair, so dazzling that Neo was almost blinded.

"For the sake of protecting... I'm willing to sacrifice my life."



When Neo surveyed everyone present, he found that practically everyone's gazes were focused on him. Neo smiled a little and then shouted boisterously, "I have decided that the next Sun Knight will be Grisia!"

First, everyone present fell silent. Soon after, an uproar broke out.

"Why was I chosen?"

Grisia was evidently shocked silly. Even though he walked forward, he kept glancing back out of the corner of his eye, toward a certain friend of his.

“Well...”

Neo looked at Roland, whose face, arms, and calves weren't covered by his clothes, and could be seen to have next to no wounds. He then lowered his head to look at Grisia whose skin was covered in bruises. He smiled as he said, “Perhaps it was because of your beautiful blond hair!”



This was completely absurd!

The Twelve Holy Knights and one royal knight who would soon be marrying the princess went as far as gathering in the Sun Knight's bedroom, opening the cellar, and moving out the closely packed wine hidden within. Now they were gathered in a prayer room, drinking wine. All of them drank several bottles, becoming intoxicated to the point that they could only be described as “completely wasted.”

Seeing this scene, Roland, who didn't like to drink very much, sighed, but he also felt strangely relaxed. The absurd actions of the genuine Twelve Holy Knights practically made the fact that he was a death knight dwelling in the Church of the God of Light seem not very absurd at all in comparison.

Because no matter how absurd something was, there was nothing more absurd than the fact that the Sun Knight had a wine cellar below his bedroom.

Roland looked toward the Sun Knight who was the most absurd one there. It was a hard event to come by, but with everyone's attempt to drink him under the table, Grisia was actually so drunk that his face was completely red and his eyes were misty.

This was way too different from what he had always imagined of the Sun Knight's image. Why was he the Sun Knight?

Roland couldn't help but admit that this question had bewildered him since Grisia had been chosen ten years ago. He tried recalling the past and concluded that the questions the previous Sun Knight asked him at the time must have been asked of Grisia too. Could it be that his answers were better than Roland's?

"Grisia."

"Yeah?"

"Why did you want to become the Sun Knight?" Roland asked, finally voicing the question that had been bothering him for many years.

"For you all, of course!"

Us? Roland looked at Grisia. He was so drunk that he was wobbling. Could it be that he was too drunk to know what he was saying? Roland furrowed his brows but couldn't help saying, "Then what are you willing to sacrifice your life for?"

"Ah? What did you say...?"

Grisia slumped onto the table, his face full of an idiotic smile. In a loud voice, Roland repeated his question. "What are you willing to sacrifice your life for?"

Grisia looked at Roland. He looked at everyone and smiled drunkenly.

"For you all!"

Side Story #2: “The Truth in Disguise”

Inside the basement, Chikus kicked at the four walls surrounding him with all his might. The walls were made of stone. With his current strength, it was completely impossible for him to rattle the walls.

Even though he knew that his actions were entirely pointless, he still couldn't stop and do nothing, since all he could see before him was a shroud of darkness. At all times, this darkness invaded his senses. Whenever he stopped moving, he would feel as if he were about to be swallowed by the darkness...

Suddenly, the only door to the basement opened.

The sudden light caused Chikus to squint. He raised his head and saw, next to the basement's door, a head of golden-blond hair that glinted under the sunlight. Because of the backlight, even though the person's face and upper body were visible, everything was still fairly blurry. There was a ring of light around the person, almost as if the entire body were giving off light.

The person who had arrived extended his hand out to him and said with a smile, “I've found you.”



During the swordsmanship lesson, Neo, the instructor responsible for teaching swordsmanship, walked amongst the Twelve Young Holy Knights. After carefully looking at each and every one of them, he felt completely satisfied. The young knights' swordsmanship could all be

said to be above expectations. He could even claim that many of them were sword experts who far exceeded expectations.

First up was young Judgment Knight. During selections, Neo had heard that his swordsmanship was excellent, but he had never thought that young Ice Knight could hold his own even against young Judgment Knight when it came to swordsmanship. Also, even though young Leaf Knight had a foolish-looking face, his swordsmanship was also quite remarkably good.

This made Neo's mood unexpectedly good. Being able to nurture so many expert swordsmen meant he would have more opponents that he could duel against in the future. This could only be a good thing.

"Eh? How has my sword disappeared again?"

Neo blanked out. *That voice belongs to...* He turned his head to look. As he had thought, it belonged to his student Grisia, whose face was currently puzzled as he looked at his very empty hands.

"Be careful!"

From the side, Chikus suddenly shouted out a warning. At the same time, he quickly stepped forward and deftly swung his sword, knocking away a sword that was flying toward someone else.

Ceo turned his head to look, eyes staring wide as he gaped at the sword that had been knocked to the ground... *That sword is pointing directly at me!*

Thank goodness it was knocked away. He let out his breath and quickly thanked Chikus.

Chikus instead turned his head and started loudly berating the originator of this fiasco. "What the hell were you doing?!"

"I'm really sor—" Grisia only managed to complete half of his apology before he was grabbed by the collar from behind and his entire person was lifted up. He turned his head to look, just in time to see his own teacher's smile.

Even though there was a smile present on Neo's face, his eyes held no sign of joy as he coldly said, "Apologize."

Grisia immediately responded with an incomparably brilliant, trademark Sun smile. Then he turned his head, bowing his head forward in an apologetic gesture toward Ceo... For someone who was being dangled in the air by his collar, his stooped, apologetic posture was truly graceful enough to surprise people.

Ceo's complexion paled as he hurriedly said, "No, no, there's no need to apologize..."

However, Grisia had already opened his mouth, speaking a lengthy and exceptionally fluid speech. "My dear brother Ceo, although the light may be resplendent, it is also blazing, seemingly capable of piercing through the deepest darkness in one's heart. It is so brilliant that for a moment, Grisia was unable to bear it, causing Grisia to lose

hold of the sword, which is used for massacre. As we are both children of the God of Light, Grisia hopes you will forgive Grisia for his blunder. May Grisia venture to swear to the sun in the sky that he will never again commit this kind of unforgivable mistake!”

With a pained expression, Ceo listened to the entire speech and sighed helplessly, saying, “I forgive you. Even if you make another mistake, don’t worry about it. I just hope that next time you won’t apologize to me again. Listening to that makes me feel so tired...”

Hearing this, Neo truly didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. He couldn’t help but admit that other than the fact that Grisia’s swordsmanship was all over the place, even he himself couldn’t find any fault with Grisia’s other capabilities... Grisia’s skill at pretending to be elegant and speaking rubbish was perhaps even a little too good. It seemed as though Neo could slack off with Grisia’s character development lessons in the future.

Neo clapped his hands and told everyone, “Today’s swordsmanship lesson ends here. Take a short rest, and then go find each of your own teachers for your lessons.”

Hearing this, everyone departed one after another. Many even let out a sigh of relief. Although Knight-Captain Sun always wore a smile on his face, no one ever believed he was truly smiling.

Before leaving, Chikus glared at Grisia and provokingly said, “If you can’t use a sword, then get out of the way.” Yet Grisia merely smiled brightly in response.

How boring! Chikus hurried his steps to catch up with the person in front of him and yelled, "Hey! Wait up, Aivis. Spar with me tonight?"

Aivis first looked all around, making sure that Knight-Captain Sun had already left, before he rolled his eyes at Chikus and retorted, "Why don't you find someone from your side? You know I'm the young Stone Knight, who belongs on Judgment Knight's side. I don't get along with people like you on Sun Knight's side!"

"Really?" Chikus snorted and immediately stuck his hand out. "If we're not friends, then return my wine money! You couldn't have forgotten how much you owe me, right?"

"That's..." Aivis immediately changed the topic and asked, "Didn't you say that you want to spar tonight? Why don't you bring someone from your side and I'll bring Ecilan too. We can take turns, or even have a two-on-two."

Chikus objected, "Who would want to bring them along?! All of them are sissies!"

You're speaking way too loudly. Grisia is still over there! Aivis glanced at Grisia. The latter happened to pass by the two of them and even gave him a smile.

After Grisia left, Aivis smiled wryly and said, "That can't be? At least there's that person..."

He hesitated for a moment to think. *Ceo? Hm, he's very shy. Probably still within the range of what Chikus considers "sissy." Elmairy's out too. Grisla...eh, let's not even talk about whether or not he's a sissy. If we're sparring with a sword, we must not invite him.*

In the end, after thinking things over, he sighed. "I think I'll just ask Ecilan. The three of us can take turns..."

Chikus snorted.



"You don't have to take any more character development lessons."

Blaze Knight somewhat helplessly looked at his own student. Chikus's two hands were never unoccupied, always needing to touch this or play around with that; he always wore his knight's outfit haphazardly, the stains on his shirt always increasing, never decreasing; whenever he opened his mouth, his voice would be loud enough for the entire Holy Temple to hear him.

He was even more like the Blaze Knight of legends than himself, who had been the Blaze Knight for ten years. *What else is there to develop?*

Chikus snorted through his nose. From the bottom of his heart, he had never thought highly of these character development lessons. *How could one possibly develop a person's character? What a load of bullshit!*

"I don't need any more lessons? Then I'm going out to play!"

Going out to play during lesson time? Blaze Knight hurriedly said, "Wait a moment!"

"What now?" Chikus turned around, arms crossed against his chest. He stamped his feet and impatiently said, "If you have something to say then spit it out already!"

Seeing his attitude, Blaze Knight first became angry. *Is this the kind of attitude that a student should have toward his teacher?*

But then he immediately remembered that Chikus' defiance and his overwhelming, unsophisticated attitude was exactly what was characteristic of the Blaze Knight, much more perfect than his own pretense that he had held for these ten years. Once he realized this, he didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Even if anyone criticized me for letting my student out to play during lesson time, that person would only have to look at Chikus' personality and would most likely agree that this child does not need development lessons at all!

Helplessly, he said, "Forget it. Go ahead and play, just don't go overboard."

"You called me back and yet you have nothing to say. What the hell? Do you have too much time on your hands...?"

Chikus grumbled as he stomped away.

Hearing this, Blaze Knight could only force a bitter smile.



Chikus wandered about the Holy Temple's corridors, greeting holy knights he met along the way as he thought about where he should head to play...

"Stutter!"

The loud and sudden shout startled him greatly. He looked all around and walked toward the room where the loud shout had come from. Sneakily, he peeked inside and saw that Earth Knight and the young knight Georgo were the ones who were inside the room. What was strange was that there was also a cleric inside, and the cleric even looked to be a girl who was around his age.

"Georgo! When you speak, stutter, and when you see a girl, you must blush– Bastard, don't you flirt with the female cleric when I'm scolding you! Move away from her!"

Seeing how the blushing and embarrassed female cleric had almost taken the bait, Georgo's heart twisted, but he was afraid to anger his already furious teacher who looked like he was about to burst. He could only take a step back, but he could not help himself from grumbling, "Teacher, you're no longer stuttering..."

Earth Knight suddenly realized his speech was too fluid. He hurriedly coughed vigorously and said, "I-I was just t-too agitated. I-It's all

because of you, ch-child; why must you be so s-stubborn...ugh! You're angering me to death! I'm telling you to stutter, not myself! You better stutter when you talk, or else I'm going to bruise your face and knock out all of your teeth. See if you can still talk fluidly then!"

Hearing that he was going to be beaten, Georgo immediately fixed an obedient expression on his face and "honestly" nodded his head as he said, "Okay, okay! I get it already!"

Earth Knight immediately bellowed, "'Okay, okay' is not stuttering! You should say, 'okay, I-I got it,' and don't you go adding insincere and dishonest words like 'already'! Also, what's with your expression?! You think your expression is honest and sincere? You're obviously discontent! You're really angering me to death..."

"Haha..." Chikus laughed out loud and immediately covered his mouth, withdrawing his head as he laughed to himself.

Georgo? Honest and sincere? Haha!

"You better look at her!"

Another loud shout. This time, Chikus was not startled. He even realized that this noise did not come from Earth Knight's room but rather from the room next door.

What's happening this time? Curiously, he stuck his head into the other room.

He took a look but didn't expect that the practice situation in this room would be pretty much the same as the one in the previous room. Just like before, both teacher and student were present, except this time it was the senior and junior Storm Knights, with the addition of one female cleric, though the female cleric in this room was much older. She looked to be around twenty something, and her features and figure were both extremely gorgeous.

"Ceo, look at her with your eyes open." Storm Knight's voice could get no colder than this.

With great effort, Ceo lifted his head. Rather than looking at the female cleric, it would be more apt to say that he was staring blankly at her.

Seeing this, Storm Knight immediately told the female cleric, "Cleric, please."

"No problem." At once, the female cleric flirtatiously puckered her lips and then winked at this young, handsome boy, adopting various amorous poses to entice him with all her skill.

Because of his teacher's evident anger and frigid command, Ceo put in great effort this time not to lower his head, even though his face had long since become as red as a monkey's butt, the color spreading all the way to the tips of his ears.

"Kiss her."

Seeing that his student was finally able to look at a woman without turning away, Storm Knight wanted to seize the opportunity to advance to the next step; however, once the words left his mouth, he immediately saw his student acting as if the world were about to end. Suddenly, he felt as if he were corrupting his student... Unable to bear it, he said, "You can just kiss her cheek."

"Teacher, couldn't we just hold hands?"

Ceo revealed an imploring expression, but his teacher's face remained frigid. He even showed hints of being ready to explode again, so Ceo could only give up on his request. He turned toward the female cleric whose expression had long since turned from a tantalizing one to one where she looked as if she didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

After he took a peek, Ceo was no longer as nervous as before. He then turned to look at his teacher, whose expression was still frigid, looking as if there were absolutely no room for discussion. He could only brace himself and pucker his lips as he barged forward, lightly touching the female cleric's cheek, and then he immediately turned completely red and jumped aside, rushing straight to the furthest corner of the room. Seeing this, Storm Knight laughed in frustration, "You wimp. We've already trained for three years, yet asking you to kiss a woman is like forcing you to kiss an orc!"

"What did you say?" the female cleric asked loudly.

Storm Knight froze. The female cleric had already approached him, using her fists to pummel him with everything she had.

"No, no, I mean you are as beautiful as an orc– Ah! Don't kick me; it was a slip of the tongue, a slip! I'm sorry, really!"

At this time, Chikus could no longer bear to watch anymore. He rushed into the room, and before anyone inside could react, he seized the female cleric and loudly kissed her on the cheek. He then exclaimed to Ceo, who had shrunk into the corner, "Ceo, look! What's so difficult about a little kiss?"

"Exactly! This little bro is the cutest!" The female cleric happily declared this and kissed Chikus' face several times before she turned her head and fiercely declared to the senior and junior Storm Knights, "You two useless guys!"

"Little bro, let's go! Big sis will treat you to some candy. Whatever you like, I'll buy for you."

"Really?" Chikus' eyes gleamed as he shouted, "Then let's go now, big sis!"

The female cleric was over the moon at being called "big sis¹." She hurriedly replied, "Sure thing! Let's go right away."

The female cleric grasped Chikus and did not neglect to roll her eyes at Storm Knight before leaving the room.

Behind them, the senior and junior Storm Knights watched in astonishment as the two left the room. After a good while, Ceo shyly

approached his teacher's side and asked in a small voice, "Teacher, there are no females left. Are we going to continue with practicing something else now?"

"Practice, my ass!"

Storm Knight grabbed his student's ear and furiously shouted, "You caused me to be called 'useless'! Bastard, do you know how humiliating it is for a guy to be called useless? You hopeless bastard! If you can't master not blushing when you see females within a year, and still can't wink at females within two years, I'm going to...I'm going to spend all of my savings to hire a bunch of females to gang rape you!"

Ouch, ouch! With a miserable grimace, Ceo yelped, "Please don't! Teacher...I'll try my best! I definitely will!"



After parting with the passionate female cleric, Chikus held a bag of candy in his hands. Yet, he did not follow his original plan of going out to play. Instead, he curiously continued peeking in on other people's lessons.

Elmairy had been taking care of small animals, and his teacher was beside him reciting fairy tales to him. One glance was enough for Chikus to feel like he would explode from boredom, so he turned and left.

Afterward, he saw that there was no one in Cloud Knight's classroom.

Chikus looked everywhere, but could not find even a trace of anyone.

"How strange! Could he be like me? Maybe he doesn't need lessons?"

Chikus scratched his head and turned to leave...

"Are you looking for me?"

Eek!

Chikus jumped in alarm and rapidly spun around. Someone was actually standing behind him wordlessly. Furthermore, his face was pale, his figure slim and weak, and his hair covered half of his face...

"I-I wasn't looking for y-you!" Chikus stuttered so much that even Earth Knight would have praised him.

Young Cloud Knight slowly tilted his head and said, "You've been looking in from outside the classroom for some time."

"...You were inside?"

Young Cloud Knight slowly nodded his head.

How is that possible? There was clearly no one inside just now...

Chikus suddenly felt a draft behind his back and hurriedly made up an excuse. "I-I was looking for young Sun Knight."

Young Cloud Knight again slowly nodded his head, slowly raising his hand to gesture at the room next door. "Grisia is next door."

"A-ah, thanks!"

In a hurry, Chikus turned to run away, but after he had run halfway, he suddenly thought of a question. His curiosity won over his fear. He turned his head to ask, "Is your teacher inside the classroom?"

Young Cloud Knight shook his head. "Teacher is taking an afternoon nap under the banyan tree."

Phew. If even Cloud Knight, an adult, were inside, and he didn't see him...then it really would be like seeing ghosts in broad daylight.

Chikus patted himself on the chest and breathed a sigh of relief. Curiously, he continued to ask, "Then why didn't you follow him?"

"Teacher told me not to disturb him and to find my own place to drift to."

Drift...are you sure he told you to drift?

Chikus waved that thought away. "Alright then, go back to your classroom and continue drifting!"

After he gave a wave and blinked, he discovered that there was no longer anyone in front of him.

"..."

Chikus fell silent for a good while before he was able to take a step toward the next room. As he stuck his head in, he muttered to himself, "I hope the situation in this room will be more normal. This Grisia fellow is my future boss. If he's too strange, I wouldn't want to heed his orders."

"Child, you absolutely must seek out undead creatures on a frequent basis."

Chikus paused. *Why is he mentioning undead creatures?* Immediately, he looked inside and saw that Grisia was asking a question to his teacher, the strongest Sun Knight in all of history, who struck fear into the hearts of everyone in the entire Holy Temple.

"Teacher, is it because the Sun Knight has vowed to destroy all undead creatures?"

After Chikus heard this, he thought this made sense. *This was probably the reason!*

Sun Knight wagged his finger, a mysterious smile present on his face. "No, no, you must seek them out frequently so as to vent your emotions."

"What?" Grisia and Chikus, who was standing outside the door, both had very similar expressions of astonishment and doubt.

Sun Knight earnestly continued, "Think about it. You must smile every day, forgive every piece of human trash, and praise the God of Light –

whom you will probably never meet in your entire life – in every sentence. If you don't have a channel by which you can vent your feelings, then if you end up with depression, you might no longer be able to carry out your duties as a Sun Knight properly. If you fail to carry out your duties properly, you will lose your job, and after losing your job you will become even more depressed. In the end, you will be so depressed that you'll be reunited with the God of Light. Now, you surely wouldn't want to meet with such a tragic end, do you?"

"...I don't."

"And so, child, you must look for an undead creature to vent your frustrations on at least once a month, understand?"

"What if I can't find one?"

"Do not worry, child. Here, this is the name card of the necromancer whom the Church has specially contracted; not only can you specify the type of undead creature that you want, you can even report this as work expenses and get the Church to pay for it."

"..."

Grisia accepted the business card with a blank face. However, perhaps it was because he frequently received plenty of shocks, he nonchalantly tucked the business card in his pocket and raised his head to resume listening to his teacher's instructions within a matter of seconds.

However, at this time, Sun Knight clapped his hands. "Alright, today's lesson ends here. I'm going to take my leave first."

Stunned, Grisia blankly asked, "Teacher, where are you going?"

"I have a date with the princess– No! I mean, I have an appointment with His Highness, the prince, to discuss important matters about the kingdom and to promote the relationship between the royal palace and the Church... Anyway, I'm leaving now. If I don't depart now, I'll be late. Making a lady wait is not something a gentleman should do."

So His Highness, the prince, is a lady? Grisia helplessly pointed out, "But Teacher, it's still class time right now!"

At this time, Sun Knight had already reached the door. Once he heard Grisia's words, he paused in his steps. This also let Chikus, who was still outside, breathe a sigh of relief. He almost didn't have time to hide. He took this opportunity to quickly hide behind some lengthy draperies in the corridor.

Sun Knight somewhat awkwardly said, "Is that so? It's still class time... That's a little problematic. Last time, Judgment told me to be more serious. Alright! I'll give you an assignment then. Go find that specially-employed necromancer immediately, and get to know each other."

After he finished relaying the assignment, he turned around to leave again.

Grisia anxiously shouted, "Wait a moment! Teacher, aren't you going to accompany me? I'm going to see a necromancer, right? At least go with me the first time?"

"You're already eighteen! Don't behave like a spoiled little kid."

Sun Knight's body was already halfway outside of the classroom, but he finally showed some awareness of his position as a teacher. He turned his head to warn Grisia. "Remember! Never ever attack the necromancer! If you don't attack, then surely you won't be harmed. That's all! Go quickly!"

Having said this, he left just like that, leaving Grisia behind. Grisia felt fairly wronged as he looked at the vacant door, and said to nobody in particular, "Teacher, I'm only fifteen..."



Of course, there was no one around to respond to him. He sighed in resignation as he fished out the business card. Even though his teacher seemed as if he was looking for an excuse when he handed out this assignment, if Grisia actually regarded this assignment as a joke and didn't complete it seriously, his teacher would once again transform into the strongest Sun Knight of all history.

"Are you really going to seek out the necromancer?"

Grisia was stunned. When he raised his head, he immediately recognized the person before him. After he finished being stunned, he blurted out, "Young Blaze Knight? Why aren't you in class... Forget it,

pretend I didn't ask."

After speaking, he suddenly remembered that he was also one of the members who didn't need to attend lessons, and his reason was that "Teacher skipped out on the lesson to carry out a love affair with the princess." He could not speak this reason out loud, so perhaps the other person's reason was also the kind that could not be spoken out loud.

Chikus yelled, "Tell me! Are you really going to seek out that necromancer?"

"Of course." Grisia shrugged his shoulders and added, "Teacher told me to go, so I have to go!"

Hearing this, Chikus was also stunned, unable to understand why Sun Knight had left this kind of command. However, no matter how hard he tried to think, he couldn't figure it out, so he decided to stop trying to understand. Instead, he warned Grisia, "The gravest enemy of the Church of the God of Light is the undead; necromancers deal with undead creatures on a daily basis. You must have known this already, right?"

Of course he knew this. Grisia rubbed his face and murmured, "But, my teacher commanded me..."

"Then...he must be testing you!" Chikus finally thought of a reason, and shouted, "Maybe he's trying to test you to see if you really would go find the necromancer, thus betraying the teachings of the Church!"

Grisia did not think this was the case at all. He understood his teacher too well. In the rankings of what Neo hated the most, "disobeying him" was definitely in the top three. Even if he betrayed the teachings of the Church, he would still fare better than if he defied Neo's orders.

"No matter what, I must go. Farewell, the hour is late. I think I should head over now." Grisia was a little worried. It was almost evening already, and he wanted to visit the necromancer while the sun was still out.

"You..." Chikus' eyes were wide. He drew his longsword from his waist and shouted, "Stop. I will never let you go find a necromancer!"

Seeing that Chikus had drawn his sword, Grisia was truly intimidated, and for a moment, he didn't know how to respond... After thinking for a bit, he concluded that since Chikus already knew he was going to seek out a necromancer, then it shouldn't matter if Chikus also found out that he knew magic, right?

If he did get exposed later, all he had to do was deny it to the end.

"Ice Wall."

Surprised, Chikus found himself blocked by four towering walls of ice that almost reached the ceiling.

From outside the walls of ice came Grisia's voice, "After I leave, the ice walls will disappear. Then you can come out."

Chikus was angry to the point of exploding. He raised his sword and

slashed wildly at the ice walls, but the ice was actually incredibly sturdy. He couldn't break the walls in such a short period of time. He roared and bellowed, "You bastard! Let me out. Don't you dare seek out the necromancer. I'm warning you, I'll tell my teacher!"

Grisia's unhurried voice drifted over. "Go ahead and tell him. You can also mention in passing that this was a command from Sun Knight."

"Grisia!" Chikus' roars drifted over from behind the walls of ice. "I'm not going to acknowledge someone like you as the Sun Knight, you hear me? You traitor!"

Grisia's steps slowed a bit before he continued on and left.



Angrily, Chikus immediately found his teacher and blurted out everything. Unexpectedly, the answer he received was not at all what he had imagined.

"If it's a command from Neo, then it can't be helped."

Blaze Knight said this with embarrassment. Once he saw his student's stupefied expression, he sighed and warned, "Don't you go provoking Neo. He has a bad temper and isn't afraid of your teacher. Only Judgment and the Pope can handle him when they work together. Otherwise, there really isn't anyone in this world who can control him."

"But, Grisia is going to seek out a necromancer!" Chikus indignantly said, "I'm not going to acknowledge that kind of guy as the Sun

Knight! I'm going to uncover his true nature!"

After saying this, he turned and left angrily.

"True nature? Then you'll need to uncover a lot of people..."

Blaze Knight watched his student leave and murmured to himself, "Even excluding Neo, which of the Twelve Holy Knights can truly be said to match their counterparts of legends?"

But he immediately recalled that his own student was truly very like the Blaze Knight of legends.

"With you around, at least there is one person who will not need to be a two-faced person among the next generation of knights."

Thinking this way, he felt he was actually lucky that he did not need to be like the others, who had to train their students to become two-faced people. This put him in a better mood.



Furious, Chikus rushed out into the streets, running and wandering around aimlessly for a good while before discovering that he didn't have a destination in mind. All of a sudden, he didn't know where he should go. However, because he was still angry at his teacher, he couldn't return to the Holy Temple. Thus, he could only aimlessly wander about the streets.

After wandering and wandering, he suddenly spotted a familiar figure...

Grisia?

Chikus was a little puzzled. Hadn't it been some time since Grisia had said he was going to find the necromancer? Why was he still wandering about the streets?

Suspicious raised, he glanced at the lollipops held within Grisia's hands, feeling somewhat speechless at the moment... *He went to buy candy first? A fifteen, sixteen year old boy is still eating candy?*

Seeing that Grisia was about to leave, Chikus followed him without a second thought.

Grisia continued walking until he reached the ghettos. This was an area Chikus had never visited before. Seeing the dirty and run-down surroundings astonished him greatly. The unpleasant odors made him wrinkle his brows. He truly could not believe this was also a part of Leaf Bud City.

Soon, Grisia bent down and entered a small, wooden house that looked like it was about to collapse.

Could that be the necromancer's residence? Just as Chikus was considering whether he should storm the place, Grisia exited and was even waving goodbye to someone inside the house. "Then I'll be taking my leave now. I'll come find you next time... Okay, okay! I'll bring strawberry lollipops with me from the start next time. I don't want to repeat what happened this time, having to make an extra trip to get them. See you next time."

Next time? Chikus' eyes widened. This guy is planning on visiting the necromancer again?

Seeing that Grisia had retraced his original path to leave, Chikus hesitated a bit, but he did not follow him. He drew his sword. Step-by-step, he approached the ramshackle house.

Once he was in front of the house's entrance, Chikus kicked open the door with all his might and shouted loudly inside, "Come out, necromancer!"

Inside the house, dust and thick spider webs were everywhere. Had he not been certain that Grisia had entered this place just moments ago, even Chikus would have had no doubts that no one lived in a place such as this.

With furious steps, he stomped into the house, off-handedly chopping the dust-covered centerpiece, ramming it off to the side. He screamed, "Stop pretending! I know you're here, necromancer. Come out! I saw Grisia talking with you!"

"Little boy, I don't recall inviting you."

A voice suddenly echoed out. Chikus' heart skipped a beat. Yet, he could not figure out where the voice came from, and he did not see anyone either.

"Did Grisia tell you to come?"

Chikus yelled, "This has nothing to do with that bastard! I'm here to deal with you!"

"That bastard... Is that how you address the future Sun Knight? Is that the right thing to do, young Blaze Knight?"

The owner of the voice seemed to have figured out Chikus' identity from his apparel.

"I'm not going to acknowledge that bastard as the Sun Knight!" Chikus roared, "He's involved with evil bastards like you. He is not qualified to be the Sun Knight!"

"Evil bastards? You say that Grisia is...that little guy is evil? Hahaha, hehehe!"

"What are you laughing about?!" Chikus loudly screamed, "He has connections with a necromancer like you. If he's not evil, then what is he?!"

"Oh? Your sense of evil is way too simple! But..." The voice suddenly changed from a lighthearted one to a deep one, "Do you know? I despise people like you the most, those who think that they are defenders of justice, young Blaze Knight."

The floor suddenly started shaking. Chikus hurriedly recited an incantation, emitting holy light from his hands. However, this holy light was only enough to dispel a part of the illusion in the house. It was not

enough to let him see the true situation inside the house.

Although he couldn't clearly see the scene inside the house, he did see the silhouette of a little girl. The little girl even held a lollipop within her hand and was slowly walking his way. Even though he somewhat guessed that this little girl was the necromancer, he could not bring himself to actually swing his sword at a little girl.

The little girl walked in front of him and said, "If you hate Grisia this much, then I have no need to be considerate toward him and Neo and let you go. In fact, hehe...if I kill you, he might even thank me!"

"What nonsense are yo--"

Before he even managed to finish, a figure suddenly plunged his way. Even though Chikus had his sword drawn, he was unable to react in his panic. He could only raise his sword in front of his chest to parry his opponent's attacks.

He was forced to take several steps back. When he raised his head to look, he discovered that the person who had attacked him had an ashen face, completely soulless eyes, and even several spots on his body that looked like he had been patched together. He did not look like a living person at all...he was an undead!

Here was an undead wearing an apron and holding a broom.

Chikus suddenly realized that the weapon the undead creature was using to attack him was actually a broom... He immediately thought this was a little ridiculous; a necromancer that was a little girl, plus an

undead creature that was wearing an apron... Why was this so different from the image of the evil necromancer and undead creature that he had been taught about in the past?

But even though it was just a broom, once wielded by an undead creature and swung his way, Chikus could not afford to be careless. He had not forgotten that he had just been forced to take several steps back by this broom.

Mentally prepared, Chikus was no longer being forced back by the undead creature. Instead, he held his own as he exchanged blows with his opponent. Once he started releasing holy light to assist himself, he even gained the upper hand. Soon, beating the undead creature before him would only be a matter of time.

"Your strength isn't bad! This undead creature was a sword expert when he was alive!" The little girl giggled as she said, "But...I can't have you killing him. If you kill him, then I'll have no one to do my cleaning for me!"

At this time, the floor suddenly began shaking so violently that Chikus almost could not remain standing. Fortunately, the undead creature did not attack him during this time. However, all of a sudden, he felt the floor give out underneath his feet. Before he even had time to struggle, he was already plummeting down, falling into complete darkness, only able to hear the little girl's melodious yet merciless voice...

"Young Blaze Knight, once you've found that you've died and become

an evil, undead creature, I wonder what kind of expression you will reveal?"



Shit! Shit! Damn that necromancer! Damn Grisias!

After he had fallen into the darkness, he had figured out that he was being imprisoned somewhere, and might even be made into an undead creature by the necromancer very soon. Yet, he still couldn't find any way to escape. He didn't know how long he had been struggling, nor how many times he had cursed out loud. Just when he thought he really was going to die in such a cursed place...a person who was dazzlingly bright all over brought forth light and reached a hand out to him.

"I've found you!"

Chikus stared blankly at the person who'd arrived. Once he recognized his face, he uttered his name, "Grisia?"

Even though the person who had come was someone he really didn't want to see, after being held captive in darkness for so long, as long as he could see someone...it didn't matter who that person was!

Hearing Chikus speak, Grisias sighed in relief. "Thank goodness you're okay. Quick, come up!"

Grisias held his hand out; however, a few drops of liquid dripped from his fingertips. Chikus reached his hand out to catch them before he

found out the liquid was actually fresh blood. Completely surprised, he yelled, "Blood?"

Nonchalant, Grisia replied, "Oh, I just fought with the undead creature that guarded the door."

Chikus raised his head to look at Grisia carefully, finally discovering that there were injuries all over his head and face. It looked like the situation was not as simple as what Grisia had claimed. Unable to help himself, Chikus asked, "Why have you come to save me?"

"What are you talking about?" Grisia asked in surprise. "You are the young Blaze Knight, one of the future Twelve Holy Knights. Who should I be saving, if not you?"

Is that so? Chikus extended his arms and grabbed that hand, leveraging the borrowed strength to jump out of the basement.

"Grisia, what did you do to my cleaning corpse?"

Both of them jumped in surprise. Chikus looked in all directions, his eyeballs almost popping out. *The surrounding walls are actually pink, and the floor is also pink, and the tablecloth on the wooden table is also pink, and there is even a cake-shaped cushion on top of the pink bed! This completely looks like the room of a little girl.* Then, on the deck chair that wasn't very far from where they stood, lay a little girl. Her facial features were delicate and quite cute, though her skin was actually also pink, a skin color that was not natural in humans. If you looked at her for too long, you would get goose bumps along your

back without even realizing it!

Chikus' jaw almost fell off. *The house of a necromancer, the necromancer herself...is this what it's really like?*

"What, Pink? Your cleaning corpse was bullying me, so I had to retaliate!" Grisia replied innocently.

"He bullied you?" Pink scoffed at this. "I think the truth must be the exact opposite? Clearly you used holy light to attack him without hesitation, so he had no choice but to retaliate. Stop lying through your teeth, Grisia. I saw everything that happened."

"If you saw everything, then why didn't you come out to save me? I almost got butchered," Grisia grumbled.

"You still dare to speak? That was my most handsome cleaning corpse. Now he's turned to dust because you bombarded him with holy light. How are you going to compensate for that... Ah! I know, there's an even handsomer and fresher one here!"

Pink's eyes trained onto Chikus, and a playful smile spread across her face; however, paired with the implications of her words, her smile could only send shivers into people's hearts.

Grisia immediately put on a wide smile and spoke toward the "not human" who was on the deck chair, "Pink, young Blaze Knight truly, truly did not mean it! He won't ever come and try to expose you again. Even if he did, it would be a useless gesture. You are the Church's

specially employed necromancer, after all! So what do you say, why don't we just let this matter pass? You don't really want to oppose the Church, do you?"

What a speech, playing both good cop and bad cop. The next Sun Knight is so amusing. Spending the days by his side might not be too boring after all. Pink smiled secretly, but on the surface, she revealed an unhappy expression as she replied, "Don't use the Church to restrain me. I'm not afraid of them. If I were afraid, would I still be living here? Grisia, think about it. Why does the Church tolerate my living here?"

Grisia honestly replied, "Because the Church doesn't want to go head-to-head against you..."

Hearing this, Chikus' expression turned sour. Could it be that the God of Light that he had sworn his loyalty to, that the Church of the God of Light that he will need to serve for thirty years, was actually afraid of one necromancer? Within his heart, a flame of hot anger ignited. *This kind of God, this kind of Church, there's nothing wrong with leaving!*

"But that doesn't mean the Church is afraid of you!"

Grisia suddenly spoke loudly. This allowed Chikus to momentarily squash his flame of anger. He turned his head to look at Grisia.

Grisia's every word resounded sonorously. "This is the capital. There are a lot of citizens. Going head-to-head with you would bring about a lot of casualties. You don't care about the citizens, but the Church

cannot be so negligent! As long as you don't harm people, the Church will tolerate your living here. However, don't think that you can do whatever you please. If you dare to do anything improper, the Church of the God of Light will definitely, definitely not let you off! This is the pledge from the next Sun Knight, Grisia!"

In a daze, Chikus stared at Grisia, whose every word had stunned him to no end. He never thought that the Church had this kind of notion... So it was for the sake of not harming innocents?

Hearing this, Pink merely giggled and flippantly said, "It's just the young Blaze Knight. It's not like he's one of the official Twelve Holy Knights. The Church might not even be so inconsiderate toward me, since they have already prepared a back-up knight anyway. Grisia, he's so disobedient. Why not replace him with a new one? You know, I'm actually helping you out here!"

"What replacement?! How could I possibly replace my brother?"

After Grisia yelled this out, he slowly and resolutely said, one word at a time, "If you dare to kill my Blaze Knight, you'll have to kill me too, or else I will definitely kill you to avenge him!"

A boy of merely fifteen years who obviously does not have the ability to harm me is actually talking about killing or not killing me. This was supposed to be very funny, but she didn't know why she suddenly had the thought that...

If I really did kill him along with the other, he would most likely

become a death knight, climbing back from the dead to avenge his young Blaze Knight, right?□□He is truly amusing.

Pink raised her head to look at Grisia. She was really curious about what kind of Sun Knight this current young Sun Knight would become in the future.

Her lips lifted in a faint smile, a decision made in her heart.



Two teenage boys who were neither grown-up nor childlike walked beneath the evening's setting sun. One boy's hair was as red as fire, while the other's was as splendid as the sun.

"Grisia." Chikus suddenly paused in his steps and turned his head to say, "Thanks for coming to save me today."

Grisia, who had been licking a blueberry lollipop, lowered his lollipop in embarrassment when he saw Chikus' serious expression. He also earnestly answered, "You're welcome! You disappeared for three days. We were all worried to death. Everyone was looking for you, especially your teacher. He looked like he hadn't slept all three days! I only just chanced upon you, and Pink only wanted ten strawberry lollipops and a pretty corpse from me as an apology before she let you go. So I didn't do much!"

Hearing this, Chikus stared at Grisia, the latter whose face still bore injuries. Those injuries were already treated with Moderate Heals, yet they still had not healed completely. Evidently, the injuries had been

quite serious.

Just how did this guy, whose swordsmanship is famously rotten, defeat that undead creature?

Chikus fell silent for a good while. Just as a confused Grisia was about to question him about his staring, Chikus finally began speaking.

Word-by-word, he said, "Grisia, you are my Sun Knight, my brother, the kind that also cannot be replaced."

Curious and puzzled, Grisia looked at him and said in a matter-of-fact tone, "Of course! Otherwise, what else could I be?"

Hearing this answer, Chikus laughed.

"Let's head back now!" Grisia reminded him, "Your teacher looked very anxious!"

"Alright."

The two of them walked farther and farther. Only their conversation drifted over faintly...

"Want a lollipop? I have blueberry, strawberry, and chocolate-flavored ones. What flavor do you want?"

"There's no way I would want that kind of thing. I'm the young Blaze Knight! I'm supposed to gorge myself with meat and gulp down wine.

Who would want a lollipop?!”

“You don’t want one? Then Ecilan will be very sad. He made these himself! Making sweets is his hobby. He told me that his father is a famous pastry chef in the city!”

“...Aren’t the people from Judgment Knight’s side supposed to be your sworn enemies?”

“Ah! That’s true, but Lesus is a very good person! He helps to fight my battles, runs errands to buy blueberry pie for me, and even beats up the dogs that bite me!”

“...Give me a chocolate-flavored one.”

Notes On the Side Story

¹ “...**big sis**...”: In Chinese, this is “little big sister” as Chinese has terms for older sister and younger sister. The cleric is over the moon for being called “little big sister” which also hints at her youth.

Side Story #3: “Facing the Darkness”

Jesus Judgment knelt on the ground, his head bowed and his right hand over his heart, as he prayed to the Symbol of Light.

The prayer room had been professionally designed so that the whole room would be extremely dark. Only the window above the Symbol of Light was open, brightly illuminating the symbol.

Because of this, the Judgment Knight, clothed in black, was completely shrouded in darkness, and his silhouette could hardly be seen as he knelt in front of the Symbol of Light.

The Judgment Knight is here, hurry up and leave...

You only know how to interrogate criminals who have been shackled to the wall! What kind of holy knight are you?

The Judgment Knight is a cruel and heartless guy... By all means, never offend him!

Forgive me, forgive me...

Aren't gods supposed to forgive sinners? Why won't you forgive me?!

Look at yourself, dressed entirely in clothes as black as hell. What kind of holy knight are you?

"Despite being very busy with work, the Judgment Knight never forgets to pray to the Light. Sun really admires that."

Suddenly hearing someone's voice, Lesus froze for a moment before turning his head. The door to the prayer room had been opened, and a person was leaning against the door. The light shining from outside the room caused his golden-blond hair to glow radiantly.

It's so bright.

Lesus looked away and kept his head bowed. He said simply, "Praying is now the only way for me to confirm that I am still a holy knight."

Stunned, Grisia quickly entered the prayer room and closed the door. He asked, "What happened?"

Lesus shook his head and answered, "I'm just a little confused. I'm not sure whether I'm really a holy knight, or whether I'm... an executioner." As he was finishing that sentence, his voice became almost too soft to be heard.

Grisia exclaimed in shock, "Of course you're a holy knight, and you're even the Judgment Knight! Lesus, if you aren't a holy knight, who else is worthy of being called a holy knight?"

Lesus smiled faintly, and mentioned something irrelevant. "Grisia, do you know where the Symbol of Light is in the Judge's Complex?"

Baffled, Grisia said honestly, "I never really noticed."

"In order to let criminals confess and repent while looking at the Symbol of Light, the symbol was placed on the wall in front of the criminals. Whenever I am interrogating criminals, the symbol is always behind me... My back is always turned against the Symbol of Light as I face and interrogate criminals who are full of sin, employing methods crueler than what any of them have ever used."

All sorts of wicked misdeeds, torturing devices, flogging, death penalties... Lesus recalled the things he was most commonly exposed to on a daily basis. Not one of them made him feel like he was a holy knight. He only felt that he was facing an endless darkness, and that if he were to lose his footing for even a split second, he would plummet into the unbounded darkness, never to crawl out again...

Grisia hurriedly said, "You are the Judgment Knight, and judging criminals has always been the responsibility of the Judgment Knight. Hence, you are definitely a holy knight!"

"Is that so? But I really don't know when I will fall into that darkness as well." Lesus stood up and said bluntly, "I should return to the Judge's Complex. There are still a lot of things for me to deal with... and a lot of criminal hearings to conduct."

After he finished speaking, he walked toward the door. However, Grisia's voice echoed from behind him, "Lesus, even if they are facing the darkness with their backs to the light, holy knights still walk under the light, not the darkness!"

Lesus stopped walking.

"If it weren't for you sacrificing your chance to face the light, could Leaf Bud City's security be so splendid? Yet you are starting to regret this? Lesus, are you regretting your choice to sacrifice yourself so that the citizens can live under the light?"

Lesus turned around and saw the Sun Knight standing in the darkness with a sad expression on his face. The Sun Knight asked, "Lesus, do you really regret sacrificing your chance to face the light?"

Even if they are facing the darkness with their backs to the light, holy knights still walk under the light, not the darkness!

Even though the Symbol of Light beside him was bathed in sunlight, the one who really saved him was the holy knight who stood in the darkness.

If the one standing in the darkness was the person who saved him, perhaps he could also continue to face the darkness.

"Lesus?"

Lesus smiled and asked, "Grisia, even if I did fall into the darkness, you would just drag me back, right?"

"Of course! We are good friends after all! Therefore, Lesus, please help me teach Earth a lesson! That bastard deserves to be beaten until he

is half-dead and half-paralyzed! I'll see if he still dares to flaunt in front of me the woman he just nabbed after that!!!"

...Looks like it is still uncertain as to who is going to drag whom back!

Side Story #4: “You May Only Use a Sword, Unless No One Sees You”

He recalled how his teacher had once left him the task of swinging his sword one thousand times, and then announced that he was leaving to go look for the prince (or the princess). But while he was gone, all Grisia had done was goof off instead. When his teacher returned and found out...

At the time, Grisia had thought he would get beaten, yet his teacher merely chuckled coldly and grabbed Grisia by the collar and threw him on his horse before galloping out of town...

He would soon discover that the reason his teacher didn't hit him...was that even one casual strike of his would be enough to hurl Grisia right at the God of Light!



Neo brought him to a notorious land of darkness, got off his horse, and grabbed Grisia by the collar once more. Devoid of all fear, he walked into the land of darkness, not even bothering to take his sword out of its sheath. Instead, he used his fists to beat up the various groups of hideous-looking undead creatures that appeared along the way.

He walked until they reached the deepest area of the forest before he finally let go of Grisia.

“Do you know where this is?” Neo asked coldly.

"The Forest of the Concealed Moon..." Grisias timidly answered.

"...this isn't the Keiran Forest?"

"Teacher, that's in the opposite direction. When you left the Holy Temple, you needed to turn left, not right."

"Oh, no wonder. I thought it was strange... I didn't recall the Keiran Forest having so many undead creatures." Neo cocked his head. In the end, he shrugged and said, "Oh well, it doesn't matter where. This place might be even better."

What's better? Grisias still didn't fully comprehend the situation.

Neo coldly said, "If you dare to violate my orders, then you need to be prepared to accept the punishment, but I don't want to hit you. You're still too little... I would need to control my power so that I wouldn't accidentally kill you. What a pain!"

Does this mean that when I grow up more, you'll hit me? The message that his teacher's words implied was far from reassuring.

"That's why I'm going to let others beat you up in my stead. Conveniently, you can also practice your extremely rotten swordsmanship... Oh! There's quite a good number of undead creatures here, so you can even train your ability to handle undead creatures. Killing multiple birds with one stone! Not bad, not bad!"

"Thoroughly enjoy your journey of punishment!" Once Neo finished talking, he leaped up a tree and disappeared without a trace, leaving

Grisia behind.

“Teacher!”

Grisia was completely shocked, but he could not prevent Neo from leaving. Even if he could, he knew his teacher’s personality. Once he declared something, he wouldn’t allow anyone to say anything different.

With no other choice, Grisia could only take a look at his surroundings. Huge trees that reached the skies soared from all directions, with vines of all kinds covering them densely. He didn’t know whether he was seeing things, but he thought those oddly shaped and strangely colored vines looked as though they were moving from time to time. The entire forest was gloomy and damp. The gusts of cold wind that blew around brought along the scent of rot, and it sounded as if something was slowly crawling along from within the weeds.

A normal thirteen year old child would most likely be scared out of his wits already.

Luckily, if nothing else, Grisia had plenty of guts. On top of that, he had been trained (tortured) by his teacher for more than a year, so even though his swordsmanship hadn’t improved at all, he had gradually gained more courage than before.

Even though Neo had claimed this journey to be for the sake of punishment and for training his ability to deal with undead creatures, whenever Grisia was suffering and was being chased all over the place

by a variety of things that were in various stages of rotting, loud guffaws would always drift over from somewhere close by...

Teacher must simply think this is all very entertaining?

This was what Grisia believed deep down inside, but he did relax a little. His teacher was still nearby after all and hadn't truly abandoned him without a care.

When it was time to eat at night, Grisia hunted down a rabbit that looked edible, albeit with a lot of difficulty. He roasted it until it gleamed with oil and overflowed with a delicious smell, not at all afraid that he might draw the attention of large beasts. This forest mostly only had undead creatures and trees, and the noses of undead creatures were either already rotten or in the process of rotting.

I give my thanks to the God of Light... After saying his prayers, Grisia lifted the rabbit. Just as he was about to bite down with an "ahhh," a black shadow flashed by, his hand suddenly became lighter, and the rabbit vanished. Grisia lifted his head and threw a resentful gaze to the left.

"What are you looking at?"

Neo had the rabbit lifted in his hand as he boldly and confidently said, "A student cooking for his teacher is as it should be! Shoo, shoo. This rabbit is mine now. You go and hunt another one."

Grisia was somewhat at a loss for words. He was wrong. The forest

still had a large beast called "Teacher"...

Looking at his teacher biting down on the rabbit without remorse, Grisia pouted and indignantly said, "Teacher, I suddenly have an irresistible urge to practice my swordsmanship."

"Oh?" Neo glanced over and mockingly said, "You want to use a sword to take revenge on me? With your talent with the sword? If you can use a sword to strike me without missing, your teacher will happily die without any regrets, even if you cut me down and send me on my way to see the God of Light!"

"Teacher, your words are so ruthless..."



When he woke up the next morning, his teacher had long since disappeared, but this wasn't something to be scared about. Generally, the majority of the time "Teacher's not here" was always better than "Teacher's here."

However, he had to admit, when he opened his eyes and found that he was surrounded by undead creatures, he still missed his teacher a lot.

"Boo hoo..."

As Grisia fled, he sobbed out loud, "Teacher, where are you? It can't be that you're not around? You must have hidden yourself to laugh at me, right? Boo hoo, Teacher, laugh already! Teacher!"

Pow!□□The result of running and crying at the same time was blurry eyesight, causing him to trip over a branch. His entire body became intimately familiar with the earth at that moment.

It hurts...

Even though it hurt, he still remembered that a pack of undead creatures were chasing him from behind, so he quickly climbed back to his feet and looked back... A half-rotten face—so rotten that even if it hadn't opened its mouth, he would still see half a row of teeth—was right in front of him. At that moment the owner of the ugly face grabbed his shoulders with both hands, and the rest of the undead creatures in hot pursuit had long since had him tightly surrounded.

He froze.

Am I going to die?

□“No...”

Grisia covered his head and screamed, “Don’t come near me!”



“Grisia?”

He didn't know how much time had passed before a shout drifted over from faraway. The boy who was still clutching his head in the same position as before twitched and lifted his head, softly calling out, “Teacher?”

From faraway another call drifted over, the voice containing some anxiety, "Grisia, where are you? Answer me!"

"Teacher, I'm here! Here!"

Grisia immediately jumped up and yelled loudly. In no time at all, a familiar figure appeared.

Seeing that familiar white figure, for the first time in his life Grisia threw himself into his teacher's embrace and began bawling his eyes out.

At this, even Neo became somewhat flustered. Even though Grisia looked weak, he was actually incredibly stubborn. During this past year, no matter what kind of difficult training he faced, even when he oftentimes had tears in his eyes, those tears had never flowed down.

This time, Grisia was actually crying. Neo knew he had taken it too far, but he really didn't know how to comfort his student. He could only lightly pat Grisia's back and continuously say, "It's okay, it's okay. No need to be afraid. Your teacher is here. There's nothing that can even think about harming you!"

But Grisia still continued crying for a long time before he finally halted his sobs with difficulty, complaining in broken spurts, "Teacher, where did you go, I thought I was really going to die, boo hoo..."

"Sorry, sorry, I went to do my morning exercises. Before I knew it,

you had run off and disappeared. I spent so much time before I managed to find you. You truly had me worried to death...”

“Teacher was actually worried about me?” Grisia mumbled somewhat disbelievingly. He thought his teacher didn’t like him, and that he regretted picking him. After all, every time they had sword lessons, his teacher would always shout things like, “Even without a backup knight, I could still find any random person who would be stronger than you!”

Seeing Grisia’s shocked expression, Neo immediately changed his tone. He slapped himself on the chest and said, “I mean, thankfully you hadn’t died. Otherwise, otherwise the Pope and Judgment would scold me to death, and I probably wouldn’t even find the path out of the forest. What bad luck that would be...”

At this time, Grisia thoroughly understood something.

The scariest thing about the strongest Sun Knight in history wasn’t his strength. Rather, it was his unpredictability, how you could never know whether he might bring you to some frightening place. Even worse, not only were his memory and his sense of responsibility inversely proportional to his strength, he was also hugely directionally-challenged!

After he calmed down somewhat, Neo finally had time to look around at the current situation of his surroundings... where everything within at least twenty meters around him was frozen by ice elemental magic. The scene was practically like an undead creature ice sculpture exhibit. Upon observing this scene and noticing that only Grisia alone had not

been turned into an ice sculpture, it was obvious that the person who had caused this sight could only be him.

Neo furrowed his brows and asked, "How do you know large area of effect ice magic? Did you see another old mage performing magic on the streets?"

"No, Ecilan taught me."

"Ecilan?"

"...the young Ice Knight."

The Ice Knight, no wonder. Ice elemental magic was indeed the Ice Knight's trademark skill. He wrinkled his forehead and asked, "Grisia, how old are you this year?"

"Teacher, have you forgotten again? I'm thirteen."

Neo hesitated a little before he asked again, "And how long has it been since you used magic for the first time?"

Grisia tilted his head, thinking a bit before he answered, "One year, six months, and thirteen days."

Hearing this, Neo creased his brows. Even though he didn't understand mages much, Grisia had only learned for a year and a half, and it was disjointed learning through pilfering without any guidance; in addition to that, he was only thirteen this year... Even with actual students of

magic, what kind of child would be capable of performing such a strong magic attack?

Impossible! Neo immediately refuted this to himself. *If all mages were this strong, then this world would have long forsaken all other professions.*

But if things continued like this, then by the time Grisia took on the Sun Knight's position at age twenty, his magic might even be strong enough to battle it out with Neo. At that time, Grisia would be the Sun Knight, yet Neo will have lost the favor of the God of Light... Grisia wouldn't come and find him for revenge, would he?

Thinking back on the manner he had been treating Grisia... Ah! No matter how shameless he was, he could not say he was a good teacher. Basically, whatever he thought of, he taught, and a lot of that was experimental lessons he had come up with for fun, such as training in elegance where he had forced Grisia to fall down constantly until he could fall down gracefully beyond comparison.

If he were to tell Judgment about his teaching methods, Judgment would roll his eyes at him for eight out of ten of his methods. One method he would even angrily say, "This is maltreatment, not teaching. If you still dare, go ahead and try! Even if I can't win against you, I can still make you pay." Only for one method would he hesitantly say, "Maybe it's worth a try."

However, of the above ten teaching methods, he had used at least five of them on Grisia, including even the one that would incur "payment"...

In any case, he was safe as long as Judgment didn't find out!

Did this mean he was going to have to treat Grisia better now?

Forget it! Even if he resolved to treat Grisia better right now, he might forget it altogether by the time tomorrow came. Or, when it was time for sword lessons, he might also completely forget his resolve, full of thoughts about killing this idiot of a swordsman!

Neo turned his thoughts over. Finally, under his student's puzzled gaze, he solemnly said, "Grisia, you must know, as a holy knight, especially the leader of the holy knights, the Sun Knight, you must not use magic! That completely violates the basic principles of a holy knight. Holy knights must use weapons. Above all, the Sun Knight who wields the Divine Sun Sword may only use a sword..."

After saying this, Neo suddenly considered how terrible his student's swordsmanship was. If he told him he may only use a sword, he might not even survive to the age of twenty. Neo hurriedly added, "And holy light! At most, you may only use magic when there is no one around to see you. In short, never let anyone see you use magic! Do you understand?"

Grisia stumbled over his words, saying, "But Teacher, my, my swordsmanship..."

"You may only use a sword. You must not let anyone see you use magic!" Neo coldly said, "Or do you want to experience where exactly the strongest Sun Knight in history can take you? Do you want to see

what the dragon of legends looks like? Or do you want to observe the silhouette of a death knight? Perhaps you want to find out just how strange the dwelling of an undying lich can be..."

"Understood! I may only use a sword!"

Grisia nodded earnestly and then added the words silently to himself: *I may only use a sword...unless no one sees me!*

Notes On the Side Story

This side story is something that Yu Wo wrote but didn't manage to use in the novels. She shared this tidbit in her blog, thinking that her readers might enjoy reading about Neo and Grisia's lessons together.

Side Story #5: Making a Mistake

At first, he had wanted to become the Judgment Knight in hopes of atoning for the mistake he had almost committed.

When his teacher had asked him why he wanted to take over the Judgment Knight's position, he had thought that it was because he wanted to ensure that criminals never had the chance to make a second mistake.

In the end, he understood that the prerequisite for ensuring that criminals never had the chance to make a second mistake was that he himself could never make a mistake.... The price of one mistake could possibly be the life of an innocent, the wrecking of a family, or even worse harm.

The Judgment Knight did not have the right to ever make a mistake.



Lesus Lucen concentrated as he swung his blade toward the wooden dummy. He was young and could not yet lift a real sword, but his skill with daggers was so good that even adults wielding swords dared not look down on him.

In reality, no man in the Lucen family dared to accept Lesus' challenge now. For the most part, they were knights or other professions that practiced swordsmanship. Losing to a twelve-year-old child would be humiliating, and they did not have the confidence that they would definitely win against Lesus.

Phil Lucen was also one of the men who didn't dare accept his nephew's challenge, but he did not feel self-abased over this or envious of his nephew, for this nephew of his in name had long ago become his son in reality.

Wonderful innate talent, a serious disposition, and the tragedy of losing both of his parents were what had created the present Lesus Lucen.

Given a few years more, Lesus would definitely become a formidable knight.

However, Phil believed that Lesus would rather be average his entire life than have his parents fall to that calamity.



I heard that the person was suspected to have committed several robberies and murders, except there had been no evidence, so he was released.

Ah! If he had not been released, then my older brother and my sister-in-law would not have... Has the murderer been found?

He's still on the run, but I heard that the Judgment Knight is very furious. He's sent out many holy knights, who are hunting the criminal who has escaped. They're collecting evidence as well, hoping to sentence him to death by hanging immediately after he's caught.

What is this "collecting evidence" about? He should be hanged right away!

Don't say that. It's not like they can hang people without a reason...



"Lesus."

Lesus stopped swinging his blade, and turned his head to look at Phil, his uncle. Even though his uncle had made it clear that he could call him Father, he knew he would never call him by anything else. His actual father and mother had already passed away. No one could take their places.

"Lesus, you will be happy when you hear this." Phil smiled as he said, "Your parents will finally be avenged! The robber was caught a few days ago, and will be hanged today. Why don't we go to the execution ground and watch the execution? Don't tell your aunt though; she doesn't want you to go."

The criminal who killed my parents is going to be hanged? Lesus was stunned, yet he did not feel happy. In fact, not knowing what to do, he turned and ran.

"Lesus? Where are you going? Lesus!"



When he should have been hanged, he hadn't been hanged, thus resulting in my parents' deaths. If he is hanged now, who am I

supposed to take revenge on?

Angered, Lesus ran to the Church of the God of Light, the expression on his face full of hatred. He even wore a dagger at his waist, yet surprisingly the holy knights at the door did not bar his way, allowing him to burst into the Church.

It wasn't until he had walked into the Church of the God of Light, with holy knights frequently passing by his sides and his steps slowing down, did he finally wake up, surprised to find that he had recklessly barged into the Church just like that. *Why hadn't the guards at the door stopped me?*

"Are you lost?"

Lesus jumped in surprise, turning his head to see a holy knight stooping down to look at him. Since the person wore a smile on his face and didn't look like he meant any harm, Lesus quickly nodded his head to answer him. "Yeah."

"Come here." The holy knight led him to a window and gestured outside. "You should be gathering over there. See those other people?" Curious, Lesus peered outside the window. There was a small plaza, with numerous children in the plaza who looked around the same age as him.

He was puzzled for a moment. However, he immediately remembered that his uncle had mentioned that the Holy Temple was currently selecting the next generation of the Twelve Holy Knights. His uncle

had even asked him if he wanted to participate in the selection. At the time though, his heart had been set on revenge, so he had had absolutely no interest in the selection.

No wonder the guards hadn't stopped me. They probably think I'm also a participant in the selection.

"If you want to go to the toilet, it's just around the corner over there."

Lesus turned his head back from the window. The holy knight smiled and said in a whisper, "If you're just curious and taking a look around, that's okay too, just don't wander too far in. The inner temple is where the rooms of the Twelve Holy Knight-Captains are. The area is off limits!"

Hearing about the rooms of the Twelve Holy Knights, Lesus did not bat an eyelid as he asked, "Where is the inner temple that I'm not supposed to go? I'm afraid I might accidentally end up there."

Without any suspicion, the holy knight pointed out the direction.

Lesus nodded to show his understanding. However, once the holy knight left, he immediately headed in the direction he was not supposed to go. He didn't have to walk far before he passed under an arched door, and the corridors' appearance changed. Compared to the majestic ones outside, these were much plainer.

Lesus slowed down his steps, carefully watching for anyone around him. He knew that if he was spotted there, he would definitely get

thrown out.

There was absolutely no one in the corridors, probably because it was daytime at the moment. *The holy knights must be carrying out their duties outside!* Lesus surmised to himself.

Someone's coming! Lesus hurriedly turned into a side corridor, and then stealthily stuck his head out to take a look. The person was standing next to the window, facing outward. With the black robes he wore on his body, and the long, black hair he had that reached his waist, his figure, when seen from behind, was a complete shroud of darkness.

Black hair and black robes... Judgment Knight!

This is the person who had let the criminal go, causing my parents' deaths... He is also a murderer!

Lesus gripped the dagger by his waist, calmly looking to his left and right, making sure there was no one in sight.

Generally, most people don't have much vigilance toward children, plus the selection is being held at the moment. Judgment Knight would most likely think that I'm a candidate as well. If I pretend that I'm lost, and then take the chance to strike once he is close, I might truly succeed...

Even though he was merely a twelve-year-old child, his concentration had always been above that of other people's. He had practiced with

his sword from a very young age, and had suffered the catastrophe of losing both of his parents, so Lesus had long since developed a calm and logical demeanor that would have frightened others.

He hid the dagger behind his back, pinched his eyelids to force out some tears, fixed a scared expression on his face, and was about to step out...

"Chasel!"

Lesus quickly hid himself again.

"What's up with you recently? Everyone's been so nervous that they came to tell me that you're in a terrible rage, and they want me to deal with it. What are you furious about anyway? If anyone has provoked you, why don't you just finish them off?"

Lesus sneakily stuck his head out and saw a man with blue eyes and golden hair. The man was also wearing a white knight's outfit with the edges embroidered in gold, and wore a golden sword by his waist. With so many conspicuous features, even if he had never laid eyes on this person before, he would still have known who he was—the leader of the Twelve Holy Knights, the Sun Knight.

The Judgment Knight who had been called Chasel turned around, his brows furrowed. He coldly said, "Then you might as well kill me, Neo!"

Both the Sun Knight, Neo, and Lesus, who was hidden behind the wall, jumped in surprise. This time, it was Neo's turn to furrow his brows.

He asked, "What are you talking about? Why are you suddenly telling me to kill you?"

"Didn't you ask me who I was furious with, and even say that I might as well finish them off?" Chasel said emotionlessly, "I am furious with myself."

Neo relaxed his brows, and asked in understanding, "This is about today's case, about the criminal that's going to be hanged?"

Heart pumping, Lesus hurriedly concentrated on looking at Judgment Knight, Chasel. The other still had his brows furrowed deeply, and he nodded his head.

"If the person has already been caught, and the situation resolved, why are you upset?" Neo abruptly stopped mid-speech and then somewhat oddly asked, "Wait, don't you always go to watch executions? You've told me before that since you're the one who sentences them to death, it's like you are the one killing them, so you should at least go watch their last moments, or something similar."

"I am afraid to watch the execution."

Stunned, Neo asked, "You think there's a problem with the criminal's sentence?"

Hearing this, Lesus, who had been hiding off to the side, hatefully drew out the dagger from behind his back.

However, Chasel shook his head and said, "That criminal deserves his sentence. What I am afraid to face is the victim. The husband and wife who had been killed left behind a child. The child is only a bit older than ten, most likely around the same age as those children outside in the plaza at the moment, I would think?"

After he said this, he turned his head to look outside the window again. Neo wasn't good at comforting people either. Put on the spot, he didn't quite know what to say to cheer the other person up.

Seeing the Judgment Knight reveal an obviously anguished expression, Lesus suddenly realized that he was not as cold-hearted and unfeeling as the rumors said he was... *So even the Judgment Knight can feel regret over releasing a criminal by mistake?*

"The God of Light entrusted the Judgment Knight to discipline criminals in order to protect the innocent, yet the true difficulty lies not in disciplining criminals, but rather in discerning who is guilty and who is innocent. Once the death penalty is dealt, no longer is there any leeway for backing out, so never am I willing to lightly deal the death penalty... Yet being too cautious has caused the deaths of even more people."

Neo wrinkled his brows a bit and said, "Chasel, it's impossible for humans to never make mistakes."

Without waiting for him to finish, Chasel spun around and agitatedly shouted, "The Judgment Knight cannot make mistakes! It was my mistake, yet someone else suffered the consequences. That husband

and wife, that child... How could I make a mistake?"

Clatter.

"Who's there?!"

Neo turned around. At the same time, he already unsheathed the Divine Sun Sword that was hanging from his waist. Sword in hand, he stayed alert, glancing at the dagger that lay on the floor around the corner of the corridor. Just as he started feeling confused, he saw a child slowly move forward.

He hadn't thought it would be a child. Neo stared blankly. No matter what, he could not fight against a child, and the child had already dropped his dagger on the floor, so he was completely unarmed and defenseless.

Chasel pressed against Neo's sword hilt, his tone rebuking as he said, "Don't frighten the child."

Neo made a tscking sound and simply put away his sword.

Chasel walked forward a few steps, doing his best to lighten his tone as he asked, "Child, what have you come here for?"

"I, I..." After Lesus stuttered for a good while, he suddenly said loudly, "I want to register for the selection for the Judgment Knight!"

"Register for the selection?" Neo brusquely said, "Registration ended

yesterday!”

However, Chasel waved his hand to stop his companion’s words, and then he asked, “What is your name? Do you know how to use a sword?”

“Lesus Lucen.” Lesus nodded his head frantically and said, “I know how to use a sword!”

At this time, Neo curiously took measure of the child. “Black hair and black eyes, your appearance passes! But the Judgment Knight’s job is very difficult, and you have to bind the criminals onto the walls and flay them until their skin breaks. Aren’t you afraid?”

Hearing this, Lesus’ face immediately turned pale.

“Neo, don’t scare the child!” Chasel gave his companion a glare and continued to ask Lesus, “Do you have your parents’ permission for entering the selection?”

Lesus lowered his head as he said, “No parents. I only have my uncle.”

“Does your uncle know then?”

After hesitating for a moment, Lesus shook his head.

Seeing this, Chasel furrowed his brows.

Neo deliberately said, “The registration period has already ended. You’re not thinking of breaking the rules for him, are you? Is this

something the law-abiding Judgment Knight should do?”

Hearing this, Chasel rolled his eyes at him. Neo merely laughed, as he was only joking. So far, all the children who had registered for Judgment Knight were undisciplined and unruly. He couldn't fault Chasel for wanting to widen his options even by a little. At least this child in front of them gave off a good first impression.

Chasel lowered his head to look at the child. Even though he knew the registration period had already ended, and even though he knew the Judgment Knight was an arduous and thankless job, that missing the registration period might even be a blessing instead of misfortune for the child, yet...

At this time, Lesus abruptly revealed a determined expression. He lowered his body to a ninety-degree bow and loudly said, “Judgment Knight, I am sorry!”

Surprised, Chasel looked at the child who was currently bowing to him at a ninety-degree angle. He squatted down in order to look the child in his eyes but discovered the child was looking away, afraid to meet his eyes. He reached his hand out to pat the other's head. Comfortingly, he said, “Don't be afraid, I won't hurt you. Tell me, why are you apologizing?”

Lesus deflated but refused to let any tears leak. He just continued to repeat, “I...sorry. I'm really sorry!”

Seeing this, Chasel didn't know what to do. He could only hold the

child's hand. "Let's go. We'll go and search for your uncle to see if he'll be willing to let you register."

"Uncle is willing!" Lesus hurriedly said, "He asked me before if I wanted to enter." Even though he said that, at the time his uncle seemed to have said something about entering the Sun Knight selection or some other knight's, but he didn't really remember. *Still, the Judgment Knight should be okay too, right?*

"No matter what, at the very least we still have to ask."

"Okay." Lesus very obediently nodded his head.

After bidding Neo farewell, Chasel led the child by his hand and said, "Let's go."

"Okay."

Neo watched the two leave. The older and the younger, both with a head of black hair, practically looked like father and son. He laughed a little, and murmured, "Lesus Lucen? I think it's time to call you Lesus Judgment instead?"



Grisia listened to the story as he ate his blueberry cookies. Once Lesus reached this point in the story, he asked in puzzlement, "Did your uncle really agree on letting you enter the Judgment Knight selection? I remember those children who were part of the Judgment Knight selection were all no good..."

Somewhat helplessly, Lesus said, "When my uncle heard that I wanted to enter the Judgment Knight selection, he immediately yelled that he wanted to evict me from the family. My aunt was so shocked that she fainted... But in the end, he agreed and even took me to participate in all the various tests."

Grisia raised his eyebrows, not at all believing Lesus' words.

"...except, whenever I passed one of the tests, they would cry violently for three days."

"Then what happened when you got chosen?"

"...they cried for around a month..."

Side Story #6: “Sweet Smile”

Ecilan Ice is forever expressionless. Although everyone else cannot see into his thoughts, the desserts he makes are always suited to everyone’s tastes.

If there was something that could represent Ecilan, it would definitely be the desserts he makes.



His original dream was to become a baker, but by some stroke of fate, he became the Ice Knight. He had to change from an ever-smiling child to an expressionless person. He also had to change from a person who brought others warmth and contentment to one who made others alert and wary.

It looks like he had lost a lot of things, including his dream.

However, Ecilan still felt that he had gained more than he had lost.

Because actually, there are many ways to express a smile.



“Lan¹, no smiling!”

Ecilan’s smile immediately became rigid. He was just greeting a passing apprentice holy knight with a smile, as he had known that child for a long time. He often delivered bread to that person’s house. That was right; Ecilan is the child of a baker. Since he was young, he

had aspired to become the best baker in Leaf Bud City. His biggest dream was to start a dessert section in addition to making bread... But currently, he was the Ice Knight-in-training. Everyone usually called him the young Ice Knight.

With an expression of shock and horror on his face, the apprentice knight in front of them bowed to the person behind Ecilan. After bowing, he quickly ran away, as if the person behind Ecilan was a raging flood or a savage beast... Perhaps the Ice Knight was much scarier than a raging flood or a savage beast?

Ecilan wiped the smile and all other expressions off his face, becoming totally expressionless. Only then did he dare to turn his head and face the person behind him. He greeted, "Good day, Teacher!"

The Ice Knight, Eller, said a little fretfully, "Lan, why can't you change your habit of smiling? Is it that hard to not smile?"

Ecilan felt that he had been wronged. In the past, whenever he delivered bread, people would praise his smile. Now, he couldn't smile at all.

Why had he become the Ice Knight? He had only gone to the Holy Temple to deliver bread. At that time, the Holy Temple happened to be choosing the Young Knights. He had just been passing by, and had not even joined the selection. He had no idea what the Ice Knight saw in him... Didn't they say that the Stone Knight was the most stubborn amongst the Twelve Holy Knights?

However, at that time, the Stone Knight had told him, "You better obediently nod your head and agree to become the young Ice Knight! Our Ice Knight is very stubborn and will not listen to other people, so he will not allow you to say no."

Eller furrowed his brows, exclaiming in a low voice, "And you also cannot make a sad face!"

When he heard this statement, Ecilan did his best to wipe every expression off his face.

Unhappy, Eller scolded, "I just want you to not smile, is it that hard? You saw that the young Judgment Knight also has to act very cool and collected! I did not request that of you, and only want you to fulfill the minimum requirements of the Ice Knight. If you can't be indifferent, then at the least, can't you be expressionless?"

Ecilan admitted that Lesus had to work much harder than he did, but he really wanted to say this to his teacher: "Your current talkative self is totally different from how the indifferent and reserved Ice Knight should behave!"

"Anyway, from today onwards, you had better remain expressionless and silent! If I hear anyone say 'That child, Ecilan, is really caring, polite, and always smiling' or something of the sort, I'm going to... forbid you from entering the kitchen!"

But since I was small, Papa and Mama have always told me that I should be polite to people, that I shouldn't face people with an

unpleasant expression...

Ecilan felt even more wronged, but the moment he heard that he would be forbidden from entering the kitchen, he felt that he had been struck by a sudden bolt of lightning! In the entire Holy Temple, his favorite place was the kitchen. After all, that was the only place where he could cook!

Eller regretted what he said right after he said it. If he forbade Ecilan from going to the kitchen, who was going to bake bread for him? However, this was the most effective way to threaten Ecilan... Forget it; he would just wait until Ecilan really broke the rules before thinking about this again!

"Lan, I'm hungry. Is the bread ready to be eaten?"

Ecilan replied obediently, "I'm going to the kitchen now to check whether it has finished baking. If it is, I'll bring it to you, Teacher."

Eller nodded. While Ecilan was different from that child Lesus who was good at everything – *Damn! Chasel really picked up a treasure there!* – and there were some problems with Ecilan's Ice Knight character training, Lesus did not know how to bake bread, especially bread as delicious as the bread Ecilan makes!

"I'll be waiting for you in my room. On your way, go and get some grape wine from Neo in addition to the bread."

"Okay."

Ecilan heaved a sigh of relief. Compared to the special training to become expressionless, he liked going to the kitchen to bake bread much more. He really wished that his teacher would eat six meals a day so he could spend his whole day inside the kitchen!



In addition to the whole plateful of bread, Ecilan had also tried baking a blueberry-flavored cake! Unfortunately, it was his first time baking a cake, so he had not figured out the right amounts of ingredients to add yet. In the end, he added too much sugar and the dessert became too sweet.

Ecilan felt that it was a pity to throw it away, so he decided to carry it back to the room. In order not to waste food, he would eat it while drinking lots of water.

On his way back to the room, he met someone unexpected. Grisia had a wide and dazzling smile on his face, and he seemed to be constantly muttering something to himself. *I wonder what he's saying? Is he reciting the Rules of the God of Light? It is said that the Sun Knight is the God of Light's most loyal holy knight, as well as the spokesperson of the God of Light...*

Only when Grisia was a few steps away from him did Ecilan remember that the former was the Sun Knight, while he belonged to the Judgment Knight's side. S-So, they shouldn't get along with each other!

Ecilan immediately made an expressionless face. However, he never would have thought that Grisia would stop walking and look at... the plate in his hands.

"Wow, it's a cake!" Grisia exclaimed suddenly and immediately reached out to grab a piece of cake.

"T-This is a test cake I baked... No!" Ecilan shouted in panic. But right after he finished shouting, he realized that he had sounded very angry, like he was scolding him.

Grisia's hand stopped and he looked down at the cake. With a little bit of regret, he asked, "Can't I eat it?"

Ecilan started to panic more. Although he wanted to explain, his teacher had just told him that he must be expressionless and silent from today onwards, or he would never be allowed into the kitchen again... *What to do?*

Looking at Ecilan's expressionless face, Grisia bowed his head and apologized, "That... I'm really sorry for trying to take your cake; please don't get angry at me!"

That's not true... I'm not angry at all! Ecilan was so nervous that he wanted to cry.

"But since I've already taken one piece, please let me eat it!" Right after Grisia finished talking, he ran away swiftly, as if he was afraid Ecilan would want the cake back.

Ecilan stared off into space in shock, as he had had no time to react at all. His first thought was, *I'm so happy that Grisia doesn't seem to be angry.* Immediately after that, he remembered that a piece of the cake had been taken away. *It's too sweet, if Grisia eats it... Forget it, if it's too sweet then he should spit it out after one mouthful, right?*

Maybe Grisia actually likes blueberry cake? In the future, I could make some cakes for him. It looks like he loves desserts a lot, and I also really want to try making desserts. The more Ecilan thought about this, the happier he felt. He could not help but smile happily as his mind was filled with all sorts of desserts and breads...

"Lan!"

Ecilan jumped in shock. When he recovered from his shock, he realized that his teacher was currently walking toward him furiously. This made him extremely flustered, as he knew that he definitely hadn't been expressionless just now. Perhaps he had even been smiling obviously!

Eller walked toward him in a huff, then started scolding, "I just told you not to smile, but you immediately violated my orders! Why are you such a disobedient child? Is it that hard not to smile? From today onwards, you are not allowed to enter the kitchen until you learn not to smile!"

"Why can't I smile?" Ecilan finally could not help but say emotionally, "If I face people with an unpleasant expression, won't they be unhappy? Maybe they will hate me! Then I will have one less friend!"

When he heard the rare emotional response from Ecilan, Eller was speechless. This child was never one to disobey his elders, so why was he so rebellious today? Also, it was impossible to refute the things he had said...

Ecilan's eyes filled with tears, and he tried his best to prevent them from flowing down. However, he simply could not resist it anymore, so he quickly handed his teacher the tray and said, "Teacher, please enjoy your meal." After that, he hurriedly turned around and ran away.

"Lan!"

When he heard the shout, Ecilan stopped for a moment, but he did not turn back. Instead, he ran away quickly, because his face was already covered in tears.

Never mind crying, Teacher doesn't even allow me to smile!



Waawaah.....waah.....

I-I want to go home and be a baker...

"Why are you crying? You seem so sad..."

Astonished, Ecilan jumped up from the bed. He had been lying on the bed, but the sudden call had nearly made him fall off the bed.

"Grisia?"

Grisia was currently staring at him with expectant eyes. This made Ecilan blush. He quickly wiped away his tears.

"Do you have any more?"

"Huh?" Ecilan stared blankly at Grisia.

With a very eager look on his face, Grisia asked, "Do you have any more cake?"

"... All of it is with Teacher."

"What?! That cake just now was huge! Does he plan to eat it all by himself?"

Ecilan had no idea what was going on, but he still replied, "No, that cake is too sweet. Teacher might not eat it."

"He won't eat it?" Shocked, Grisia exclaimed, "But that cake is so delicious! If he's not going to eat it, then is it going to be thrown away? What a pity! No, no, it can't be thrown away!"

Ecilan was still in a confused state, but Grisia grabbed him in one movement and was about to drag him out of the room.

"Come on, let's go look for the Ice Knight and get the cake back!"

What?! Stunned, Ecilan protested, “W-Wait a minute...”

“What are you waiting for? If we wait any longer, the cake is going to be thrown away!”

“I have some bread here with me. It’s blueberry-flavored, just like the cake! Please don’t go search for Teacher!”

Grisia stopped and turned to look at Ecilan. The latter hurriedly dug some bread out of a cabinet and spread some blueberry jam on it before giving it to Grisia.

Grisia bit into the bread brazenly the moment he received it. When he saw this, Ecilan relaxed.

“This isn’t sweet enough. Come, let’s look for the cake!”

Eehhhh?



The sight of the two young knights walking together attracted quite a lot of glances from people. Grisia smiled all the way, but next to him, Ecilan was completely expressionless.

Grisia smiled and mumbled to himself at the same time. “Ah, damn, someone’s coming and I have to smile again. My face has stiffened already! I really don’t want to smile, but Teacher will beat me to death if I don’t... I will smile!”

Ecilan's eyes widened as he looked at Grisia. *S-So this is what he actually says every time he mumbles to himself?*

Along the way, Ecilan observed that Grisia had to reveal his most dazzling smile every time someone walked past them. When there was nobody around, he let his facial muscles relax, but the moment someone appeared, he had to smile right away. Ecilan suddenly realized that maybe smiling was not as easy as it seemed either.

When Grisia saw that there were many people in front walking toward them, his face immediately turned as pale as ash. Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted Ecilan and immediately decided to talk to him so that he would not have to keep smiling continuously. However, the moment he noticed Ecilan's reddened eyes, he started to want to chat for real. He could not help asking, "Ecilan, why were you crying just now?"

"I... I just suddenly felt that I am not suited to be the Ice Knight."

"Oh? Then what do you want to be?"

"I originally wanted to be the best baker in the city."

"Ooooh! No wonder you're so good at making bread and cakes!"

"I'm not; that was my first time baking a cake. I even made it too sweet..." Ecilan could not resist asking, "Don't you think that the cake was too sweet?"

"No, I don't! And it can still be a little sweeter... Hmm? Isn't that your teacher?"

Ecilan turned his head to look. Indeed, the Ice Knight was currently standing at a balcony next to the corridor. He was not alone, as the Judgment Knight was also there.

Grisia held Ecilan's hand and crept stealthily to the window closest to the balcony.

A little bewildered, Ecilan asked, "Weren't you searching for Teacher?"

"I am! But first, let's eavesdrop on their conversation!"

Why do we have to eavesdrop on their conversation first... Isn't eavesdropping wrong? Just when he was thinking of correcting Grisia, he heard a voice from the balcony.

"Did I really make a mistake? Maybe I shouldn't have chosen Ecilan, as he was not one of the children who came for the selection."

Ecilan jumped in shock. Was Teacher... regretting choosing him?

B-But, he was already doing his best to adapt to his new identity, and was working very hard to become the Ice Knight. He even felt that practicing swordplay was extremely fun, and he had become familiar with many of the holy knights...

Feeling his eyes get a little warm, Ecilan turned his head around and

started to walk away. However, Grisia suddenly grabbed his hand. No matter how much he struggled, Grisia would not let him go.

Once again, they heard the Ice Knight's voice coming from the balcony. He said, "But I really don't want to choose a child who looks very cold right from the beginning! And Ecilan is such a good child! He is caring, respects his elders, and even knows how to bake bread!"

Ecilan froze and stopped struggling to escape.

They heard the low voice of Judgment Knight, who said, "You're right. If I were you, I would also have chosen him, as he is a good child. But there's no need for you to rush Ecilan's training to match the Ice Knight's 'expected' personality, since he's only been the young Ice Knight for slightly less than two years."

"But..." The Ice Knight's voice was filled with frustration as he said, "You should know that recently, a lot of people have been talking about replacing the young Stone Knight. Remarks from those who object to the young Sun Knight have also surfaced. If Lan doesn't learn to be expressionless, what am I going to do when the wave of comments about replacing him comes?"

Chasel said plainly, "Don't worry, Neo will not allow the person he has chosen to be replaced. You should know what his personality is like. If he's not willing to replace his student, then no one can force him to do so."

Still somewhat worried, Eller said, "What about the young Stone

Knight?”

“If we replace one person, it forms a precedent to replace a second person. Therefore, Neo will definitely not allow the young Stone Knight to be replaced, because that will give him problems.”

On hearing this, Eller felt much calmer. Since Neo wouldn’t allow the young Stone Knight to be replaced, then he also most definitely would not let Ecilan be replaced. With Neo’s support, you could be certain that things would be much easier. Because everyone knew that once Neo had made his decision, he would persist to the very end regardless of whether it was correct or not... Even when forcing people to do things, he would never give up until the end.

“Then I can relax and train Ecilan slowly. Also, I should give him more time to go to the kitchen... The cake he made this time was way too sweet! His cooking skill still has much room for improvement! Sigh, I really want to eat it but it is too sweet to eat...”



Only after the sounds of the two people’s conversation had stopped for a long while did Ecilan recover from his shock. He suddenly realized, *Did Teacher keep forcing me to be expressionless lately because he was afraid that I would be replaced?*

“So, do you want to be the Ice Knight, or a baker?”

Stunned, Ecilan lifted his head and met Grisia’s serious eyes. He contemplated the other’s question, and replied haltingly, “I-I want... I

want to be the Ice Knight! I don't like the fact that I cannot smile, but I like everything else! Even if I don't become a baker, I can still bake bread. But if I don't become the Ice Knight, I feel that I w-will lose many things!" *Like Teacher and the other holy knights. I also promised Lesus that I would practice swordplay with him!*

"You like smiling?" A little shocked, Grisia said, "Smiling is very tiring!" Ecilan thought about it. If he had to smile all day like Grisia, it would indeed be very tiring. He said honestly, "But I'm afraid that if I don't smile, people will hate me."

On hearing this, Grisia shook his head exaggeratingly and said, "Who said that? You didn't smile at me, but I still like you a lot! Especially the cakes you make!"

Ecilan blinked. He realized that what Grisia said was correct. Although he had not smiled at him, Grisia did not hate him because of it... He suddenly felt like he understood something.

Even if he did not smile, as long as he gave desserts to them, wouldn't people feel that he was not hateful?

So desserts... can actually replace smiles?

Notes On the Side Story

¹ **"Lan"**: Eller's nickname for Ecilan.

Side Story #7: “An Honest Style”

Today’s sunshine is so strong!

With his eyes squinted, Georgo lifted his hand to block out the sunlight that was blinding him. Even though he was in one of the corridors of the Holy Temple, the corridor had many enormous windows. They usually provided excellent lighting for the corridor, but with today’s weather, with not a cloud in the sky, it was truly bright enough to hurt his eyes.

Once he lowered his hand, Georgo immediately discovered a slim figure ahead of him, with a head of brilliant blond hair bright enough to dazzle one’s eyes. Although he couldn’t really see anything from the back, the hand that he could see was as tender and fair as white lilies.

A superb blond-haired female beauty... no wait, from her build, it must be a young, female beauty! A superb, blond-haired, young female beauty!

Georgo dove straight ahead, and stammered as he yelled loudly, “T-The s-sister up ahead. You seem to have dropped your h-handkerchief...”

Simultaneously, he fished out a handkerchief from his possession. This kind of pure white handkerchief embroidered with the symbol of the Sanctuary of Light was systematically distributed to all of the knights and clerics in the Church. That meant that every female cleric carried such a handkerchief, so that was all the more reason for Georgo to

always carry ten such handkerchiefs on his person!

They weren't for his personal use, but rather so that he could conveniently "pick up" a female cleric's handkerchief anytime and anywhere.

The blond-haired, young female beauty turned around and... transformed into a blond-haired, young male beauty.

It was the current young Sun Knight, Grisia, the future leader of the Twelve Holy Knights, and the spokesperson for the God of Light — but his figure from behind looked like that of a young female beauty's.

Young... male beauty. Georgo's face twisted a bit and he muttered under his breath, "Bleh, bleh, bleh! What bad luck!"

The person who was going to lead him in the future actually looked like a young female beauty! If it were actually a young female beauty, he wouldn't have minded; working under a young female beauty was at least a feast for the eyes, but he just had to be someone who looked like a young female beauty from the back yet was actually a stupid man once he turned around. How could he not want to spit blood because of this?

"Ah!" Grisia launched a smile that was brilliant enough not to lose out to today's sunlight. "The sunlight is bright today, and Brother Georgo's affection for his friends also deserves one's praise."

As Grisia spoke, he reached his hand out to take the handkerchief, but

instead Georgo withdrew the handkerchief into his possession.

He had had a very difficult time snatching these handkerchiefs from the other young knights. He had to use them sparingly or else one day, he might see a female cleric to his liking yet have no handkerchief to pick up and give to her, bringing about regret as wide as the sky!

Grisia stared blankly for a moment before he inquired, "Uh... my handkerchief?"

Georgo carelessly replied, "Eh, I made a mistake. It wasn't yours, it was mine."

Grisia furrowed his brows for a moment and checked his possessions. Indeed, he still had his handkerchief.

"If you don't have any business with me, I'm leaving!" Georgo informed him and turned in an attempt to leave. He had no interest in wasting time on a man.

"Wait a moment. Brother Georgo, might you help Grisia with a tiny favor?"

Georgo flatly turned him down. "No, I don't have time."

Grisia stared briefly. This was the first time anyone had refused him so bluntly. Usually in response to his smile and his requests, no one was able to turn him down directly. Even if they were truly very busy, they would still agree to help with a reluctant expression on their face. He

brought his ten fingers together and spoke in a gentle tone, "It's only a small favor and won't take much of your time, Brother Georgo."

Not at all happy, Georgo said, "Then why don't you do me a small favor and go and find Ceo to help you instead?"

Once again hitting a snag, Grisia's face twitched for a moment, but he wasn't going to give up like this. He revealed an awkward expression as he said, "But Brother Ceo is currently correcting documents and has no spare time."

"Then go and find Ecilan!"

"He's currently experimenting with making new desserts."

"Chikus?"

"Who knows where he went off to play."

"Uh... Demos?"

Grisia tilted his head to think for a moment before he asked in confusion, "Who's Demos?"

"He's the young Cloud Knight!" Georgo looked at Grisia with an incredulous expression. "You can't even keep track of the five holy knights under your command?"

"Are you very close with the young Cloud Knight?" asked Grisia

curiously. "I don't think I've seen him much."

"No, I can't even remember his appearance," Georgo answered frankly. "His name was very strange, so I remembered that. Go find him to help you! I'm really very busy and don't have time to help you!"

Hearing this, Grisia glanced at Georgo several times, but the latter didn't look like he had the tiniest bit of intention to help him, so he could only give up. He grumbled, "All right, looks like I have to find where Demos is. He's truly very hard to find..."

After seeing Grisia walk off, Georgo finally relaxed a little. He knew from the start that Grisia was always seeking people to help him, so he wasn't going to fall for that!

No one wanted to be like Ceo, correcting never-ending paperwork every single day! Rumor had it that not only did he have to do his own teacher's leftover work from slacking off, he also had to help Grisia do his teacher Neo's leftover work from slacking off.

Poor Ceo! Georgo observed a single second of silence for his comrade before he happily celebrated that his own teacher was a person who earnestly did his work and who would not slack off and throw his work at his student. So, other than doing the homework his teacher assigned, Georgo didn't really have anything else to do. His days were quite full of leisure.

Georgo really liked these leisurely days, so he would never, ever promise to help Grisia... No one who promised to help him ever had a

good ending. Just look at how Ceo had ended up and you'd know how wretched it'd turn out.

Before he was to actually become one of the Twelve Holy Knights, he definitely wanted to continue this kind of leisurely lifestyle... no! Even when he succeeded the Twelve Holy Knights, he definitely wanted to have these kinds of leisurely days!

With twelve people supporting the Holy Temple together, there was no reason for him to work himself to death, was there?

However, Ceo would probably be unable to escape from the four words, "work himself to death." He was most likely destined to take care of the majority of the Holy Temple's paperwork. It was Ceo's fault for handling paperwork so quickly and efficiently, making it so that everyone got used to him being the one to correct the documents.

At this time, Georgo's eyes captured the beautiful image of a woman. To the left ahead of him was a slim figure wearing a female cleric's robes, and she had a head of supple, brown, curly hair. Immediately, he once again fished out a handkerchief from his possession and loudly shouted, "T-The sister up ahead, y-you d-dropped your handkerchief..."

When the brown-haired female cleric turned around, Georgo was actually a little nervous, afraid that this female cleric would once again turn into a male cleric!

His fears were unfounded and the female cleric was still a female cleric, and she was even a super beautiful female cleric with an oval face,

cherry lips, and a pair of large, shimmering eyes. Most important was that super ample chest!

Jackpot! □□ Georgo's two eyes lit up. He was even close to salivating, but good thing he had already undergone several years of education on how to pretend to be honest. He automatically revealed a dopey, smiling expression.

"Oh? Thank you so much!" The female cleric didn't suspect him at all and promptly took the handkerchief. "Thank you."

"N-No problem." Georgo touched the lower part of the back of his head and quickly continued to say, "Do y-you want to go to my room?"

"Huh?" The female cleric was greatly surprised.

Georgo honestly smiled as he said, "B-Because someone gave me a, a lot of sweets! I r-really can't finish them all, so I-I want to give you some. That is, if you want any?"

Hearing this, the female cleric relaxed and even berated herself a bit for thinking badly of him. How could the young Earth Knight resemble a little pervert? She was about to answer, "Okay," but the moment she raised her head, she saw an incomparably brilliant smile, and was immediately stunned as she gazed at the owner of that smiling expression.

As Georgo was celebrating that his prey had taken the bait, hearts suddenly appeared in his prey's eyes. She was staring blankly... not at

him, but instead at "something" behind him!

Georgo abruptly turned his head, finally discovering that Grisia had actually returned after he left, and his face still sported that damned brilliant smile, radiant enough to make people want to beat him to death!

Grisia smiled as he said, "Brother Georgo, this sister cleric has a slim figure. Evidently, she must have a small appetite and cannot eat a lot of food. If any is left over, that would be such a waste of food, so why don't you let me have the desserts? That is, if Sister Cleric would be willing to permit me to share these desserts?"

The female cleric quickly nodded her head, secretly elated over the words "slim figure," so she didn't dare say she wanted to eat anything.

Grisia smiled as he thanked her. "I am truly very thankful, Sister Cleric. Even the God of Light is touched by your friendly affection and camaraderie."

After he finished speaking, the female cleric left unwillingly, looking back three times with every step. In the end, she finally reached the corner of the corridor and turned to look back for several more glances before she made her way around the corner.

When he was no longer able to see the female cleric, Grisia let his brilliant smile relax a bit. He had smiled so much that his cheeks felt a little stiff. He turned toward Georgo and said, "Should we go to your room to get the desserts? They're desserts made by Ice, right?"

Moodily, Georgo answered, "I ate them all!"

Grisia blinked and asked in suspicion, "But you just said you were going to give some to the cleric?"

"I suddenly remembered I already ate them all, all right?" Georgo stubbornly replied.

Hearing this, Grisia didn't say anything in response. He merely tilted his head to look at Georgo.

Once he saw Grisia's expression, Georgo suddenly felt a cold draft from behind!

In actuality, Grisia was only looking at him with large eyes, but for some reason, he felt an ominous wind blowing behind his back, like something was terribly wrong... Maybe he should sacrifice Ice's desserts? He should still have some cookies in his room... no! He wasn't going to do that!

Anyway, Grisia was the just and honorable Sun Knight... Ah, the future Sun Knight, so it wasn't like he could do anything to Georgo!

"I'm really busy, so I'm leaving first!" After Georgo said this, he turned to leave right away. He immediately saw his next target... Although she wasn't as ideal as the last one, she was still a youthful, lively, and beautiful cleric!

He immediately chased after her, the expression on Grisia's face that had given him the chills forgotten.



Georgo was in his own room, but he wasn't alone. There was also a youthful, lively, and beautiful cleric with him.

This wasn't the first time he had successfully maneuvered a female cleric to his room, but in the past, they always merely chatted. This time, he was definitely going to advance another step! At the very least, they were going to kiss!

Like he always did, Georgo employed his conventional tricks. "I, I'll make tea for you to d-drink along with eating the cookies. Do you want b-black tea or green tea?"

Even though it was a simple question, asking the question took profound skill. If he were to ask if she wanted any tea, a female cleric who came alone to a man's room would always feel a little embarrassed. She would definitely find it too embarrassing to stay for tea, but if he directly asked if she wanted black tea or green tea, female clerics usually answered with one of the choices, and would naturally stay to drink tea and eat dessert!

Georgo had at least ten different methods of making sure women stayed in his room!

"I'll have black tea then." As he had expected, the female cleric chose one of the teas.

"T-Then take a seat on the bed for now!" As he made the tea, he asked if it was too hot, and if he needed to open the window, after which he served the desserts to her. Towards women, being gentle and considerate was a skill one could not do without!

Once he had both the desserts and the black tea ready, Georgo sat a meter's distance away from the female cleric. The two of them ate dessert while they talked.

Although he stuttered whenever he talked, female clerics would lower their vigilance because of this and consider him honest and gullible. Sometimes, they even teased him on purpose to see him stutter, and then they would smile quite happily.

Before the female cleric knew it, Georgo was already sitting right next to her. The distance between them was only a fist's breadth apart!

As they talked, Georgo's face came closer and closer, nearly close enough to kiss her. Even though the female cleric was a tiny bit shy, she didn't move her face away...

Bang!

"Brother Georgo... Ah!" When Grisia rushed inside and saw the situation at hand, he cried out in alarm and adopted an expression full of regret. "I am truly very sorry. Did I disturb you?"

"N-No!" The female cleric jumped up, her face completely red. She

lowered her head as she said, "I-I was just about to leave!"

After she said this, the female cleric threw open the bedroom door at lightning speed and rushed out of the room, leaving without even saying farewell.

It wasn't until the female cleric ran away that Georgo finally regained his senses. Angrily, he yelled at his future boss, "What'd you come here for?"

Grisia smiled happily as he said, "To see if you have finished with your business yet. Can you help me now?"

"I told you I'm really busy!"

"Really busy?" Grisia looked at the bedroom door that had just been thrown open.

Stubbornly, Georgo said, "I'm busy trying to get a girlfriend, all right?"

"You're the honest and sincere Earth Knight," Grisia said with his brows furrowed. "How can you act like the promiscuous Storm Knight?"

Even so, Georgo answered boldly and confidently, "I'm very honestly and sincerely showing that I'm a very promiscuous person, all right?"

This was completely twisting words and forcing logic! But Grisia tilted his head a bit and said, "It's... not like you can't do that, but could you at least help me out?"

"I'm not helping you!"

Grisia thought for a bit again and then tried negotiating. "Help me, and I won't bother you in the future."

... By these words, did he mean that if he didn't help him, Grisia planned on frequently coming to disturb him?

Georgo didn't have much, but he did have a very stubborn disposition, so he stubbornly said, "I'm not helping!"

"Help me! If you don't, I'm going to reveal your true personality!"

Georgo immediately bellowed, "Go ahead and reveal it, who's scared of you? You should look after your own true personality! I said I'm not helping, so I'm not helping!"

"... You sure are suited to be Stone!"

"You're the one who's suited to be Stone! You already have a bunch of people helping you out. Why do you have to have me help you too?"

The two people who were very suited to be Stone stared at each other, their stubborn temperament bearing extreme likeness.

"If you don't agree to help, I'll really come to bother you again and again!" Grisia said with a threatening tone.

Unexpectedly, Georgo used an even more stubborn tone to say, "Even if you come to bother me again and again and again, I won't ever agree to help you! I absolutely won't agree to help in my entire lifetime!"

Grisia became enraged as well and threatened in a low voice, "Okay! Then let's compete to see who's more stubborn! I will definitely come to bother you again and again and again!"

"Then come bother me again and again and again and again!"

"Okay! I will for sure come again and again and again and again and again..."



Storm broke out in tears. *If you have the time to bother each other again and again, why don't you come and help me correct documents? Come bother me! I beg you! Sob ...*

Side Story #8: “Owing a Favor”

Ceo Storm could never figure it out.

Owing a favor. Being owed a favor.

In the end, who owed whom?

In short, who cares!

Between brothers, if you are angry, you pummel them. Since you keep owing me and I keep owing you, owing another favor makes no difference!



“Ceo, seeing as how today’s sunshine is magnificently warm, could you perhaps warmly help Sun with a small favor?” With a brilliant smile, hands clasped together, Grisia took up an imploring stance.

If this were a normal day, doing a small favor would be no problem, but... Helplessly, Ceo said, “But my teacher wants me to work on my assignments. I’m not allowed to do other things until I finish practicing.”

Grisia looked to the left. Ceo followed his gaze. *Isn’t it just an empty corridor?* Grisia looked to the right. Ceo followed his gaze again, but it was still only a deserted corridor... They were standing in the very middle of the corridor. No matter which direction they looked, what they saw was still just a corridor.

What exactly is Grisia looking at? Ceo stared at him in incomprehension.

Grisia looked back at Ceo with a helpless expression and asked, "What homework can you accomplish here? If it's reading, even if you can read while standing, you don't have a book in your hands. If it's practicing your sword, even if you aren't afraid you might cut someone while you practice, you don't have a sword in your hands either. If you don't want to help me, you know, shouldn't you at least find a more reasonable excuse than that?"

Ceo stared blankly for a bit, about to explain that he wasn't looking for an excuse, when his chance to practice suddenly arrived!

Hurriedly, he pushed Grisia off to the side, took a step forward, and then opened his eyes very wide...

"It's the young Sun Knight and the young Storm Knight! Hehe, both of them are so cute!"

So, so...so many women, ahh! Why are there so many?! When he saw an entire file of more than ten female clerics headed his way, giggling nonstop, Ceo couldn't persevere anymore. With a turn, he shrunk behind Grisia's back.

"Huh?" Not understanding what this guy was doing, Grisia started to turn his head to glance at Ceo just as the female clerics in front of them called out to him.

"Young Sun Knight, how do you maintain your blond hair? It's so smooth and neat and super shiny!"

Of course Grisia couldn't actually reveal his hair oil formula, so he smiled brightly and said, "Under the witness of the God of Light, each of the sister clerics before Sun is even more resplendent than Sun's hair!"

The female clerics started chuckling. They didn't leave until the leader of the female clerics urged them to hurry up. Even as they walked away, they continued laughing.

Once Ceo heard the laughter fade as the clerics continued out of earshot, he hurriedly jumped out and started blinking his eyes nonstop towards the direction of the female clerics' retreating backs.

"Are your eyes cramping?" No matter how Grisia looked at this situation, he couldn't figure out what this guy was doing.

"Not at all!" Ceo immediately turned his head to retort. "I'm practicing how to wink!"

"...What's there to practice with winking?"

"Of course I need to practice! Winking is really difficult, and all the girls smile so much, or they look at me with twinkling eyes, and they smell so sweet. I don't dare to look at them..." Once he got to this point, Ceo dishearteningly said, "I originally thought only one or two

female clerics would pass by the Holy Temple, so I waited here, but in the end an entire group came...”

Grisia scratched his head and said, “Probably only the likes of the Bishop of Radiance would come by themselves! Otherwise, female clerics usually come to help heal holy knights. One or two isn’t enough at all, so of course they’d come by groups!”

Hearing this, Ceo’s face completely crumpled. “I can’t complete my teacher’s assignment. Throwing winks at a hundred females is too hard. I can’t do it!” he moaned in despair.

As he spoke, his eyes became moist.

“D-Don’t cry! I’ll help you!” When he saw the other person’s eyes had already become red, Grisia hurriedly said, “Help me first, and then I’ll help you out too. How’s that?”

With his vision blurred by tears, Ceo asked, “Can you really help me? Even my teacher couldn’t manage to teach me this!”

“Don’t worry! I’m your Sun Knight!”

“Not yet...”

“Hey! I will be soon! Quick, quick, you help me first. My business is more urgent!”

Grisia pulled on Ceo’s hand and led him away, leaving him no time to

refuse or reconsider.



Thud!

"What's this?" Ceo looked at the mountain of paper that Grisia had thrown on the table. His eyes widened in puzzlement.

"Work documents," Grisia replied simply as he placed ink and pens on the table in preparation for correcting the documents.

"Work documents?" Ceo tilted his head and asked in confusion, "Why do you have to correct documents? We're still in training. We don't have to take care of paperwork yet."

"You should tell what you just said to my teacher," Grisia replied very helplessly. "But first, let me say this: no one in the entire Church of the God of Light is brave enough to tell him that."

"What about Knight-Captain Judgment?" Even though the reputation of the strongest Sun Knight was truly intimidating, Ceo believed that Knight-Captain Judgment was definitely not a pushover either.

"Teacher gracefully warned me that if I were to let Knight-Captain Judgment find out about this matter, he would force me to spend all the time I would have spent correcting documents taking lessons in how to act graceful instead."

"Lessons on gracefulness?" Puzzled, Ceo asked, "What's wrong with

taking lessons like that?”

“They’d probably be around the same as your lessons on winking...”

“Ah! I would rather correct paperwork!”

“Exactly, so hurry up and correct them!” Grisia sat down and stuffed a pen into Ceo’s hand. Urgently, he said, “These documents have to be turned in tomorrow!”

Pen in hand, Ceo was at a loss. When he saw that Grisia had already started fervently correcting paperwork, he felt a little too embarrassed to stay motionless, so he began reading paperwork for the first time in his life...

Bang!

At pretty much the same time, the door was busted open and an echoing bellow reached them. “Grisia, where’s your teacher?”

In his nervousness, Ceo almost sent the mountain of paperwork flying—they weren’t supposed to be correcting documents, yet they’d been discovered! What were they going to do?!

Grisia raised his head from the midst of paperwork. “Probably in the wine cellar... Ahem! I mean, may I ask what business Knight-Captain Blaze has with him?”

Wait, we’ve been discovered, right? Why is he still so calm...?

Knight-Captain Blaze sighed softly before saying in a rough voice, "Can't believe he's in the wine cellar at such a time...geez! Go and find Neo quickly and bring him to the great hall!"

"Okay." Grisia stood up and said, "Ceo, I'll return soon. Don't forget to correct the paperwork!"

Ceo's mind was currently in a state of blankness, so he reflexively let out an "okay." It wasn't until Grisia and Knight-Captain Blaze had walked out that he woke up with a start and realized...

There was a mountain of paperwork on the table in front of him!



"You actually finished correcting everything! You're so impressive!" Grisia said in admiration.

Hearing this, Ceo's eyes, which were already glassy, became even more laden with the look of death. He weakly said, "Didn't you say they had to be turned in today? That's why I corrected them the entire night without sleeping..."

"That's right! They have to be turned in today!" Once Grisia finished speaking, he quietly murmured, "But I often turn them in late, since everyone knows Teacher Neo always delays turning in his paperwork."

"What was that?" Ceo didn't quite hear Grisia's additional muttering.

"Nothing!" With one hand, Grisia took the paperwork. With his other hand, he grabbed Ceo and said, "Let's go! You helped me complete the paperwork, now it's my turn to help you complete your homework of tossing winks!"

"You still remember that?" Ceo was a little astonished. The previous night, he'd thought more than once that Grisia had tricked him into helping him correct paperwork, and that Grisia had no intention of helping him complete his homework.

"Of course!"

After he turned in the paperwork, Grisia dragged Ceo to an area and stopped. He turned his head and asked, "How do you feel right now?"

Tiredly, Ceo said, "Very exhausted. I didn't sleep at all, and I looked at so many documents. My sight is still full of text, what with asking for instructions, additional staff, and there were also applications for next year's funds for each holy knight's living allowance..."

"Wink in that direction."

"Why?"

"Just wink first!"

Confused, Ceo winked an eye.

"So cute!"

“Quite handsome!”

Stunned, Ceo heard the quiet shrieks of girls from the direction where he tossed his wink. *Are there...girls in that direction?*

He opened his eyes wide, attempting to focus his eyes to clearly see his surroundings, but Grisia went as far as covering his eyes. He then abruptly took his hands away and said, “Wink ahead to the right.”

Ceo followed his instructions. Once he did so, his eyes were covered again.

When his eyes were uncovered once more, the command came again.

“Wink ahead to the left.”

“Wink ahead to the right again...”

After winking several times in a row, Grisia finally stopped covering Ceo’s eyes. He clapped his hands once. “The assignment of winking at a hundred girls has been completed!”

Huh? Ceo blinked his eyes and was finally able to clearly see his surroundings. *This is...the Sanctuary of Light! The Sanctuary of Light that’s full of female clerics!* Immediately, he hid behind Grisia’s back.

Seeing this, Grisia simply pulled Ceo away. Once they were outside, he crossed his arms in front of his chest. As though it were only natural,

he said, "I said I would help you! Remember, you owe me a favor now!"

...Huh?



During Class

"You finally learned how to wink at beautiful women without blushing!" The Storm Knight couldn't be more touched than he was now. He patted his student's shoulder and said, "I knew you could do it! Your teacher is so moved!"

Because he had spent the entire night correcting paperwork, all he could see was text running across his vision, so he hadn't even been able to tell if the people before him were male or female...

It seems like I really do owe Grisia a favor...?

Ceo didn't really understand what was going on. Why was it that he had helped Grisia correct paperwork, yet he still owed him a favor? But no matter what, Grisia had helped him finally learn how to wink, so when it all came down to it, he probably did owe Grisia a favor...right?



"Well! Here's today's paperwork!" With a single movement, Grisia shoved a huge pile of documents into his hands. "After you finish this, your vision will be full of text, so you won't have to worry about being afraid of winking. That means you owe me another favor!"

Why did he owe Grisia another favor? Obviously, he was the one helping Grisia out with correcting paperwork. *Helping correct paperwork yet still owing a favor... What kind of deal is this?*

"I helped you correct documents!" Ceo was a little angry now.

Grisia tilted his head to the side and sighed. "What to do with you? Okay! Let's just say that you don't owe me an additional favor then. But you still owe me the favor from before!"

...Why did he feel like he hadn't gained anything from this?

But then, for the sake of winking without blushing, it looked like he had no choice but to correct paperwork?

How had things turned out like this?

While he corrected paperwork in his room, Ceo couldn't figure out the answer no matter how hard he contemplated the question. However, during the time he pondered, he finished correcting another ten documents.

"Ceo, what are you doing? Recently, everyone says that they haven't seen you much. You seem to be very busy."

"Teacher." Ceo had corrected paperwork to the point of becoming dizzy and lightheaded. When he heard a noise, he merely blankly raised his head. When he realized it was his teacher who had called

out, he still continued to stare blankly at the person before him, unable to react at all.

"...What are you looking at?"

The Storm Knight picked one of the documents off the table to take a look.

Oh no! I'm not allowed to correct paperwork! Right up until the present, Ceo hadn't been able to react.

"You..." The Storm Knight's expression stiffened. "...Are actually helping Neo correct paperwork?"

Everything is over! What am I supposed to do? Grisia...

"You don't even help me correct paperwork, yet you're helping Neo correct his? Am I your teacher, or is he, huh?"

...Eh? Timidly, Ceo said, "This was given to me by Grisia. I was helping Grisia, not Knight-Captain Sun."

"I don't care!" The mighty Storm Knight began to throw a tantrum. "If you're helping Neo correct his paperwork, then you have to help me correct mine too!"

Suddenly, Ceo felt as though Grisia had opened his eyes to the many hidden truths of the Holy Temple. He nodded and said, "Okay, I'll help Teacher correct paperwork, but I don't want to take any more lessons

on winking!”

“...You’ve been corrupted by Grisia, but it’s a deal! Since you’ve already learned how to wink, it’s no big deal if we stop the lessons.”

With such a result, it really does seem like I owe Grisia a huge favor, but then I had definitely helped Grisia correct an awfully huge amount of paperwork too, right? Ceo felt a little bewildered.



“Deatheo!¹ You owe me a favor, so help me out!”

“Deatheo! Since you owe me a favor, help me out quickly!”

If you keep calling me Deatheo, you’ll be the dead one!

“...Storm! Quick, help me! You owe me a favor!”

Even after he turned twenty and became the official Storm Knight, Ceo Storm still didn’t understand why he owed Grisia a favor, and why he could never finish returning this “one favor.”

Once, when he corrected paperwork for three days straight without sleep, and Grisia tossed another mountain of paperwork in front of him, Ceo Storm finally exploded and bellowed, “Grisia Sun!”

With one leg he kicked out and sent the guy in front of him flying, the guy who never stopped bringing him paperwork. Then he ran after him and continued kicking.

"Aaaah!" Grisia screeched and ducked, but he wasn't as nimble or as agile as Ceo. He got kicked again as he ducked and then again as he tried to speak. "Why are you suddenly so angry? I don't understand! I haven't done anything recently, have I...? I mean, nothing particularly bad, right? Ouch! Don't kick my face!"

That's right, not recently. You've just been doing it continuously for eight years!

During a high kick, Ceo brought his right foot to a halt by the side of Grisia's face, causing a gust of wind that actually moved the other's blond hair. Then he slowly stated, "Let me kick you right now to my heart's content to vent my anger, or else I won't ever help you correct paperwork in the future. What's your decision?"

"...Kick me! Please use your full strength to kick me! Don't hold back. My holy light is very strong. I'm the Sun Knight with the best recovery ability, so there's no problem! Come!"

At this time, the door was pushed open. Leaf stuck his head in and worriedly asked, "Has something happened? I heard shouting... Don't fight!"

With a footprint on his face, Sun revealed a brilliant smile and said, "Brother Leaf, as they say, fighting is a sign of affection and arguing is a sign of love. Brother Storm and I were merely exchanging our affection and love, and were not coming to blows with each other. Please do not be concerned."

"...Sorry to disrupt your communication with each other."

Leaf pulled back. The door immediately closed.

Expressionlessly, Ceo looked at Grisia who was actually smiling as he said, "Deatheo, as my subordinate, you actually dared to hit me. This is a crime! You were even caught by Leaf, but look at how brilliantly I helped you explain your actions. You owe me another huge favor!"

"..."

I'm returning your favor right now!

KICK!

Notes On the Side Story

¹ **"Deatheo"**: This is Grisia's nickname for Ceo. In the Chinese version, the nickname, Sǐwō (死喔), is pronounced very similarly to Ceo's name, but the first character means "die" or "dead."

Side Story #9: “Beloved Voodoo Doll”

A little nervous, Elmairy looked at the person standing beside him. The other person was completely clothed in black. Although he was not wearing his usual black robes and was just wearing normal clothes to enable more freedom of movement, he still managed to look intimidating despite not actually being angry.

Jesus really was as solemn as the rumors implied. *We are all sixteen, seventeen years old on average. How can he be this imposing?*

Despite thinking it over a hundred times, Elmairy still could not figure it out. At the same time, he was a little afraid of his companion.

Actually, he was in a different group from Jesus, and in theory there should have been no chance of them going on a mission together. Thus, having to go on a mission with Jesus this time made him extremely nervous.

Someone who was good at using holy light was needed for the mission. However, all the other people in Elmairy’s group were either preoccupied by other matters, or didn’t want to go. Hence, he was left with no choice but to go.

Jesus’s distinctive deep voice rang out, “Elmairy, can you feel any dark element up ahead?”

Elmairy felt carefully for a while, and then shook his head, saying, “No. However, this distance is simply too great. If there isn’t a large

amount of dark element, I'm unable to feel it. In this aspect, Grisia is better than me."

Looking at the gloomy house before him, with its spacious grounds and large courtyard within its walls, Lesus also concluded that the distance was rather great. He shook his head as he said, "In this aspect, Grisia is indeed very strong. It's a pity that he went to the palace with the Sun Knight today."

Elmairy kept on staring at Lesus even after he had finished speaking. The latter's heart lurched, and he hurriedly continued in his deep voice, "But even if he had not left the Holy Temple, I would not go on a mission with the young Sun Knight!"

Elmairy flinched, and in a small voice, he tried to explain, "Grisia is easy to get along with."

Lesus coldly replied, "Regardless of whether he is easy to get along with, his swordsmanship is too lousy, and he often makes other people do his work for him. If I were to go on a mission with him, I'm afraid that I'd have to complete it alone."

"..."

Although he wanted to defend his future immediate superior, Elmairy could not come up with any rebuttals at all. Lesus's words had really hit the nail on the head! He couldn't help but blurt out his own suspicions. "You understand Grisia really well. Could it be that you're close to him?"

Lesus's heart received yet another shock, but his face remained indifferent. After making a displeased expression and coldly snorting once, he said, "Why would I be close to the young Sun Knight? The young Sun Knight will one day be the Holy Temple's role model, and everyone observes his each and every move. It is not hard to know of his conduct and deeds."

Elmairy suddenly realized something. *How terrible! So Grisia's reputation for having lousy swordsmanship and throwing his work to others has already spread to the Judge's Complex?*

Lesus turned his head and gave an order to the five holy knights behind him. "The two of you, go to the back door and wait for further orders. As for you, knock on the door and call out to the owner of the house three times. If you hear no reply, immediately break down the door and enter, then begin the search."

"Understood."

Elmairy was extremely impressed by Lesus's composure while giving orders. Although everyone knew that they were the future Twelve Holy Knights, the emphasis was on the word "future." Not to mention, they were still young. Therefore, the young twelve knights did not actually hold any form of authority. Most of them would've hesitated and used a less commanding tone when giving orders to a bunch of holy knights who were many years their senior. However, Lesus did not seem to be troubled by this in the least.

The holy knights that were being commanded by a child also did not reveal any sort of dissatisfaction or awkwardness on their faces. They revered Lesus, and Elmairy could see that just from the expression on their faces.

Lesus is really amazing. However, if possible, Elmairy still didn't want to go on a mission with him, as the feeling of oppression that came from being around Lesus was just too much. *Standing at Grisia's side is much more relaxing.*

Lesus gave a final command. "Elmairy, you stay behind me and provide cover for everyone."

Surely that's just my own misperception? Hearing Lesus's words, Elmairy abruptly realized that Grisia would always make others do his work for him. For example, in a situation like this, he would definitely tell others to go ahead first while he stayed at the back. However, Lesus's conscientiousness was known far and wide, and he would probably never make others do his work for him.

Standing at Grisia's side is actually not in the least bit relaxing either!

"Elmairy!" Lesus had walked a few steps and realized that the person behind him had not followed him. He shouted, "Why are you in such a daze? Hurry up and follow me! Also, take out your weapon as a precaution!"

"Yes, yes!" Elmairy received a huge shock. He quickly took the bow from his back, drew an arrow, and notched it on the string.

The holy knight who was at the front shouted for the owner of the house thrice. His voice was so loud that even the neighbors stuck their heads out to see what the commotion was, but there was still no reply from within the house.

Elmairy was a little nervous. According to the report, there was someone who was using dark elemental magic here. More importantly, the dark elemental magic was being used to harm others.

Bang!

The door was finally kicked open, and the party entered the house rapidly. Along the way, they searched the rooms one after another, not allowing any clues to slip by them.

Though the house was not small, it was not a palace either. Hence, in almost no time at all, they had searched the whole house several times. A holy knight reported to Lesus, "There is nobody inside the house."

Lesus frowned and turned around to ask, "Elmairy, do you feel any dark element?"

Elmairy shook his head.

After receiving this reply, Lesus's frown deepened.

"Perhaps it was a false alarm." Elmairy made an attempt to explain,

"The public has little understanding of the dark element, and sometimes when they see a few unusual occurrences, they believe that there is someone using black magic."

Jesus also thought there was a high probability that that was what had happened, but he preferred to be a little more cautious. He said to everyone, "Go back and investigate one more time. If there is nothing abnormal, then we'll leave..."

I'm going to kill you! Die, you unfaithful man!

Shocked, Elmairy yelled, "Jesus, that voice..."

After yelling the command "go," Jesus started sprinting away. Elmairy and the other holy knights could only run after him.

They rushed to the middle of the courtyard. The courtyard was not big, and it only took a few glances to realize that someone was standing in the thicket, with a huge tree blocking a large portion of the person's figure. They could hear the seemingly endless string of curses that the person was spouting, and see their disheveled hair. Also, the curses were accompanied by the sound of something being knocked on, and the source of that sound could not be identified.

Hearing the malicious curses coming from that person's mouth, Elmairy's scalp prickled. However, Jesus did not hesitate as he took a huge stride forward and yelled, "Put down the weapon in your hands!" After his outburst, he finally got a good look at the person's appearance, which caused him to become temporarily stunned

because he had no idea what to do.

"Jesus?" Seeing that something was wrong, Elmairy rushed forward, but he too ended up rooted to the spot, dazed.

That person is actually a... woman?

Moreover, it was an extremely terrified woman. Although her hair was disheveled and her clothes were in a state of disorder, when she returned to her senses and saw Jesus and the others, she was so frightened that she couldn't stand properly. She even dropped the object in her hands... It was a hammer.

The woman retreated a few steps and leaned on a tree. Beside her, a doll fashioned out of straw was actually pinned to the tree by many haphazardly placed nails.

"You, all of you, who are you? What do you want?" She shrieked in horror.

In a low voice, Jesus said, "We are holy knights from the Church of the God of Light, and we received a report that there was someone here using black magic to harm others."

"Black, black magic?" The woman was terrified out of her wits, and couldn't even speak properly. "I was only, only..."

"Take her aside first. Remember, do not let your guard down," Jesus instructed the holy knights at his side.

“Understood!”

Elmairy sincerely felt that that woman didn't seem like a practitioner of black magic. The dark element was not an element that could be easily harnessed. If she really knew how to use dark elemental magic, then she would have to be a relatively strong magician, and would not display such a distraught look.

“See if this has any traces of black magic.” Lesus bent down to pick up the hammer, and then placed it in Elmairy's hands, saying, “Though I don't believe that this has any relation to black magic, my holy light abilities are not strong. Will you check it for me?”

After Elmairy received the hammer, he turned it around to examine it from all angles. Then, he shook his head and said, “This is just an ordinary hammer with no anomalies. The concentration of dark element inside it is not high.”

“Not high? Then that means that there is some?” Lesus asked. Hearing that, Elmairy hurriedly tried to explain, “You misunderstood what I meant. Every object's elemental makeup is extremely complicated, and most are made up of a mixture of different elements. Although I have learned to sense the dark element, I am still unable to conclude whether this object has dark element or not. I can only say that its dark element is within the normal range, and is not unusually high.”

“I see.” Lesus nodded his head, and muttered to himself for a while.

Then, he said, "Try copying that woman's actions and hammering the straw doll. See if you can feel any dark element from doing so."

"Uh... Okay."

Although Elmairy felt that this was a little strange and didn't actually want to do it, he couldn't come up with any excuse to refuse. Not to mention it was Lesus asking! *Never mind me, I doubt any holy knight would dare say "no"!*

Actually that isn't right either, because at the least, there's Grisia who would dare to do so.

Elmairy walked to the front of the tree and stared at the straw doll. Having no other alternative, he raised the hammer and hit the doll once. Then, he turned around to look at Lesus. The latter frowned a little, and said, "Continue."

Elmairy could only pick up the hammer and whack the doll again and again continuously. The more he hit it, the greater the strength he used, and the more engrossed in the task he became, until he seemed to forget what he had been doing in the first place...

"... Elmairy!"

Elmairy snapped out of it abruptly, and turned his head around with a puzzled look as he asked, "What's wrong?"

"That's enough." Lesus looked at Elmairy, and with a hint of suspicion, he asked, "Are you alright?"

Thoroughly confused, Elmairy answered, "Yes, I'm fine."

After scrutinizing Elmairy and confirming that he was indeed back to normal, Lesus inquired, "Is there any dark element?"

"No, none at all."

"Is that so?" Lesus pondered for a while, but he was still rather concerned at how mesmerized Elmairy had become just now. After thinking it through thoroughly, he made a decision. "For caution's sake, I think we should hand the hammer and the straw doll over to the young Sun Knight for appraisal."

"Okay."



After knocking on Grisia's door, Elmairy waited patiently. That was because whenever he knocked on the door, Grisia would be slow to respond eight out of ten times.

Elmairy heard a variety of noises coming from behind the door. The sharp sound of something falling; the sound of flowing water...

Occasionally, he would even hear swearing like "F***, this must be a curse," but Elmairy pretended not to hear any of that.

He remembered the time when he had unnecessarily asked Grisia, "What are you doing?" Immediately, Grisia had shoved a stack of documents into his hands that was at least half a meter tall. *I wonder how long it took to accumulate so many documents...*

Once the door was pulled open, a golden-haired teenage boy walked out. His smile was incomparably radiant, though his hair and clothes were still a little damp.

Had he been bathing? Elmairy felt a little apologetic.

Grisia began his long-winded inquiry. "Dear Brother Leaf, is it the God of Light's whispers, or possibly because brothers should communicate with each other more often, that caused you to come and knock on the door..."

In order to stop him from continuing, Elmairy immediately took out the hammer and the straw doll, saying, "Lesus wanted me to show you these."

Grisia bent his head to examine the straw doll and hammer, and his radiant smile became stiff for a moment. Puzzled, he asked, "What is it that Brother Lesus wishes me to see?"

"He wants you to see if there is any black magic in it." Elmairy gave an honest recount of what had happened. "A citizen reported that someone near his house was using black magic to harm others, so Lesus and I went over to check it out..."

After hearing the whole story, Grisia bent his head to examine the hammer and straw doll once more, and then waved to Elmairy, beckoning him into the room.

Elmairy was a little surprised, but he still followed Grisia in.
“There isn’t any black magic on this at all!”

Unexpectedly, Grisia made a conclusion right after closing the room door. Not to mention, his tone was “not elegant at all.” Elmairy was not too surprised about that. All of the Twelve Holy Knights knew that Grisia’s degree of elegance changed according to how many people surrounded him -- as the number decreased, his elegance would drop as well.

“Are you sure?” Elmairy was a little uncertain, so he immediately started describing the situation at the time. “But that woman’s appearance as she hit the straw doll was really frightening! It was almost as though she had gone crazy!”

“She was only venting her emotions.” Grisia shook his head, saying, “If hitting a voodoo doll is black magic, then black magic would be far too easy to cast.”

Elmairy had also thought so, but he didn’t understand the other sentence that Grisia had said. “How does hitting a voodoo doll help one vent his emotions?”

Grisia smiled once, and explained, “It’s not hitting the voodoo doll that helps, it’s hitting the fellow who made you angry that lets you vent

your emotions! You imagine the voodoo doll as your enemy, even stuffing his hair or fingernails inside it, and then you stab him mercilessly with a nail!"

Elmairy's eyes opened wide as he exclaimed, "That doesn't seem like a good thing to do!"

"What's so bad about it?" Grisia shrugged, saying, "It's better if she hits a voodoo doll rather than actually killing her enemy with a knife, right?"

Hmm? When you say it like that, it sounds very logical! Elmairy looked at the straw doll in his hands, recalling what he had felt when he had followed Lesus's instructions and hammered it... *No! No way, I definitely cannot allow myself to engage in such eccentric behavior!*

"Oh yeah, Strawberry." Grisia suddenly shouted.

"My name is Elmairy... Forget it, what's the matter?"

"Hold out both of your hands."

Elmairy did as he was told, and held his hands out. Then, a pile of documents, half a meter tall, was shoved onto his hands.



Grisia was currently searching for Elmairy because the documents were overdue and his teacher was nagging at him non-stop. He had no choice but to go and check if Elmairy had finished yet... *Though the*

probability that he isn't is higher, seeing as the pile of documents was as tall as a mountain.

If there were no other choice, he would also have to join in and correct the paperwork. Grisia felt a little depressed, for he hated correcting documents the most. To correct one document, he had to write the three words "God of Light" at least twenty times. *It's just like being punished and having to write lines!*

I hope that Strawberry has already finished. Grisia pushed open the door to Elmairy's room, and then, seeing a situation that was just too shocking, froze in place.

Elmairy lifted the hammer and hit the voodoo doll on the wall forcefully again and again. He even cursed non-stop as he did so, saying, "Curse you! You always make me do your work! I often can't finish and have to pull all-nighters! 'No matter what kind of request it is, I can't refuse it,' what kind of lousy set-up is that... Grisia?"

After cursing for a while, Elmairy finally saw Grisia standing at the doorway, and was immediately scared out of his wits.

"Y-You, why are you here?" The color of Elmairy's face was so terrible that it couldn't get any worse. As a holy knight, he actually did something like cursing while hitting a voodoo doll. Also, he'd actually been found out! *Just like how they misunderstood that woman's actions, would people think that I'm using black magic? Then, I would be replaced... Maybe not just that, I could even be burnt at the stake!*

Grisia suddenly had a really bad feeling about this. *If I say something like "I saw you hitting a voodoo doll," will he hammer the nail into my body instead?*

Though Elmairy was usually very easy to bully, his intuition told him never to mention the matter of Elmairy hitting a voodoo doll in his room, otherwise he might not live to be promoted to the Sun Knight.

"I-I see... I see that Brother Elmairy's room is really very clean!"

Elmairy was stunned. *Grisia doesn't intend to report me? ...Not to mention, what did he just call me? How long has it been since he last said my name correctly?*

Flustered, Grisia said, "I only came to retrieve the documents, and didn't see anything. Also, I swear that after I leave this place, I definitely won't remember a thing!"

Seeing that Grisia really did not seem to have any intention of reporting him, Elmairy then timidly explained, "I, I only wanted to test whether I could really vent my frustrations using this. I discovered that it was actually quite useful, s-so I..."

"Cough!" Grisia coughed loudly as he said, "I only came here to retrieve the documents, and didn't see anything. Therefore, you don't need to explain, just tell me whether you have finished correcting the documents?"

Elmairy nodded, walked to the side of his desk, and picked up a thick

stack of documents. He then walked to the doorway, and was just about to hand the documents over to Grisya when he suddenly stopped moving.

Just as Grisya was considering whether to snatch the documents and run, Elmairy suddenly asked, "Grisya, can you give me a strand of your golden hair?"

"... Okay."

Grisya plucked a strand of his own hair, and handed it over to Elmairy with one hand while receiving the documents with the other. As he closed the room's doors, he attempted to hypnotize himself by muttering, "I've really brought this onto myself. I actually taught Strawberry how to nail voodoo dolls, even telling him that he can use hair and nails... No, no, no! I don't know that Strawberry nails voodoo dolls, don't remember, don't remember, don't ever remember... Later I should go drink with my teacher until I get wasted, and then treat it as a dream! Yup! I'll go do that!"

Hearing those mutterings, Elmairy started smiling. Although he was still holding the hammer in his right hand, he didn't feel like nailing the voodoo doll anymore.

He took the voodoo doll from the wall, and stuffed the golden hair in. After that, Elmairy smiled as he said, "From now on, I'll have to trouble you to vent my anger! Beloved voodoo doll... And Grisya."

Side Story #10: “Kicking Forth the Truth”

Kicking doors is really addictive; it’s just so fun and exciting!

But some doors are forbidden. Chikus only kicked them open once, and has never dared to kick them again.

Lesus – Even if you kick his door open, there’s nothing much to see. You will just see Lesus correcting documents, and then you will make him angry.

Grisia – Extremely horrifying things will happen after you kick his door!

The Pope – After kicking his door...???



"I must have owed Grisia in my past life, so in this life,¹ I have to repay the debt. But that’s okay, because the other ten people are also repaying their debts."

BY Chikus.

"Rubbish! I’m the one repaying debts! You bastard!"

BY Grisia.



"Chikus! I told you that you could only kick ten doors open a week. Why did you break more than twenty doors in one day?"

Furious, the Blaze Knight punished his student, mercilessly knocking him on the head several times with a smoke pipe. This was because the Pope had warned him over and over again that if Chikus continued kicking down too many doors, the repair fees would all be added to his bill.

Originally, he'd thought that it was okay for his youthful and energetic student to kick down a few extra doors. They were just doors, so he should have been able to afford it... However, when the Pope showed him the number of doors Chikus had destroyed today, he almost vomited blood. Chikus had broken more than twenty doors in one day, so that would add up to more than five hundred doors a month. Not even the Blaze Knight's salary could compensate for that amount of damage!

After being knocked on the head a few times, Chikus lowered his head in mock repentance. Still, he did not learn his lesson and muttered, "Why bother to count how many doors I kick? When someone sees a door, he should just kick it!"

The Blaze Knight pulled his student's ear ruthlessly until he wailed "OW OW OW!" Only then did he calm down a little and growl, "You think your feet can replace your hands, huh? Well then, since you use your feet to open doors, why don't I make you use your feet to eat as well?"

"..."

Although Chikus shut his mouth, there was no fear in his expression at all because he did not believe his teacher would really make him do that. His teacher may look intimidating and even had sideburns, but he was actually quite sensitive. If he really did something like “using his feet to eat,” the first person to stop him would definitely be his teacher!

The moment he saw his student’s expression, the Blaze Knight knew that his student was not afraid at all. For the sake of his salary, he decided to do something else to prevent his student from spreading chaos. He warned, “You may only kick open ten doors a week! If you exceed that number, I-I will cut your pocket money!”

On hearing this, Chikus exclaimed, “Teacher, how could you do this to me? This is child abuse; the God of Light will punish you for this!”

“Oh? You say that this is child abuse?” The Blaze Knight was so angry he instead laughed, “You haven’t experienced what real child abuse is! Do you honestly believe that I can’t learn from Neo and treat you the same way he treats Grisia?”

“What’s so scary about that?” Unconvinced, Chikus said, “Doesn’t the Sun Knight just have to be elegant? I am the Blaze Knight, so I have to be very aggressive and kick doors!”

Kicking doors is not an easy skill to master, and some doors even have to be opened using battle aura!

“There’s nothing scary about that?” The Blaze Knight rolled his eyes

and snapped unhappily, "Where do you think Grisia's pile of documents that he can never finish..."

"Bullshit! Grisia obviously dumps all that work on other people. Since when has he done it himself?" Chikus immediately retorted.

"...His pile of documents that he can never finish tossing to others comes from? I have never made you do any paperwork before!"

After hearing this, Chikus hesitated. He really didn't want to be saddled with a pile of paperwork because then he wouldn't have any time to run around and play. If he had to edit a never-ending pile of documents like Ceo... Chikus shuddered and did not dare argue with his teacher anymore.

"But ten doors a week is really too few!" He was scared, but Chikus knew his teacher too well. His teacher looked intimidating on the outside, but he was actually very soft-hearted.

The Blaze Knight thought about it for a while, and he also felt that he was a little strict. He considered the amount he could afford with his salary and said, "You may only kick fifteen doors a week."

"Okay! We start counting from today onwards!" Chikus shouted happily, "Bye bye Teacher, I'm going to go kick doors now..." After his teacher rolled his eyes, he corrected himself, "I'm going off to play now!"

"Just go!" The Blaze Knight waved a hand impatiently.

Looking at his student, the Blaze Knight felt a little helpless. But on further thought, he concluded that for boys, being lively and active was always a good thing, so he became less concerned.

“Fahr, aren’t you too soft-hearted?”

A shadow swung down from the tree. Without even looking, Fahr Blaze already knew that the person had to be Lanbi Storm, since there were very few people who would have nothing to do during character development training class and who liked lounging in trees or bushes.

Also, he had detected the smell of tobacco a while ago. *This guy took my tobacco again! Sigh! Can’t he go buy his own?*

“Young people are full of vigor, so naturally, a few broken doors are unavoidable. There’s no need to be so harsh.”

Lanbi leaned on the tree trunk, artfully holding a long smoking pipe. He said disapprovingly, “If Grisias ever dared to kick down several doors, causing Neo to pay for it with his salary, I think he would be dead by the next day!”

That was indeed true. Fahr was left speechless. Actually, this was not the first time somebody had said that he pampered Chikus too much. The sight of Lanbi holding his treasured smoke pipe, though, made him say in exasperation, “Don’t use Neo as an example! Strictly speaking, he is basically abusing children. Judgment should arrest him and lock him up!”

After inhaling some tobacco and then exhaling a long breath of smoke, Lanbi raised an eyebrow and said, "If you really want to be picky, Neo is guilty of at least abusing the entire Church of the God of Light. It's not as simple as child abuse."

On hearing this, Fahr said helplessly, "Even in his younger years, Neo was always a troublesome guy."

"That's right. Back then we always said that we could never imagine him teaching a student but before we realized it, we'd all become teachers."

Filled with emotion, Fahr asked concernedly, "How is your student doing recently? In a few years, they will become the next Twelve Holy Knights."

"Besides having rather serious dark circles around his eyes, everything else is pretty good."

Fahr also knew that recently, Ceo had been correcting documents from early morning till late at night. A little embarrassed, he said, "Looks like I really have been pampering Chikus."

"That's not news."

"Damn you!"

"Don't worry." Almost smiling, Lanbi said, "Grisia will help you train

the young Blaze Knight. He will never allow there to be a useless guy among his men. He will definitely use them 'for all their worth,' 'without sparing even the dregs,' and make sure to 'spit out the bones after swallowing them whole.'"

...Looks like Lanbi wasn't really indifferent about his student's dark circles.

Determined to continue arguing, Fahr said, "Grisia has no choice. He's still very young, yet he already has to clean up a lot of Neo's messes. Even Chasel had to admit that with Grisia's help, his burden has been reduced significantly."

"He will be a good Sun Knight." Lanbi blew out another mouthful of smoke and added, "I'm just a father with a 'marrying off my daughter' complex. Seeing my precious daughter become someone else's wife makes me feel disgruntled. Please ignore me."

Fahr was just about to correct him, when Lanbi spoke up first.

"And don't remind me that Ceo is male. Ever since he was young, that boy has loved blushing and has always been shy. If I didn't think of him as my daughter, I would have beaten him to death a long time ago."

On hearing this, Fahr said sympathetically, "At least he doesn't kick down doors all day."

"That's right!" With a gloomy look on his face, Lanbi said, "He only

knows how to stamp his foot and say 'I just can't do this.'"

Guess every family has a troublesome little knight...²

Fahr raised his smoke pipe. Coincidentally, Lanbi also raised his smoke pipe, so both of them inhaled a mouthful of smoke and blew out large smoke rings of depression.



I can only kick fifteen doors a week, so I cannot just kick any random door I see. I have to choose which doors to kick carefully!

"Heehee!" As he looked at a door, Chikus giggled like a man looking perversely at a young girl.

This was a door that he had never kicked before – the door to Grisia's bedroom.

Grisia had warned him time and again not to kick his door, but... this was exactly why it was worth kicking! It was just like a forbidden door, so kicking it would feel more satisfying than kicking any other door!

Therefore, Chikus had been saving it till now. This was one of the main attractions, so he could not bear to kick it right from the start.

Kicking doors is really the most fun thing to do in the world!

The first door he ever kicked was Ceo's door. This was because Teacher said that he was very familiar with the Storm Knight, so it was

okay to kick his student's door.

At first, Chikus was a little reluctant. *What's wrong with using my hand to open a perfectly good door? Why do I have to kick it open?*

But the moment he kicked the door open, Chikus saw Ceo holding a picture of a girl and looking at it while blushing furiously. He even had a towel wrapped around his head and had been in the middle of dying his hair.

Also, when Ceo realized that his door had been kicked open he was momentarily stunned. After that though, he became really frightened, and the sight of him about to burst into a flood of tears was really... too entertaining!

From then on he became addicted to kicking doors. If he could see all sorts of fun things every time he kicked a door open, how could he possibly stop kicking them?

Oh, but he had also kicked a boring door before. That was Lesus's bedroom door.

Not only was there no fun show to watch behind his door – Lesus would only turn his head around slowly and frown at him – he would also be scared half to death by Lesus's grim face and receive several warnings. There was nothing good about that at all! He never wanted to kick Lesus's door again!

Kicking Grisia's door will definitely be much more fun!

Chikus was absolutely confident of that, since everyone knew that Grisia had countless explosive secrets!

Chikus took a deep breath and positioned himself in front of the door – he raised his foot really high – *and kicked!*

Bang!

Bang!

BANG!

The door was kicked open; Chikus tried to focus on what was going on inside the room, but he was sent flying out; he slammed right into the wall. His whole body hurt like hell, and his brain was extremely fuzzy. He thought he was going to die.

“Chikus?”

This voice, is it Grisia? Nah, how could that guy ever say my name correctly? But this voice...

A warm feeling spread through his body. This was the feeling one would get when healed by holy light.

Not long after, Chikus woke up. He looked at the person in front of him stupidly. It was indeed Grisia, but at the moment, he was not wearing the uniform of the young Sun Knight. Instead, he was in a white shirt

and shorts, his hair and face still wet.

Was he taking a bath? Chikus thought, dazed.

"Why did you kick my door, dear brother?" Grisia asked, puzzled, "Don't you remember me telling you 'please don't kick my door'?"

Chikus said boldly, "I-I forgot."

Even though he heard this kind of answer, Grisia continued smiling. He said, "Dear brother, you are really naughty! Next time, please don't kick my door." At this point, he slowly leaned closer and whispered into Chikus's ear, "The next time you touch my door, I will blast you from the east side of Leaf Bud City to the west side. Also, no one in the entire Church of the God of Light will dare heal you!"

After he finished speaking, he slowly moved away. Smiling brilliantly, he said, "May the God of Light always protect you, so that you will be free of illness, pain, and committing mistakes, my dear brother."

Chikus's face turned pale. He nodded vigorously and made a permanent mental note: *Grisia's door must not be kicked!*

Grisia turned around and shut the door that had been kicked crooked. Chikus heard an indistinct mumbling about something he didn't quite understand. "Damn! Every time I apply my facial mask, someone comes to annoy me. This must be a curse..."



After experiencing that painful lesson, Chikus decided not to kick doors in the Holy Temple. Who knew if he would kick the door of another Grisia?

Thus, he went to the Sanctuary of Light to kick doors. The place was filled with clerics anyway, and he wasn't afraid of clerics!

Chikus was not very familiar with the Sanctuary of Light, so even when he got there, he couldn't decide on which door to kick. He walked here and there, trying to identify a satisfactory door.

Luckily, Chikus was wearing his uniform. Everyone recognized him as the young Blaze Knight, so nobody stopped him from wandering around.

At last, he finally found a satisfactory door. The designs on the door before him were no less elaborate than those of the leader of the Holy Temple, the Sun Knight's door. *Perhaps this is the Pope's bedroom door?*

"The Pope?" Chikus rubbed his chin. *This is definitely a good prey. I've heard that the Pope is already getting along in his years, but he still looks like a teenage boy. Wouldn't he have a lot of secrets? Of course he would!*

In addition to looking like a teenage boy, the Pope only knows healing spells and other similar spells. There is nothing to be afraid of!

Once he finished thinking, Chikus raised his foot once more. He took a

deep breath, but as he kicked he suddenly remembered that... Grisia was also just a teenage boy.

BANG!

"Who dares to break my door? Don't you know that there are magic traps on it... Huh? Young Blaze Knight?"

The Pope walked out slowly but only saw the young Blaze Knight ensnared and immobilized by the magic traps. The young Blaze Knight's eyes were extremely wide as he looked at something unbelievable, and that was...

The Pope quickly reduced the amount of magical power. If he caused any lasting side effects, a lot of people would take revenge on him.

Fahr was one of them, and the other was that little devil, Grisia. That guy was only fifteen, but had already tried to demand the young Hell Knight from him. He'd even warned him not to mess with any of the other holy knights.

"Sigh, you keep kicking doors, even kicking all the way to my room! Warning your teacher last time had absolutely no effect! However, for the sake of Fahr and Grisia, this time I will let you go."

At this point, the Pope thought for a while before continuing, "But I want to dock your teacher's pay... Forget it, Fahr pampers you too much, doing that is useless. I will have Grisia owe me a debt, and if he refuses, I will lock you up in isolation for a year. He will definitely

agree reluctantly, and then get even with you, haha!”

Grisia was going to get even with him... Chikus really wanted to cry. He'd just offended Grisia!

“Child, you cannot remember what you’ve seen in my room!” With a child’s smile on his face, the Pope slowly used his magic to wipe Chikus’s recent memories.

Chikus’s eyes widened, as if by doing so he could remember the great secret he had seen today. But unfortunately...

“Eh? Why am I in the Sanctuary of Light? What was I about to do just now?”

Chikus scratched his head. He looked to his left and right, but saw no people. *What am I standing here for...?* Suddenly, he had a revelation. “That’s right! I was going to kick Grisia’s door! How could I forget that? Whatever! I’m going to kick it now! It will definitely be lots of fun! I wonder what secrets Grisia is hiding? Heeheehee...”



“...” Furious, Grisia yelled, “Chikus Blaze, did I owe you something in my past life? You’re dead, this time you’re really dead! If I don’t make you so busy that you don’t have the time to even kick a single door, then my name is not Grisia!³”

Notes On the Side Story

¹ **"Past life... this life":** Refers to the concept of reincarnation.

² **"Every family has a troublesome little knight":** '家家有个难搞的小骑士' (pinyin: jiā jiā yǒu gè nán gǎo de xiǎo qī shì). This is a pun on the Chinese saying, 'every family has their difficulties', or '家家有本难念的经' (pinyin: jiā jiā yǒu běn nán niàn de jīng, lit. 'every family has a text which is unpleasant to read').

³ **"...then my name is not Grisla!":** In Chinese, people often declare that if they can't manage to do something, they'll turn their name upside down and write it that way (the equivalent of writing a name backwards). Essentially, they mean that they won't be worthy of their name.

Side Story #11: “Doing a Small Favor”

Doing a small favor doesn’t sound like a big deal, but when the person you’re helping is Grisia, then it’s a big deal.

One small favor turns into two small favors, and then those turn into three hundred small favors...

Wait, isn’t this number growing a bit too quickly?

Even if the small favor for Grisia is throwing away trash on your way out, you must never ever help him...



Demos sat in his favorite spot under the table where virtually nobody would notice him. This made him feel at ease.

“Hey, why are you crouching down there again? You’re going to scare somebody to death!”

It was a pity that today was an exception, for a young man stretched out his legs as soon as he sat down at the table. Demos didn’t even have enough time to get out of the way before he was kicked, scaring the young man into cursing out angrily and dragging Demos out from under the table.

This young man was actually Demos’ brother-in-law, Yen. Upon hearing the angry commotion, his sister Aris immediately rushed out from the kitchen, shouting, “Don’t scold little D! Why did you kick him

so hard? You'll hurt him!"

"He was hiding under the table again!" Yen replied in rage. "How come he never gets it no matter how much we teach him? Why can't he just play outside with all the other children instead of hiding under tables? Why can't this child be a little more vivacious? He's not cute at all!"

Although Yen had been scolding him non-stop verbally, he had released Demos from his grip and was even looking at his arm for signs of injuries.

Hearing Yen criticize Demos, Aris raised her eyebrows, ready to flip out and release a torrent of insults of her own. However, she caught sight of Demos from the corner of her eye and calmed down, quenching her inner rage. With a tight grip she dragged her husband into the kitchen.

As soon as the pair entered the kitchen, Aris spat out indignantly, "It's not like you don't know what happened! How Demos was captured by robbers in the past and held captive inside the bandits' lair for an entire three years! How can you expect him to just be vivacious?"

"I know and I'm not blaming him. But it's not a good idea to just let him continue on like this! You wouldn't want to see him hiding under the table for the rest of his life, would you?"

Upon hearing these words, Aris felt an unbearable sensation inside. She and her younger brother had been depending on each other for their entire lives. Who knew that one-day her brother would get kidnapped and go missing, not to return for another three years? And

it was a stroke of luck that her brother was able to remember where he lived despite being so young at the time, and was able to return home at all.

Aris didn't find out until later about the bitter life her brother had led during those three years. First he was abducted by child traffickers, and then those child traffickers were intercepted and ransacked midway by bandits, resulting in her brother being held in captivity in a bandits' lair for three whole years until that lair was cleared out by the holy knights of the Church of the God of Light. Her heart ached every time she thought about how her brother had been ordered around like a servant by those bandits.

Yen held his wife's hands, saying, "Aris, listen to me. I have just heard that the Church of the God of Light has recently been seeking out candidates for the next generation of the Twelve Holy Knights. Why don't we let Demos try out?"

Aris froze, and replied hesitantly, "But with Demos like this..."

"Ah, there's no harm in trying! At least it would make him get out of the house. Since there's going to be many kids vying for positions as future knights, we can just treat it as if he were playing with the other children."

This is not a bad idea, Aris thought to herself.



"Demos, would you like to try out for becoming one of the Twelve Holy

Knights?”

“The Twelve Holy Knights?” Demos raised his head and saw his sister smile resplendently. Yet, it seemed that the more resplendent she looks, the more he wanted to stay away from her. He would rather be with the brother-in-law who always scolds him, for his sister looked simply too magnificent... and too blindingly dazzling.

Although his sister used an inquiring tone, Demos had never been permitted to give “no” for an answer during his three-year tenure in the bandits’ lair, so he nodded and responded in affirmation. “Alright.” Hearing his reply, his sister revealed a particularly resplendent smile, a truly blindingly dazzling sight.



“...So bright!”

Grisia squatted to meet Demos face-to-face. Upon hearing this, Grisia asked quizzically, “Bright? Where is it bright?”

Demos was crouching behind a suit of armor at a crevice in the corridor. This was a shadowy area that took him quite a bit of effort to find. There was even a pair of oversized red curtains on either side of the suit of armor. One would be virtually undetectable when hiding behind those curtains. The more he hung out with these dazzling people, the more he felt himself become darker in return. *How did someone like me become one of the Twelve Young Holy Knights?* He could never figure out the answer to this question no matter how hard he thought about it. He had been putting all his effort into hiding

towards the back... yet Teacher Cloud seemed to loathe the children who strived to crowd up in front of him.

"Don't get tangled up with me. Play by yourself over there."

"I'm only going to perform this swordsmanship technique once for you guys, so practice on your own afterwards."

"Confirm that you have finished reading the Cloud Knight's list of rules."

"Hmm, that doesn't look very elegant... Forget it, I suppose this can still be considered 'drifting' of sorts."

Teacher would always turn around and leave after saying such phrases. Yet, Demos was actually quite fond of Teacher Cloud's personality. It was precisely because his teacher had this sort of personality that he was able to always hide here like this outside of class. Nobody had discovered him here for an entire three years... except for Grisia who was currently crouching before him. He was so blindingly dazzling and his smile was even brighter than his sister's. Since the beginning, Demos had been purposely avoiding Grisia.

"Hey! Demos, even though I may be the young Sun Knight, it's not as if my body is giving off light... unless I'm deliberately gathering up holy light." Grisia extended his arms and placed his hands on Cloud's, saying, "Look! Your hand is clearly a lighter shade than mine, and mine is quite light already."

"Don't!" Demos suddenly withdrew his hand. Seeing Grisia's shocked

expression, Demos continued in a low voice, "You will get yourself dyed black from me..."

Grisia furrowed his eyebrows, asking, "No matter how dark you may be, you couldn't be as dark as Lesus, right?"

"Lesus is not dark." Cloud couldn't say exactly why Lesus was not considered dark, and even though his hair, eyes, and clothes were all black, "darkness" wasn't actually dependent on one's outer appearances.

Lesus always walks in front of the others and is both strong and capable, so everyone listens to him... He isn't dark at all!

Grisia pondered over this for a bit and said, "If Lesus looks dark but isn't actually dark, then just because I look bright doesn't mean I would really be shining in actuality, would it?"

Demos was taken aback, not quite understanding exactly what Grisia was trying to say. Grisia reached out his hand to pinch Demos' cheek but Demos only stared back expressionlessly, not comprehending what the intentions were behind the pinching of his cheeks.

After pinching for an entire minute, Grisia finally let go and nodded his head in satisfaction, declaring, "Your pushover score is 100%! Even though everyone says you're hard to associate with, the truth is actually that nobody has gotten to know you yet! Your pushover score is even higher than that of Elmairy's!"

"...You bully Elmairy?"

Grisia immediately denied it, saying, "Of course I don't bully Strawberry!"

...*Strawberry?*□□"I just ask him to help me with some odd tasks, like driving away dogs, letting me borrow some condiments, and editing documents! I definitely haven't been bullying him." Upon saying this, Grisia seemed to be thinking for a bit and then muttered, "But 'Deatheo' is more useful regarding paperwork. Going forward, it looks like it'd be best if I stick with him helping me edit documents."

"What is a 'Deatheo'?"

"It's Ceo, of course!"

"..."

Although Demos didn't say a word in response, Grisia still continued talking regardless, "However, Deatheo's pushover score is only 50%, a failing mark! Yet, once I find him, all I would need to do is to put the documents in front of him, and he wouldn't be able to help but correct them all! It is simply too hilarious! I'll even tell you a secret: despite Lesus' fierce appearance, his pushover score is actually quite high at 80%. He wouldn't reject my requests, even if it's asking him to buy me some blueberry pie."

Even Lesus has... Demos couldn't help but exclaim, "You...you're so dark..."

"No way! I'm actually the future Sun Knight, so of course I'm super bright!"

"Grisia, where are you immersing yourself in light at this moment? Right now, immediately, come out here right this instant, or else as your teacher, I'll come looking for you."

Upon hearing this voice that was graceful yet clearly in a much lower tone than usual, Grisia immediately pulled aside the curtains and stepped inside without another word. Right afterward, he let the curtains fall back.

As if his head were covered in fog, a confused Demos watched Grisia and shortly heard the sound of footsteps walking by... footsteps that stopped unexpectedly, right in front of the curtains.

"Who's there?"

Demos was quite startled, not expecting that within just one day he would get discovered by two different people. He looked at Grisia next to him; it was obvious that he had no intention of answering, so Demos had no choice but to part the curtains slightly, stick out only his head out and say, "It's Demos."

The Sun Knight creased his brow elegantly, asking, "Have you seen Grisia?"

As the perplexed Demos was deliberating how to respond, he felt a

light pinch on his lower back, and had no choice but to reply with a “No.”

Upon hearing this, Neo paid no more attention to him and turned to leave, mumbling faintly, “Where exactly did he run off to? I have several documents that must be turned in by tomorrow...”

As soon as Neo left, Demos wanted to go back to fading into his own little world, but Grisia had already stuck his head out from behind the curtains and said, “Thank you! Oh, by the way, can you do me a small favor?”

How come he felt that something was off as soon as the two words “small favor” was spoken? Demos was completely baffled, but helping out with a small favor was no big deal, so he nodded his head.

“Then help me retrieve the documents from Teacher Neo, and then deliver them to ‘Deatheo’ and tell him that those are the documents that must be turned in by tomorrow.” Grisia paused for a moment and then continued, “Why are you looking at me so doubtfully? I can’t do it myself because I have other concerns that I’m busy with! If Teacher finds me, he would surely assign me some additional tasks to work on.” *So that’s how it is.* Demos nodded his head, begrudgingly stepping out of his own little world, intending to do this small favor. In any case, all that needed to be done was to retrieve some documents, which shouldn’t take much time at all. However, at this moment, the corner of his shirt was suddenly being grabbed by someone. He turned his head back, looking skeptically at Grisia, who was currently showing a dazzling, brilliant smile. He requested while beaming, “Since you have

already agreed to helping with this small favor, then why don't you also help out with another? Relax, it's just delivering some messages."

If it's just delivering some messages, then it shouldn't take too long.
Demos nodded his head.



Ceo accepted the documents right away, and Demos felt a bit glad inside. *All that's left is to deliver a few messages, and I can return to my own little world. At least this is much better than having to correct a pile of documents like Ceo.*

Yet, Ceo who had to correct the pile of documents actually revealed a sympathetic look and asked, "Did Grisias say to you, 'do me a small favor'?"

Demos nodded.

Ceo remarked mildly, "That's what he said to me as well when he asked me to help correct documents." Having said this, Ceo patted Demos on the back and continued, "Welcome to the 'do me a small favor' club."

What's so bad about helping out with a small favor? Ceo's expression made it look like he had been inaugurated into the Risk Your Life to Slaughter a Dragon Club or something. Demos didn't understand at all.



"Grisias told you to come here to borrow condiments?" Elmairys asked

while looking at Demos with intense curiosity. Although they were both part of the Twelve Young Holy Knights, and even in the same “good, warm-hearted” faction, he rarely had any contact with Demos, who was truly someone who was not often seen.

Demos nodded and then responded, “There’s also these cases that you need to investigate. He also said, ‘The targets of the investigation are all motherly types, so be sure to dress more adorably to trigger their motherly instincts more easily.’” Although he didn’t at all comprehend the meaning behind Grisia’s words, he was only responsible for reciting them word for word.

Elmairy looked stunned for a bit and muttered in a low voice, “How am I supposed to make myself look adorable when I’m already sixteen...?”

Yet when he looked at Demos again, Elmairy’s eyes were filled with compassion, and he said in a pitying tone, “Thanks for all your hard work. Too bad there’s not much that can be done, so please just bear with it. If it really becomes too much to handle, I’ll help you out. I have been helping Ceo pretty frequently anyway.”

...?



“Grisia says, ‘There has been a large number of discontent spirits appearing at the furthest execution grounds and you must exterminate them.’”

Upon hearing this, Chikus paused in astonishment. To be honest, he

had detected Demos' presence only after he had started speaking. He looked at Demos from top to bottom to size him up, and Demos misconstrued this to mean that his words weren't heard clearly and repeated himself once again.

"Oh, I get it now." Chikus answered with a nod. Unlike the others, he did not comfort Demos in sympathetic tones. Rather, he said in admiration, "Grisia is truly too incredible, to be able to get even the most difficult guy to find and associate with to do his bidding. Looks like Georgo is the only one left who won't help out Grisia. Oh right, what has he been calling you?"

"Calling me?"

"Grisia probably hasn't been using your real name to refer to you, right?"

Demos replied in puzzlement, "He has just been calling me by my name."

"Oh..." Chikus thought for a moment and responded, "It's probably just that you haven't been acquainted with each other for long enough yet. You'll find out soon enough."

...?



After completing every single task, Demos felt joy from the bottom of his heart as he started walking back to his own little world...

"Didi!" Demos continued walking forward. "Didi!" The voice calling out became louder and louder, but Demos continued on his own path since he didn't have an older brother and thus nobody that would refer to him by "younger brother"... Yet suddenly, he felt himself being grabbed by somebody.

His turned his head to see that it was Grisia, who complained in a resentful voice, "I have been calling for you. Why did you ignore me?" *Calling him?* Demos tilted his head. *I clearly heard Grisia calling out for his younger brother... Unless he has actually been saying Deedee?*¹

Grisia latched onto Demos tightly and spoke in a very anxious voice, "Deedee, you have to do me this small favor!"

Didn't I help out already?

"I still got caught by Teacher! His assignment is for me to go to the forest outside and capture a wolf to give to him. But Ceo is helping edit documents for me, Leaf went to help me investigate those cases, and Blaze went to exterminate spirits at the execution grounds, so it has to be you who must accompany me to fight the wolves!"

Then what task are you responsible for doing yourself? Demos didn't understand at all, but he wasn't used to disobeying orders, so he obediently followed Grisia along.

It's just fighting a single wolf, so it shouldn't take too long anyway.



Retrieving some documents didn't take too long.

Delivering some messages didn't take too long.

Fighting a wolf didn't take too long, either...

Yet Demos suddenly realized that before he knew it, he had not only retrieved some documents, delivered some messages, fought a wolf, scouted for undead creatures, helped buy ingredients for dessert, handled some documents, investigated in secret, inquired about various information, taught a lesson to an unlucky fool who provoked Grisia, added some laxatives into the king's meal without being discovered... It could be said that he had been hearing all day, everyday the calls for...

"Didi! Do me a small favor!"

Perhaps it would have been better to have joined the Risk Your Life to Slaughter a Dragon Club than to help Grisia out with even a single small favor! Demos thought as much to himself as he helped Grisia out with another small favor.



Chikus laughed with his hands on his belly, "Hahaha! Di... Didi? Wahahaha!"

Ceo raised his eyebrows and said, "Freakus, somehow I don't think

you are in a position to laugh at others.”

Chikus’ laughs subsided, and not one to be outdone, he replied, “‘Freak’ is still preferable to Deatheo! Watch out, if he keeps calling you that, you’ll really die!”

Elmairy patted his own chest and said in celebration, “Good thing Strawberry actually sounds quite pleasant... I wonder what Grisia calls Georgo?”

Ceo responded moodily, “Since Georgo doesn’t even help him out, Grisia didn’t even bother to give him a weird nickname as he wouldn’t be using it to call him to do a small favor day in and day out.”

Having said that, all four of them, including the speaker, turned silent.

How shameful! Had I known it would turn out like this, back then I never would have agreed to help Grisia out with “a small favor.”

Notes On the Side Story

¹ **Didi and Deedee:** “Didi” is Chinese for younger brother, pronounced the same as “Deedee” which uses the first character of Demos’ Chinese name. Although we usually try to westernize all names and terms, we thought that leaving “Didi” as Didi would be best, as we did not want Grisia’s pun on “younger brother” to be lost in translation.

Side Story #12: “When Teacher Wasn't Yet Teacher Part One”

Chasel heard the sound of hurried footsteps coming toward him. He looked up slightly as he finished fixing his appearance and decided to dress himself first.

Is there a need to be so excited this early in the morning?

He had just slipped on his shirt when the door was slammed open. Chasel started to wonder whether his projected image was a failure or not. Even though he was the Judgment Knight, this wasn't the first time his door had been kicked open. His comrades did not seem to regard him as they should the imposing Judgment Knight.

However, they had only recently been promoted, and there would be plenty of time in the future for his comrades to get to know him better. *No hurry.*

Fahr¹ rushed into his room anxiously. He said only two words, “It’s Neo!”

Chasel raised his gaze slightly and glanced at Fahr, then looked back down and continued putting on his boots. He asked, “What happened?”

“He’s been heavily injured!”

Chasel made an “oh” sound and proceeded to buckle his belt.

Fahr was flabbergasted. He shouted, “You... How can you still continue

dressing yourself so calmly?”

Chasel unhurriedly said, “If I were the Sun Knight, perhaps I would rush over immediately. But I am the Judgment Knight. What difference would it make even if I rushed there?”

That might have been true, but Fahr was not at all satisfied with Chasel taking his sweet time when his comrade had been heavily injured... When he looked closely, however, he noticed that Chasel had not been delaying at all. In fact, his movements were quick and efficient.

Seeing this, Fahr did not say anything further.

“Lead the way, and explain the situation while we walk,” Chasel took his black robes from the clothes rack, threw it on, and left the room before Fahr.

Neo has been heavily injured? No matter how much he thought about it, he felt that this was a little too unbelievable. *Just who could possibly injure Neo Sun?*

Fahr pointed in one direction and walked forward with hurried steps. Chasel caught up with him by increasing the length of his strides.

“Wen said that the guards at the main entrance were so shocked that they rushed here like crazy, and he just happened to be nearby...”

“Wen actually woke up before I did?” Chasel felt that something didn’t

quite make sense. Although Wen wasn't the main problem at the moment, as the Judgment Knight, he could not stop himself from addressing his doubts.

Chasel might not be one of the first to wake among the Twelve Holy Knights, but Wen was definitely one of the last to get up.

Feeling awkward, Fahr said, "He didn't sleep at all. He spent all night drinking at the tavern and only returned this morning."

Chasel fell silent. Although he felt that it was really imprudent for the Leaf Knight to be drinking in a tavern until the next morning, he was the Judgment Knight, not the Sun Knight, and was therefore not in charge of the Leaf Knight. As for counting on Neo to handle it... Neo was a drunkard himself!

Fahr noticed Chasel's displeased expression and quickly changed the topic by saying, "Wen said that right after the guards had led him from the main entrance, he saw Neo collapsed on a staircase. His blood flowed down more than ten steps, and he wasn't moving at all. Wen was so shocked that he even sobered up and immediately punched Neo several times. Luckily, Neo made some sounds and wasn't dead yet."

"..."

Fahr's eyes widened. *Did Chasel just... smile?*

"What?" Chasel's gaze swept toward him, and the cold expression in

his eyes was undoubtedly that of the Judgment Knight.

"Nothing," Fahr decided to bury the sight that he had just seen deep in his heart and let it rot there. He changed the topic again, saying, "It seems that Neo is truly seriously injured."

"But he could still make sounds, right?"

Feeling extremely worried, Fahr said, "He was punched several times, yet he didn't get up to pummel Wen. This scared Wen to death, so he carried Neo to the Church of Light, all the while shouting 'Sun is dying!' as he ran."

When he heard this, Chasel furrowed his brow. However, he had no intention of asking any more questions as they had already reached their destination. Saying any more was meaningless when he could easily find out the answers by entering the room.

The moment he walked into the room, he saw Wen leaning against a wall with an elaborate, portable wine flask in hand.

Chasel narrowed his eyes slightly as he looked at the wine flask. Smiling awkwardly, Wen explained, "It contains coffee brewed by that person at home. She couldn't find a bottle, so she poured away all the wine that had been in this flask. Nowadays, my wine flask contains either coffee or a remedy for inebriation."

"You have a good wife," Chasel nodded and said, "But mind your image."

Wen nodded in response and put away his wine flask. He pointed at the one and only bed in the room and said, "It's been awhile since they started treating Neo. I don't know what his current condition is."

Chasel looked in the direction that Wen was pointing. Several clerics were gathered around the bed, and gentle holy light filled the room. He started walking over, but suddenly stopped before reaching the bedside.

Fahr had been walking right behind Chasel and nearly bumped into him when he suddenly stopped. He was just about to ask Chasel what had happened when he saw Chasel looking down at the floor. He followed Chasel's gaze and noticed that there were some red clothes...

No! That's the Sun Knight's uniform!

Chasel picked up the clothes. A knight's long overcoat, a shorter inner coat, and a shirt were, without exception, dyed completely red. The piercing scent of blood gave away the identity of the red dye.

"The clerics said that they wanted to see the extent of Neo's injuries, so I tore off his clothes," explained Wen from behind Chasel.

Chasel tossed the clothes aside and moved to the bedside. The clerics naturally cleared a space for him.

Neo's eyes were tightly closed as he lay quietly on the bed. His face was as pale as a sheet, and there was a large sword wound across his

chest. Fortunately, under the efforts of the clerics, the wound had begun to close and was in the process of scabbing over.

Chasel had never seen Neo so weak before. He suddenly understood why Wen dared to impulsively hurl a few punches at Neo. He was probably hoping that Neo would immediately get up and return the favor more than ten times over like nothing had happened.

"Neo..." Fahr's eyes widened as he looked at the sickly person on the bed, not believing that this person was Neo.

At this point in time, everyone else had reached the room one by one. There were too many people, so they could not all squeeze in by the bedside. However, seeing through the cracks between people was not a problem. What they saw shocked them so badly that everyone started talking at the same time.

"Who was actually capable of heavily injuring Neo?" Lanbi muttered, "Don't tell me the Demon King has awakened? Who else could do this?" "It must be the Demon King!" Face deathly pale, Hayseth asked, "Is our generation so unlucky that we have to face the coming of the Demon King?"

"I haven't heard anything about the coming of the Demon King..."

Furious, the clerics shouted, "Be quiet! The patient needs to rest!"

Chasel turned and briefly glanced at everyone present. He ordered in a low voice, "All of you, get out."

The knights under him obeyed immediately, but the side that followed the Sun Knight was not so obedient. One by one, they started to protest.

Chasel narrowed his eyes dangerously. He felt that he had indeed failed in building his image. Previously, he had thought that he did not need to be very authoritative since Neo, a person so strong that it left a permanent impression in people's hearts, was a member of his generation of knights. But now... he realized that he was wrong!

Wen tried to help by saying, "I will stay here. You guys should leave first. Neo is quite heavily injured, so don't be noisy here—"

"Just who is heavily injured?!" A familiar voice rang out. Everyone's emotions changed from sadness to happiness as they all shouted, "Neo!"

The person on the bed sat up, setting off a round of protest from the clerics. However, their protesting was useless. They were even waved off impatiently by Neo, who said, "All of you get lost! That includes you, Wen! You actually dared to hit me just now!"

"Eh? How could you consider that hitting? I just 'gently touched' you several times to confirm that you were still alive!" Wen turned around to hide his nervousness. He said to everyone, "Okay, since Neo has given the order, let's get out of here."

When everyone else had left, the person on the bed lay down again.

Smiling, he said, "Hi, Chasel."

Chasel silently counted the number of wounds on Neo's body. There was one on his chest, one on his left thigh, three on his arms, and two on his calves. *I wonder whether there are any more wounds on his back?*

"How did you get hurt?"

Neo grinned and said unconcernedly, "I got into a fight!"

"With who?" Seeing that Neo didn't really want to reply, Chasel immediately added, "If you killed anyone, you'd better tell me about it now. If not, when someone accuses you of murder and reports it to me, it will be very difficult for me to deal with."

"It will not become a murder case," Neo shrugged and said, "It was a gang of bandits. I annihilated all of them. That was the first time I've gotten sick of chopping people up. I'm extremely tired now, so I'm going to sleep."

"What made you suddenly interested in a bandit gang?" Chasel was very confused. *Leaf Bud City is the capital and thus would not permit the existence of any bandit gangs nearby, if only for the sake of its image. I'm afraid that one would have to cross several mountains in order to find the nearest bandit gang. Why would Neo suddenly go so far away to annihilate a bandit gang for no reason?*

"I'm sleepy," Neo rolled over, his back facing Chasel. He obviously had

no intention of explaining his actions.

There was another wound on Neo's back, adding up to a total of eight wounds. Chasel scowled and left the room. As expected, no one had left yet. They were all waiting just outside the room.

He looked around at everyone and said, "Does anyone know where our Sun Knight went after going missing for so many days? Where is his vice-captain? Tell him to come here and give me a report!"

Wen immediately replied, saying, "Sun didn't choose a vice-captain." Chasel was stunned for a moment. He asked, "Why hasn't he chosen one yet? Is it because he doesn't get along with the members of his platoon?"

"Err, no," Fahr said awkwardly, "Sun said that since he can order all twenty of them about, it doesn't matter whether he picks a vice-captain or not."

Chasel furrowed his brows. It had not been long since they had been promoted, so everyone had been busy with the handover of duties. Thus, no one had "cared" about their Sun Knight for quite some time. However, it had never even occurred to Chasel that Neo hadn't even chosen a vice-captain!

"Cha... Judgment, who injured Neo?"

As they had only recently succeeded the previous generation, they were still unused to the new terms of address. However, when they

saw Chasel's face, everyone sincerely felt that they should seriously make an effort to watch their speech.

Chasel did not answer directly. He just said, "There are eight blade wounds on Neo's body."

Everyone's face grew dark. Wen laughed coldly and asked, "Who cut him?"

"He said that it was a gang of bandits."

Fahr roared angrily, "A gang of bandits actually dared to hurt the Sun Knight of the Church of the God of Light? Let's prepare the troops and exterminate them all! I will go and mobilize the platoons right away—"

"Neo said that he had already killed all of them."

Everyone became depressed. They had been thinking of taking revenge when they realized that the enemy had already been dismembered. Having a Sun Knight that was just too strong made it so that they could not even find an opponent to exact vengeance upon. Chasel commanded plainly, "Summon the Sun Knight Platoon here."

Confused, Wen asked, "Why are you summoning the Sun Knight Platoon? Are you going to start investigating? Neo could have just gotten lost and happened to meet a gang of bandits. You should already know that he has no sense of direction at all—"

"That's the thing! Neo has no sense of direction at all!" Chasel cut him

off and yelled angrily, "That's why he doesn't leave the city without a reason. Something must have happened inside the city that made him so angry that he was willing to leave the city. Also, someone else must have been leading the way for him! Otherwise, he wouldn't have gone missing for a few 'days.' He would have disappeared for at least a few 'weeks'!"

This explanation made sense. Everyone understood just how terrible Neo's sense of direction was. However, what Chasel had said wasn't important at the moment. Instead, what was most important was that... Chasel had actually shouted at someone!

Chasel was the Judgment Knight and assuredly possessed the imposing attitude that befit a Judgment Knight; he never smiled. However, his generation had a shockingly strong and violent Sun Knight named Neo. Compared to Neo, Chasel could be considered a cultured and refined man.

Moreover, Chasel had always been calm and self-disciplined. He had never snapped before and rarely started fights. Only uninformed commoners would fear the Judgment Knight.

But now, this cultured and refined man had actually shouted at someone?

Just as everyone thought that Chasel was finally about to snap, his face suddenly calmed.

"I will not let the Sun Knight have another opportunity to mysteriously

go and annihilate a gang of bandits, then come back after receiving eight slashes. Wen, bring the Sun Knight Platoon here immediately. You have five minutes!”

Wen immediately turned around and started his search.

“Fahr, you said that you wanted to mobilize the troops, so go and do it now. If the Pope has any opinions on this, ask him to come find me.”

Chasel looked at everyone with a calm expression and said, “No bandit gangs are allowed to exist in places where Neo can reach. Is that understood?”

...No, he isn't calm at all!

Notes On the Side Story

¹ Yu Wo included a list of names of the 37th generation at the beginning of this short story. Here was her message:

I hope everyone had a great New Years. Happy New Year, and be happy everyday! ^0^~~~~

This was first place in the holiday stories: When Teacher Wasn't Yet Teacher.

For some reason, as I wrote it became a two-parter. OTZ...

I originally planned for this to end in one part, but oh well. I hope everyone will be happy everyday in the year to come. ^0^~~

Summary of previous events! Here are the names of the 37th generation that have made an appearance:

1. Neo Sun
2. Lanbi Storm
3. Fahr Blaze
4. Chasel Judgment
5. Eller Ice
6. Hayseth Moon

(And now we can also add Wen Leaf to the list)

Side Story #13: “When Teacher Wasn't Yet Teacher Part Two”

As Chasel looked at the Sun Knight Platoon that was assembled before him, his face grew increasingly dark. Each holy knight capable of joining the platoons of the Twelve Holy Knights went through very careful selection, even more so for the Sun Knight Platoon. If a holy knight was not in possession of excellent strength or at least some quality others didn't have, he could not become part of the platoon of the leader of the Holy Temple.

So... Who were these lazy men standing before him?

Chasel's gaze swept across the platoon members. He recognized a few of them. His teacher wasn't an autocratic person; before deciding on the members of Chasel's platoon, he had once sent a list over for Chasel to peruse, though he had also said that he might not be able to acquire the men.

He had just wanted Chasel to select a few men he wanted the most, and then he would do his best to obtain those men.

Chasel spotted a man that he had asked his teacher to obtain at all costs. Originally, he had hoped to recruit the man and had planned on letting him become his vice-captain after a trial period. However, this man was simply too popular and had been selected by the previous Sun Knight one step faster.

The most popular candidate back then is actually in this condition at the moment. Chasel felt an indescribable fury. He narrowed his eyes.

He recalled that this man's name was...

"Kleenly."

The holy knight who was standing in the center was surprised. He stepped forward and replied, "Present!"

At least his response is rather quick. Although Chasel still did not feel satisfied, at least the man could be said to be the most spirited and disciplined out of these lazy holy knights.

He narrowed his eyes forebodingly and asked, "Have you heard about what happened to Knight-Captain Sun?"

Kleenly widened his eyes. Finally, he asked somewhat nervously, "What has happened to Sun Knight?"

Once the others heard the conversation, they looked over more attentively and fixed their postures, no longer as negligent as they had been before. However, this made Chasel feel even more displeased.

Sun Knight? The way these platoon members address their captain is actually the same as the common folk's?

"Knight-Captain Sun returned to the Holy Temple with heavy injuries." The men before him were unable to react right away, thinking about what the two words "heavy injuries" meant. *Has someone spoken words that have slandered the Sun Knight?*

No matter how they twisted, bent, and took countless turns with their thinking, they could not connect Sun Knight “Neo” with the words “heavy injuries.”

“After getting healed by the clerics, Knight-Captain Sun is no longer in any danger. Do any of you know Neo’s itinerary for the day?” This kind of thing should ideally be directly reported by the vice-captain, but that damned Neo hadn’t even chosen a vice-captain. Chasel could only ask all of them.

It’s “heavy injuries”! Everyone was so shocked that their minds turned blank. *Sun Knight actually got heavily injured? Someone was actually able to injure him?*

Impatient, Chasel bellowed, “Answer me! Where did Neo go today?”

They were even more shocked. The unbeatable Sun Knight got heavily injured, and the gentle Judgment Knight was in a rage. *Oh, God of Light! What is going on today?*

Chasel’s gaze swept over them like a sharp knife. By this time, they had long since tossed aside their lazy attitudes, standing perfectly straight. However, no matter how much each of them wished to immediately answer Judgment Knight’s question, no one opened his mouth to answer.

Chasel could only look toward Kleenly. As far as Chasel could tell, since the other had been the most popular candidate back then, there

was an eighty to ninety percent chance that he was the most capable assistant in the Sun Knight Platoon. He might possibly know more. Kleenly did not know how he had become the target of Judgment Knight's attention and was even being called by name. Since he had been singled out, he could only summon up his courage and answer.

"Sun Knight only ordered us to take care of paperwork. He has never given us any orders for anything else." He hesitated and said, "Sun Knight told us, 'Don't bother me with any small matters,' so we... We only go to see Sun Knight for instructions when there are documents that are too important. We do not know his recent business."

Once he finished speaking, he suddenly saw Judgment Knight's face darken. The originally gentle feeling he gave off became somewhat... Somewhat like the presence of the Judgment Knight of legends.

"Our duties these past years have been correcting documents. After finishing that, we do not have much else to do, and Sun Knight has not given us any other orders so..."

The more Kleenly spoke, the more Judgment Knight's expression darkened, making everyone's hearts tremble in fear...

"You, come with me."

First, Chasel pointed Kleenly out. After he gave the command, he then gestured at a random person and said, "You, go and find my vice-captain. Tell him to come to the Sanctuary of Light to find me. As for everyone else..."

He took a deep breath and yelled, "As part of the Sun Knight Platoon, you've actually dared to slack off so much with discipline! Just because Sun Knight has not been managing you, does that mean you can let yourselves go like this? Do you still dare call yourselves holy knights, furthermore, holy knights of the Sun Knight Platoon?"

Their faces colored with shame. Although they had slacked off for many years, it was not that they wanted to slack off. It was just that Sun Knight never gave them any work. However, when all was said and done, they had all used to be the cream of the crop of the Holy Temple; faced with Chasel's criticism, they still felt guilty.

Chasel eyed each one of them and roared, "All of you go to the Judge's Complex..."

They sucked in their breaths.

"...and find my platoon. Pair off with them to practice swordsmanship. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir!" came the unified shout.

Chasel gave them his secret approval. *Now they finally look dignified like a Sun Knight Platoon.* He turned to leave, leading Kleenly.

Although Judgment Knight had already left, no one dared to move a muscle. They stood rooted to the spot for several minutes before someone finally spoke.

"I almost thought we were going to be confined..."

"Pah! Confinement is nothing! I thought we were going to be strapped onto the rack and tortured!"

One of them said as consolation, "We were mistaken. Judgment Knight just wants us to practice our swordsmanship."

Someone couldn't help but complain, "So what if he wants us to practice our swordsmanship? There was no need to put on such a scary face!"

"Oh please, since when has the Judgment Knight possessed a pleasant face?"

"That is true. We really misunderstood him. This generation's Judgment Knight is not all that scary. Everyone says it's the Sun Knight who is the strongest..."



Chasel led Kleenly to the Sanctuary of Light. When they entered the room where Neo was resting, Chasel discovered that Neo was not actually resting. Rather, he was currently cleaning the Divine Sun Sword. This made Chasel wrinkle his brows. He did not know if Neo was merely cleaning his sword out of boredom, or if he planned to use it later, so needed to polish it at the moment.

Chasel narrowed his eyes, deciding that he must get to the bottom of

this matter first.

Neo lifted his head, brows creasing when he noticed Kleenly.

"Who is he...? Oh, one of my guys."

So you can't even recognize one of your own platoon members! Chasel took several deep breaths before he finally spoke, "Neo, you have been injured. You must rest well for now, but the Sun Knight Platoon cannot go without a leader. Why not take the opportunity to choose a vice-captain? I have brought someone over. How is he?"

Once he heard Judgment Knight's words, Kleenly was so shocked that he was at a loss. He had not expected the sudden mention of vice-captaincy. Even though he had originally wanted to try out for the position, once he had met Sun Knight and discovered that he had no intention of choosing a vice-captain, Kleenly had forgotten all about it as time passed.

"Vice-captain? What does it matter if I choose one or not?" Neo didn't really care as he said, "Whatever."

"Then choose him." Without batting an eye, Chasel said, "He is called Kleenly. From today onwards, he will be your vice-captain."

Neo nodded his head, though it didn't really matter.

He had become the vice-captain with a "whatever." Kleenly really didn't know how he should react. He could only stand dumbly by the

bedside and look at the two leaders of the Holy Temple.

Chasel pulled a chair over and sat down. He picked up an apple from the fruit basket and began to peel it. He methodically said, "Your swordsmanship is truly excellent, yet the Sun Knight Platoon under your command cannot even win against my Judgment Knight Platoon. This has greatly astonished me."

Neo's eyes bulged out and he angrily said, "My platoon lost to yours? Really?"

"Really." The corner of Chasel's mouth lifted up.

Eyes wide, Kleenly turned his head and stared at Chasel, but he didn't even have time to point out that the other was lying when his captain was already glaring at him with towering rage and yelling, "You guys actually dared to lose to the Judgment Knight Platoon?"

"No—"

Before he could even finish speaking, Judgment Knight cut him off. Chasel lifted his eyebrows and asked, "Have you guys ever won against my Judgment Knight Platoon?"

"N-No..." *We haven't even fought before!*

Neo could not believe it as he yelled, "You've never won even once?" Before him was Sun Knight whose rage reached the skies, yet behind Sun Knight was Judgment Knight whose cool eyes were glaring at him.

At this time, Kleenly felt that he would really rather go see the God of Light than be oppressed by the Sun Knight and Judgment Knight that were under His command.

"...We have never won a single time." He wasn't lying. He had just omitted the fact that they had never even fought before.

Neo was so angry he could barely speak. "Great, *great*..."

"They are all holy knights and they were merely sparring. Losing is no big deal." Chasel handed over the apple he had finished peeling. "Once you have recovered, teach them swordplay. After all, you are the Sun Knight famous for his superb swordsmanship. It would not look good if your platoon was too weak."

"My platoon, too weak..." Neo ground his teeth. "Rest assured I will use the shortest amount of time to make them into the strongest! Tell your platoon to wait for my men to seek them out for 'friendly sparring'!"

Chasel nodded and answered, "Alright, I'll let them know. But no matter what you plan on doing later, you should rest for now! Oh, by the way, can you let me borrow your platoon for a while? Recently, there have been a few cases in the city. My vice-captain has his hands full and needs more men to provide assistance, so how about having your platoon follow my orders?"

Neo glared at Kleenly and angrily said, "Take them! Use them as much as you want! Even better, make them so busy that they won't even

have time to eat!”

A corner of Chasel’s mouth lifted and he said, “No problem.” He turned to Kleenly and said, “From now on, you will listen to my orders. Sun Knight has no objection to that. Do you hear me? Do you understand?” Kleenly heard and he understood. He lowered his head. He had completely understood.

“Yes, sir!”

Neo was startled and felt that something was a little off. “Chasel, you—”

“Oh right, about the matter from earlier. Why did you leave town to wipe out a bandit brigade? We are still waiting for your explanation.”

“...I’m tired. I want to sleep. Leave!”

Chasel sighed and stood up. “Alright, since you don’t want to tell me, I won’t ask you anymore.”

I’ll just investigate it myself!



“Knight-Captain Judgment, Noley is here for your orders.”

When he left the room, Chasel immediately spotted his own vice-captain, Noley, who was already waiting outside the door and whose posture was straight. Before his superior, his attitude was neither

servile nor overbearing.

Although Noley was not the person Chasel had wanted the most back then, the facts proved that nurturing guidance could make up for nature's deficiencies. In contrast, acquired idleness could also destroy innate superiority.

When he turned his head to look at the Kleenly of the present and then looked at Noley, Chasel felt that his vice-captain won in every single aspect! However, this did not make him happy. It had only taken a few years for Neo to turn elites from the platoon members of the current generation of Twelve Holy Knights into garbage.

Chasel very much wanted to accuse his Sun Knight of the crime of recklessly wasting natural talent.

"Sun Knight has ordered that the Sun Knight Platoon must listen to me from now on. You will lead them and thoroughly investigate all information in town related to bandit brigades. If any information bears traces of Sun Knight's meddling, you must investigate to the bottom of the matter!"

"Yes, sir!" Noley answered. Since Judgment Knight had not yet told him to leave, he silently stood by the side.

Chasel turned toward Kleenly and said, "You heard what Sun Knight has personally commanded. From now on, you will listen to my orders."

"Yes, sir," Kleenly answered helplessly.

"Once Neo's injuries recover, you must follow him closely. If he tries to shake you off on purpose, you must at least know where he is going, and then immediately report it to me."

When he heard this, Kleenly hesitated for some time before he finally said, "I am the vice-captain of the Sun Knight. I am not your vice-captain! Even though Sun Knight has ordered that I must follow your commands, I still cannot disobey the Sun Knight!"

Not bad, at least he still has some backbone. Chasel said brusquely,

"The Judgment Knight is supposed to assist the Sun Knight. Nothing to refute here, right?"

"...Right."

"That's why you will report to me about the Sun Knight's situation so that I may 'assist in the best way possible.' What is wrong about this?" Kleenly was a little disoriented. "I, I..."

"Noley," Chasel said coolly, "This is Kleenly. He has just become the vice-captain of the Sun Knight Platoon. Teach him how to be a competent vice-captain."

Noley smiled and said, "No problem, Captain Judgment. Give me half a month, and I will make him learn everything."

...Everything? Kleenly felt a chill come over him. Just who was it who claimed that the scariest and most audacious of this generation is the Sun Knight...?

Side Story #14: “When Teacher Wasn't Yet Teacher Part Three”

“Reporting to Knight-Captain Judgment, I have only managed to find out that Sun Knight previously came to this area before he went missing. I have not managed to discover anything else.”

Kleenly summoned his courage to give his report, feeling that his days before getting dragged to the torture rack were numbered.

Chasel’s brows creased as he looked at the small alley in front of him. They were no longer on the main streets of Leaf Bud City and were already a fair distance from the Church of the God of Light. However, he did not find it odd that Neo would come here; their Sun Knight has always been a large idiot with directions. It would not be strange no matter where he ended up in Leaf Bud City.

Although Neo always claimed that he was taking a walk, everyone knew the truth. If you wanted Neo not to be late or to actually make it to a gathering or a meeting, it was best to give him a guide.

After Chasel muttered to himself, he told Kleenly, “We’ll enter the alley. Then, we’ll have you ask the people in the vicinity if anyone has seen a blond-haired, blue-eyed person with fair skin come here. Don’t mention that it’s the Sun Knight. Neo might not have worn his Sun Knight uniform.”

Neo was such an eye-catching person. He should have given people a lasting impression.

Chasel stood close by and watched Kleenly ask each resident. Truthfully, if possible, he would have wanted to make the inquiries himself. That way, he would be able to search for hidden meanings within their words. However, he wore all black, plus was serious and imposing. The average person would become cautious the moment he or she saw him. He was truly not suited for asking questions – unless the location was the Judge’s Complex.

Kleenly continued asking more residents. They all recalled Neo, but none of them had spoken with him. Finally, they managed to ask someone with relevant information.

“That person seemed to have spoken with Aris. She’s the daughter of the Hills family. Her home is on the corner of that street over there. What a poor child. First, she lost her parents, and now...”

Once he learned of this piece of information, Kleenly turned his head to look at Chasel. The latter indicated for him to go to the corner of the street and knock on her door.

Right after knocking, a girl opened the door and shyly stood behind it. She looked to be around fifteen years of age.

She’s still so young. Don’t tell me she’s one of the numerous rumored lovers of my captain? Kleenly’s imagination ran wild.

“Hello.” Seeing that the girl looked cautious and afraid, Kleenly tried his best to be gentle. “May I ask if you are Aris?”

The girl nodded.

"I am a holy knight from the Church of the God of Light and am currently investigating a matter. Have you spoken with a blond-haired, blue-eyed man recently?"

Aris hesitated for a moment but still answered, "I have."

"What did the two of you talk about?"

The girl did not answer further. She furrowed her brows and looked as if she wanted to close the door.

Kleenly immediately said, "That person is my captain. Recently, he unexpectedly returned with severe injuries but refused to explain anything. We just want to know what happened to prevent him from suffering such heavy injuries again!"

After saying this, Kleenly stilled, realizing what he had just said and discovering that he actually wasn't as uncaring as he had thought about the "leisurely lifestyle" that he had led in recent years. He and the others always talked about how their daily life was truly wonderfully relaxing in comparison to that of the other platoons.

It was true that it had been super relaxing, but it had also been super boring... Kleenly was a little despondent.

"Captain is not willing to tell us anything. He might as well not have

any platoon members, right? Ah, that's not exactly right either. At least, we are still necessary for 'correcting documents,'" he spoke somewhat mockingly.

Hearing this, Aris finally stopped being wary. She even tried to console him, saying, "Don't feel bad. That person looks like the type who doesn't know how to consult other people."

Kleenly looked at her gratefully.

"At the time, I had been kneeling in front of my house, crying. Big brother passed by and asked me why I was crying. I told him that my younger brother had disappeared."

"How did he disappear?" Kleenly was somewhat surprised. He didn't think that his captain would actually care about a crying girl by the roadside, especially when she was only fifteen, which obviously fell short of Captain's "range of protection."

Aris's mouth trembled and tears fell as she said, "He was playing outside when a bad guy snatched him. I saw it happen through the window and gave chase, but I couldn't keep up at all. He disappeared just like that, my only brother!"

Seeing her cheeks streaming with tears, Kleenly was at a loss about what to do.

"What was the malefactor's appearance and attire?"

When Aris raised her head, she saw pitch black before her eyes. She jumped in shock, took a step back, and immediately slammed the door closed with a bang.

"..."

Chasel coldly said, "Why aren't you knocking yet?"

Kleenly hurriedly knocked and explained, "This is our Knight-Captain Judgment—"

Behind the door came a small scream. After a long while, the door finally creaked open, only revealing half of the person's frightened face behind the door.

Aris whispered, "He wore clothes that were not very well-fitting. A knife hung by his waist."

"Did he have anything tied to his calves?" Chasel inquired in detail. Aris blinked and threw open the door. She cried out in surprise, "You're asking the same thing as that big brother! There was! He had a lot of straps tied around his legs!"

"I see. He belongs to the bandits from the mountains," Chasel said mildly. "Their clothes do not fit because most of them are stolen. They have to tie their pant legs while traversing the mountains to prevent mosquitoes and other insects and even leeches from getting into them."

The truth was out. Neo had mysteriously gone off to exterminate a bandit gang because of hearing Aris's story.

"Will you be able to save my brother?" Aris looked hopefully at the two people in front of her. She asked, "Big brother told me not to worry. My brother will definitely return. Is this true?"

Kleenly didn't know how to answer. Sun Knight had indeed returned, but Aris's brother had evidently not returned. *Does this mean...*

"The big brother that you speak of is the Sun Knight of the Church of the God of Light," Chasel spoke in a deep voice. "If the Sun Knight says that your brother will return, then he will return! Do not tell me that you actually dare to doubt the Sun Knight's words?"

Although Aris was a little afraid of Judgment Knight's cold expression, what filled her heart at the moment was hope and not fear. With a tearful smile, she said, "I don't dare to."



After leaving the alley, Kleenly worriedly asked in a quiet voice, "Knight-Captain Judgment, is it alright for you to say something like this? We don't know where that child might have been sold off to—"

"Neo won't let this rest," Chasel cut him off. "He has never known the meaning of letting something rest. Since he has told the girl something like that, he will give chase to the bitter end, all the way until her brother returns home!"

Is that so? Captain has such a personality? Kleenly lowered his head, somewhat despondently, saying, "I truly do not know my captain well enough."

Chasel once again felt the urge of giving Neo a thorough scolding. "If that is the case, then you should all take this chance to show the Sun Knight that the Sun Knight Platoon is useful! None of you were assigned to him to correct documents. You are all capable of handling more important matters!"

Kleenly jerked his head up. *We can handle more important matters... That's right, in the beginning, when I had first been chosen to assist the Sun Knight, the leader of the Holy Temple, I had been prepared to face all sorts of hardships and difficulties, no matter how challenging. Yet, when did I become so content with my leisurely life?*

This isn't what I wanted!

"Yes, we will prove it to Captain!"

Seeing his determined expression, Chasel nodded his head in satisfaction. *This is the Kleenly that I had originally wanted.*



Knock, knock.

After the knocks, a voice from inside the room asked, "Who is it?"

"I am Kleenly."

"...Who?"

Kleenly silently quenched the sadness he felt and clarified, "Your new vice-captain."

"Oh. Come in."

When he entered the room, he saw that Neo was lying in bed. Neo took measure of Kleenly and asked curiously, "Why did Chasel pick you as my vice-captain?"

Kleenly answered honestly, "Reporting to Knight-Captain Sun, I do not know why."

"So you don't know... Oh well. With Chasel's personality, it most likely is because you have the best rating in the Holy Temple."

Kleenly was taken aback. It was true that his rating was fairly good.
So this was factored in?

No—It didn't matter why Judgment Knight had chosen him.

"Even though you're my vice-captain, you can just do what you did before. Just take these documents—"

Documents again! Kleenly gritted his teeth and prepared himself to cut off his captain in mid-speech.

"Captain, I have drafted a plan."

Neo paused and asked in confusion, "What plan? Who decided you should make a plan?"

"I did," Kleenly said firmly.

Neo opened his mouth. He looked at his own platoon member whose expression was nothing like what he used to show in the past. Neo was actually at a loss for words.

"Speak."

Hearing this, Kleenly relaxed by a large margin. He walked to the side of the bed and unfolded a map as he spoke. "Captain, I have researched all of the bandit gangs within the kingdom. I have discovered that there are nearly twenty large bandit gangs in our kingdom. These are their possible hiding locations. I believe that this is an utterly preposterous disgrace for the Kingdom of Forgotten Sound's public security. It is also profoundly dangerous for the citizens, so I suggest working together with local churches to lead troops to annihilate them!"

"Bandit gangs..." Neo muttered, "I understand now. It's Chasel, right? You went with him to investigate why I annihilated a bandit gang?"

Kleenly stilled. His expression already told Neo the answer.

Neo furrowed his brows, but then he laughed and said, "I knew that

Chasel and the others wouldn't let it go so easily. If any of them came back hurt, I would also..."

After speaking thus far, Neo raised his head and looked at Kleenly as he said, "Tell me what needs to be done."

That Neo was willing to listen caused indescribable emotion to surge from within Kleenly. He immediately started explaining, "There are nearly twenty or so bandit gangs. If we take them on one by one, the other bandit gangs will undoubtedly become cautious and will hide even further and become harder to find. That's why we should team up with local churches and split up our assault to attack ten places at once. Within a short time span, we will proceed with the second wave of attacks so that they will not have any time to relocate."

Neo nodded. "Doesn't sound bad. I'm not good at these kinds of things... Okay! You will take care of the arrangements. Just remember to make me the leader of the troops. Basically, you can just treat me like a chess piece you can use to charge and break through enemy lines!"

"I wouldn't dare to treat you like a chess piece, sir!" Kleenly shouted in surprise, "Knight-Captain Sun, I don't have that intention!"

"What intention?" Neo said impatiently, "Cut the crap! Do you want to annihilate the bandit gangs or not?"

"O-Of course I do!" Kleenly hurriedly said.

"Then go make your plans, and make sure I am the leader of the troops. You just have to tell me what I need to do when the time comes."

Isn't this backwards? Usually, shouldn't it be up to the Sun Knight to make plans for the platoon members to follow? Kleenly felt like his head was a little muddled.

"Oh, right." Neo suddenly turned and got off his bed. He grinded his teeth and said, "Chasel mentioned last time that you guys lost to the Judgment Knight Platoon? Come. We're going to practice!"

Seeing this, Kleenly hurriedly said, "Captain, you are still recuperating! We will diligently practice our swordsmanship. Please—"

Neo growled, "What recuperating! I've already recovered, and I've been reclining so long that I'm itching all over!"

"But Judgment Knight said—"

Neo approached all of a sudden and demanded, "What, are you my vice-captain or are you Chasel's?"

"Of course I'm yours!" Neo's severe expression scared Kleenly so much that he answered right away, but since Neo had moved so close, he also noticed that his complexion was much paler than usual. It really couldn't be said that he had "recovered."

Once he realized this, Kleenly immediately calmed down. Although Sun

Knight's expression was severe, Kleenly was more worried about his "pale complexion." He nodded and said, "Captain, please wait here for a moment. I will go and gather the platoon members and tell them to get ready at the training grounds. Then, I will come back for you so that you can instruct them."

"Okay." Neo nodded his head in satisfaction, suddenly feeling that having a vice-captain was not a bad thing.

Once he left the room, Kleenly's footsteps were swift and hurried. He had to gather the platoon and also go... to the Judge's Complex.

Knight-Captain Sun, I do follow you, but you ordered me to listen to the Judgment Knight, so I will listen to the Judgment Knight.

Side Story #15: “Pride”

Vival always raises his chin with pride.

However, this pride was nearly nonexistent before Lesus.

Even if the future Judgment Knight never lifts his chin, the expression on his face always remains a deep frown, and no one can have more pride than him.

Never go against Lesus. That is something only Grisia can accomplish.



“What are you so haughty about, hmph!”

Vival had his chin raised, barely glancing through the corner of his eye at the person who had approached him. Although the other person had given him a friendly smile, Vival had completely ignored the other’s action and walked passed him. Unsurprisingly, muttered swearing came from behind.

I’m sorry. Vival silently spoke these words to himself.

“Not bad!”

A man walked out from behind a tree. Although he had spoken words of praise, and he was even clapping with his hands, both his slightly raised chin and his purposely impeccable clothes made people feel like the praise was actually closer to words of mockery.

Vival let his chin drop. A smile appeared, his entire demeanor changing. “Teacher, thank you for your praise—”

Before he even finished speaking, his teacher rolled his eyes at him.

Vival quickly raised his chin and changed his words, saying, "This is nothing for me!"

Hayseth Moon coldly snorted. "You sure know how to talk big!"

Despite his words, he extended a hand to rub his student's head. At the same time, he felt somewhat saddened that his student had already grown this tall in the blink of an eye. Also, his student had his head raised, so it was getting more and more difficult to rub his head.

In addition, he didn't know when the child would grow up to the point that he would no longer wish for his teacher to rub his head! Thinking of this, Hayseth quickly rubbed some more. Vival's hair was soft and fine, very comfortable to the touch.

No matter how much the Moon Knight was worried about the future, at least right now Vival was still very willing to let his teacher rub his head. Still, Vival sometimes worried that he was acting like a spoiled child when he was already eighteen. It really wouldn't do, especially since none of the others seemed as much of an attention seeker as he was.

Hayseth coughed and retracted his hand, returning to his prideful attitude with a straight back and a raised chin. He coldly said, "Vival, what is the first requirement of maintaining a prideful demeanor?"

"A neat and tidy appearance!" Vival immediately began combing his hair that had become messy from the rubbing. His hair only came down to his shoulders, so it was not very difficult to manage. At least, it was much easier to manage than Grisia's long hair...

Once he thought of Grisia, Vival spoke distressfully, "Teacher, about

my appearance, I do not think I can win against Grisia. It is very difficult to maintain a prideful demeanor in front of him."

When he heard Vival's words, Hayseth was struck speechless. That guy Neo was not the Moon Knight, so Hayseth really didn't know why Neo had raised his child up to have an impeccable outer appearance—No, he really shouldn't think about it too much. Neo most likely did it out of "amusement!" That guy had always been like that.

Winning against Grisia in appearance was truly too difficult. Hayseth coughed again and said, with a raised chin, "Grisia is the Sun Knight, the leader of the Holy Temple, the one who will lead you in the future. You do not need to be too prideful before him."

"Okay." Vival breathed a sigh of relief, but then he began worrying again. "Teacher, then what about Lesus?"

Seeing his student afraid of one person after another, Hayseth couldn't help but be somewhat angry. However, he immediately thought of the both of them, Grisia and Lesus... and believed that his student's reaction was nothing to criticize him about.

"Same logic. Lesus is the Judgment Knight under the Sun Knight, and he is the person you will directly take orders from in the future, so no need to be too prideful before him either."

Suddenly, Hayseth used the corners of his eyes to glance around before he approached his student and lowered his voice to ask, "Vival, if you had to choose between angering Grisia or angering Lesus, who would you choose?"

"Teacher..." Vival helplessly asked, "Have you once again made a bet

with someone?"

"Ahem!" Hayseth coughed loudly and said, "Just a small one. Tell me quickly. I still need to return and collect the bet from all of them!"

You mean pay the bet! Teacher, you always lose nine times out of ten!

Vival sighed to himself and then wondered out loud, "Teacher, do you feel death by jumping off a building is worse or death by jumping into the sea?"

"What kind of question is that? You die either way, only by a different method."

Vival looked into the distance and lamented, "Exactly. Both ways lead to death, so what does it matter how the death comes about?"

"..." Hayseth suddenly felt that his generation really wasn't that tragic even though they had Neo. "No, I've made a bet with other people, so you have to give me an answer!"

"If I really have to make a choice, I'm probably more afraid of..."

"Holy knight Vival!"

When he heard his name, Vival immediately shut his mouth, returning to his cold and unperturbed expression. From the corner of his eye, he saw someone running toward him from afar. Once the person reached his side, a greeting was administered toward Hayseth. "Knight-Captain Moon, may the God of Light's severity look after the world."

Like usual, Hayseth did not return the greeting. He merely coldly glanced at the other person. "What?"

"Knight-Captain Moon, I am here for holy knight Vival."

Hayseth darted his eyes at his student. Logically speaking, this had nothing to do with him, so he could leave right away. However, he hadn't gotten to the bottom of the bet...no, the answer yet, so of course he didn't really want to leave.

Seeing the unfamiliar face before him, Vival asked doubtfully, "Who are you?"

"I am Vidar Brigg." The other person's attitude was somewhat wary, but he paused and couldn't help revealing a proud expression as he said, "I am Captain Lesus's vice-captain."

Surprised, Vival said, "Lesus has already chosen a vice-captain?" *I thought we only just finished selecting our platoon?*

"Yes." Vidar nodded. Even though he wanted to maintain a calm attitude, his bright expression and his lips that kept quirking up were both betraying him.

Vival used the corner of his eyes to discreetly study the other man. He was somewhat curious why Lesus had chosen him. He looked a little... baby-faced, and he didn't seem like he could hide his emotions well. Vival had thought that Lesus would choose someone like himself whose expression wouldn't change even if the Holy Temple were to collapse.

After a moment of observation, Vival realized that the other man had not spoken anything more. He could only pretend to be impatient and say, "What in the world did you come here for anyway?"

"Uh...Ah!" Vidar jumped, finally remembering what he had been sent here to do. He quickly said, "I am here to relay that Captain Lesus

would like to see you.”

Vival blinked. “Lesus is looking for me? Got it, I’ll head over right now. Lead the way.”

“Understood.”

Vival had only just turned to leave when Hayseth made eyes at him desperately, never to be satisfied unless he received an answer.

With a wry smile, Vival said, “Teacher, I feel that compared to jumping into the wide and open sea, neither floating nor sinking, not knowing when I would perish, death by jumping off a building is much cleaner and to the point.”

When he heard the conversation, Vidar looked back curiously but didn’t ask anything. It was not an uncommon occurrence for teachers and their students to chat, though the topic this time was rather strange.

Once he heard the answer, Hayseth furrowed his brows, but he knew that Vival wouldn’t joke around with him. After thinking carefully about the two children, Grisla and Lesus, and then comparing the methods of “death,” he immediately came to a realization and smiled as he said, “I agree.”

The bet was his!



Vival followed behind Vidar. Although he was a little puzzled over why Lesus wanted to see him, he thought it probably had to be a mission, so he didn’t plan to ask Vidar about it first.

They reached the Judge's Complex, and Lesus seemed like he had just finished an interrogation and was now going through the confession. A few holy knights were cleaning up the place.

"Vidar, give this document to my teacher, and then take the others to the training grounds to practice our new series of swordplay. There will be a test in three days."

Vidar answered in the affirmative and led the holy knights who had finished cleaning the place away from the Judge's Complex.

Once everyone had left the Judge's Complex, Vival finally relaxed a little. He rubbed his neck as he asked, "Why did you choose Vidar as your vice-captain?"

Lesus answered quietly, "When I asked if anyone wanted to be my vice-captain, he was the only one to raise his hand and say yes."

...The others probably only reacted too slowly, or even if they reacted in time, they wouldn't raise their hands and say yes in such an outrageous fashion! It's not like they're kindergarteners!

Vival took several deep breaths and then asked, "Is he powerful?"

"He's okay."

Just okay? Vival opened his mouth but then recalled that it was Lesus who had said "He's okay," which probably meant that he must not be bad.

"There's something I need your help with." Lesus lowered his head and looked at the whip hanging by Vival's waist. He asked, "How are you with a whip?"

Help? Not a mission? Vival looked at his whip in bewilderment and said, "I'm very good. I've already finished learning all the forms, and my teacher says that my control is even better than his!"

"Very good." Lesus nodded his head. "Come with me."

Vival was a little puzzled, but the person before him was Lesus, so there was no need to worry. If it were Grisia, then he might need to worry a bit. Rumor had it that even Demos, who made people really doubt if he even existed or not, had fallen in to a dizzyingly busy state, and the perpetrator behind that was exactly Grisia!

Lesus opened the door to the last interrogation room. The moment Vival followed him inside, he spotted a person tied to the interrogation rack.

Is this an interrogation? Although he had received a bit of training in interrogation, Lesus had never asked him to help...

However, when his gaze swept across the face of the criminal, he yelled in surprise, "Laica!"

Vival rushed forward. Laica was heavily chained; even his mouth was chained, and it was not going to be easy to free him. Vival immediately turned his head, asking, "Lesus, w-why have you tied him up?"

Lesus stood by the doorway, looking at Vival. Then, he reached behind to close the door to the interrogation room and even used a sword to block the way, barring outside people from entering.

"..."

Vival backed up and began to calculate how much of a chance he would have of winning against Lesus... No! It would be more practical to think about whether he wanted to die by Lesus's hand or to kill himself off instead!

"Lesus, has Laica done something bad?" Vival shot Laica a worried look. Once he discovered that Laica did not seem to have many injuries, Vival couldn't help but relax a bit.

Lesus slowly walked over and said, "No, he completed his mission very well. You can practically say he completed it perfectly."

"If that's so, why have you tied him up?" Vival was already starting to consider if he would be able to break the chains with one swing of his whip. With Laica, they would at least have a slightly better chance against Lesus.

Lesus stopped and began organizing the interrogation tools that were to the side. "A few years ago while facing the enemy, I poured everything into my sword aura. When I took a heavy step backward, I accidentally stepped on Laica's foot, yet he showed a smile. From that moment onward, I felt that something was off."

Vival didn't understand. "It was only a small injury, so what's wrong about smiling to show you that he was fine with it?"

"I stepped so hard I cracked the brick floor."

"..."

Lesus said indifferently, "Several times after that, once he completed an assigned mission very satisfactorily, I would ask him what kind of reward he wanted. Although he said he didn't need anything, he kept

looking at my foot. So I kicked him.”

So you kicked him? Vival’s eyes were wide open, suddenly gaining a deeper understanding of his future Judgment Knight.

“And then?” Right after asking, Vival somewhat regretted doing so. He had a feeling that he might hear something he shouldn’t hear.

“Then, he fell to the floor and looked at me. He made no motion to climb back up, so I kicked him again.” Lesus’s tone was still very indifferent.

“...And then?” Vival was so shocked he felt numb.

Lesus picked up a short whip, turned to look at Laica, and then put the whip down. After that, he picked up a short stick, looked at Laica again, and started walking over with the stick.

“Whenever Laica completes his missions very satisfactorily, I would sometimes reward him.”

Reward? What’s with the wooden stick... Vival’s face twitched.

Lesus walked before the interrogation rack. Vival unconsciously took a step to the side to let him through. In the next second, he saw Lesus swing the stick at Laica who was tied to the rack. He nearly shouted out in alarm, but he saw that Laica hadn’t reacted much, so he must not have been injured too badly. Only then did Vival calm down.

“Sigh...”

Vival abruptly twisted his head. *Did I just hear Lesus sigh?*

“We started training when we were ten. The older we get, the stronger

our bodies become. Using too little strength won't even hurt Laica anymore, so now harsher blows are required. But it's really hard to grasp the right degree, so sometimes clerics become necessary. It makes it easy for suspicions to arise."

Jesus furrowed his brows and said quietly, "So, I've been thinking, whips should be a good choice of weapon. The degree of pain will be strong but the injuries won't be deep, yet I am not good with a whip, so I could only come to you—"

Vival hurriedly interrupted. "Wait a moment! I don't understand. Why do you need me?"

Jesus calmly said, "I need you to help hit Laica."

"...Why hit him?" Vival nearly needed to force the words out.

"Laica likes to be hit, so whenever he completes his missions very satisfactorily, I would hit him as a reward."

Are you joking... However, Jesus wasn't one to joke; moreover, he wouldn't joke about something like this. Vival started to hate his own understanding of Jesus. He couldn't even say, "You're kidding me!" to him.

"Vival."

Vival lifted his head to look at Jesus. The other gestured at Laica and said, "Later, I have a battle I promised to attend, so please start immediately."

Start what? Vival stood rooted to the spot, looking at Jesus who growled, "Swing your whip!"

Reflexively, Vival grabbed the whip by his waist and swung it toward the interrogation rack. When he heard a soft whimper, he abruptly realized what he had done. He looked up and saw a tear around the thigh area of Metal's pants, and there was blood trickling from it.

I actually harmed a comrade! Vival paled, helplessly looking toward the person who had given the command, Lesus.

"Put more strength behind it." It was like Lesus was trying to guide him with his words. "Carefully watch Laica's expression and listen to him. It's very easy to tell that this still isn't enough for him, so you need to put more strength behind it."

Vival hurriedly passed the whip over. "Lesus, you do it. I can lend my whip to you. If you don't know how to use a whip, I can also teach you..."

Lesus didn't take the whip. He merely turned his head and looked at Vival.

"...You want me to put more strength behind it? What kind of injury do you want me to inflict? Tell me, and I can accomplish whatever you want!"

"Don't injure his bones, don't make him bleed too much, don't hit his face."

"Understood!"



Teacher, I was wrong. Can I still change my answer? Actually, death by jumping off a building is very scary too~~

“Brat! What the heck are you changing your answer for? You made me lose the bet again!”

Side Story #16: “Knife Blade Part 1”

Laica Metal is a holy knight who wields throwing knives and daggers, a fairly contradictory profession.

However, he possesses a trait that is even more contradictory than his profession.

When crimson blood trickles down his silver knife blades, excitement rushes through his heart.

Especially when this blood comes from his own body.

Pain is such, such sweetness...



Laica’s home is a village not far from Leaf Bud City. When the Holy Temple began selecting the thirty-eighth generation of the Twelve Holy Knights, quite a commotion came over the village—the main activity being bringing out various crops and game to gamble with.

However, there were not many people in the village who would actually send their children to the selections, as the chance of being chosen was not high. Compared to children in the city, who were sent to learn swordsmanship and etiquette early on, how could children in the village, who had to help with household chores and hunting with their fathers since young, ever be selected?

Watching the excitement was the actual deal. Many villagers had invited each other to stroll around the city during the days of the

selections.

A group of hunters walked into the village, various types of game hanging from their bodies. Their age discrepancy was quite large. The oldest had a face full of wrinkles and almost didn't seem capable of walking, yet he still carried a string of game on his back, while the youngest looked to be only around ten years old.

A hunter with a face covered in stubble laughingly said to his companion next to him, "Your Laica's archery skills aren't bad! His first time hunting, and he already brought in game. Why not have him try out for the Leaf Knight?"

Laisme shrugged and said, "He only shot one more pigeon than your little one. If he can get chosen just for that, then how many kids in the village can become the Leaf Knight? I've heard that the Leaf Knight can shoot a butterfly one thousand meters away with his eyes closed!"

Laica, who was walking by his father's side, thought this was an impossible feat. *A butterfly already can't be seen beyond ten meters, so how can anyone shoot a butterfly one thousand meters away?!*

"Impossible!" Laica blurted, "Anyone who believes that is an idiot!"

"..." Laisme immediately whacked his son on the head.

"Ouch! Why'd you hit me?" Laica didn't understand at all.

Laisme rolled his eyes, not wanting to explain further. This brat had

had a terrible mouth since he was young. Laisme had told him to change his behavior, but the brat didn't know what was wrong about what he'd said at all, and, what was even more infuriating was that all the words he had spoken were actually true!

"Go pluck the pigeons you shot down. For dinner, give them to your mom to make stew."

Laica replied "okay," his mood quite good. Pigeon stew sounded delicious. Looking for birds throughout the entire hunt hadn't been a waste of time. If he had brought in larger game, it would all have been sold, or made into bacon or jerky, preserved for their winter reserves, and would not have been available for immediate consumption.

"Carve some arrows too, while you're at it. We used too many today."

Laica nodded. He was good with his hands. Anything that could be accomplished with a knife, he was good at it.

Ever since childhood, from the first time his mother had him help peel potatoes, he'd fallen deeply in love with knives. All children detested being told to do things, yet Laica very much looked forward to peeling, plucking, and arrow making. There were even times when he refused to play with other children for the sake of peeling potatoes.

Laica knelt in the middle of the yard, using his trustworthy knife to rid the pigeon of its plumage. At first glance, the scene seemed a bit gruesome, but there was no hunter's child who did not dare handle dressing game. Getting rid of plumage was a small matter. Once he

grew up and had more strength, he would learn how to dress larger prey.

However, removing the feathers was getting difficult. The blade of this small knife was no longer very sharp, but Laica purposely didn't sharpen it. That way, he could touch the blade of the knife and enjoy the piercing pressure without getting hurt—his mother said that if he cut himself one more time, she would confiscate his knife. He couldn't have that happen!

"Brat, how far is this place from Leaf Bud City?"

Laica raised his head. Four people stood outside of his family's yard. Their clothes looked somewhat like a knight's, yet not the traditional kind, a lot lighter and tighter. They didn't carry swords or shields. After looking more closely, he discovered that they carried daggers on their waists.

Laica stared at the daggers intently. He had never ever seen such beautiful daggers before.

"You like it?"

The other party had noticed his attention and chuckled. Mockingly, he said, "Stupid brat, you haven't even been weaned off your mother's milk, yet you already want to play with knives?"

Laica's attention was completely on the daggers. He offhandedly said, "I never drank milk. My mom doesn't have milk. My little sister and I

both grew up drinking berries!”

The other party was stunned for a moment. He had only mocked him out of “necessity” and had been hoping he would end up with an “infuriated brat.” He had even prepared further taunts to infuriate the kid until he couldn’t even speak. He never thought the kid would answer so seriously, making it so that he didn’t know how to follow up on that—and why did these honest words sound so irritating?

It felt like he was the one who had been mocked.

“Not far. On horseback, it’s a day’s journey.”

“What?” He was surprised.

“Leaf Bud City!” Laica looked at him in confusion and said, “Weren’t you asking how far Leaf Bud City is?”

“Brat!” The others moved forward to yell in displeasure, “What kind of attitude is that? Don’t you know that you’re speaking with the Metal Knight of the Twelve Holy Knights?”

Laica’s eyes widened. *Twelve Holy Knights?*

“Yelling at a kid without any facial hair, who do you think you are?” Metal turned to yell at his platoon.

Metal had always had a headache over disciplining his platoon. Since he had to have a foul mouth out of “necessity,” of course his platoon

would copy him. Yet he could never bear it, just like now. Why yell at a brat?

The Metal Knight had to have a foul mouth. It couldn't be helped. But he didn't want his entire platoon to have a foul mouth as well. Just imagining such a scene was seriously giving him a fucking headache.

"But none of you look the least bit like a knight!" Laica said in disbelief.

"Brat, what part of us doesn't look like a knight?"

Metal yelled furiously, but, in actuality, this was not the first time other people had said so. For the ease of investigating in secret, the Metal Knight and his platoon members always wore body-hugging clothes that were easy to move around in. Compared to those of the Twelve Holy Knights who followed the Sun Knight, the men under the Judgment Knight never looked much like holy knights.

Laica said matter-of-factly, "Knights always wear a lot and very long stuff too. Their robes are just as long as a girl's dress!"

"..."

For the first time, Metal thought that, even though he was a holy knight who was not dressed like a holy knight, it might actually be a good thing.

"What'd you say? Y-You actually dared to say that a knight's clothes looks like a girl's dress... Pft!"

Don't laugh while scolding a kid! You don't have the least bit of authority like that, bastard! Metal looked at his platoon member wordlessly.

"Brat, what's your name?" Metal started becoming interested in this kid.

Laica spoke bluntly, "Before asking for someone else's name, you have to give yours first!"

"...Dansbert Metal."

"What a difficult name to pronounce," complained Laica while frowning.

Dansbert could not help rolling his eyes, but he had to admit that this was the truth. Nearly everyone around him called him Metal. Very few called him by his name.

"I'm Laica Bode." After Laica finished replying, he gazed at Dansbert's dagger with shining eyes. He asked, "Why do you carry daggers when you're a knight? They're so pretty. I've never seen such pretty daggers before!"

"You like it?" Dansbert smiled and drew his dagger. He cleanly spun it around in the air, the cold silver blade gleaming in a streak of silver-white. The flowing blade and the hilt carved with scale designs both made it so that Laica couldn't wrest his attention away.

It was not until Dansbert stuck his dagger back in its scabbard that Laica regained his senses. He exclaimed, "W-Wow!"

Dansbert guffawed. Having someone praise his weapon made him happier than having them praise him.

"Brat, if you have the guts, come to the Metal Knight selection! If you're damn lucky enough to get chosen, not only will you be able to hold them, I'll even teach you how to use daggers and throwing knives."

"Throwing knives?" Laica's eyes widened.

Dansbert swung his hand so quickly there was only an afterimage. A clear sound came from behind Laica. He turned and saw a throwing knife stuck on the tree stump that was used to chop firewood.

Laica could not help walking over to look. The throwing knife was a simple one, only around the size of a hand. The blade and the handle were seamless; the color a dark gray. It was not as shiny as the Metal Knight's daggers, but there was a symbol carved at the tail. This symbol was the same as the symbols on the chests of the knights.

Although it was not shiny, Laica really liked this dark-colored little throwing knife. He used both hands to pull on the knife, exerting all his strength, yet the knife was completely stuck in the tree stump without budging at all.

Irritated, Laica turned and said, "I can't pull it out—"

No one was behind him.

"Why'd they leave?" Laica was stunned for a bit. He yelled, "You left behind your throwing knife!"

Laughter came from afar. "You can have it! Foul-mouthed brat."

Laica's heart jumped in joy and he yelled, "You're the one with a foul mouth! Everyone says the Metal Knight's mouth is the foulest!"

Stupid brat... But this means I won't have to spend too much effort on character development lessons.

Laica spent a lot of effort before he was able to pull out the dark knife. Even though he could have asked an adult for help, he wanted to accomplish it himself. He really liked this throwing knife, but he liked the dagger, with the flowing design, that the Metal Knight wore on his waist even more.

I'm going to enter the Metal Knight selection!



Halfway through the mission, Laica somewhat lost his focus. He had just learned that he had failed his character development lessons once again. His teacher was bursting with fury, claiming that he definitely "could not have a fouler mouth," so why was it that whenever he wanted Laica to speak poisonous words, he wouldn't be able to speak a single word of poison?

Laica felt a bit wronged. He had never spoken anything foul before. He had never even known how to speak poisonous words... *Ah!*

Bang—

After the sudden loud sound, Laica gasped in pain. His foot hurt so much that he thought it might split open.

The person standing in front of him turned around. It was Lesus. They happened to be on the same mission together and were chasing after a bandit, but the intelligence they had received seemed to be very wrong.

The intelligence claimed that the bandit had no comrades and was not very powerful, so the Holy Temple had dispatched Lesus and Laica, these two young Twelve Holy Knights-in-training. Only a few young holy knights had come with them, as this was treated like training for the two of them; however, reality was altogether different.

Not only did the bandit himself possess great ability, he even had several comrades, making it so that their chase was not going smoothly at all. From time-to-time, they would even suffer a counterattack. Thankfully, Lesus and Laica's abilities could be considered topnotch among the young knights. In addition, once the holy knights who had come with them realized the situation was not in their favor, they also became serious and stopped watching from the sidelines just because this was supposed to be training for the two young knights.

After finally catching up, the opponents sneakily fled once more. Lesus finally became impatient and, with one burst of strength, stepped backwards heavily, sending out a gust of wind with his sword. However, before he even managed to hit the enemy, he heard Laica's gasp of pain come from behind.

When he turned, he saw that he had hurt his own companion. A rare flash of panic seized Lesus, who was always collected. However, he did not forget his actual mission and gave a command to the holy knights by their side first, ordering them to continue the chase. Only then did he turn and in a concerned tone, ask softly, "Laica, are you okay?"

Although his foot kept throbbing in pain, Laica shook his head and replied, "I'm okay."

Lesus was nearly unable to believe it. He actually knelt down and took off Laica's shoe to inspect his foot.

Although it hurt a lot, when Lesus kept on grabbing his foot and gently touching it to examine the injury, Laica felt that it made the pain inconsequential. In fact, he only felt the underside of his foot to be itchy after it kept being touched. This feeling was so strange that he could not describe it, and it kept making him wonder if he had thoroughly washed his feet before sleeping the night before.

Laica said uncomfortably, "Lesus, you can let go of my foot now, unless you really like smelling my stinky foot."

"..."

Jesus silently placed Laica's foot back in his shoe, letting the shoe stabilize his foot so that the bones would not crack.

Laica was a little surprised. He had never seen Jesus, who was always cold, act in such a gentle way before. No matter if it was inspecting his foot or helping him wear his shoe, although pain couldn't be avoided, seeing Jesus be so gentle and careful made him feel that this pain was nothing.

He felt like he was someone important who was highly cared for. Laica could not help but smile faintly.

When Jesus raised his head, uncertainty flashed across his face, but he quickly regained his composure and said, "Your injury is severe. I'll take you back first. I'll support you... No, I'll carry you back. That way, the injury won't be jostled."

Laica was very shocked. He hurriedly shook his head back and forth. Care to the level of being carried back, he could not bear it!

"I can still walk!"

In order to prove it, Laica moved to set his injured foot back on the ground. Just as he felt a wave of pain, he heard Jesus growl, "Don't you dare step down," scaring Laica so much that he immediately resumed a one-footed, bird-like stance.

Following that, Jesus grabbed his arm and looped it around his

shoulders, unwilling to accept a refusal. "Let's go; your injured foot is not allowed to touch the ground, or else I will switch to carrying you!" Laica almost immediately wanted to smash his foot against the ground, but luckily, he instantaneously curbed that notion.

Why did I have such an urge?



Laica lay on the bed, recovering from his injury. Although it was a bit boring, he was happy he didn't need to attend character development lessons. *Speaking poisonous words is truly too difficult!*

"Laica!"

Dansbert suddenly rushed in after pushing the door open.

"Lesus asked me to give you a few days of vacation." Dansbert asked worriedly, "Were you injured that severely?"

Laica immediately retorted, "Not at all! Lesus is just even more like an overly-worried, middle-aged woman than my mom!"

"These words of yours are truly poisonous! Remember them. Next time, speak in such a way during your lessons." After Dansbert finished instructing him, he asked suspiciously, "He said that part of your bone cracked, but after the clerics healed you, they still told you to rest for a few days?"

"That's true," Laica could not help but admit. The strength of Lesus's

foot was no joke, even the floor had cracked, and he had blanked out so much that day that he had been completely stepped on.

"So the injury really isn't minor then? Stupid brat, I heard from Lesus that he stepped on you? Why are you so clumsy? You make it so that I'm too embarrassed to even tell people how you got injured!"

Dansbert was so angry that he reflexively swatted downwards in the direction of the bed, coincidentally hitting Laica's injured foot, making him cry out in pain.

"W-What?" Dansbert fretted, "It still hurts? Didn't you say it already healed? Was it really that severe?"

Laica shook his head and complained, "It's because Teacher used too much strength!"

"I didn't use much strength at all!" Dansbert retorted. He frowned.
"Rest for a few days. You don't have to attend any lessons for the next few days. Make sure you recover first. Right, it's almost time for dinner. Are you hungry? I'll let the kitchens make some food that will be good for your bones."

Laica was a little startled and exclaimed, "Teacher, you have never been so nice to me before! It's so unexpected!"

Dansbert nearly spat out blood. He pointed at his student. "This utterance was not bad either! Why can't you say things like that during your poisonous tongue lessons?"

Laica felt wronged as he said, "But I'm not speaking poisonous words. I'm clearly only saying the truth."

Dansbert's rage was as explosive as thunder. He shouted, "What truth! Tell me, since when have I not treated you right?"

"It's not that you haven't treated me right..."

Dansbert's fury subsided.

"But it's not like you've been that great to me either. It's just ordinary." He really did spit blood.

"Damn brat, shut up! I've wasted my time raising you!"

Dansbert was so angry, he left immediately after turning.

"Teacher! I'm just saying—"

Laica hurriedly left the bed to rush over, but Dansbert had already slammed the door closed.

Faced with the door, Laica was stunned. He felt waves of pain come from the foot he had used to step heavily on the floor. He limped back to bed, dejectedly sitting on the side of the bed.

"I mean, ordinary, just like an ordinary parent."

Did I say something wrong again?

Are these words of mine very poisonous?

Why is it that I can't tell apart words that are poisonous and words that are not?

With his foot on the floor and waves of prickling pain drifting over, Laica could not help using more strength to transform the prickling pain into full blossomed pain. Only then did he feel the pain in his chest lessen, and it caused him to use even more strength to step down. He even stamped his foot—

"Laica, what are you doing? Are you okay?"

A voice called out worriedly from the other room.

"I'm okay! It's just that something fell. You're being too nosy!"

A "hmph" came from the other room, and then there was no other reply.

Ah... Did I say something wrong again?

He had only wanted the other person to stop worrying about his actions.

His heart constricted again, but he could not stamp his foot this time. It would be too loud.

He sat silently on the side of the bed, staring blankly at the wall. On the white wall hung only one thing—

The throwing knife that his teacher had given him.

The contents of this story are purely fictional. Holy knights have all undergone training, so if you are not a holy knight, please do not mimic their dangerous actions.

Side Story #17: “Knife Blade Part Two”

He held the small, commemorative throwing knife in his hand. Just like when he was young, he used his fingers to press down on the blade, feeling that sting of pain. Nowadays, he was able to control the amount of strength very precisely, and the small throwing knife was just commemorative. He hadn't polished it for a long time, so he could no longer easily harm himself with it.

This kind of stinging pain wasn't even as painful as his foot injury, but even that didn't compare at all to the ache in his heart when he yet again worried his teacher. So Laica was not satisfied, but he tried to hold himself back. He couldn't let his fingers be injured. There were still a lot of things he had to do the next day.

Should I go and apologize to Teacher tomorrow? Right after Laica made the decision that he would never let himself say the wrong thing again, he suddenly remembered that he would have character development lessons tomorrow. If he were to say kind words, his teacher might get an even worse headache... *Just what would be the right thing to say?* Laica was back to worrying again.

Suddenly, a stab of pain seized his hand. Laica froze, and only then did he realize that he had actually cut his finger. He had actually been unable to control himself. He stared at the cut on his thumb, worried over how he was going to do his work like this the next day.

Even though bandaging it wouldn't be a big deal, since there were a bunch of clerics around, wearing bandages in the Holy Temple would draw endless questions. Yet, Laica felt that finding a cleric over such a

small cut would also be very foolish.

Stinging pain came from his hand. This new injury was more of an ache, and even superseded the pain in his foot. When he saw blood drip down his finger, he immediately used the small throwing knife to catch it. He stared, mesmerized, at the blood on the blade, momentarily forgetting his worries about whether or not he should apologize to his teacher tomorrow.

Unable to help it, he raised the small throwing knife, wanting to make another cut. However, he still retained some of his senses, so he didn't make the cut on his fingers. Instead, he drew the knife across his arm. Even if he didn't seek out a cleric, he could bandage himself and hide that underneath his sleeves.

He gently left a streak of red across his arm.

Ouch!

Laica felt utterly enchanted by this sort of feeling.

Unable to stop himself, he made another cut... and another...



"Teacher, your complexion looks really good today. You look like such a benevolent and friendly person, not at all like the Metal Knight!"

Laica carefully said the words of praise he had spent the entire night preparing, afraid he would anger his teacher and cause him to leave abruptly.

Dansbert was furious. Just what was this! That brat Laica normally said such poisonous words that he would want to spit blood, yet whenever character development lessons came about, he would only be able to say these off the mark “poisonous words.” Even mosquitoes wouldn’t get poisoned!

“Poisonous words! You better speak poisonous words! Have you forgotten what today’s class is?”

Laica furrowed his brows. After a long moment, he tentatively said, “Teacher, your words aren’t even poisonous. You’re such a good person, so of course a student taught by you wouldn’t be able to speak poisonous words.”

Dansbert felt completely helpless. *Are these poisonous words? Why do I feel like I’ve been praised?!*

With Laica like this, what’s going to happen when it comes time to evaluate their personalities? Dansbert knew that he didn’t have Neo’s skills and arrogance. He would not be able to shield Laica, so Laica had to be able to safely pass the evaluation on his own!

“Just speak like normal. Don’t think too much.”

Laica frowned. He really didn’t know what to do.

“Laica, quick, speak.” Dansbert grew impatient. *Didn’t he nearly anger me to death last night? Why is it only during character development*

lessons that he turns into a polite child who only speaks nice things?

Anxious, Laica blurted, "Teacher, you're so strange! I can't say it this way, I can't say it that way, so then how am I supposed to say it?! If I knew it was going to be like this, I would never have come to be your student."

Dansbert was stunned. These words were poisonous indeed! Actually so poisonous that he couldn't utter a single word. His words were caught in his throat, unable to be voiced.

"Very good, these poisonous words pass." Dansbert finally managed to force a smile. With these poisonous words, plus the words from the previous night, he bitterly wondered just who he had been so worried and rushing around for.

"Dismissed." He turned to leave, his heart so pained that all he wanted to do was drag someone off to get smashed.

"Teacher!"

When he heard the call, Dansbert momentarily paused but still did not stop. He continued forward and left.

"Teacher ..."

Just by looking, Laica knew that Teacher had grown angry, and he was definitely very, very angry this time. After all, he had left without even scolding him.

Dispirited, Laica mumbled, "If I hadn't come here, Teacher might have found a much smarter student than me, and then he wouldn't need to be so troubled. It's all my fault."

The more he thought about it, the more he felt it was his fault. He was merely a child from the countryside. Why did he think he had the ability to become the Metal Knight? He always caused his teacher to be super disappointed. Maybe he should just give up. *That might actually be better for Teacher...*

In the following days, Laica didn't even have the chance to say he wanted to give up because Dansbert had left on a mission. It was a sudden mission, and Laica only learned that his teacher had gone when he went to ask. He had waited and waited without his teacher showing up at his lesson.

Could it be that Teacher left on a mission because he doesn't want to see me? Laica had these kinds of thoughts. If it wasn't because several of the Twelve Holy Knights had also left, Laica might really have immediately departed from the Holy Temple so as to prevent himself from further angering his teacher.

The young knights were all attending classes, and Laica did not have much else to do. He could only stare off into space in the training room. When a knock at the door sounded, he jumped up in fright, yet also felt a surge of happiness. He rushed to open the door, yelling, "Teacher!"

However, the person outside the door was actually Lesus.

Laica stared, his happy mood abruptly disappearing without a trace. Although they were currently holding character development lessons, Lesus had stopped needing such lessons quite some time ago. His imposing manner was even greater than that of the current Judgment Knight. After all, the current one, Chasel, was said to be the most gentle and cultured Judgment Knight there ever was. He even improved the Judgment Knight's bad reputation quite a lot—but this was not something to be praised.

Lesus seemed to know that Laica didn't have anything to do, so he walked in without asking at all, unafraid that he would bother him. "Laica, why is your foot injury recovering so slowly?" Lesus asked in confusion, "Did I injure you that severely?"

Because he was the one who had caused the injury, Lesus would ask after Laica's foot injury from time to time. However, he heard this news from the clerics—the condition of Laica's injury improved but then grew worse. It wasn't until recent days that his injury had healed. Lesus was getting a bit worried.

"Huh? It has nothing to do with you."

The moment the words escaped, Laica felt frustrated. These words were most definitely wrong again. He meant that he himself had caused the situation. Every night, he would not be able to resist secretly stamping his foot, so how could he recover like that? It had nothing to do with Lesus at all.

He thought Lesus would grow angry like everyone else, but he did not have an angry expression. Lesus even asked, "Are you angry I hurt you?"

Laica immediately retorted, "Are you stupid?" To begin with, he was the one who had been in a daze, and that was why he had gotten hurt. Then, his injury didn't heal properly for the longest time because he kept stamping his feet. *Why would I be angry at Lesus?*

Lesus furrowed his brows lightly, which made Laica begin to feel nervous. He knew he had spoken the wrong words again. If he kept irritating Lesus time and time again, it would be difficult for the other person not to get angry. *If he turns his head and leaves, ignoring me just like Teacher, then what should I do?*

"Has your foot injury healed?"

Laica nodded, afraid to speak any further. Even though he secretly stamped his feet every day, the clerics of the Church of Light lived up to their reputations. If it wasn't because he only suffered a foot injury, and thus the Church of Light only sent a few young clerics to have them practice their healing spells, Laica's injury would have recovered a long time ago. It didn't matter if he stamped his feet. Even performing a flying kick would not result in any pain.

"Then, come with me. The information was wrong last time, so our training mission was interrupted and didn't count. We have to do it again. This time, I chose a suitable mission. We can complete it together to make up for the interrupted one."

Laica nodded again without answering.

Only Lesus would have the authority to pick his own training mission. Even if he didn't go on a training mission, no one would say anything. Lesus was already more like the Judgment Knight than the current Judgment Knight. No one would make any extra demands of him.

If anyone dared to say Lesus was still a trainee, the entire Holy Temple would ridicule that person for being blind.

Even Grisia with his super strange personality could already take charge. All day long, he would clean up the Sun Knight's messes. No one dared to say he was still a trainee either. If he grew angry because of it and ended up only willing to complete training missions, the Sun Knight would be the first to jump up and kill the speaker.

When he thought of these two, Laica felt that even as a trainee, he was a failure of a trainee who could not even speak a word of poison. He only knew how to anger his teacher day in and day out.

"Lesus, you really are an annoying fellow." *Why are you so amazing? I can't compare at all!*

Laica hung his head dejectedly. The moment he finished speaking, he suddenly gasped with an "ah." This time, even he understood that he had truly said the wrong thing. He frantically looked toward Lesus.

Yet Lesus asked, "You don't seem to be in a very good mood. Should

we postpone the mission?"

Laica blinked and asked cautiously, "You're not angry? I said you're really annoying!"

"You don't seem to mean it." Lesus said calmly, "Observing words and gestures is a basic skill of interrogation. Although you said that I'm annoying, your expression tells me you don't hate me."

Rather, it seems like you hate yourself. Lesus omitted saying this.

"I'll postpone the mission for a few days." Lesus could tell that Laica's mood was not good. Going on a training mission under this condition would not be ideal.

"I want to go!" Laica persisted, "Recently, Teacher went on a mission so I have nothing to do. Going on a training mission works out perfectly."

It was because Lesus knew this that he had chosen to come at this specific time; however, he then discovered that Laica's mood was rather disadvantageous for a mission, so he had wanted to give up on his idea. Perhaps he should talk further with Laica, but his past experiences told him that he was definitely unsuited for doing such a thing. The sort of "talking it out" that ended up with the other person crying definitely could never happen again.

Lesus carefully observed Laica's rather resolute expression. Only then did he nod and say, "You must ensure that your state of mind does not

affect the mission.”

“Really, are you stupid?” *I wouldn’t mix personal feelings with duty!*

“...Then, let’s go.” Lesus felt that talking with Laica could really train his powers of observation. His mouth scolded him for being stupid, yet his expression was one of resolute agreement. *Just what kind of personality is this of Metal’s?*

When he thought of the other person who also gave him an incomparable headache, Grisia, compared to dealing with his companions, Lesus felt that interrogating criminals was a truly simple task.



Because it wasn’t a solo training mission, combined with the fact that he had already made Laica waste his effort once and even get injured, Lesus did not choose a very difficult mission. All they had to do was investigate a thief. Lesus did not follow the usual practice of seeking out holy knights to watch them from the sidelines. Recently, the Holy Temple had been particularly busy, and was short on manpower, so Lesus skipped that step.

He didn’t think that they would meet trouble again. This time, the thief brought along an accomplice. From their speech, it sounded like they belonged to a burglar group. After stealing, they planned on returning to the group’s main headquarters. Although Lesus could immediately capture these two, doing so would cause them to lose this prime opportunity to investigate. Of course, he could not let go of this chance.

Jesus glanced at Laica with a hint of apology.

Laica didn't think anything of it. Under his assumptions, it was normal that Jesus would pick a difficult mission.

As they followed the thieves, Jesus discovered that Laica was indeed a good assistant. He was extremely good at hiding. Several times, it was Laica who advised him where they could hide. There were even times when the thieves in front of them became more alert, and Laica promptly pulled Jesus into hiding. Only because of that did they remain undiscovered.

I should come directly to Laica for carrying out these kinds of missions in the future. Jesus silently noted this to himself.

The two of them followed the thieves to their hideout. Once they confirmed the location, Jesus could not make a decision right away. Since it was just a bandits' hideout, with his and Laica's strength, they should be able to deal with it. However, they were still trainees, so theoretically, they should not take care of something like this on their own.

Just as he was making up his mind, Laica suddenly pulled at him, making him stagger a step. At the same time, he heard a faint piercing sound.

From the corner of his eye, he saw that a throwing knife protruded out of where he had been standing. Jesus's expression immediately darkened. *How could I have been so careless!*

A few thieves had stuck their heads out from the windows above, their faces carrying traces of viciousness. This rather vexed Lesus. Although he and Laica wore lightweight outfits, it was definitely clear that they were people from the Church of the God of Light. *Yet they still dared to attack? If we were normal citizens, wouldn't we have been killed already?*

A raging flame ignited in Lesus's eyes.

"Laica, we're heading up!"

When Laica heard him, he was not at all surprised. Although they were trainees and should not act on their own or take on a thief's lair alone, this was Lesus. If he said it could be done, then it could be done.

As soon as Lesus said, "up," he immediately sprinted forward without the slightest intention of letting Laica go first. Although with Laica's abilities he should be responsible for opening up the path, at that moment Laica could only follow along behind.

Lesus trampled over the two brutes guarding the entrance. He forced his way in, and even used the hilt of his sword to knock unconscious a huge man who was twice Lesus's size and carrying a huge mallet. All this time, the thieves and robbers inside, being scared out of their wits, were all fleeing one after another. The person who had thrown a knife at Lesus from the second floor was even trying to escape through the window.

One could see the corridor of the second floor from the first floor's hall. When Lesus saw him escaping, he stepped backward with great force, intending to jump directly to the second floor with this charge.

However, he heard a very familiar grunt from behind.

Don't tell me... Lesus felt a rare flash of panic, but he did not immediately turn his head to investigate. Instead, he threw the sword in his hand up. It passed through the railings on the second floor, slicing the target's calf, making him fall to the floor while crying out in pain.

Only then did Lesus turn his head to look. As expected, Laica had fallen behind him. This scene was exactly the same as the previous time—he had stepped on Laica again.

It was probably because Laica was truly very good at concealing his presence that Lesus often could not tell that he was right behind him. Thus, he stepped on him for a second time, hard.

"Laica!" Lesus hurriedly reached out his hand to pull him up. This time, he had only been trying to use a heavy force to jump to the second floor. He had not used his battle aura, so he should not have stepped on him as heavily as the previous time.

However, who knew that when he grabbed Laica's arm, not only did Laica not stand up, he even gave another groan of pain, and then revealed a strange smile.

Lesus, who was skilled at observing words and gestures, really could not make sense of things this time. That groan obviously signified pain, but then what was with the smile?

Lesus pulled up Laica's sleeve. Sure enough, it was wrapped in bandages. He asked in a low voice, "What happened to your arm? Did someone hurt you? In the Holy Temple?"

Laica hurriedly said, "No one did. I cut myself using a throwing knife!"

Lesus froze. *He cut himself with a throwing knife? And that smile just now...*

In order to confirm his conjectures, Lesus did something he had never done before—he intentionally kicked his companion.

The expressions on Laica's face were rather spectacular—shock, astonishment, embarrassment, mixed together with that strange smile from before, and in the end, he even said, "Lesus, can you step on me again?"

It felt like he had been punished. Even though he wasn't getting beaten by his teacher, Laica still felt his heart becoming more at ease.

Thus, Lesus wordlessly gave him another kick.



"Laica!"

When he returned from his mission, Dansbert immediately heard that his student was once again on bed rest. He hurriedly rushed over to see what had happened. Fortunately, the moment he opened the door, he saw that Laica was resting in bed, safe and sound. Except, his foot was wrapped in bandages.

Jesus was even sitting by the side, peeling an apple. His skill with the small knife was so brilliant that Dansbert could not help but praise him silently. The long apple peel was so thin it was nearly translucent, yet it did not break apart at all.

"How did you get hurt?" Dansbert looked at Laica's wrapped ankle in confusion. *Why is the injury in the same place as last time's...*

"I was the one who stepped on him." Jesus explained calmly.

"..." Dansbert grew angry. "What the heck, are you purposely giving my Laica a hard time?"

"It was not intentional." Jesus was a little embarrassed. He had stepped on his companion twice, so he felt that it was necessary for him to explain that he definitely had not done it on purpose. "Laica's ability to conceal his presence is really powerful, so I often do not notice that he is right behind me. That's why I stepped on him."

"As if you need to tell me, who do you think taught him... No, that's not the main point. You already stepped on him last time, yet you still weren't careful. You even stepped so heavily—"

"It's not like that, Teacher." Laica hurriedly explained, "Lesus didn't step as heavily this time. It's when I told him to step on me that I accidentally twisted my ankle, so the bone broke."

Dansbert suddenly felt that his ears must not be working.

"What did you say? You told Lesus to do what?"

"I told him to step on me, because the feeling of getting stepped on is so good," Laica replied honestly.

"..."

Dansbert held his head and mumbled, "I didn't hear anything. I must be too tired after returning from completing the mission, so I accidentally fell asleep and am now sleep walking. I actually heard Laica say that it feels very good to be stepped on. I should quickly return to bed and sleep... Laica, I'll come see you again after I wake up tomorrow."

"Okay!" Laica's eyes shone. *Teacher isn't angry anymore?*

Lesus too rather wanted to return to his room to sleep and pretend that today was all a dream, but unfortunately he would never allow himself to escape from reality. He could only sit and continue to peel the apple, taking care of the patient he had injured by stepping on and kicking him.

"Lesus, from now on, you should hit me more!" Laica added very excitedly, "I like to be hit!" *All I have to do is get hit or injured, and Teacher will stop being angry!*

"..."

The apple peel broke.

Lesus felt that his skill at remaining calm was still not good enough. He said faintly, "As long as you complete your missions well."

"No problem! I'll definitely complete them perfectly! So you won't have any excuses not to hit me."

For the first time, Lesus felt that it would be better for his companion to fail his missions.

-END-

The contents of this story are purely fictional. Holy knights have all undergone training, so if you are not a holy knight, please do not mimic their dangerous actions.

Side Story #18: “We Are Not the Dark Human Squad” Part 1

“Stop joking around, Neo!”

Aldrizzt struggled with all his might, but to Neo, his strength was so meager that it could be disregarded.

As a matter of fact, there weren’t many people who could put up a struggle against Neo Sun.

“What the heck are you struggling for?” Neo finally lost his patience. Just when would they reach their destination if he had to drag him like this the entire way? He didn’t have that much patience.

Aldrizzt jerked back and his anger surged forth. He forcefully shook Neo off, and the latter who was also tired of dragging him on like this, took the opportunity to release him.

“Shouldn’t I be the one asking this question? You insist on dragging me into a big city, just what are you thinking of doing?”

Neo said as though it was a matter of fact, “It’s to register our team, of course!”

He’s serious? Shocked, Aldrizzt said, “We only have two people, and we’ve never even taken on any huge missions. What is there to register?”

“It’s precisely because we’ve never taken on any huge missions that we must register our team!”

Neo felt extremely dissatisfied. With Aldrizzt's and his strength, what missions were there that they couldn't handle? Unfortunately, as they were solo adventurers and didn't have much reputation, there simply weren't any big missions that would be given to them. Most of them were item-collecting and escort missions, and Neo completely had no interest in escort missions. Compared with protecting someone, he was better at beating someone up. And therefore, they were only left with a whole pile of herb-collecting, worthless missions!

Aldrizzt was very happy doing these jobs picking flowers and plants, but Neo was extremely depressed. The adventurer life he had imagined was definitely not being a gardener! Speaking of which, other than that time when he met Aldrizzt a short while after leaving Leaf Bud City and was hunted by a whole group of dark elves, the following days were truly too boring.

"I don't want to do any more of these gardening missions!"

Aldrizzt rolled his eyes and said indignantly, "The sites of these 'gardening missions' are locations that even warriors rarely go. I've already tried very hard to find the most dangerous sites for collecting. What more do you want?"

Without any hesitation, Neo said, "Register our adventurer team, seek out an elf to be our archer, and accept the most dangerous mission. Best would be the sort like slaying dragons!"

Why do you have to have an elf as the archer? Aldrizzt felt very vexed.

Neo plainly knew that he was a dark elf, and would definitely be unable to get on the good side of an elf. Despite that, Neo still wanted to find an elf to be their party member.

Aldrizzt already couldn't be bothered with the two words "slaying dragons." Having journeyed with his companion until now, he was incapable of feeling shocked regardless of what Neo wanted to kill.

"Wasn't the previous incident when we entered a small town enough to make you understand?" Frustrated, Aldrizzt said, "At that time, we had been surrounded by the citizens in an inn in the middle of the night. If we hadn't been strong enough to escape, then even if we had been tied to a stake and burned to death, it wouldn't have been strange! But do you know how many people there are in a big city? Perhaps we would be encircled by more than a thousand people!"

"Be encircled by more than a thousand people?" Neo's blue eyes shone. He stroked his chin as he said, "Even though getting surrounded isn't anything new, getting encircled by more than a thousand people sounds a lot more interesting than gardening missions."

He was totally wrong. The thing that Neo loved the most was danger. Aldrizzt was full of regret.

"Let's go into the city." Neo's tone did not seem to leave his teammate any room for discussion. Yet, he also did not immediately turn around and leave because...

"Which direction do we head toward?"

Upon hearing this, Aldrizzt also clearly comprehended that if he did not lead the way or deliberately take the wrong route, Neo would definitely hit many walls before he managed to find the city—Truthfully speaking, sometimes he was truly baffled over who was the human that lived on the surface and who was the dark elf that lived underground.

What should I do? Frowning, Aldrizzt called out, “Neo.”

“Hm?”

“Do we have to enter a city?”

“We do!”

As expected, there was no room for discussion. Aldrizzt sighed and reluctantly compromised, saying, “Then, we’ll go to Leaf Bud City.” *At least that is the location of the Church of the God of Light. If something actually happens, the Church probably wouldn’t watch the former Sun Knight get mobbed, right?*

“We can go to any city except Leaf Bud City!” Neo wasn’t willing to buy it. “I’ve lived there for several decades. I know Leaf Bud City like the back of my hand. Why would I go there?!”

Like the back of his hand? Aldrizzt asked skeptically, “I’m quite doubtful, are you sure you can recognize the streets in Leaf Bud City?”

He could only recognize the half closer to the Church of the God of

Light; however, Neo would never admit it. *In any case, recognizing half of it also counts as recognizing it!* “Of course I can recognize the roads.”

Aldrizzt was not fully convinced, and asked in reply, “Then tell me, right now which direction do you head to go to Leaf Bud City?”

“It is Leaf Bud City that I know like the back of my hand, not how to get to Leaf Bud City!”

Neo knew that if Aldrizzt acted disoriented and led them the wrong way, then perhaps they really would end up at Leaf Bud City. However, with his personality, Aldrizzt could not do something like pretending to be disoriented. So, as long as he persuaded him to agree to lead the way, there would be no problems.

“Aldrizzt, no matter what else you say, I still want to enter a city and form the Dark Human Squad!”

“...” Aldrizzt’s expression changed and he asked in disbelief, “Were you actually still thinking of this name, Dark Human Squad?”

“Of course. You are a dark elf, and I am a human. Isn’t it perfect to call us the Dark Human Squad?¹”

“It’s not perfect at all!”

Aldrizzt was determined to disagree until the very end. Simply thinking of the laughter it could raise when they registered their team made

him want to dig a hole to bury himself in it. What's more, if they became famous... With Neo's plans for their adventurer life, even if he tried his best to block half of them, he feared that they could still build up a considerably large reputation with the remaining half.

If they became world famous using a team name like Dark Human Squad, Aldrizzt would rather go back to the underground den of the dark elves.

"What's wrong with Dark Human Squad?" Neo felt that this team name was extremely suitable for the two of them. Just when he was about to insist on keeping the name, he suddenly thought of something better and changed his words, "Then, as long as we use a different name, we're good to go?"

Aldrizzt blurted out, "Yes!"

"Alright, we won't use this name. Now that we're good to go, let's go to the city to register our team."

"..." Aldrizzt cried out, "Wait a second!"

Neo raised an eyebrow and retorted, "Hey hey, elves should mean what they say, right?"

"I am a dark elf, not an elf! To my race, not meaning what we say is a virtue."

Neo let out an "oh" sound, then asked back, "So can you, this 'dark

elf,' say what you don't mean to your comrades?"

Aldrizzt was startled, and then his shoulders drooped weakly as he honestly admitted, "I can't."

"Then we're all good; now let's go to a city to register our team!"

Aldrizzt hesitated for a moment. To agree was to agree. Furthermore, looking at how persistent Neo was, he feared he wouldn't be able to do anything to make him give up on his plan. He could only nod and hope that by pulling the hood of his cloak a bit lower and wearing a veil, maybe he would be able to hide his true race?

Right now, he could only hope that Neo merely wanted to enter the city to register their team. He had better not take the opportunity to drink wine, eat a meal, cause trouble, and stay in an inn. Then inexplicably, someone would discover that he was a dark elf, and after which they would really have to act out the scene of getting surrounded by thousands of people in the middle of the night.

"Let's go, Aldrizzt—what are you staring blankly at? Hurry up and lead the way."

Even though the words in his mouth sounded like he was urging him impatiently, Neo was actually feeling very happy. This maneuver "Use an even worse proposal to make the other party accept the not-so-worse plan" was a trick that Chasel was an expert in, and usually used on Neo himself. It was rare that Neo had a chance to use it on others, even thoroughly embarrassing the other party. This made him feel

that all the past resentment he had felt from getting tricked by Chasel had been swept away.



"I'm really sorry, but adventurers need at least three members before they can establish their teams."

Looking at the female attendant before him, who wore an apologetic expression yet was occasionally winking at him seductively, and hearing a dark elf chuckling behind him, Neo felt his good mood completely vanish.

However, he also could not do something idiotic like having an outburst. Instead he put on a faint smile, propped both his hands on the counter and lowered his head slightly, making the female attendant in front of him so crazy about him that hearts were nearly floating out of her eyes. Only then did he open his mouth and request, "We really do have three members, but one of them has yet to arrive. I wonder if you could be a bit more flexible and let us register our names first, and afterwards let him come and submit his information?"

The female attendant was gazing fixedly at such a handsome guy while her hand slowly slid toward the large hands propped on the counter. Even so, her mouth still dutifully said, "I'm sorry, I really can't make an exception."

Neo immediately wiped the smile off his face and drew back his hands, letting the female attendant's hand that was about to touch his fall onto air. She looked at him dolefully, but Neo ignored her. If she didn't

make an exception, then he wouldn't let her touch even his fingernails.

"Aldrizzt, we're leaving." Neo coldly turned around and walked off.

Hearing this, Aldrizzt felt glad and nodded repeatedly behind his veil as he said, "Let's hurry up and return to the forest."

"Return to what forest, don't we need to take on a mission?"

Only then did Aldrizzt remember, not only did they have to take on a mission, they also had to report back that they had completed the previous mission. However, he really did not want to accept a mission in the city. During this period of time, he would have to come into contact with people from the Adventurers' Guild, and it was simply too easy to get discovered by others. Even if he wore a veil and pulled his hood lower, if he continued to look down instead of at the other party when he spoke to them, it would arouse their suspicion or curiosity, and it would be followed by the big crisis of his true identity being discovered.

All the previous occasions when his true identity had been revealed had happened in a few small towns. There weren't many people in a small town and the moment Neo was unhappy, he swung his sword around wildly, so those few residents did not dare advance and surround them at all. However, in a big city...

"Aldrizzt, what is the name of the mission that we have to report back?"

In the blink of an eye, Neo had already rushed to the front of the counter for accepting missions, and was now turning his head back to ask him. Aldrizzt laughed bitterly. He had once again forgotten that

Neo only knew how to take action and never made plans. By the time the words were out of his mouth, he feared that he would have long since taken action, and he wouldn't have any time at all to stop him.

"It's Medicinal Herb Metru—"

"Where did this beauty come from? Her voice is so captivating!"

He was suddenly interrupted by a loud voice taunting him from behind. Aldrizzt felt anything but reassured. At that moment, sounds of laughter erupted all around him. Even though Aldrizzt's voice was soft, one could still clearly distinguish it as a man's voice. This person was obviously saying it on purpose to ridicule him.

This sort of situation wasn't rare. Aldrizzt had already discovered that his voice was much too soft compared to that of a human male, and so it occasionally attracted several verbal slurs about how he wasn't manly. Personally, Aldrizzt actually didn't mind. In any case he was not a man; he was a male dark elf. However...

"Who said that?" Neo turned around, and with a single glance, saw a big man wearing a contemptuous expression behind Aldrizzt. Without pause, he coldly snorted at him.

However, every time, Neo would always immediately create a scene. Aldrizzt hurriedly said, "Neo, I don't mind."

But it was as if Neo hadn't heard Aldrizzt's dissuasion at all. He glared at that man, and frostily said, "You can't even distinguish between male and female, what kind of adventurer are you? You probably can't

even recognize the roads, so what adventure could you go on?!”

Are you truly qualified to say such things?! Aldrizzt nearly coughed out blood. Who had to spend three days at the beginning before he could finally identify my gender? And now, who was it that couldn't even recognize the way home?

“Mind your own business.” The person who had ridiculed him wore light armor and looked tall and strong, particularly his biceps, which were so buff they were like two giant boulders. He appeared to be a warrior. He took several steps closer toward Neo until the two of them were face to face. Neo was shorter than the other by a full head, so they looked just like an adult and a child.

“He is a member of my team. To insult him is to insult me!”

Aldrizzt was dumbstruck, and because of this sentence, nearly stood at Neo's side to confront the other party together with him. However, this wasn't necessary at all. Besides, he really couldn't bear to watch that man get beaten up by Neo until he was bedridden for a month because of a single taunt.

That's right, he was worried for the other party's safety, and completely unworried about his own companion.

“Neo, I really don't mind...” Aldrizzt broke off, because he realized that Neo didn't actually look angry at all. Instead, he was more eager and excited. When that warrior stood in front of him and turned out to be a full head taller than him, he looked even happier.

Aldrizzt had a flash of realization. Basically, Neo had stayed in the forest for too long, and his hands were itching to find someone to practice his skills on.

The heck about insulting his teammate is to insult him...

Aldrizzt was annoyed. He turned around and queried, "May I ask which is the farthest inn from here?"

Farthest? The attendant was confused. He had heard of people asking for the nearest, but he had never heard of anyone asking for the farthest. He could only ponder for a while, and then inform him of one that was farther away.

"When he finishes fighting," Aldrizzt gestured toward Neo and said, "please tell him to go to that inn to look for me."

Let Neo fight until he was content. Then, he would see if this adventurer could find his way to the inn by himself. If he couldn't find it, then he could have fun sleeping by the roadside!

Notes On the Side Story

¹ **“Dark Human Squad”**: Neo formed this name by using the “dark” from dark elf combined with “human.” It’s a terrible name because the combination of 黑 (black) from 黑暗精靈 (dark elf) and 人 (human/man) to form 黑人隊 (Dark Human Squad) actually means “Black People Squad.”

Side Story #19: “The Complete Peeping Record on Lesus Judgment”

"Shh! Don't talk. The person we're going to peep at now is him, Lesus Judgment! Even if it's me, there's still the possibility of being discovered, right? So we must be ex-tra-care-ful! Heehee!"

What? Who am I? This ah... Take a guess? Heehee~~

Alright! Alright! Stop caring about who I am already. The most important thing right now is peeping! If we don't go soon, we won't be able to see him in his sleep!

I seem to remember that Lesus's room is next door to Grisia's?

This is bad. The room is really dark. We won't be able to see anything at all like this!

But if it is too bright, he will notice it...Just two or three fireflies should be okay, right? Let's try it! One, two... Ahhh! Damn it, he moved! Shh, Shh~~

"Who's there?"

Lesus flung aside his quilt in one fluid motion, his hand immediately landing on the Divine Judgment Sword by his bed. Even in the Holy Temple, he would always keep his divine sword within arm's reach.

Fireflies? Lesus hesitated for a moment, but when he didn't detect anything odd, he returned his sword to its original position.

Although there were only two fireflies, they were enough to light up half of Lesus's body. He was wearing a flax-colored, sleeveless garment. Even though it was now the beginning of autumn, a slight chill wasn't enough to make the holy knights wear long sleeves and pants.

Putting down his sword, Lesus guided the two fireflies with his hands. He chased them straight to the window and then opened it up to let them leave. It was still dark outside.

Upon seeing that they were gone, Lesus lay back on his bed, determined to rest a little while more.

Ahh, so we can't use fireflies. But, there's no need for everyone to worry. Soon, it will be dawn. It'll be bright enough then, so we'll be able to see plenty, heeheehee!

Even though everyone can only wait now, but! I can see! This insignificant darkness cannot prevent me from peeping at Lesus's sleeping position — so disciplined!

He's lying so straight and stiffly on his back, with a thin quilt pulled up to his stomach. He isn't turning over at all? Can't you kick the blanket? Isn't it tiring to sleep like this?

How boring! Grisia always kicks his blanket, hugs his pillow, and even

*talks in his sleep. Peeping at him sleeping is much more fun... Ohhh!
The sky is starting to brighten! Everyone, hurry up and look!*

The first ray of light shone on Lesus's collarbone, and following that, the entire side of his face was lit up brightly. He seemed to sense it, eyelashes fluttering slightly. He inhaled deeply and opened his eyes, only bleary-eyed for about two seconds before he was fully awake.

As he had purposely arranged the bed in a place where the sun could easily shine on it, he could always get up on time.

Lifting up the quilt, Lesus had on the same flax-colored shorts on his lower body. He walked to the window ledge, where he had placed water and neatly arranged clothes the previous night.

He started to carefully tidy up his appearance. Even though there weren't any requirements for the Judgment Knight's appearance, Lesus didn't tolerate the least bit of sloppiness for himself.

Soon after, he removed his sleeveless garment in a single movement, and the sun shone on his strong back muscles...

Ah— — So bright! Damn it! I hate it, I hate it! It's the same when I peep at Grisla. Now, I'm also not allowed to peep at Lesus. "You" are truly detestable!

Will you die if I take a peep? Is the flesh of holy knights that precious!? Damn it, I really want to see... What? Awaitsun? I'm tired of looking at Awaitsun already! Stone? You go remove his pants then.

What does it matter if I'm only able to see his upper body?

Ah? You'll let me see a little bit? Ah~~ I love you, Big Brother!

Lesus pulled on his pants and fastened the button. Just for a brief moment, you could vaguely see that the top of his underpants was black.

... A bit, my ass! I hate you!

The highlight is already over. Can I skip straight to the evening's bath? Ahhh! No, there is one more thing that is very interesting to watch, I guarantee it!

Heh heh, it'll happen today. I specially picked the day!

Come on, we'll follow Lesus to the Judge's Complex now!

"The witness and the evidence are all present. Do you still dare to deny your crimes?" Lesus roared sternly, both eyes burning. All the criminals that he had to personally interrogate were not pitiable even in death, and the one before his eyes should even go to hell!

Just like usual, after a full day of interrogating criminals, Lesus's mood was so rotten that it couldn't get any worse, even though he had especially arranged for fewer cases today. As he always had an additional task to handle on this day every week, he had to free up his time.

"Captain Judgment." Metal walked in. As usual, he felt embarrassed and hung his head, hardly daring to look at his own superior.

Lesus nodded at him. On the contrary, he didn't have any particular feelings. After all, he had been doing this for ten years. This usual practice had long since become natural for him.

Leading the other, he walked to a specially arranged torture chamber. Moon was already waiting inside and was leaning against the torture rack. The moment he saw Metal, he immediately drew out his whip and gave the other's calf an incomparably accurate hit. Metal muffled his groan.

"How slow. Come here and stand properly!"

Metal obediently walked to the side of the torture rack. Moon put away his whip and tied him to the torture rack with a sense of practiced ease. After that, he turned his head and asked excitedly, "Captain Judgment, how about we play with something different today?"

Moon, have you become addicted to beating him up? Lesus grudgingly arranged the torture instruments that cluttered the table. Of course, they were specially prepared ones. He wouldn't reuse the torture instruments used on those criminals' bodies on Metal's body.

Lesus lifted an iron rod and looked thoughtful as he asked, "Metal, how about we use the branding iron today?"

Metal's eyes shone.

"Branding iron?" Moon asked in astonishment. "But, those aren't easy to heal and fully recover from, right? Is it really okay?"

Lesus responded indifferently, "Don't worry, Sun gave me ten rose beads, and he still owes me eighty of them. Even though he is paying me back all the time, I don't think the number is likely to fall."

Moon shook his head, saying, "What the heck is Sun doing? He also owes me five of them!"

"He owes me ten," Metal interrupted.



Ahhh— —

The hot red iron was branding his lower abdomen. Having been in the Judge's Complex for many years, Lesus was well aware of where branding was the most painful.

The smell of scorched skin and flesh arose, along with the shrieking of his companion. Even though it was impossible to know for certain, Moon sometimes suspected that after being in the Judge's Complex for many years, their Captain Judgment had actually already turned into a sadist.

"Captain Judgment, don't you feel like puking?"

"I'm okay. Metal is a lot cleaner than criminals," Lesus said calmly.

The real problem is whether or not they're clean? Moon was a bit speechless.

"And he's not suffering at all," Lesus muttered in a low voice.

"Not suffering? Metal, Captain Judgment says you're not in pain."

Moon laughed as he flicked his hand and whipped him, purposely whipping across the wound that had just been branded by the hot iron. He didn't expect that it would cause Metal to shriek.

Moon panicked and exclaimed, "Is it t-too painful? Captain Judgment, where are the beads? Hurry and heal Metal!"

However, Lesus remained calm as he queried, "Metal? Do we continue?"

Metal was in so much pain that he shuddered for a long while before he raised his head, saying hopefully, "Can we continue?"

Lesus nodded. "As long as the condition of the wound is kept within the healing range of the rose beads."

The whip immediately lashed out, and Moon said angrily as he whipped him, "You yelled out so loudly, scaring me into thinking you were truly in pain! Bastard, if I don't beat you until you cry this time, then my name is not Vival!"

In the midst of Metal's anguished wails, Lesus continued to heat up a piece of iron. He estimated that if he didn't heat the branding iron up too much, perhaps he could burn him three more times...

Sitting in the bathroom, Lesus decided to wait for only a minute, as he didn't have anything to do. Unexpectedly, his wait was actually successful.

Sun walked in. The moment he saw Lesus, he said in amazement, "You aren't vomiting? Ah, was your last job today beating Metal?" Lesus nodded his head. "Today, I used the branding iron on his lower abdomen." He knew that Sun liked to ask, so he simply said it first.

"Branding iron?" Sun blurted out, "Isn't that too much?"

"Not at all. The rose beads can heal it completely."

"... The rose beads that I make by hugging my Divine Sun Sword and exerting my utmost efforts, a treasure that even the king desires, you guys actually use it to play S&M?" Sun nearly vomited blood.

"Only once in a while." In fact, Lesus also felt that it was a bit wasteful, but Metal had been doing a lot of work recently and had finished it all very well, so he should occasionally reward him.

"How about this? I'll lend my Elaro to you to heal him. Each time takes the place of one rose bead."

Lesus flatly refused, "He is still young. He shouldn't see scenes like brutal beatings."

"Yours is the one who is still young. Mine has just turned eighteen..."

"..." Lesus was unable to retort. Indeed, he had briefly thought of Hungri's age, but even Hungri should be setting foot in the Judge's Complex soon. "But are you sure that Elaro can take that sort of scene? He's very kind-hearted."

Sun chuckled as he said, "You underestimate my Elaro too much." Lesus frowned for a moment. According to his observations, the young Sun Knight was truly a kind-hearted and good child. *I don't understand. What does Sun mean by saying, "underestimate too much?"*

"Your expression says that you don't believe me? My head of the nursery is definitely not the head for nothing!"

When Sun finished speaking, he actually felt a bit depressed. Every time he saw Elaro mingling with the other young knights, he would wonder "Why in the world is he such a good father?" and feel like spitting blood.

Lesus fell silent. When he thought of Hungri, he truly couldn't refute Elaro's title as the head of the nursery.

"Anyway, I made an appointment with Elaro to work on documents together."

Lesus was stunned and looked at Sun in disbelief.

“My head of the nursery is not a pushover...”

When he thought about correcting documents, Sun lurched as he walked out, his mouth muttering a bunch of grumbles that Lesus couldn't make out.

That's right! Hurry up and leave! I don't want to watch the two of you chat! Because after this, Lesus is going to... Heehee!

Lesus stood up. After he finished passing judgments, he would return to the public baths to bathe, as was usual. If he went in and out of the Judge's Complex twice in one day, he would even bathe twice.

In fact, everyone knew that he was a little mysophobic. Therefore, before the criminals were dragged out to be interrogated, they would have already been washed clean. This was actually inconvenient and not very necessary, because after the interrogation, those criminals would only be dirtier and messier. However, Lesus had never been able to do anything about it.

Walking into the public baths, there wasn't a single person inside, as usual. This was the exclusive public bath of the Twelve Holy Knights. Only Grisia didn't come here, and at this hour, the only person who would come here to bathe was Lesus.

Lesus took off the black robes of the Judgment Knight. Underneath it,

he wore black pants that were fairly tight-fitting and easy to move in, and the same colored short-sleeve shirt. As there was the robe to cover them up, Lesus had never paid particular attention to his inner clothing—the outer black robes were already hot enough, so of course the simpler and more convenient his inner clothes were, the better.

After taking off his robe, Lesus felt a lot more relaxed, and hung his robe by the side as he passed by. Then, he started to remove his shirt...

The highlight, the highlight—

“Judgment!”

Lesus turned around and promptly put the clothes he had half taken off back on. Unexpectedly, the person who had opened the bathroom door was Sun. He was a little surprised. Sun never used this bathroom.

“Has something happened?” Lesus couldn’t help but frown as he took down his black robes that were hanging by the side. He probably wouldn’t have time to bathe.

However, Sun froze and said blankly, “Actually it isn’t a big problem. Why did I feel like I must come and find you? How strange... It’s just a small matter. I can resolve it by myself.”

Lesus frowned, but said, “I’ll help you.”

“Hm?” Sun initially wanted to say that there was no need, but he saw

that something was not quite right with Lesus's expression. "What's wrong?"

Lesus's brows were deeply locked together as he said, "The entire day today, it felt like there was someone closely watching me. It's the same even in here."

After he said this, he glanced around. There was obviously no one in the bathroom—that was apparent to him—but he simply felt that something was not quite right.

Unexpectedly, Sun said with understanding, "I also have that sort of feeling occasionally, but in the end, nothing happens. It is probably the God of Light closely watching us during those times!"

The God of Light? Lesus couldn't think of any other explanations and could only nod his head in agreement. "Then, you can go ahead. I'll continue bathing."

"No!" Sun said, "I think you should still come with me."

"You also feel that something is not right?"

"I only feel that the God of Light wouldn't be watching you bathe."

Sun's expression was rather strange. "If you feel the gaze on you even in here, then maybe it's not Him. Maybe it's... Cough! In any case, you wouldn't feel too uncomfortable going without bathing for a day, right?"

I would! Lesus was silent for a long while, but eventually gave in to the uneasiness in his heart. For once in his life, he made the rare

decision not to bathe on this day. He put on his black robes once more, and followed Sun out of the bathroom...

... Grisia Sun!

As my spokesperson, you actually wrecked my exciting moment!

You are dead for sure. I'll never be finished with you— —