



GOD Volume 3: The End Begins
Original novel in Chinese by: [御我 \(Yu Wo\)](#)
Translated by [Prince Revolution](#)

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Chapter 1: The Little Angel Yaya

Ugh...

Why is it so bright? Is it daytime already? Why didn't Bai Saya wake me up?

On a normal day, even before the skies would start to brighten, Bai Saya would already be up and training. After he finished his morning training, he would wake Alan up. Then, the two of them would split up to search for breakfast.

The elf opened his beautiful, slim eyes. The piercing sunlight immediately made him shut them again. A long time passed before he could open them once more. It was really too bright already. Not only that, the sun was directly above him. *It seems to be noontime, but how is it possible for me to sleep all the way until noon?*

He sat up quickly and his state of confusion lasted for a bit before he finally remembered what had happened.

They had been attacked by a plant manipulator. Unable to win, Shooting Star had wanted to use group teleportation so they could flee, but he had been stopped before he could finish reciting the incantation. Defeat had been right before their eyes when Bai Saya had woken up, screamed, and...

Self-destructed.

Alan sat in a stupor. *Does this mean that I died? And that I died due to the absurd reason that my companion self-destructed? I would rather have been killed by the enemy. That would have been better!*

Suddenly, there was a noise. It resembled the fluttering of wings, and it was very close... Alan lowered his head, only to be met by a large pair of eyes. There was actually a child sitting on his lap, and it was a little girl with a pair of small wings.

Alan's long, slender eyes widened right then. This situation was out of his expectations and stunned him once more.

The child copied him, widening her round pink eyes to stare at Alan.

"Ah, ah." The cute little girl waved her chubby hands cutely, as if she wanted someone to hug her.

Alan vaguely recalled that Shooting Star mentioned more than once that he wanted to capture an angel as his pet. At the time, the elf had even asked what in the world an angel was.

As it were, in a certain old religion of the human race, people with wings on their back would come to welcome the souls of benevolent people who passed on. These people with wings were known as angels.

Does that mean I really am dead? That's why an angel has come for me... Alan frowned. *But I'm an elf. I don't believe in human religions.* When elves died, they would become leaves and return to the world tree of their homeland.

"Ah, ah, ah!" The child, seeing that Alan wasn't paying her any attention, began to make loud sounds. She used her chubby hands to grab onto Alan's golden hair that rested against his chest.

Alan frowned and wrestled his hair back from the child.

The child seemed to grow angry. She puffed up her cheeks and began to fight with the elf over his hair.

"Ah! Alan, you're already awake."

Alan stilled. He turned his head to look. Bai Saya's gentle face came into view.

"Bai Saya, have you died, too? Oh, that's right. You self-destructed." Alan furrowed his brows. *Is it because I promised to play with Shooting Star for two hundred years, so even though I died, I have been pulled into the afterlife of humans and have not been returned to the world tree?*

Bai Saya blinked and smiled. "Alan, are you still half asleep? What self-destruction? I'm not dead either."

"You're not dead?" Alan stared at him suspiciously and asked, "But earlier, you were clearly emitting light, and then you exploded."

Bai Saya explained, "That wasn't an explosion. It was Roth lending me power, but I was just too angry then, so the power came out all out once. That's why the intensity was so much."

Alan knitted his brows together and asked, "If you're not dead, then am I still alive, too? But if I'm still alive, then why has an angel come for me?"

"An angel?" Bai Saya's gaze moved to Alan's lap. He figured it out and asked, "You mean this small girl?"

Alan nodded. Then, he reached his hand out again to wrestle his hair back, angering the child to the point of incessantly crying out with, "Ah, ah, ah, ah!"

"Um, she's not an angel. The truth is..." Bai Saya smiled wryly and pleaded, "Could you help me keep this from Shooting Star? The truth is, this little girl hatched from the egg, the egg that we obtained from the dragon's lair."

"Wasn't that a dragon egg?" Alan asked in surprise. It was then that Alan finally noticed that other than the little girl on his lap, there were also a lot of egg shell shards.

"No. The truth of the matter is..."

Bai Saya recounted the entire story of the dragon asking for a favor with the egg. However, he didn't at all notice that halfway through the story, Alan's originally calm expression suddenly changed. He stilled and then began to waver over whether or not he should warn Bai Saya...

"So, this means that the egg wasn't a dragon egg, and you knew it from the beginning?"

"Yes." Bai Saya rubbed the back of his head out of embarrassment.
"I'm really sorry that I didn't tell you all. I was just worried that Shooting Star would steal other treasures from the dragon after learning that this wasn't a dragon egg. So I thought that I should keep it from him for the moment—Alan, why are you blinking at me so much? Do your eyes hurt?"

Alan had been hinting so hard his eyes were starting to twitch, but even then, Bai Saya didn't seem to get it. *Sigh! I give up.* He shook his head and straight out said, "I wasn't the one who asked the question just now."

"It wasn't you? Then..." Halfway through his question, Bai Saya shivered, as if there were a devil with an evil glare staring holes into his back.

He frantically began to explain, "Um, a-actually, back then, I did consider telling Shooting Star, but I just happened to be interrupted!"

"Oh? Really?" A purposely low and dragged out voice sounded behind Bai Saya.

Seems like it's too late. Bai Saya turned with a contrite face. A pair of large golden eyes that resembled lava that was about to erupt was glaring at him fiercely. He reflexively answered, "Shooting Star, I wasn't keeping it from you deliberately!"

"Liar! You great big liar! You clearly knew that wasn't a dragon egg, yet you kept it from me, your owner!" Shooting Star grabbed pet

number one's neck and shook him back and forth fiercely. He shouted unhappily, "My pet number three is gone! My dragon is gone! You have to compensate me! Compensate!"

Hearing that, Bai Saya, whose neck was being grabbed, smiled even more wryly. *I myself am already Shooting Star's pet. What else can I give him?*

"Ah, ah, ah!" The little girl stuck her head out from Alan's arms. She looked curiously at Shooting Star who was choking someone.

Shooting Star's attention was immediately diverted by the soft voice of the child. She had a round face, short, curly maroon hair, large pink eyes, a chubby body, pudgy limbs, and even a pair of small white wings on her back... *A pair of white wings?!*

"Sh-Shooting Star, I know you're really disappointed that a dragon didn't hatch from the egg, but you only have to bear with it for a short while!" Bai Saya immediately begged nervously when he saw Shooting Star stare at the little girl. "When I find a good mother, I'll send this child away at once..."

"What!" When Shooting Star heard that, he snapped his head back and glared daggers at Bai Saya.

Bai Saya jumped in surprise and amended, "O-Or, we just have to find a populated area, and I can ask someone to find a good family to raise her!"

"What are you saying?" Shooting Star's voice shot higher, a stormy look of anger darkening his face.

Looks like it's still no good... Bai Saya sighed and said dejectedly, "If you really won't allow her to stay, then at least let me bring her back to the dragon."

When Shooting Star heard that, he immediately growled, "No way!"
"Shooting Star, don't be so heartless!"

Bai Saya was getting a little mad. After all, the dragon had personally entrusted this important task to Bai Saya, yet after he made the promise, he now had to go back on his word and return the child. This was already making him feel miserable. *Yet now, Shooting Star isn't even willing to let me bring the child back? Am I supposed to abandon the child in the middle of the wilderness?*

"That's my pet! I won't allow you to give her to someone else!"

"I must at least bring her back to the dragon... Huh?" Halfway through speaking, Bai Saya finally realized what Shooting Star had said and froze on the spot.

Shooting Star left behind the frozen Bai Saya and ran toward the cute kid with wings and even shouted, "Angel, angel! My dream pet, your owner is here!"

"Ah, ah!" The little girl was frightened by his shout and burrowed into Alan's arms, wanting to hide from the mysterious entity that was flying her way.

"Alan, give my angel to me now." Shooting Star looked left and right. The entire body of the angel was plastered against Alan, like she was a part of the elf's body. Besides, the elf hated other people touching him for no reason, so Shooting Star really didn't know where to start. He could only puff out his cheeks and extend his hand to his pet to ask for his other pet.

"Okay."

Alan responded and proactively lifted the child to hand her to Shooting Star. However, when he let go, the weight on his hands didn't lessen at all. The little girl was like a koala, tightly clinging onto Alan's arm with all four of her limbs.

Shooting Star, however, wasn't going to give up on his little angel so easily. He grabbed the kid. *I'll pull, pull, pull~~*

"Ah, ah!" The little girl also steeled herself. *I won't let go, won't let go, won't let go~~*

Alan unwillingly became central to the tug of war. He frowned and asked, "Why isn't she letting go of me?"

"She's an avian. This race hatches from eggs. It's in the nature of those who hatch from eggs to treat the first living organism they see as their mother."

Bai Saya glanced at the person who had explained this. Only then did he realize that Dan had woken up as well.

"Saya, what exactly happened?" Dan couldn't believe his eyes. He wasn't able to understand what this group was thinking. *Don't they see the "condition" of our surroundings at all? They still have the heart to play with a small avian child.*

With Bai Saya and the rest as the center of the circle and a radius that extended a kilometer long, the entire circle was yellow dirt where not an inch of grass grew!

However, their campground had originally been a field of grass, and their foe had even summoned a large group of towering, ancient trees. Now, all of those sights had vanished without a trace, leaving behind only yellow dirt.

After Dan asked that question, Shooting Star, who had been pulling on the angel, finally recalled the matter at hand. *Weren't we almost killed by Braids, and then Bai Saya added fuel to the fire and self-destructed? Why are we all fine right now?*

I don't even have any injuries!

If the clothes on his body hadn't been tattered and bloody, Shooting Star would have thought it a nightmare he had dreamt up.

Bai Saya honestly said, "When I was unconscious, the Stone of Fury lent me power. Once I woke up and saw that you were all so heavily injured, I was just too angry and accidentally let out all of the power at once. Then, I fainted. When I woke up again, it was already like this."

When Shooting Star heard that, he gave up on the little angel in his hand and ran beside pet number one to look him over.

Bai Saya couldn't help but ask, "Shooting Star, is something wrong with me? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"How strange!" Shooting Star didn't respond to him. Instead, he turned and asked Dan, "Hey! Do you feel Xiao Bai has gone crazy? But even though my Xiao Bai used the stone's power and went cuckoo, he's still such a good guy. He is definitely a good person through and through!"

You're the one who has gone crazy! Bai Saya rolled his eyes.

Dan clearly did not agree with Shooting Star. In his opinion, Bai Saya was no different from usual. There was no way that he had gone insane! Even though he knew this, Dan could not help but ask in concern, "Saya, are you really okay?"

"I'm fine. Roth said that I'm his true master now. Even if I overuse his power, I won't 'go crazy.'" When Bai Saya said the last part, he especially emphasized it for Shooting Star.

Hearing that pet number one wasn't going to go crazy, Shooting Star relaxed and asked in curiosity, "Xiao Bai, what power did you get from Wrath?"

"Hm? I don't really know either. Roth just said that this was power that I wished for. The more wrath I provide, the stronger the power will be."

Bai Saya looked at how barren it was around them and smiled wryly as he said, "I just didn't think that the power would be this unbelievable."

It really is unbelievable! Shooting Star frowned. *This power blasted such a large radius around us, and it even helped heal all of our injuries? What the hell is this power? You're gonna make clerics and mages hold hands and ram into tofu to commit suicide!*

"That Braids is definitely dead, right?"

Shooting Star suddenly remembered the other fellow who could make all of the assassins in the world hang themselves with noodles to commit suicide. That person could actually turn leaves into projectiles that were just like metal ones. This power was too frightening. There was no shortage of leaves in the world! If Bai Saya hadn't suddenly exploded, they would have all been dead meat!

"No, he didn't die. I can sense that he escaped." Bai Saya hesitated for a moment before he divulged what had happened to Braids.

"In which direction did he flee?" Dan's tone instantly turned cold.

Although Shooting Star hadn't asked, his face had hardened. Clearly, the disdain he felt toward Braids didn't at all lose to Dan's. If Dan was going to strike while Braids was weak by chasing after him to finish him off, then Shooting Star was definitely going to go with him. He

would use his blood red claws to claw him several hundred times to relieve his frustration. *That bastard actually dared to use leaves to slice my neck!*

"Don't chase after him." Bai Saya shook his head and said in disagreement, "Roth told me that even though the master of the Stone of Indulgence has gotten injured, he is still able to use his stone's power. However, I overused my stone's power the very first time I used it, so..."

"So what?" Dan quickly asked in worry.

Bai Saya smiled lopsidedly and said, "So, I even have trouble with a fast walk."

Ever since he had woken up, he had felt completely exhausted. Other than still being able to walk normally, he couldn't do anything else at all. After Roth explained it to him, Bai Saya then understood that this result was actually already considerably fortunate. If not for the fact that Bai Saya had indeed provided a large amount of wrath, don't even mention walking, he would probably still be unconscious, and who knew when he would wake up.

Shooting Star propped his hands on his waist and shouted angrily, "Xiao Bai, you're way too useless! Braids used so much of the stone's power and was still able to escape! Yet you're barely able to walk. Both of you possess Stones of Sin, so why are you so much weaker than him?"

When he heard that, Bai Saya could only smile awkwardly. He was a novice. He had already exceeded expectations when he was able to chase away Braids, who had been using his stone's power for who knows how long.

"But since you put it that way, forget it! We won't give chase."

Unexpectedly, Shooting Star didn't want to take revenge. However, after he said that, he immediately pounced on Alan.... No, on the little girl who still refused to let go of Alan.

"I'd rather hug my little angel. Alan, let go of my little angel already!" No matter how Shooting Star tugged on the little angel, he couldn't pull her away. He could only take his anger out on his other pet.

Just who is letting go of whom? Alan looked at the little girl who was clinging on to him, refusing to let go. He recalled what Dan had said—those of the avian race hatched from eggs and would treat the first thing they saw as their mother... *No!* The elf felt completely powerless after thinking of this. *Not only am I not an avian, I am also male. How am I supposed to be a mother?*

"Ah, ah, ahh ooo ahhh... Wah!"

The little girl clung onto her "mama" with all her might, but "Mama" wasn't paying her any attention. Yet, that monster with shining eyes kept wanting to take her. Distressed, the little girl could not help but burst into tears.

"She's crying." Shooting Star extended his arms and said in all seriousness, "Here, let your owner Shooting Star carry you. I'll rock you."

The little girl cried even harder.

Seeing the child cry so devastatingly, Bai Saya asked worriedly, "Is she hungry? Let's quickly get her some milk."

Shooting Star mocked him, "Then, you can squeeze some milk for her right now. How about that, big sis Bai Saya?"

Um... Bai Saya felt gutted. Right, where are we supposed to get milk for her out of nowhere?

The elf, who was always indifferent, knitted his brows together for once. Perhaps he could no longer bear the noise, or perhaps his miniscule amount of sympathy and even more miniscule amount of "motherly love" suddenly made their presence known. He gently patted the little angel on the back and even hummed a gentle little tune.

The little girl's loud wailing slowly turned into quiet sobs. She burrowed into Alan's arms and gave a few "ah, ahs" before she extended her little hand and grabbed onto a strand of Alan's hair. She slowly closed her large pink eyes and finally fell asleep.

"The little angle is so so adorable! As expected of my pet number three!"

Shooting Star could not help but grab his cheeks and scream at the top of his lungs.

Dan reminded him, "She is not an angel like you're claiming. She is an avian, which is one of the beast tribes."

Shooting Star resolutely said, "Who cares what race she is? I like the little angel. I want her to be my pet!"

"What part of her do you like?" Bai Saya asked curiously. After his eyes, Alan's golden hair, and Belle's facial shape, he was very curious about what part of the little avian Shooting Star liked.

"Her wings! Such cute, little, white wings!" Shooting Star immediately shouted. He almost woke up the little angel, earning him a pissed off glare from Alan.

"Unfortunately, she doesn't like you." Alan coldly doused Shooting Star's fervor with a bucket of cold water.

Shooting Star angrily glared at pet number two and grumpily said, "In any case, she likes you. A pet of a pet is still my pet!"

Alan firmly said, "I am not her mother, and I do not wish to raise her as a pet. When we reach a place with humans or beasts, we will hand her over to an actual female to raise her!"

"No way! I won't allow you to give my pet to someone else!" Shooting Star shouted, "The little angel is mine, mine, mine..."

Alan didn't pay him any attention. He ignored him and told Bai Saya and Dan, "Let's go find somewhere with people. Not only does this little one need a mother, she also needs food."

Bai Saya nodded. He agreed with Alan. Although the little girl had fallen asleep, she would definitely be hungry once she woke up. Finding food was their top priority.

But what should we do after that? Bai Saya looked at Shooting Star. Even though he looked like a kid who was always fooling around, Bai Saya knew that Shooting Star was very headstrong. Once he became enamored with a "certain part" of someone, unless that person's position was as important as Princess Anabelle's, then it was very difficult to make Shooting Star give up on them.

Even when faced with Alan's high price and the Guild chasing them, Shooting Star's determination to make the elf his pet hadn't wavered. So, how was it possible for him to give up on a little angel who had practically already fallen into his devilish hands?

If by chance they really were able to find a woman they could leave the little angel with, then Bai Saya would truly worry that the woman would suffer heavy injuries from suddenly getting whipped that very night. Or, she could get disfigured by claw marks to the point that she couldn't face anyone after that.

If they couldn't find a mother for the little angel, then Alan would get angry. If they found a mother for the little angel, then Shooting Star would get angry... *Sigh!*

Only you, the one in possession of the Stone of Fury, refuses to get angry.

Huh? Who just spoke? Bai Saya looked around for a moment before he realized that it was probably Roth's voice. *It's still hard to believe that a stone can talk.*

Bai Saya clasped Dan on the shoulder and said, "Dan, the two of us should go search for some food, or else the child will have nothing to eat when she wakes up."

Dan nodded. He glanced at Shooting Star, who was lazing around on the ground, staring at the little angel. He didn't look like he planned on foraging with them. However, Dan did not feel angered by this action of his, not anymore. After fighting together, he realized that this boy who was always fooling around was actually quite strong. His wariness was much higher than Bai Saya and the elf who knew little of the world's matters. Leaving him behind to keep watch was not a bad arrangement.

"Why don't I go by myself?" Dan reminded him, "Didn't you exhaust yourself from using up your power?"

Bai Saya smiled and said, "Finding some food isn't a problem. I'm not that weak."

Dan watched that pair of gentle amber eyes dance with mirth and felt his heart warm.

"What is it?" Bai Saya walked past Dan. When he noticed that Dan didn't follow him, he gave voice to his confusion.

"Nothing, let's go." Dan sighed. He was falling in too deep. *How am I supposed to keep walking down this path?*

Bai Saya made a noncommittal noise and worried out loud as he walked, "But milk is probably difficult to find. Just how are we supposed to feed the child?"

Dan gave a suggestion. "We can pick some berries and mash them up. Once we reach a town, we can think of something else."

"I suppose so..."

As he watched the two of them depart, Shooting Star also grew hungry. Even though he wanted to make a fire so that he could start cooking once the ingredients arrived, Bai Saya had demolished everything around them. There wasn't even a single blade of grass left, let alone any firewood.

Should I go gather some firewood? Shooting Star looked at the exhausted elf and the slumbering little angel. *Forget it. Bai Saya will probably find some. Making a fire using fire magic doesn't take long anyway.*

"Shooting Star." Alan frowned a bit and said, "Bai Saya has already become the master of the Stone of Fury, and Dan came here to search for the other stones and to test to see who the master of the stone would be. Won't he betray us for the sake of completing his mission?"

Shooting Star wasn't concerned. He answered, "It's a good thing that Bai Saya is the stone's master! If either of us were the master, then we'd be done for. But Xiao Bai is Dan's checkmate. Don't you underestimate the loyalty the demon race has toward their checkmates. Dan won't betray him."

Alan recalled what had happened on the boat. Dan hadn't cared for his own safety and had even pointed out the direction of land for Bai Saya's sake. And so, Alan nodded.

"However, the fact that Xiao Bai has become the stone's master is a huge problem." Shooting Star frowned and said, "I really don't understand what the heck these Stones of Sin are, but Braids is really too ridiculously strong. This kind of power will attract a lot of trouble."

Alan nodded. Even though strong power was good, this kind of strength that came from outside sources would only attract too many others coveting its power.

"And the masters of the stones can even detect where the others are. That's leaving us nowhere to go!" Shooting Star had a huge headache just from thinking about this. If not for that fact, he could take Bai Saya to hide deep in the forests on some mountain. *Who could find us then?*

Alan quietly said, "Must the masters of the stones hold enmity toward each other? Must these people fight each other?"

"Who knows? That Braids looked just like a cuckoo. Maybe he was just crazy, and it had nothing to do with the stone!"

Alan thought about it and agreed. That person really didn't seem normal, while Bai Saya was completely different. The masters of the Stones of Sin, though they all possessed stones, were probably all different from each other.

"You don't have to think too much about it. Dan is definitely even more worried about Bai Saya than we are. More than us, he's probably more concerned about his own subordinates. They're underlings from the Guild, you know! He'd rather have Bai Saya stay with us."

Is that how it is? Alan understood it a bit more. He looked at Shooting Star's childish face and couldn't help but ask, "How old are you really?"

It was almost imperceptible, but Shooting Star flinched before he said, "Fifteen, almost sixteen."

Really? Alan didn't believe him. *How can he have this kind of fighting ability at that kind of age?* Even though he wasn't very familiar with the characteristics of humans, no matter which race, fifteen should still be considered a child. Neither Shooting Star's ability nor his mind was like a child's. Although Shooting Star always fooled around, he could still be depended on at key moments.

The elf recalled when they had been ambushed. If Shooting Star hadn't discovered it in time, Alan and the little girl in his arms would probably have both been strangled to death.

"If that is your true age, then calling you a genius for your ability would not even cut it."

Shooting Star said a bit uncomfortably, "I've been on my own since I was young. If I didn't have some strength, then wouldn't I have been bullied to death?"

Alan fell silent for a while before he got out the words, "I am sure you caused trouble everywhere you went since you were young, so you had no choice but to get stronger."

"No way! I haven't been causing trouble since I was young. It wasn't until I was at least ten that I started to cause trouble!"

Causing trouble since you were ten doesn't count as "since you were young?" The elf was speechless.

"Ah! Xiao Bai is back!" Shooting Star jumped up.

Not far in the distance were two figures, which belonged exactly to Bai Saya and Dan. The first was holding two small animals around the size of chickens and ducks, while the latter was carrying them directly on his shoulder.

"How were you so fast?" Alan was a little confused. He and Shooting Star had only spoken for a short while. *How are they back already?*

Bai Saya walked up to them. When he heard Alan's words, he blushed for some reason.

Dan helplessly said, "Many animals were toppled by the stone's power. We only walked to the outer edges and already found the bodies of many animals that had just died. There was no need to hunt. We only had to spend a bit of time to pick fruits and gather firewood."

Shooting Star guffawed and said, "Xiao Bai, so the power you got from the Stone of Fury was actually the power to hunt!"

If it really were just the power to hunt, that would be great. Bai Saya smiled wryly.

"Xiao Bai, go make a fire. Alan, mash the berries to feed the little angel."

The elf, who had just received his task, was a little worried that this child would treat him as her "mother" even more if he were the one to feed her. However, watching the sleepy girl in his arms made him unable to harden his heart. He took the red berries Bai Saya handed him and began to mash them earnestly.

When it was time to eat, Shooting Star stared fixedly at his little angel, as if she were the appetizer.

The little angel sat on the elf's lap and stared back at Shooting Star, her chubby hands grabbing tightly onto the elf's hair. She was extremely wary of being taken by a bad guy. Only when the elf fed her the jam would she open her mouth to swallow the food.

As Shooting Star stared and stared, he suddenly thought of something and suggested, "Why don't we give the little angel a name? Otherwise,

if we keep calling her little angel, what should we do if she really thought that she's called Little Angel?"

Are you planning on giving another random name?! The faces of the first victim, Xiao Bai, and the second victim, Alan, both darkened upon hearing the three words, "give a name."

Shooting Star crossed his arms and stared at the little angel in Alan's arms. A thought came to him and he shouted, "Right, she's Alan's daughter!"

No, she's not! Alan glared at him fiercely, but he didn't bother arguing over it with that person. After all, they had to find this child someone to take care of her. There was no need to squabble over this right now.

"That's why the little angel should of course have the last name Al!" Shooting Star concluded gleefully.

Alan finally could not hold in his anger. If not for the little girl who was still sleeping in his arms, he really would have jumped up and sent several streaks of lightning at him. "My last name is not Al. Listen carefully. My full name is Alanmishus Grodiatila. My last name is Grodiatila!"

"Xiao Bai, tell me, what is Alan's last name?" Shooting Star didn't pay any attention to Alan. Instead, he turned and asked Bai Saya, who was to their side.

"Um, Gro, something ala?" Bai Saya asked hesitantly.

Alan despaired over how his companions couldn't even remember his name, while Dan began to rejoice that his name was only one syllable.

Shooting Star looked at Alan gleefully.

Defeated, Alan sat down and continued to feed the child. He gave up and said, "Give her whatever name you want. She is not my daughter in any case."

Shooting Star continued and said, "Since she should have 'Ah' from 'Al' in her name, and she always likes to make those ah ah noises, I have decided to call her Yaya!"

"Good one! It's simple and easy to remember!" Bai Saya applauded.

"..." Dan kept his head lowered and refrained from commenting.

The beautiful elf's face twitched. *Poor Yaya. You would have been better off being called Little Angel.* Alan could not help but feel sorry for the little girl in his arms. He didn't notice in the least that he had already started thinking of her as Yaya.

Meanwhile, Bai Saya was feeling sorry for the elf. He knew in his heart that since Shooting Star had given her a name, then he wasn't going to give up on keeping her even on his deathbed. The elf was definitely going to take the place of "the mother."

"Wah—" Yaya began to cry due to how her chubby, fair face was currently being pinched by two relentless fingers. However, she was too scared to smack that hand away. She could only grab onto her

“mother’s” hair tightly, afraid that she would get snatched away the moment she let go.

“You hurt Yaya! Move your hand away!” The elf growled, and a streak of lightning immediately descended from the sky.

“Ouch! I’ll stop pinching her. I’ll stop! Don’t zap me with lightning, owie ow ow—”

A strict mother and an easy-going father; at least I would be the easy-going father, right? Bai Saya held his warm soup and felt very relieved.

Chapter 2: Easy-Going Father, Strict Mother

Originally, the speed at which Shooting Star and company advanced on the road, given their high exhaustion from searching for Bai Saya without sleep or rest, was only slightly faster than taking a stroll.

After getting ambushed by Braids, Bai Saya, who had originally been the most energetic among them, became a wounded patient. The team had also acquired the small avian Yaya, who had legs but didn't know how to walk, and wings but didn't know how to fly. Therefore, their speed decreased until it was no different from taking a stroll.

Shooting Star teased Yaya the entire way. Yaya would cry and run for her mama—meaning, Alan. Following that, it was Alan's turn to "tease" Shooting Star; although the skies stretched far and wide without a cloud in sight during this entire period, lightning flashed nonstop.

"Wah—" Yaya began to wail again. Unfortunately, as she hadn't been able to learn how to walk or fly yet, she could only keep squirming in Shooting Star's arms, wanting to escape the devil's grasp and return to her mama's warm embrace.

"Shooting Star!" Alan's face was furious, as if he were a mother whose child was getting bullied. He rushed over and snatched Yaya back. Then, he growled, "Don't bully Yaya!"

Shooting Star boldly said, "I wasn't bullying her. I was only pinching her cheeks!"

Alan glared at Shooting Star suspiciously. Then, he lowered his head to look. Yaya's fair cheeks had two red fingerprints on them. He had really only pinched her cheeks—so hard that they were turning purple!

"Shooting Star!"

Piercing lightning once again split the skies open.

"Wahh, Xiao Bai, save me!" Shooting Star ran right away and didn't forget to beg his pet to rescue him as he fled.

Bai Saya smiled wryly. His body had only recovered to the point that he could walk. How would he be able to save someone from the elf?

Besides, even if Bai Saya's body was in perfect health, he would not stop Alan from disciplining Shooting Star. Only the elf was able to stop Shooting Star from pinching Yaya's cheeks until they were as swollen as meat buns. Also, only the elf's lightning was able to stop Shooting Star from bothering Bai Saya about acting out the finishing move he did with the stone.

When they didn't have money to buy food, Alan was able to dig up all sorts of vegetables and roots from the wilderness. When they weren't able to buy milk to feed the kid (Yaya), Alan was able to find berries and honey from the forest to feed her. When they weren't able to discipline the kid (Shooting Star), Alan could use lightning to electrocute him until he shouted, "I won't do it again!" and became obedient for around one to three hours.

Bai Saya was shocked by a realization. *T-this has to be the best example of good fortune coming to those who have earned it!* If it weren't because he couldn't bear to turn a blind eye to Alan and had decided to save the elf back then, then how would they have such an omnipotent mom—no, such an omnipotent companion—who could buy food, raise a kid, and educate the other kid?

Bai Saya could not help but wipe away cold sweat. He couldn't let Alan know that he also thought that he resembled a mother. Then, he would be in great trouble and might even get a personal taste of that violent lightning.

Ever since Shooting Star had been electrocuted by Alan until his hair stood up, making him angrily grumble, "The elf is really such a nagging mommy," Alan had grown sick of any words related to motherhood. It was about the same degree of hatred Bai Saya held toward the word sissy.

At this time, Shooting Star, who had been fleeing, abruptly stopped in his tracks. He yelled excitedly, "Hey! There's a village up ahead AHHHH..."

His words turned into a shriek as he got hit by lightning.

Dan walked over to take a look. Not far ahead was a village, and it wasn't all that small either. At least, for the Shaosi Continent, it wasn't all that small of a village. Over on this continent, tribes made up the majority of the population, and most resided along the water and grasses. There were a lot fewer settlements here than on the Weisite Continent, and most were not large in size.

Frowning in thought, Dan suddenly smelled something burnt. When he turned to look, he saw a charred redheaded boy standing seriously beside him.

"Let's head in."

Dan shook his head and said, "The elf must stay outside. He is worth too much. Even though we are on the Shaosi Continent, he will still easily attract trouble."

Shooting Star smiled. "Nah, have you forgotten what I have?"

Only then did Dan remember the transformation bracelet, but he didn't relax even after remembering it. With his years of experience at the Guild, he understood that this bracelet was truly extraordinarily valuable. It wasn't something that regular people could possess. *Just where did Shooting Star get it?*

"All right, let's transform!"

Shooting Star handed the bracelet over and had the elf transform into a human again.

As they entered the village, Shooting Star was originally a bit worried. *Here on the Shaosi Continent where beasts outnumber us, will our team of humans, an avian, and a half demon appear too odd?*

However, before they even entered the village proper, he had already discovered that there were quite a number of humans living in the

village. In the end, humans were indeed the race that multiplied the fastest and adapted the best! Humans had made their presence known on all the continents: north, south, east, and west.

Humans are everywhere, practically like cockroaches! Shooting Star couldn't help but quip.

After they entered the village, their original nervousness finally ebbed away. This place looked exactly like a normal village. Even though the villagers were observing this group of travelers, it was clearly mostly out of curiosity. There weren't any expressions of disdain.

"May I ask if there is an inn where we can stay?" Dan took the initiative to ask one of the villagers. He picked an elderly beast granny, who appeared rather kind.

The beast granny warmly said, "Ah, an inn? There's an inn near the middle of the village, but they've only been selling wine and food lately. We haven't had visitors to our Stone Village for quite some time. But I'll head over and let them know to get things ready for you all."

"Thank you," Dan replied politely and felt great relief more than anything else. He was a half demon, after all. Many people felt extremely uneasy about demons.

The inn near the middle of the village was quite small. It could even be said to be just a small restaurant where the villagers gathered to have food. It had been a long while since they had rented any rooms to travelers. The owner was a middle-aged man. He gathered half of the

women in the village to help him, and it still took them a long time before they could tidy up three rooms for the travelers to stay in.

Dan directly divided the rooms up. "Shooting Star, you'll stay with Saya. Alan will be with Yaya. I'll be by myself. If my subordinates arrive, I'll need the space to discuss guild matters with them."

"What the heck, no way! Alan should go and room with Xiao Bai. I want to be with Yaya!"

Shooting Star protested loudly, but his protests clearly fell on deaf ears. It was obvious that such an arrangement would cause odd weather such as lightning to flash in the night sky despite it being clear and full of stars.

Thus, the group temporarily began their stay in this small village. First, they were waiting for Dan's subordinates. Second, they needed to let Bai Saya recover, and Alan could also take the chance to teach Yaya how to walk.

Bai Saya, contrary to how he normally was, was putting all his effort into sleeping nearly the entire time. According to him, the Stone of Fury was using his sleeping hours to teach him how to use the stone's power.

Dan, who had suffered the shock of failing to protect his checkmate and had instead needed to be protected by his checkmate, was putting all his effort into training.

Alan was responsible for taking care of the children. The first was the actual child, Yaya, who needed to be raised, fed, and taught how to walk, while the second was the fake child, Shooting Star, who needed to be disciplined.

Shooting Star was causing trouble all the time, always making Alan discipline him.

"Mama Cow, I want to eat a big pancake!" Shooting Star said as he rushed toward a bull-headed beastwoman near the fields.

"Wow, what a rare sight! Shooting Star, your mother didn't ground you?" The bull-headed beastwoman replied while smiling.

Shooting Star stuck his tongue out and giggled. "Nah, my mom is busy taking care of my little sis and my dad who is stuck in bed!

"I see, your mom has it hard." The bull-headed beastwoman shook her head and promptly took out a pancake that was larger than her face from her basket. She handed it over and said in concern, "Give this to your mom. Have her eat more. She's so skinny that the wind could sweep her away."

"Okay!" Shooting Star took the pancake with a smile. He ran off right away to give it to his mom.

When Shooting Star rushed back to the inn, he was smiling as if he were the most obedient kid in the whole wide world. "Mom, Mama Cow said to give this pancake to you. Don't forget to eat it."

Unfortunately, the other person didn't feel grateful at all. Face flushed with anger, he shouted, "I'm not your mom!"

A streak of lightning shot out, sending the inn's wooden door flying for the nth time. Shooting Star rushed out with the pancake in hand and made a face at the room. He also dodged several streaks of lightning.

The elf rushed out from the room. He was even holding Shooting Star's sister, Yaya, in his arms.

"Alan, don't be so angry. At most, mothers should only spank their kid and not use lightning to strike them!"

The innkeeper's wife rushed over, alarmed by the crackling lightning in Alan's hands. This mother was so ferocious that she didn't know what to say to her.

"I'm not his mom!" Alan was about to burst.

Shooting Star ducked behind the woman's back. Looking pitiful with his teary eyes, he said, "Owner, I was only trying to give Mama Cow's pancake to my mom. She got so angry that she shot lightning at me."

The innkeeper's wife rubbed Shooting Star's head, her heart going out to him. She comforted him, "There, there, Shooting Star is a good child. Be good. Don't cry. I'll try to talk your mother around!"

After that, she turned and scolded, "Alan, it's not that I want to say this, but you can't be so biased toward your biological daughter Yaya.

Even though you didn't give birth to Shooting Star, he is still a cute kid! How can you bear to strike him with lightning?!"

Hear, hear! I'm such a cute kid! While hiding behind the woman's back, he made a face at the elf.

If you're a cute kid, then there's absolutely nothing detestable in the entire world! Alan endured so much that his face twisted.

For several days, the villagers had been guessing nonstop at the relationship the travelers had with each other. Three humans, one half demon, and an avian who was still a baby. This combination was odd no matter how they looked at it. As a result, the village naturally came up with hundreds of guesses.

As the object of the guesses, not only was Shooting Star not angry about it, he had directly joined in to stir things up.

"What? Our relationship?" When Shooting Star was asked this question, a super fun idea abruptly came to him. According to Bai Saya's description, it was an idea that held no benefits and would also severely harm others.

Shooting Star blinked his large, innocent golden eyes and shyly said, "Can't you tell? The beautiful blonde and the dark-haired man are my mom and dad!"

A certain dog-headed villager jumped in shock and asked, "But you don't resemble your parents at all!"

"Because the beautiful blonde is actually my stepmom!" Shooting Star shook his head, his gaze sad. He began to spin a wild tale.

"I look like my biological mother. After she left my dad, he married my stepmom Alan so that there would be someone to look after me. But my stepmom is also someone who was married before. Her previous husband was an avian. That's how I ended up with an avian as my little sister."

W-What a complicated family...

"T-then, who is that half demon?" A certain bird-headed girl asked, stupefied.

Shooting Star declared, "He is my older brother from a different father! Before my biological mother married my dad, she had been married before, and her partner was a demon. That's how she had a half demon child!"

...What kind of messed up relationship is this! The villagers all went home and had a debate with their families for several nights. Then, they also thoroughly discussed it with their neighbors for a good long while. In the end, they were finally able to understand how these people were related to each other.

Since the villagers believed Yaya to be Alan's biological daughter, while Shooting Star was the stepson, and Alan always zapped Shooting Star with lightning, rumors arose that "Alan is biased toward her biological daughter and abuses her non-biological son Shooting Star."

After who knows how many villagers had come to persuade Alan not to abuse Shooting Star, the elf finally burst into uncontrollable rage. Streaks of lightning exploded outwards, destroying the inn's walls, scaring the villagers into scattering, never again daring to come forward to persuade her.

When Bai Saya learned of this, he felt very guilty... Even though he wasn't the culprit and was only responsible for "being bedridden," he took the initiative to chop trees with Dan and rebuilt the walls of the inn, making them even better than before. As a result, the innkeeper didn't hold it against them and said it was fine even if they destroyed more walls.

After a period of acquaintance, the villagers came to accept that Shooting Star and company were a family.

Alan was the mean stepmother. Shooting Star was the abused stepson. Bai Saya was the gentle but weak husband who was scared of going against his wife. Dan was the eldest child who was obedient and knew to help his father. As for Yaya, she was too young to warrant an assessment. She was purely a cute baby.

However, the villagers' understanding of this family eventually changed after Shooting Star burned down the cowshed with fire, stole the cow that was a sacrificial offering, and ate the entire cow until only the bones were left. Shooting Star wasn't some abused kid. He was an extremely mischievous bad boy!

As a result, Alan's ratings greatly improved, from a stepmother who abused her child to a strict mother who disciplined her child to make

sure he wouldn't misbehave—but no matter what kind of mother it was, the elf was just as furious about it.

"Ah, ah!"

Yaya toddled out of the room and looked at Alan and Shooting Star curiously. She knew that every time they glared at each other like this, Mama would make sparkly stuff show up in those hands!

Yaya loved watching that sparkly stuff, so every time she heard Mama yell, she would do her utmost to crawl out to watch. However, this time, she walked instead. Even though she walked unsteadily, she hadn't fallen even once.

"Yaya can walk now!" Shooting Star shouted excitedly. "Those wobbly steps are so cute!"

Alan snapped, "She's been able to walk for two days already."

"Really?" Shooting Star rushed beside Yaya. His eyes danced as he watched Yaya toddle.

"Teaching her how to walk wasn't difficult. What is difficult is that I don't know how to teach her how to fly." Alan frowned, rather troubled. He knew how to fly, but that was through using magic, not wings. The theory behind them was too different. He couldn't teach her.

Hearing that, Shooting Star also grew troubled. *You got to be kidding me! Yaya is my little pet angel! How can an angel not know how to fly?*

This was the first time the innkeeper's wife had seen these two interact with each other for longer than ten seconds without sparks flying. *What a rare sight to see them get along so well!* She quickly gave them some advice.

"You could head to the mountains to find the avians. I hear that there is a tribe of avians in the mountains near our village!"

"Really?" Shooting Star immediately began to act spoiled. "Owner, hurry and tell me where the avian village is! Otherwise, if my little sis becomes an avian who can't fly, she'll be so pitiful!"

"Shooting Star is so nice. You know to worry about your little sister! I'll definitely help get that info for you."

He's just worried that his pet angel won't know how to fly! The elf growled to himself.

After learning the approximate location of the avian tribe, Shooting Star immediately sought Bai Saya and Dan out to have a discussion.

Shooting Star gave a simple explanation. "I'm afraid Yaya won't know how to fly in the future, so I plan to find the avian tribe. Xiao Bai, you're still not completely recovered, right? Wait here. We'll be back right away."

Dan immediately turned him down. "I don't wish to leave Saya's side. That person who ambushed us may return. I must stay here. You three can go."

Alan agreed about this point. He also felt that it was better to have someone keep Bai Saya company. Besides, they were just looking for the avian tribe and weren't looking for trouble. Just him and Shooting Star taking Yaya should be enough.

Shooting Star frowned and said, "Then, forget it. Let's wait until Bai Saya recovers and head there together. Otherwise, if Braids comes knocking again, just Dan alone isn't enough to stop him."

Dan coolly said, "Even with the rest of you, it's not enough to stop him."

Shooting Star snorted and said, "Next time we meet that guy, I'll grab my cute pets immediately and teleport away. Who wants to stay and be an idiot?"

Hearing that, Dan couldn't help but admit that Shooting Star was right. Teleporting away was a much more logical choice than engaging in a fight. However, Dan coldly said, "Then why did you originally want to leave Saya here by himself? Is it because it is dangerous, so you don't wish to stay with him?"

"No way!" Shooting Star said as if it were a matter of fact, "It's because Xiao Bai is able to win against Braids. If we're not around to mess him up, he can explode and chase Braids away immediately. It's so much better than if we were with him and carelessly ended up as hostages!"

When Dan heard that, his face darkened, but he couldn't help but admit that the other person was probably right.

Bai Saya didn't quite understand what these two were talking about, but he was able to understand that their tone sounded antagonistic. He quickly said, "Don't worry. No matter how the arrangement turns out, I'm able to protect everyone. Roth taught me a lot of ways to use his power."

Alan approved of going together. "Let's stay longer. We will let Bai Saya recover before looking for the avian village. It won't be too late. Yaya has only just learned how to walk. There is no hurry in learning how to fly yet."

Bai Saya resolutely said, "I will do my best to get well. I'll definitely be able to depart in a few days!"

Hearing that, Shooting Star gave up. At first, he had wanted to split up so they could quickly take care of matters and leave.

"Then, rest well, Saya. If there's anything you need to do, just let me do it." Dan was very worried that Bai Saya would do something taxing again, such as chopping trees to rebuild the walls because of his conscience.

"I got it," Bai Saya responded earnestly.

Dan heard Bai Saya's promise. Given Bai Saya's serious personality, now that he had made the promise, things would be all right. Therefore, Dan was able to relax and turn to Shooting Star to say, "Come with me to my room. I would like to discuss searching for the other stones."

"Huh?" Shooting Star frowned but gave an "oh."

Shooting Star followed Dan to his room and immediately asked, "Hey, when we go to the avian village, what's gonna happen if your subordinates come here but can't find you?"

"I will leave them a message telling them to wait for me here in this village."

"Oh, then what did you want to discuss with me? Do you have the location of the Stone of Ego, Pride?" Shooting Star made a guess at what the other wanted to discuss that needed to be kept from Xiao Bai and the elf.

Dan was silent for a moment before he suddenly said, "Is Saya your checkmate?"

Shooting Star froze. "What the heck are you saying? I'm not a demon. Why would I have some checkmate..."

"You are a demon, and a full-blooded one at that!" Dan's eyes bore right into Shooting Star. He completely believed in his own judgment.

Seeing how firm his gaze was, Shooting Star pouted and knew he couldn't weasel his way out of this.

"How did you know?"

"Braids said it. He said 'you think you can defeat me with a demon and a half demon?' From that moment on, I've had my suspicions. I believe that he wouldn't claim that you're a demon without any basis. He was probably able to see through your disguise with the power of the stone.

"But I was never able to see any cracks in your disguise, not until you removed a bracelet to give to Alan so that he could disguise himself as a human." Dan explained thoroughly, not giving the other person any chance to defend himself. "At that time, I was finally able to sense a tiny bit of demonic aura, and it did not belong to me. However, I was still not completely sure until you wanted me to accompany you to the avian village. Only then was I one hundred percent certain."

Shooting Star lifted his eyes to look at Dan and still did not say a word.

"You were afraid that Alan would sense your demonic aura, right?" Dan calmly said, "Since elves and demons are sworn enemies, elves are especially sensitive to demonic aura, which is of the dark element. If I am present, then Alan would just think that the demonic aura he senses is all from me, but if you and he are alone, he would then realize that the demonic aura is all from you."

"Hmph!" Shooting Star grumpily said, "If I didn't have to use Claws of Darkness, then you wouldn't have been able to discover that I'm a demon even when I gave a bracelet to Alan."

Dan looked at the remaining bracelet on Shooting Star's arm and felt helpless about how Bai Saya and Alan had never grown suspicious

over why Shooting Star wore a transformation bracelet and never ever took it off.

"Is Saya your checkmate? Or is it Alan?" Dan was extremely fixated on this question. If Bai Saya were Shooting Star's checkmate, then Shooting Star would definitely do everything he could to protect Saya. In that case, Dan could leave with his heart at ease and complete his task of searching for the stones.

"No, neither. I don't have a checkmate."

Dan's heart sank. Like this, he could not leave Saya without worrying...

"What kind of expression is that?" Shooting Star rolled his eyes and snapped, "Even though none of them are my checkmate, Xiao Bai, Alan, and Yaya are my precious pets! I wouldn't carelessly abandon them."

"You lied to them without a care. What's to say that you won't abandon them? You are a heartless, full-blooded demon." Dan had associated with demons for many years, and his uncle Ice Chess was also a full-blooded demon. Therefore, he understood that the heartlessness of the demon race wasn't a fabricated rumor. It was an undeniable truth.

"I didn't lie to them without a care. When I first met Xiao Bai, I met him with a human appearance!" Shooting Star barged on, "It was just that later on, I never found the right time to tell him. I wasn't trying to lie to him!"

"But you never told him in the end," Dan responded mercilessly.

"That's because Alan joined us!" Shooting Star clenched his fists. Even now, he still couldn't come up with a good solution for this. This was an extremely troublesome problem. He was a demon, while Alan was an elf. The elves were born with hatred toward demons. There was hardly a way to solve this problem.

Shooting Star just thought it was better to stall for time, the longer the better. Perhaps, after a long while, Alan would grow close to him, to the point that he wouldn't mind even after learning that he was a full-blooded demon.

"So, do you plan to reveal that I'm a full-blooded demon?" Shooting Star glared at Dan. *If he says he will, then, I, I...*

"No." In the end, Dan shook his head and said, "I just wanted to confirm whether or not Saya is your checkmate. Exposing you does not benefit me at all."

"Hmph! You chose right!" Shooting Star was finally able to relax. For the moment, he wouldn't have to worry about the racial conflict between him and Alan.

"Sigh, I really don't know what to do about Saya's identity as the possessor of the Stone of Fury."

Dan sighed. In these past few days, he had contemplated it for so long, yet he still could not come up with a way to protect Saya. No matter if it was the Guild or the foe with braids whose identity was a mystery,

to Bai Saya, both of them were serious dangers. However, Dan was unable to get rid of either.

Shooting Star frowned and asked, "Do you really not know why the Guild wants the stones?"

"I really don't." Dan shook his head. "My position isn't that high yet. Ice Chess might know, but he wouldn't tell me."

The only exception would be if his safety was involved, but unless there was no other choice, Dan would never wish to do anything that used his life against Ice Chess. He owed Ice Chess too much already.

"Then tell me, you said you had a way to discover the location of the stones. How exactly?"

Dan hesitated for a moment before he began explaining something he was unwilling to explain before. "It is a magical item that the Guild developed. It can detect the unique energy that the stones give off. However, the item bears little threat to Saya, as it cannot detect a stone that already has a master, unless that master is currently using the stone's power."

"So the real danger toward Xiao Bai is the other masters of the stones."

Shooting Star furrowed his brows. *Braids aside, could the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild also have other possessors of the stones?* His guess was a definite yes, and Dan also thought the same. Otherwise, why would they know so much about the stones, and why would they search for them with so much effort?

I believe only a possessor of a stone would know so much about them and would even restlessly want to find the other stones, right?

Shooting Star couldn't help but complain, "How troublesome! Even though Xiao Bai used the stone's power to send Braids running, the Stones of Sin are really both troublesome and impossible to get rid of!"

What was even more ridiculous was that the pigheaded Xiao Bai had become the stone's owner because of nicking his finger on a letter opener and accidentally dripping blood on Wrath.

A tiny matter such as cutting oneself on a letter opener had gotten them involved in something as dire as the end of the world, and nothing could be direr than that. This could really only be described with one word—unlucky!

Shooting Star yelled at the ceiling, "I only wanted a pet! Goddess of Fate, there's really no need for you to play around like this with me!"

Are you sure you only want "a" pet? Dan didn't say a word to the side.

"I don't care anymore! Things will work out in the end. I'll take it one step at a time!"

Shooting Star simply gave up and tossed down these words, no longer paying any attention to Dan. He walked to the door on his own and pulled open the door. Brilliant blond hair was immediately blown inward by the wind. The azure eyes of the owner of the blond hair were slowly becoming frosty.

"Alan? Since when have you been there?" Shooting Star was stunned. *Don't tell me...*

"Since Dan asked if Bai Saya were your checkmate. I have been here since then."

The elf's tone was calm, calm to the point of being frightening.

*Sh**!* Shooting Star's face fell completely. "T-then you already know? That I'm, I'm..." He stuttered and didn't know what to say.

"After spending so many days with Dan, I no longer detest demons as much as I used to."

"Really?" Shooting Star was overjoyed at this unexpected good news. *It's just like I thought! Spending a lot of time together can overcome the hatred between races...*

"But you lied to me!" Sadness flashed across Alan's eyes. He accused him with a trembling voice, "You pretended to be a human, making me believe that I only had to accompany you for two hundred years. I had truly believed that I could return to my people after two hundred years. But now..."

Shooting Star froze. He opened his mouth but could not say a single word.

"But you're actually a demon! The years you possess ahead of you are not any fewer than mine. So how long must I remain your pet before

my debt is paid? Is it my entire life? Then why have you rescued me from slavery? If I were a slave, I at least have the chance of escaping, yet you have tricked me into personally promising you to accompany you. Now I will never have the chance to go home!”

Shooting Star stared blankly at Alan. Two streaks of tears dripped down the elf’s face. He appeared completely devastated. Shooting Star wanted to reach out and tug on him. He wanted to open his mouth to tell him that he hadn’t lied to him deliberately. It was just that if he had told him from the start, the elf would never have been willing to play with him...

Alan jerked his hand away, evading Shooting Star’s tug. He glared at Shooting Star with angry, azure eyes.

“Leave.”

Shooting Star lowered his head.

“What?” Alan was stunned.

With his head lowered, Shooting Star pointed at the door and shouted, “I said, leave! Leave right this moment! Go home. My bracelet can disguise you as a human. You won’t get snatched on the way there.”

The elf stared at him blankly, unable to believe his ears.

“You don’t have to keep your promise. I don’t want you to play with me anymore!”

Chapter 3: Overthinking Companions

"You don't have to keep your promise. I don't want you to play with me anymore!"

The elf's eyes shot open. Blinding sunlight wove through the leaves of the trees, shining straight into his eyes, making it difficult for him to keep them open. It was only after he crawled up that he realized the sun was already high in the sky. *How can it be so late already?*

He naturally turned and accused, "Bai Saya, why didn't you wake me up to prepare breakfast?"

However, there wasn't a single person beside him, only forest and grass. This wasn't a dense forest, and the trees weren't all that tall either. It was mostly grass and shrubs. Among the rather empty forest floor, there was only a single white rabbit that paused after hearing the elf's shout. It stared at him with red eyes before quickly hopping away.

In the entire forest, the only thing that could speak was the elf himself.

It was only at this time that the elf remembered he had already left those two—one who had treated him as a pet, and one who had the same position as him as a pet.

Shooting Star really let me go just like this?

There's no scheme or trick behind this?

Alan found it difficult to believe. He looked at the bracelet on his wrist. The "heartless demon" had even given this bracelet to him. The elf understood it clearly. Without this bracelet that could disguise him as a human, he would never be able to return to the homeland of the elves. He would only be captured again to be sold.

The other, the "fickle human," had given him money for his travels. Their money had always been tight. Alan understood this clearly, too. This money should be all that Bai Saya had on him.

"Alan, where are you planning to go?"

Before the elf left, Bai Saya had asked him this. Bai Saya had already persuaded him to stay once. *Does he wish to prevent me from leaving again?*

The elf couldn't help but retort coldly, "Home."

"Oh." When Bai Saya heard that answer, he nodded. Not only did he not speak a single word to persuade Alan to stay, he even said, "You should go home."

"Don't you wish to go home?" Alan couldn't help but ask. At the same time, he felt foolish that he had actually asked such a meaningless question. Bai Saya had already promised Shooting Star that he would accompany him on his adventures. Of course he couldn't go home.

Bai Saya shook his head and said, "My only shifu has already left this world. My home is just an empty house now... No, I don't plan to return home."

"Going anywhere is better than staying by the side of a demon! I heard with my own ears that you are not Shooting Star's checkmate. The moment it gets dangerous, he will leave you behind."

"Checkmate?" Bai Saya asked in confusion, "What's a checkmate?"

Alan was momentarily stunned. He cried out, "You actually don't know about checkmates? Has Dan not told you about them?"

Hearing that, Bai Saya blushed and quietly said, "He did say that he liked me, b-but I've already turned him down clearly. We're just friends now, nothing else!"

Alan was speechless. He couldn't believe that Dan knew, Shooting Star knew, and even Alan, who was an elf, knew, yet Bai Saya who was the person involved didn't even know what a checkmate was—Shooting Star must have kept it that way on purpose!

"Checkmates aren't so simple..."

The elf explained what he knew about the nature of demons to Bai Saya. The latter was stunned as he listened, having never before considered such a thing.

"No wonder Dan treats me so well. Even turning him down is of no use. What am I supposed to do now?"

Bai Saya frowned. He was rather worried.

Alan consoled him, "You don't have to worry. From what I know, checkmates don't necessarily have to be lovers. Relatives and friends are actually more common."

Hearing that, Bai Saya immediately perked up. "Then, I should just become sworn brothers with Dan!"

Alan remained silent. He felt that Dan wouldn't be happy about Bai Saya wanting to become sworn brothers with him, but he likely would not refuse him either. As long as he could make his checkmate happy, he would not mind whatever he was to Bai Saya.

"So, do you understand how serious this is now? The demon race is heartless. As long as you are not Shooting Star's checkmate, he wouldn't care in the least about your life. When it comes down to it, he would abandon you without a care."

Hearing that, Bai Saya smiled wryly and said, "But would others not abandon me? At least Shooting Star wouldn't choose to run away when he is able to save me. If he isn't able to save me, then staying behind would only mean dying along with me. Then, I would rather he fled."

When he heard that, the elf was shaken. He actually didn't know how to respond. *These words... are fairly logical?*

Seeing Alan's expression, Bai Saya sighed. "In the process of taking revenge for Shifu's murder, no one I knew was willing to help. Shooting Star was the only one who extended a helping hand. Even though he is a demon, to me, he has a lot more compassion than most

humans.”

Alan agitatedly refuted, “The help he gave you was paid for using your freedom!”

Bai Saya used an open gaze to look at him. He said, “But I don’t feel like I have lost my freedom. Alan, do you really feel you have lost your freedom?”

I...

“You zap Shooting Star on a daily basis,” Bai Saya began to recount in detail.

Because he is too disobedient!

“You at least scold him three times a day.”

He keeps trying to bully Yaya, and he always pinches her cheeks until they’re swollen!

“When you’re furious, you would even drag Shooting Star over and spank his butt.”

He keeps telling everyone that I’m his mom. I’m clearly a male elf!

Bai Saya chuckled as he said, “But I don’t have the right to say anything about you. Shooting Star really takes it too far. I sometimes knock him on the head to punish him, too.”

See!

Bai Saya laughed lightly. "I really don't feel like I've lost my freedom. I'm even very happy to be able to journey with Shooting Star."

The elf found that he could not say anything to refute him.

Bai Saya didn't mind. He patted the elf's shoulder and said, "Don't worry. I will help you take care of Yaya. In a few days when my body has completely recovered, I will immediately head out to search for the avian village. I will do my best to leave Yaya to an avian in the village to raise. Without your help looking after her, Shooting Star would never have the patience to look after such a young child like Yaya."

Right, there's also Yaya...

"If there is a chance in the future, we will seek you out. I wish you the best on your journey."

Bai Saya sincerely gave his well-wishes to the elf.

The elf remained silent. He knew in his heart that this was impossible. Bai Saya and Shooting Star would never ever be able to visit him. This was because the depths of the forest that the elves resided in did not at all welcome any other races.

This farewell will be an eternal one!

As he returned to himself, Alan was still alone in the forest. He had

already lingered here for several days, yet he was still unable to make the decision to hurry home with everything he had. As he had expected, he was still a little worried—of course, he was worrying about that child, Yaya!

I wonder if Bai Saya will truly be able to leave Yaya in the avian village? Shooting Star really didn't seem like he wished to let her go. Even though he didn't have the patience to look after a child, he would likely try to throw her at Bai Saya to raise. However, even though Bai Saya was a good person, he wasn't attentive enough. *Would he be able to take good care of such a young child like Yaya?*

Will Yaya successfully learn how to fly?

Will the enemy Braids come to attack Bai Saya and the others again?

Will the Stones of Sin, tangled up with the end of the world, bring danger to them again—danger?!

You should go home.

If staying behind means dying with me, then I would rather he fled.

I will try my best to leave Yaya at the avian village.

The elf came to an abrupt realization!

Bai Saya hadn't tried to persuade him to stay at all. Even though he knew how fixated on his pets Shooting Star was, he was even planning

to leave Yaya at the avian village. Moreover, Bai Saya knew that Shooting Star was a heartless demon who would definitely abandon him and flee at crucial moments, yet he still planned on adventuring with him. *Don't tell me...*

Bai Saya knows he is in danger?

That's right! Recently, Bai Saya has been conversing a lot in his dreams with the Stone of Fury, Wrath. The Stone of Fury must have warned him of how dangerous this matter is!

Bai Saya doesn't want to endanger his companions. That is why he wishes for me to return home and for Yaya to be left in the avian village. He doesn't want us to follow him. Shooting Star is the only companion he is willing to keep by his side because he will abandon him and flee when it gets dangerous!

Shooting Star, a heartless demon, hadn't abandoned Bai Saya. The one who had actually abandoned Bai Saya was himself. As an elf, he had actually abandoned his savior in times of trouble. *How ungrateful of me!*

The one who is actually heartless is me, Alanmishus!

As he thought of that, the graceful figure among the trees began leaping across the branches; however, the direction he advanced in was exactly the same as the one he had taken several days ago when he had arrived here.



"One ugly pig, two ugly pigs, ugly pigs everywhere left and right..."

The out-of-tune singing reverberated among the mountain forests of the Southern Continent. Compared to this song, the songs that the beastmen belted out using their low, coarse voices were works of art infused with wild abandon.

"Shooting Star..."

The singing abruptly stopped. Two golden eyes gleaming dangerously in the dark narrowed at him. A childish voice snapped, "What?"

"If you keep singing, Yaya won't be willing to sleep."

Bai Saya looked at the child in his arms rather helplessly. He felt it was very strange. Shouldn't a child as young as this be more scared of... all this random noise? Shooting Star's singing definitely ranked high on the list of random noises. *Yet Yaya...*

Two chubby hands kept waving around with the noise. When there was a heavy beat, her wings would even flap along, and she would use her soft, baby voice to sing things along the lines of, "Won oogly pig." If this continued, Bai Saya was very worried that Yaya's language abilities and taste for music would receive lasting damage.

If it came to that, Alan would definitely kill Shooting Star!

In order to prevent a homicide in the future, Bai Saya decided to plan ahead and stop the tragedy before it could happen. "How about you continue to sing after Yaya falls asleep?"

"No!" Shooting Star immediately complained, "I want to sing right now. Besides, Yaya looks really happy. It's not like she doesn't like it!"

"Ah, ah, ah! Oogly pig! Oogly pig!" Yaya squirmed in Bai Saya's arms restlessly. Then, she waved her hands at Shooting Star, her little pink lips jutting out in a pout. She seemed to be very unhappy that Shooting Star had stopped singing.

"See!" Shooting Star gleefully said, "What I'm singing is the very, very best lullaby for babies!"

Aren't lullabies supposed to coax kids to sleep? But Yaya seems to be even more excited than before? Bai Saya had a huge headache.

"Hmph! I'm going to sing. You can't stop me! One ugly pig pig pig, two ugly pigs pigs pigs~!"

Shooting Star made it even worse and sang louder than before. Yaya also followed along and loudly sang, "Oogly pig!"

Bai Saya sighed. He stopped arguing over it with Shooting Star. Ever since Alan had left, Shooting Star had begun acting up even more.

Suddenly, a streak of lightning struck from the skies, the dark night momentarily as bright as day. Bai Saya quickly covered Yaya's ears to prevent the thunder that was to follow from scaring her. After a second or two, the thunder indeed boomed.

Such great thunder out in the open. Bai Saya frowned. *Is this a bad*

omen? Then again, when have we ever had good luck? They had met one misfortune after another. He was pretty much used to it now.

"Bzz, bzz! Ah, ah!"

Yaya had climbed to Bai Saya's shoulder and was excitedly pointing at the sky and shouting. She wasn't scared at all. In fact, she seemed to be even more excited than before.

I wonder if it's normal for a kid to become excited by lightning? Bai Saya, who hadn't raised a kid before, was at a loss.

Sigh! I'm really not good at looking after a kid. If only Alan were here. Just as Bai Saya sighed, he heard crying. Surprised, he immediately turned his head to look at Yaya, but Yaya wasn't crying. Rather, it was the other "kid" who was crying.

Shooting Star was on his knees in front of a big tree. He hugged his head and shouted, "Wah! I'm sorry. I won't ever teach Yaya the ugly pig song anymore! Don't zap me with lightning!"

Bai Saya looked at Shooting Star speechlessly. *It looks like even if Alan isn't here, just the "aftershock"... No! Just the shock of hearing a little bit of electricity is enough.*

"Shooting Star, Alan isn't here." Bai Saya smiled bitterly as he walked under the large tree. He clasped Shooting Star on the shoulder.

Shooting Star remained still until he suddenly jumped up like a spring and shouted, "I didn't hug my head out of fear and hide under the tree

just because I heard electricity and thought Alan was still around as that's really all your imagination since it's just that I thought the Thunder God had come here and he's a dangerous god that even a demon like Ice Chess can't defeat!"

You rambled so much in a single breath. Don't you need to breathe? Bai Saya felt helpless. *Besides, why would the Thunder God suddenly come here? This excuse is way too flimsy.*

"A-anyway, this has nothing to do with that ungrateful elf!"

Shooting Star puffed up his cheeks and turned his head away. It was easy to see at a glance that his embarrassment had turned into anger.

"Got it," Bai Saya said with some amusement. Seeing how Shooting Star seemed like he still wanted to argue over that point when his face was already red, Bai Saya just stuffed Yaya into Shooting Star's arms and said, "It's late. Hug Yaya and sleep. I'll add some firewood to the fire."

Shooting Star's cheeks were still puffed up, and he appeared as if he wanted to continue to argue. However, once Yaya was in his arms, she immediately yanked on his hair. In order to avoid becoming a bald Shooting Star in the future, he could only hug the baby and burrow underneath the blankets. Then, he sang the only song that would lull Yaya to sleep, an elven song that celebrated the beauty of nature that Alan often sang.

Once this song was sung, the boisterous Yaya would immediately fall asleep obediently. At these times, even Shooting Star couldn't help but

be in awe of “Mama Alan” for being so good at parenting!

Bai Saya was also in awe of how well Alan had taught both Yaya and Shooting Star! As long as this lullaby was sung, Yaya would be the first to calm down and fall asleep soon after, while Shooting Star would definitely be the second yawning child.

Even now, when Shooting Star himself was the singer, this habit had not changed. After three minutes of singing, Yaya’s large pink eyes closed tightly, and she fell fast asleep. After five minutes, even the singer himself was now sleeping spread eagle, and the melody coming from his mouth had long since turned into snoring.

Faced with such a scene, Bai Saya smilingly fixed their bed rolls for them and then walked beside the fire by himself to tend to it.

At this time, a rustling sound caught his ears. This was the sound of small branches being stepped on.

Bai Saya rested his hand on the hilt of his sword. He stood up, fully alert, but he wasn’t nervous for long before a familiar voice sounded.

“Saya, it’s me.”

Accompanying the voice was a half demon who walked out of the darkness into the area illuminated by the campfire.

“Oh, it’s you, Dan.” Bai Saya relaxed his guard. He smilingly sat down by the campfire once more. “Thanks for patrolling around.”

"It's nothing." Dan strode over and also sat down by the fire.

"But is it okay for you to do this?" Bai Saya asked worriedly, "For you not to leave with your subordinates but to accompany us to the avian village? It might take Yaya a long time to learn how to fly. Won't this delay your work?"

"Why would it?" Dan instead asked, "If you aren't going to stay and wait for Yaya to learn how to fly and are just going to leave her there in the care of someone else, then it won't delay things for long, right?"

"Huh?" Bai Saya asked a bit guiltily, "You already know that I plan to leave Yaya there? Please don't tell Shooting Star for now. Can I ask that of you?"

Otherwise, we probably won't ever reach the avian village.

Dan raised his own request. "I won't tell him, but you must promise me to let me keep on accompanying you, that you won't leave me behind."

Bai Saya was taken aback and asked, "But aren't you in a hurry to search for the Stones of Sin?"

"Don't look for excuses for me to leave!" Dan, who had always been very gentle toward Bai Saya, stood up abruptly and shouted at him for the first time.

"What?" Bai Saya was shocked still. He had never seen Dan use such a furious expression on him. He didn't know how to respond at all.

"You didn't persuade Alan to stay, and you're also planning to leave Yaya in the avian village. You don't even care that Shooting Star is a heartless demon who will abandon you—No, it's precisely because he will abandon you that you are willing to have him stay and are not tossing him away, too!"

Bai Saya opened his mouth, but before he could say anything, he was interrupted again.

"Do you plan to shake me off now, too? Do you consider me to be a demon who cannot accompany you through thick and thin?" Dan's face had fallen, deep grief in his gaze.

"Dan..."

"You have never considered my feelings toward you to be real, right?"

"Dan!" Bai Saya finally could no longer stand it. He stood up and halted Dan's self-pity with a shout. "What in the world are you talking about? I don't understand at all!"

This time, it was Dan's turn to freeze. He asked doubtfully, "You don't understand? Are you..."

Playing dumb? However, Bai Saya wasn't someone who would play dumb. Perhaps it was because the Stones of Sin were so dangerous that Bai Saya would rather play dumb and make all of his companions leave to escape the danger that might befall them? Dan frowned. He didn't know which explanation was the truth.

“Pft! Hahaha!”

Dan and Bai Saya were both taken aback. They turned to look toward the only person who might make such a strange sound—Shooting Star.

“What a big idiot!” Shooting Star sat up from his blankets. He was laughing so much he could hardly breathe. He pointed at Dan and said, “Do you really think Xiao Bai is that smart?”

Do you mean I’m not smart? Bai Saya was a bit indignant.

Like a judge interrogating a criminal, Shooting Star jumped in front of Bai Saya and pointed at his nose as he asked, “Let me ask you, why did you let Alan leave and didn’t persuade him to stay?”

“That’s because Alan has always wanted to go home. Even though I feel he is a good companion who is skilled at disciplining you—I mean, raising Yaya—he finally has the means to go home as he has always wanted. How could I stand in his way?”

“Hmph!” Shooting Star didn’t approve of this at all, but this wasn’t the main point at the moment. He continued to ask, “Then, why do you want to leave Yaya in the avian village?”

“Ah...” He still found out! Now I definitely won’t be able to leave Yaya there.

Seeing how Bai Saya felt too guilty to speak, Shooting Star didn’t have the heart to squabble with him over it. He unhappily urged, “Hurry and

tell us!”

“That’s because the dragon wanted me to find a good mother for Yaya. Originally, Alan was a good mo—father! But now that he has left, I think it’s best to find a good set of parents in the avian village for Yaya.”

Bai Saya confessed honestly in hopes that his honesty would stop Shooting Star from coming up with too many terrible ideas to exact vengeance on him.

When Shooting Star heard that Bai Saya had secretly wanted to “release” his pet, he shot Bai Saya a glare. His tone was even more displeased as he asked, “Then, let me ask you this final question. Before this, you slept a lot and kept saying that you were conversing with the Stone of Sin in your sleep. Just what did you talk about? Did it tell you something like you have to pay a price to possess it, or that you’ll run into grave danger?”

“Roth didn’t say anything like that. He only taught me how to use his power, but...” Bai Saya rubbed the back of his head and smiled stupidly. “In order to use his power, I need to provide wrath. Since nothing has happened lately, I can’t get angry at all, so I still don’t know how to use his power.”

Shooting Star snorted. Then, he turned to look at Dan, who was stupefied, and asked without holding back, “Get it now? How smart do you think Xiao Bai is?”

You thought he was smart enough to realize that his situation is

dangerous, so he'll get rid of his companions without anyone cluing in? Hmph! You're thinking too much!

Utterly confused, Bai Saya called out, "Wait a moment, Shooting Star, what in the world is going on?"

Shooting Star flippantly replied, "Dan saw that you let Alan go and also wants to leave Yaya behind. He was worried that you wouldn't want him anymore either. You know how much he likes you. He doesn't want to leave you at all."

I have to watch what I say. If Xiao Bai realizes that he's a dangerous fellow and could drag us to our deaths, then don't even mention Dan—Xiao Bai would definitely even chase me away, a heartless demon "who would definitely flee." All for the sake of not endangering us.

"I see." Xiao Bai understood and turned to console Dan, "Dan, don't worry. I was just afraid that your job would get delayed, causing you to be reprimanded again. If you feel that your job won't get delayed, I wouldn't ask you to leave."

"..." When he heard that, Dan looked at Bai Saya speechlessly. *So, I was overthinking everything. He had never thought that way?*

At this time, for the sake of hurrying back to the "savior he had abandoned," a certain elf made haste on the road even through the nights.

Shooting Star threatened fiercely, "Xiao Bai, I'm warning you, you're not allowed to give my little angel away!"

Bai Saya anxiously said, "B-but we don't have anyone who can take care of Yaya. No matter how much you like Yaya, you're not willing to look after her all day long, right? I'm not great at looking after a kid either. It's not suitable for Yaya to stay with us."

Shooting Star lifted his eyebrows. He confidently said, "Don't worry, our nanny will return soon enough."

"Our nanny? Do you mean Alan? He has already left for home. He won't ever return. Shooting Star..."

Bai Saya wavered. *Although Shooting Star always gets electrocuted by Alan to the point of yelping, deep inside his heart, he must still hope for Alan's return?*

"He'll definitely come back." Shooting Star hummed.

Bai Saya sighed and shook his head. "He won't."

"You actually don't believe me!" Shooting Star grew so angry that he began shouting.

"No, it's just that Alan really wanted to go home. I don't think he'll ever return."

Shooting Star frowned and said, "Then, let's bet on it!"

"Never!" Bai Saya immediately said with great resolve.

"But you don't believe me?" Shooting Star stared in disbelief at his stubborn pet.

Bai Saya scratched his face and admitted, "Whether or not I believe you is one thing, but I've never won a bet against you before. So no matter what, I won't make a bet with you over it."

You don't believe me, yet you also claim that you'll lose the bet? Shooting Star felt completely powerless. *Just how does Xiao Bai's mind work?*

"It's up to you whether or not you believe me. In any case, don't you dare give my little angel away! Even if you do give her away, I'll immediately snatch her back!"

Bai Saya could only sigh. *It seems that the only way to complete the dragon's wish would be for me to try to do my best as a good father.* However, he really felt that perhaps even Shooting Star would be better at the job than he was. At least Shooting Star could sing the elven lullaby and also knew how to cook, while he didn't know how to do any of that. At most, he could only help hunt and tend to the fire.

"Then, where should we go now?" Bai Saya asked helplessly. *If we're not planning to leave Yaya in the avian village, then we don't have to go out of our way to search for it anymore, right?*

Shooting Star rolled his eyes and snapped, "Nonsense! Of course we're going to the avian village! Did you forget that my little angel Yaya doesn't know how to fly yet?"

"Oh right, Yaya still needs to learn how to fly. I almost forgot." Bai Saya rubbed the back of his head a little embarrassedly.

"Idiot!" Shooting Star scolded as he burrowed back into the warm bed roll. He even gave a content sigh before he mumbled, "I'm going to sleep. Remember not to wake me too early, since we can't travel too far anyway. It would be a disaster if Alan isn't able to catch up and gives up chasing after us!"

"Alan won't come back." Bai Saya was certain of this, though he didn't dare to bet on it.

"He will." Shooting Star buried his entire head in the bed roll. A muffled voice came from it. "Because Alan is just as smart as Dan, so he'll definitely come to the same conclusion as him. Then, he'll do everything he can to hurry... back..."

In the end, only muffled snoring could be heard from the bed roll.

Bai Saya looked at Dan in confusion. *The same kind of conclusion?*

"..."

Even though he had been deemed "smart," Dan really didn't feel like he had been praised.



Although Shooting Star had already asked Bai Saya not to wake him too early, Yaya, who was in his arms, had little care for what time it was.

Once the first streak of sunlight in the morning hit the little angel's soft cheeks, she immediately opened her large, pink eyes and twisted back and forth. When she discovered that Shooting Star wasn't paying her any attention, she puffed up her cheeks and used her two little hands to yank Shooting Star's red hair. Unfortunately, the latter was fast asleep and didn't at all care about how much his scalp hurt.

Evidently, the gravity of becoming bald far paled to the importance of sleep.

Receiving no response after putting in so much effort for so long, Yaya was both tired and frustrated. Her mouth wobbled, and huge drops of tears fell from her pink eyes. Finally, she wailed at the top of her lungs.

At this time, Bai Saya, who had already been up for a long while, heard the crying. No longer able to pay attention to sparring with Dan, he hurriedly rushed over and lifted Yaya up...

"Ahhhhh! My head!"

Bai Saya's mouth dropped open.

Only then did he discover that Yaya's two chubby little hands were tightly grabbing onto Shooting Star's hair. Because Bai Saya had lifted Yaya up, and Yaya still hadn't let go of Shooting Star's hair, even Shooting Star had been pulled up. The point of contact was naturally his poor scalp...

Since everyone had already woken up, this group of people who had

decided yesterday that they would depart later today, ended up eating breakfast earlier than the day before.

As Shooting Star swallowed his food, he asked, "Xiao Bai, last time, Braids said that the possessors of the Stones of Sin can sense where the others are. Since you've already used the stone's power, you should be able to know where the other people are, right?"

Bai Saya nodded. As he fed Yaya, he answered, "I can. There are two other holders on the Southern Continent. There's one to the northwest, which should be located within the western Weisite Continent. There's also one to the far north."

"There are two more holders on the Southern Continent? One of them should be the Stone of Indulgence that came to ambush us last time." Dan abruptly stood up and shouted, "Could it be that the Stone of Ego already has a master, too?"

"Huh?" Bai Saya held the little spoon he had been using to feed Yaya. After staring off into space for a moment, he openly admitted, "I can't tell which stones these two hold."

"So, this means that with Braids, Xiao Bai, and that unknown fellow, there are three holders of the stones on the Shaosi Continent? Why is everyone gathering here?" Shooting Star tilted his head. With an expression that implied things were extremely bad, he yelled, "Don't tell me that the apocalypse is beginning here?"

That would be terrible! Shooting Star hurriedly urged, "Hey, hey! Finish eating already. We have to hurry and get Yaya to learn how to

fly. Then, we'll immediately leave the Shaosi Continent for... Xiao Bai and Alan's homeland, the Yisite Continent! You just said that the north and west both have one, so that means only the Yisite Continent doesn't have any, right?"

Bai Saya nodded.

"Hurry and eat!" Shooting Star wolfed down his food. He was beside himself with worry. "If the end of the world is gonna start here, then doesn't that mean I'll have several fewer days to play? No way! We gotta hurry and get Yaya flying. After she learns, we'll quickly flee to the Yisite Continent."

Bai Saya was in disbelief as he said, "If the world really were ending, you're still only worrying over playing a few days more?"

Shooting Star didn't feel there was anything wrong with that. He said as if it were a matter of fact, "Of course, what else? Should I cry and wail until the end comes?"

Bai Saya thought about it and felt he was right, but he still reprimanded him a bit. "At least, you shouldn't be playing!"

"It's the end of the world, and you're still nagging at me about playing..."

Dan speechlessly ate his breakfast. *Saya, what you hold in your hands is a stone that involves the end of the world, yet you're here feeding a kid and arguing with your companion. You don't at all realize the danger you're in. This kind of conduct, compared to Shooting Star who*

is only thinking of playing, is in no way any better...

"All right! I'm full. Let's head to the avian village!"

After swallowing the last piece of meat, Shooting Star jumped up and shouted.

Chapter 4: The Avian Nation

"Shooting Star, are you sure this is the right road?" Bai Saya asked uncertainly once again.

"I'm sure! Uncle Cow even drew a map for me. There's no way I'm wrong about it!" Shooting Star patted his chest with great confidence.

But...

Bai Saya lifted his head doubtfully and looked at the road they were currently walking on.

This road wasn't a small one that was difficult to find. On the contrary, it was extremely wide; so wide that two carriages could race down it side-by-side, with no problems whatsoever. Even though it was a little old, it had actually been paved with stone, and beautiful carvings were spaced out in intervals on both sides of the road. The majority of them were statues of winged avians.

Such an obvious road is indeed hard to mistake, but... no matter how you look at it, this appears to be a grand road leading to some historic site, and not a path leading to a small village, right?

"Something doesn't feel quite right," Dan solemnly said.

"Yeah! I feel the same," Bai Saya completely agreed.

Shooting Star abruptly recalled something and said, "Come to think of it, Uncle Cow said that the avian village isn't very welcoming toward

visitors who aren't beasts!"

Bai Saya and Dan exchanged a glance and saw a half demon and a human respectively. Then, they turned in unison to stare at the full-blooded demon, and asked completely in sync with each other, "Why didn't you say so earlier? You think there are any beasts among us other than Yaya?"

Shooting Star lazily said, "Me!"

"You're a demon," Dan refuted with a frown.

Shooting Star propped his hands on his waist and brashly asked, "Hmph! Then, tell me, what race I look like right now?"

"Human," Bai Saya honestly answered.

Shooting Star asked, "Since I can make myself look human, then what's so difficult about making myself look like a beast?"

"Oh, right!" Bai Saya came to a sudden realization.

However, Dan frowned. He worked at the Guild, so he had seen a lot more than Bai Saya, and knew that many magic tools only allowed the user to take on a single appearance. If that bracelet could actually allow several different transformations, then that meant that the bracelet was worth tons and was possibly even priceless!

Shooting Star, who exactly are you?

Bai Saya curiously stuck his neck out to look. "Then, try transforming into a beastman."

Shooting Star shrugged and impolitely pointed at Dan. "You, scram!"

"You don't want me to see your demonic emblem?" Dan immediately understood, yet still asked.

"What is a demonic emblem?" Before Shooting Star could even answer, Bai Saya had already asked in curiosity.

Shooting Star rolled his eyes and scolded, "Idiot! It's that pattern underneath Dan's eye. You've seen it for so long. Don't tell me you never noticed it? Did you think it was a tattoo or what?"

"..." He had really thought it was a tattoo. Bai Saya lowered his head in embarrassment.

"Sigh!" Dan didn't know whether to laugh or cry as he explained, "Saya, most demons of nobility have a demonic emblem on them. By observing the patterns' shape and position, you can approximately tell where that demon is from. Those that have a deep understanding of demonic emblems can even use them to determine which family the demon belongs to."

Shooting Star excitedly said, "If it's a famous demon, the shape of his demonic emblem would be very famous too! Just like the demon race's first general Eminent, his demonic emblem is famous! He has a pattern in the shape of a butterfly on the left side of his neck. Along with that pretty face of his, he's just so breathtaking!"

You've actually seen the first general? That's not someone you can easily meet. Dan's frown grew even deeper.

Bai Saya said with great certainty, "Then, you must really want to capture him as your pet. Which part of the first general do you like?"

Even though Shooting Star said that the general had a pretty face, Bai Saya had never seen Shooting Star like someone's entire face. He instead mostly liked a portion of it.

Shooting Star answered without any hesitation, "It's his demonic emblem, of course. It's in the shape of a butterfly! Where else can you find that?"

Just as I thought! Bai Saya didn't know whether to laugh or cry. *Shooting Star, Shooting Star, can't you use the face or the figure like a normal person would use to judge beauty? Who uses all these miscellaneous parts like the eyes, the shape of someone's face, the hair, the wings, and now a demonic emblem, to judge beauty?*

"Ah, ah!"

At this time, Yaya, who was in Bai Saya's arms, began to squirm. As she twisted around, she babbled, and her chubby hands reached far forward, almost making Bai Saya drop her.

Seeing Yaya react in such a way, the three of them couldn't help but look toward the front.

At the end of the stone-paved road was a super gigantic stone gate. Shooting Star and company all had the same reaction. They stared at the stone gate and followed it upward, their heads tilting further and further...

"Whoa!" They all cried out at the same time.

The top of the stone gate actually reached the same height as the two towering mountains on both sides of it. The three of them had tilted their heads to the point of them nearly being parallel to their bodies before they could see the carving of wings at the very top of the gates.

"Are all villages around here like this?"

At last, Bai Saya said this with great admiration.

The two people beside him, to the left and right, both turned to look at Bai Saya. One had on a helpless expression, while the other really wanted to open his head to see just what was inside of it.

When Bai Saya became himself again, he saw the two of them looking at him with an odd expression. "Huh? Is something the matter?" He asked, confused.

"Nothing! Dan, hurry and scram. I'm going to transform into a beastman!" Shooting Star rudely commanded, "Oh right! Take Yaya with you too."

After Dan looked at him, he solemnly took Yaya from Bai Saya and walked away.

"Should I leave too?" Bai Saya asked and pointed at himself.

"You don't have to!" Shooting Star shrugged and said, "Even if the demon king from my race makes a personal appearance and comes wearing the royal emblem, wielding the frightening demonic sword that let him prevail over the world no matter where he went in the past, and riding the summoned darkness bone dragon, putting on a complete show for you, you would just ask him, 'Who are you?'"

Bai Saya didn't dare to retort. He couldn't help but ask, "Is the demon king strong? He uses a demonic sword? Then, he must be a warrior! What's a darkness bone dragon? Is it any different from a dragon? Have you actually met the demon king before?"

Shooting Star speechlessly stared at his pet, who was lacking in common sense and knowledge. Then, he poked him in the chest and shouted, "No, I haven't! Other than the first prince, it's been several hundred years since anyone has seen the demon king. Every time the demon king showed up, it was just to throw his kid at the first prince to raise."

When Bai Saya heard that, he said disapprovingly, "Such an irresponsible father!"

"I totally agree!" Shooting Star grumbled and unwillingly added, "But people say that the demon king is old and isn't in great health, and he doesn't want anyone to find out about it. That's why he is unwilling to make any appearances."

Bai Saya nodded in understanding, but he still insisted, "But he still shouldn't toss his children to his son."

Shooting Star shrugged and said, "Even if he doesn't throw them at his son, it's not like he can raise them himself. He's the king! Have you ever heard of a king personally raising his children?"

Bai Saya thought it over and said in embarrassment, "I don't really know. I've never met a king before."

Shooting Star rolled his eyes at him. *This is common sense!*

Bai Saya also felt that he was lacking in common sense. He hurriedly changed the topic. "Are you going to transform into a beastman?"

Shooting Star hesitated for a moment before he directly removed the remaining bracelet on his wrist. Even though his movement wasn't indecisive, he truthfully felt a bit uneasy. After all, this was the first time he was going to show his true appearance in front of Xiao Bai. *I wonder how he will react?*

Bai Saya was stunned.

Shooting Star panicked and worriedly shouted, "How is it? Why are you so shocked? Am I that different? Do I look ugly?"

"You..." Bai Saya stuttered in shock. He sucked in a deep breath before he was able to continue speaking. "You haven't changed at all? Shooting Star, did you take off the wrong bracelet?"

"...Are you blind? I have changed!" Shooting Star shouted with clenched fists. He was so angry that his face turned red.

Bai Saya swept his eyes up and down Shooting Star. Then, he swept them down and up. Shooting Star still had the same red hair, the same large eyes, and the same childish face and figure. He couldn't help but ask in confusion, "Just what has changed?"

Shooting Star pushed aside his fiery hair and gestured hard at his ears. They were no longer round like a human's. Rather, they had a sharp point.

Bai Saya came to a sudden realization. "So, your ears turned pointy! They were covered by your hair earlier, so I didn't notice. My apologies."

After he said that, he asked in confusion again, "But an elf also has pointy ears. Then, can't you be considered an elf?"

It was like Shooting Star had been hit by a heavy one hundred kilogram hammer. His head instantly fell. He was in complete disbelief. He could only use his hands that had been pointing at his ears to point at his forehead instead.

"Your forehead?" Bai Saya bent over a bit to observe Shooting Star, who was dispirited. Finally, he was able to see an upside down black pentagon tattoo—no, Shooting Star and Dan had said that this was a "demonic emblem."

An upside down black pentagon... Bai Saya abruptly thought of

something and blurted, "Ah! This is exactly the same as your necklace."

Shooting Star froze. Coldness flashed across his large, golden eyes. He used a frigid tone to ask, "My necklace? How do you know I have an inverted pentagon necklace?"

"When we were on the ship, I was in a hurry to find Roth to give to Dan. I asked Bones, and it poured everything out of your pouch. I saw the necklace then. I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to."

Bai Saya apologized with great sincerity. Even though it was Bones who had poured everything out of the bag, it was because he had asked Bones to help him search. Therefore, he didn't plan to escape responsibility.

"Bones poured it out?" Shooting Star frowned.

How is that possible? Bones wouldn't do that. Since the bag held items of utmost importance, Shooting Star had commanded that little fellow to guard the bag carefully.

Shooting Star looked toward their luggage. *Come to think of it, Bones doesn't seem very energetic lately. It's been sleeping nearly the whole time. Even if I order it to pick fruits, it will follow my orders and return right after picking them, instead of dallying and stealing birds' eggs before returning. When it's bored, it would even chatter at me nonstop in the past.*

I'll have to take the time to figure out just what is going on with Bones.

When Shooting Star lifted his head, he was just in time to see Bai Saya stare at him. Shooting Star stared deep into Bai Saya's eyes, but other than apology, all he saw was "stupidity" there. There really was nothing else in those amber eyes...

Xiao Bai really must have been on his own with his shifu ever since he was born, until the day his shifu was murdered. Or else, how could he be so naively stupid?

"In any case, don't tell Dan that my demonic emblem is an upside down black pentagon. I don't want him to know which family I'm from."

After Shooting Star saw Bai Saya nod, he relaxed. Xiao Bai had yet to develop the skills of "lying" and "breaking his promises."

"All right, I'm transforming now!" Shooting Star twisted the bracelet. *Ehehe, what kind of beastman should I turn into?*

Bai Saya asked in curiosity, "Are you going to transform into an avian?"

"No way!" Shooting Star rolled his eyes and said, "What I transform into is just for appearances. If some avian asks me to fly, I wouldn't be able to do that."

"I see. So, what are you going to transform into?"

"Does it need to be said? Of course, I'm gonna transform into the king of all beasts—a lion!"

After Shooting Star made his great declaration, he immediately put the

bracelet on, and his body began to change. The pointy ears of a demon began to shrink, and two fluffy ears appeared on top of his head. Three whiskers grew from both cheeks, while fur slowly appeared on his hands, and soft, round pads rose from his palms, finally turning into paws.

"How is it? Am I imposing?" Shooting Star turned around and struck an attacking pose as he asked gleefully.

Imposing? Bai Saya felt that Shooting Star's current appearance had nothing to do with the word imposing! However, Shooting Star was currently basking in glee. Bai Saya didn't want to burst his bubble, or else Shooting Star would never let him hear the end of it.

"It suits you pretty well." Bai Saya, who never lied, could only say this.

"All right! Let's call Dan over and knock on that door!"

Shooting Star's eyes shone as he looked at the door in front of them. It wouldn't budge even if they knocked until their arms broke, yet he shouted that he wanted to knock on it.

Dan walked over. When he saw Shooting Star's appearance, he lifted an eyebrow and turned a questioning look on Bai Saya. The latter held in his laughter and blinked at Dan as he said, "He's a lion. Imposing, right?"

Dan laughed. When Shooting Star shot him a suspicious look that said, "What are you laughing at," he quickly smothered his laughter and returned to his solemn face. However, he secretly exchanged a glance

with Bai Saya, laughter still dancing in their eyes.

Yaya loudly cried out, “Fluffy” and jumped into Shooting Star’s arms. Then, she grabbed his soft toe beans and refused to let go.

With Bai Saya’s firm decision not to waste effort in “knocking,” Shooting Star could only use the method that Uncle Cow had told him of. He walked to the door and pulled on the rope that was as thick as a person’s thigh, to ring the huge bell that hung in front of the gate. At once, the bell resounded deeply.

“No one is responding... Ah! I mean, no avians! Hey, guests are here. Hurry and open the gates!”

Shooting Star’s loud voice accompanied the ringing bell, sounding endlessly. It was just that no matter how loud his voice was, it couldn’t compare to the huge bell. It didn’t take long for him to give up competing with the bell using his voice. He even gave up on ringing the bell and had Bai Saya take his place. He went off to the side and used his toe beans to play with Yaya instead.

Yaya was having a lot of fun. This relieved Shooting Star. On that first night after Alan had left, she had wailed so desperately. They could only leave quickly the next day to search for the avian village, lying to her that they were heading out to search for her mother. Only then did she calm down.

He kept playing with Yaya on the way here, and that was the only reason she stopped crying about wanting her mom. But how long could this last? Shooting Star was a little worried and couldn’t help but

start to blame Alan. Just when was he going to catch up with them?

It can't be that the elf isn't as smart as Dan? Shooting Star began to worry. He thought it over. His elf was sometimes a bit scatterbrained. Maybe he really didn't figure out "Bai Saya's true intentions" like Dan did.

The bell rang for a long time. Even though Shooting Star had moved farther and farther away, he still felt that he was about to lose his hearing. Just as he wanted to tell Bai Saya to give it a rest for a bit, something finally happened.

Several shadows appeared on the ground. They reflexively looked up. In the sky were several... "large birds?"

"Step back from Heaven's Wing Gate. Remain below without moving."

However, the large bird spoke.

Bai Saya was taken aback.

Dan reminded him, "They should be avians. Let's back up a bit."

Bai Saya nodded. They directly backed up to where Shooting Star and Yaya were. Shooting Star was currently looking up at the avians in the sky with great excitement.

"A whole group of angels!" Shooting Star smiled so much that his eyes closed. "It would be so wonderful if I had a beautiful army of angels!"

Bai Saya and Dan shared a glance. They didn't at all wish that what was above them was an army of angels.

The avians descended one by one. They definitely didn't have enough to form an army, but there were still more than ten of them. In addition, they had gigantic wings on their backs, making them appear quite imposing.

Shooting Star widened his eyes and clearly made out the avian at the very front. He held a long spear in his hand and towered over him. His skin was a deep bronze from too much sun, and he had a square face and thick eyebrows. If not for the pair of wings behind his back and the light leather armor on his body, he looked just like a farmer who was always on the field.

A f-farmer angel! Shooting Star fell into a stupor. *Pop, pop, pop.* The heavenly avian village of his imagination shattered completely, like bubbles bursting apart.

The spear-wielding avian furrowed his thick eyebrows and asked, "Why have you come here? Trade?"

"Ah, ah?"

Before anyone else could respond, Yaya gave an "ah, ah" and even looked curiously at those people's wings as she touched her own small wings.

"This is... a child of our race?" The spear-wielding avian exclaimed.

At this time, Dan returned to his senses and explained to the avians, "Yes, we were asked by her parents to look after her. However, we are unable to teach her how to fly, so we sought your avian vill... city, hoping to receive your help."

When the spear-wielding avian laid eyes on Dan, his face darkened, and he asked, "Demon?"

"Half-demon." Dan remained calm as he answered. He understood that many races were unable to accept demons. He had even mentally prepared for the possibility that he may have to camp outside of the city by himself.

The spear-wielding avian nodded. He solemnly said, "Swear in the name of the Demon King that everything you have said is the truth, that you have told no lies."

After Dan paused for a moment, he complied and said, "In the name of the Demon King, Dyph Yph, I, Dan Dove, swear that everything I have just said is the truth."

The spear-wielding avian nodded with a pleased expression on his face. Then, he turned his gaze on the other two. When he saw Shooting Star, he was rather surprised and said, "Huh, it's been a long time since I've seen a beastman of this race."

Shooting Star immediately returned to his senses. His eyes sparkled, as if saying: *Hear, hear! Quickly tell them that I'm an imposing beastman of the lion race!*

The spear-wielding avian smilingly rubbed Shooting Star's head and praised, "What a cute kitty. The cat race is such a rare sight!"

Hear, hear! It's so rare to see such an imposing cat... cat?! Shooting Star's jaw dropped. He swatted away the avian's hand and roared, "I'm not a cat! I'm a lion, an imposing lion!"

"Hahaha, the little kitty is angry! Fine, fine, you're an imposing kitten, okay?"

The spear-wielding avian broke into laughter.

The avians behind him also laughed and said, "Cats always like to claim to be lions."

"You!"

Shooting Star was so angry that his fur stood up, making him appear just like an electrocuted cat. He was on the verge of pouncing with his toe beans and leaving red scratches all over the avian's face. By then, Bai Saya had finally regained his senses and saw that the situation was getting out of hand. He immediately stepped forward to restrain Shooting Star.

"Shooting Star, calm down!"

Unexpectedly, Shooting Star didn't put up much of a protest, but the avians each raised their spears and jabbed at Bai Saya mercilessly. Fortunately, the latter was a fighter and reflexively dodged these attacks.

After the avians' attack failed, they immediately yelled at Bai Saya, "Evil human! What are you doing to the little cat? Unhand him now."

"Huh?" Bai Saya, Shooting Star, and Dan coincidentally uttered the same sound of confusion.

"Ah?" To the side, Yaya copied their example.

Bai Saya was at a loss. This was the first time he had been crowned with the descriptor "evil."

The spear-wielding avian coldly said, "Humans are a despicable race. They are able to break any promise, including oaths sworn to the gods they follow. Even those! They can't be trusted at all!"

Hearing that, Dan was actually the one who was the most troubled. He would much rather the avians held animosity toward him instead.

"Xiao Bai isn't that kind of person at all!" Shooting Star propped his hands on his waist and spoke up for his pet, "He keeps his word without needing to swear to any god! My Xiao Bai is that stupid!"

Bai Saya couldn't help but feel grateful that Shooting Star had spoken up for him. *It would have been even better if he hadn't added that last part.*

Yet, the spear-wielding avian didn't believe him.

Seeing that, Shooting Star could only change tactics. "Anyway, no

matter how evil he is, he is only one person. You're a whole avian city. Don't tell me you're scared of a single human?"

The spear-wielding avian actually agreed. "This isn't an avian city. We are the Avian Nation."

The Avian Nation, White Feather.

Usually, only during wartime would tribes and villages on the Southern Continent join together to form a temporary nation against a common enemy. Once the war ended, the temporary nation would naturally dissolve. As a result, Uncle Cow and the others had told Shooting Star that this was an avian "village," as they truly had little concept of a "nation."

The White Feather Nation was an exception. Avians enjoyed living in groups and possessed a gentle nature. They were unlike other rowdy beastmen, who easily fell into conflict when living together. If tribes were too large, they would even run into a shortage of prey, resulting in fights over food.

The avians were one of the rare beastmen races that specialized in farming and gathering food rather than hunting. Therefore, they simply gathered together in this location and formed a nation of avians.

Compared to the nations on other continents, the avian nation was laughably small, as it was merely a single capital city; however, the White Feather Nation was one of the few long-standing nations on the Southern Continent, which mostly had villages and migratory tribes.

"White Feather Nation, right? I've heard so much about you!" Shooting Star immediately made up.

Didn't you just call them an avian village? Since when have you heard anything about them? Bai Saya shot a glance at his companion. *Just who among us is the human who can't be trusted?*

The spear-wielding avian clearly adored Shooting Star. Such an obvious lie didn't even register, and he even happily rubbed Shooting Star's head.

"Come on in, little kitty. You will definitely love our nation."

Shooting Star was about to combust, but whatever. As long as Xiao Bai could enter and Yaya could learn how to fly, then he'd be a little kitty!

"So, we can all head in?" Shooting Star shamelessly added the word "all."

The spear-wielding avian nodded, but before they could express their happiness, he pointed at Bai Saya and said, "Except for him."

Shooting Star and Dan's faces both fell. Maybe they shouldn't have Dan enter. Bai Saya was the holder of the Stone of Sin. They could leave anyone but Bai Saya by himself out here.

"He must wear handcuffs and shackles. The others can enter as is."

As the avian said this, he glanced disdainfully at Bai Saya. Then, he

turned and tasked his men to get the handcuffs and shackles.

Shooting Star scratched his furry ears and turned to look at Bai Saya, who was a little frustrated. However, the swordsman, who was always obedient, had no intentions to refuse, as long as he could enter.

Dan, on the other hand, was displeased. He would rather be the one handcuffed and shackled instead. This was an insult to his checkmate Bai Saya that Dan could not allow. "We demons are not good people either. Why aren't you tying me up?"

Shooting Star rolled his eyes. *You're begging to be tied up?* But he was too lazy to care about Dan. When it came to checkmates, arguing over it was useless. They might as well send him over as a freebie to get tied up. In any case, the avians weren't some evil race.

"That is indeed the case." The avian nodded and said, "However, demons would never go back on their oaths to the Demon King Dyph Yph. Only the rarest few would dare to break their oath sworn under the name of the Demon King. If you are indeed 'that kind of demon,' then even if I don't allow you to enter, you would force your way in."

Dan choked but couldn't refute. He was right. The only ones who would dare to break their oaths were thousand year old demons like Ice Chess.

"Oh, so that's how it is. That's why you wanted Dan to swear by the Demon King's name, but..." Shooting Star delighted in creating chaos as he deliberately said, "He's a half demon! And the other half is human! Aren't you worried that he's more like a human than a demon?"

Dan coldly glanced at Shooting Star out of the corner of his eye. Although he was dissatisfied with Shooting Star's tone, he wasn't dissatisfied with what Shooting Star had said. He didn't want Bai Saya to suffer this alone. He would rather be shackled with him.

"Even so, he is still much more trustworthy than a human." The spear-wielding avian didn't care about that point much at all.

Bai Saya hurried to placate them. "It's fine, it's fine. I'll just be handcuffed. I've even been imprisoned before, so it's nothing. Let's just head in."

Dan frowned, but Bai Saya had on a pleading expression. He could only give in and silently watch his checkmate get handcuffed and shackled.

Seeing Dan's ugly expression, Shooting Star couldn't help but mutter, "Geez, I wonder just who is getting handcuffed? Are checkmates really so extraordinary? I better never..." *...meet my checkmate my whole life.*

In actuality, making Bai Saya wear handcuffs and shackles was more for formality than for any practical purpose. The spear-wielding avian didn't even make Bai Saya hand over his sword, although it was true that he didn't know that the Sword of Sacred White could cleave through iron as if it were mud.

After all, this was a mere four person team, and among them were a little boy and an infant who needed to be carried. This kind of team couldn't cause any great trouble to this nation of avians.

Therefore, the spear-wielding avian easily let this group enter his country.

"Please come in. Markham welcomes your arrival on behalf of White Feather."

After that was said, Shooting Star stared at the gate in great excitement. *It will definitely be a grand sight when such a huge gate like this opens!*

Even Bai Saya couldn't keep his composure. He stared at the humongous gate expectantly.

Only Dan, who had been through thick and thin, retained his usual calm. He cared more about whether or not the handcuffs and shackles on Bai Saya were too tight than about the stone gate.

Before they knew it, a "clang" sounded, and the gigantic gate... had a tiny, rusty door open near the bottom.

"..."

Markham personally led Shooting Star and the others into White Feather. He planned to first take them to report to the city supervisor. On the way, Shooting Star asked endless questions, and Markham patiently answered all of them.

As they walked on, many avians stopped in their steps, pointing and gesturing at Bai Saya, who was handcuffed and shackled. Even though

he hadn't done anything wrong, Bai Saya still felt embarrassed by the remarks. He couldn't be bothered to marvel at his surroundings, his head drooped the entire way.

Dan walked beside him and helped block some of the gazes from the outsiders. Meanwhile, his face had darkened, and he coldly observed the surrounding beastmen that were gossiping about Bai Saya.

"Didn't you just say that White Feather often does business with other beastmen?" Shooting Star looked around with an odd expression and asked, "Why are there so few other beastmen? I barely see any!"

"It is currently off season for business." Markham answered the little kitty's questions rather patiently.

"So that's how it is! Do you have any food specialties?" Shooting Star would never forget to ask about good food.

Seeing Shooting Star's hunger, Markham laughingly said, "Tons! But our most famous delicacy has to be our fruit wine. You're a kid though, so you should drink juice instead."

"Fruit wine!" Shooting Star jerked his head to the side and reached out with his furry paw as he said, "Xiao Bai, I wanna drink fruit wine. Give me money to buy it."

When he heard that, Bai Saya immediately lifted his drooped head and turned him down seriously. "No, you're still a kid. You may not drink wine."

"I'm not a kid. I'm already over thirty!" Shooting Star shouted.

Shooting Star is actually over thirty years old? Bai Saya was stunned. *Doesn't that mean he's an entire twelve years older than me?* At this, Dan said next to his ear, "A demon's lifespan is different from a human's. To a full-blooded demon, thirty years old is equivalent to around fifteen years old for humans."

Fifteen years old! When Bai Saya heard that, he immediately said in a serious voice, "Little kids may not drink wine! I'll buy you juice."

After he said that, he dragged along his shackles and dug out his money pouch, about to go off to buy juice.

"No, I want fruit wine. I don't want juice!" Shooting Star hurried over to pull him to a stop, making a big fuss over it.

"No is no. If you keep complaining, I'm going to tell Alan that you drank fruit wine without permission when he comes back!" Bai Saya sternly threatened him. "Didn't you say he is definitely coming back?"

"Hmph!" Having been threatened, Shooting Star unwillingly let go. Then, he viciously glared at his pet and scolded, "I'm beginning to consider whether or not I should allow him to come back!"

"What's with all the noise here?"

Markham was out of sorts watching this evil human, who was handcuffed and shackled, take out a small money pouch. It was too bizarre. When he heard this familiar growl, he immediately turned and

reported, "Captain of the Guard! I was in the middle of bringing these travelers to report to you."

Captain of the Guard? He must be strong! Strong people always looked beautiful. It didn't matter if that made any sense. Shooting Star believed in it.

He must be a beautiful angel! Shooting Star abruptly spun one hundred and eighty degrees...

"A-Agid?" Shooting Star's mouth dropped.

The newcomer had a pair of wings that were more robust than all of the other avians' wings, muscles that were as strong as mountains, and even a face that was pieced together with muscles. He was a muscle man built completely from muscles piled together. In his hands, he even held a thick and long spear, appearing quite deadly—just as deadly to both body and mind!

Bai Saya sympathetically looked at Shooting Star, who was wilting. It was like two huge mallets had struck him in his eyes, nearly blinding him. He couldn't even stand properly anymore.

This avian really looked like Agid had a pair of wings sprout from his back. When Bai Saya saw him, he had nearly reflexively taken ten steps back to prevent Agid from performing the ultimate technique of "instantly approaching him."

Avian Agid growled, "This is a human? You actually let a human inside!"

"I-I already made him wear handcuffs and shackles." Markham was clearly a bit frantic. He quickly explained himself to the captain.

Avian Agid yelled, "Handcuffs and shackles can't do anything to stop a human's evilness!"

"We humans have a lot of good people among us too! We're not an evil race!" Bai Saya finally couldn't help but stand up for his own race.

Avian Agid mercilessly refuted, "For their own selfish desires, humans capture other races all over the world, making them into slaves to order around or pets to marvel at. They are irredeemably despicable!"

"Ugh!" Bai Saya was abruptly rendered speechless. He could not help but admit that this was indeed true, as he too had almost been sold as a slave in the past.

When Dan saw Bai Saya's dejected demeanor, wrath burned within him, and he coldly said, "Beastmen also go to war all the time and take captives as slaves."

"We avians never initiate any confrontations, and we do not own a single slave," Avian Agid proudly said. Afterwards, he shot a glance at Dan and turned to shout at Markham, "A human and a demon. Why have you let such dangerous people inside?"

Markham scratched his head, as he had let them in because of the little avian. Besides, they only had four people in their group. It wasn't like they could cause a lot of trouble.

"Like hell we're dangerous people!" Shooting Star propped his hands on his waist and shouted, "You're being way too rude. We were asked to take care of this kid by an avian, and we even came all the way here to help his kid learn how to fly!"

It was actually a dragon who asked us for a favor. Bai Saya corrected Shooting Star in his heart.

Avian Agid looked toward Shooting Star. Seeing that he was a beastman, Avian Agid's expression immediately gentled. He nodded and said, "Ah, it's been so long since I've seen a cat."

"I'm a lion!" Shooting Star was just like an angry cat. Even the fur on his body stood up.

"Is she the little avian child you speak of?"

Avian Agid clearly did not care about Shooting Star's declaration that he was a lion. He turned his attention to Yaya. The moment he saw those large pink eyes of Yaya blink at him non-stop, he blurted in great alarm, "T-this is..."

"Royalty!"

Chapter 5: Saiximili

"Xiao Bai, can you be any more ridiculous? You fell in the ocean and got snatched by a dragon; you had your hand cut by a letter opener and got involved with the end of the world; you picked up an egg by the roadside and got a princess in return?! You're basically a magnet for trouble. You are not allowed to randomly pick things up, touch them, or even look at them!"

Shooting Star was carrying Yaya as he glared at Bai Saya. The latter could only smile wryly. He was quite unwilling himself, but how was he to know that trouble would keep finding him?

Yaya strongly wished to tug on Shooting Star's furry ears, causing Shooting Star to really want to pinch her cheeks into an apple red. But no matter how daring he was, Shooting Star would not dare to bully a princess in front of her own bodyguards.

In fact, he could not even toss the little angel at Bai Saya like he usually did whenever he got tired of playing with her. Avian Agid was stubbornly unwilling to allow their princess to be held by a "despicable human" and a "heartless demon."

"I am so sorry. Dan is just a heartless half demon, while I am a full one!" Shooting Star could not help but mutter under his breath. Then, he took the chance to pinch Yaya's little butt, warning her to stop wiggling around.

"Wah... Bzz bzz!" Yaya's butt smarted in pain, and her mouth turned downward; however, instead of crying, she used "bzz bzz" to threaten

Shooting Star.

“Ugh!”

Hearing the “sounds” of lightning, Shooting Star’s complexion immediately changed. *Alan should be back soon, right?* He really did not want Alan’s welcome gift to be a streak of lightning right when Alan returned. He could only unwillingly let Yaya touch his ears. To vent his annoyance, Shooting Star deliberately stomped on the stone pavement as he moved forward.

Shooting Star rudely asked, “Hey, Avian Agid, just how far away is the palace hall still?!”

For the nth time, Markham corrected, “Our Captain of the Guard is not called Agid. His name is Barna.”

Barna himself took no offense to this little cat calling him the wrong name. He straightforwardly said, “We are almost there. My king will be able to determine right away if this one is royalty or not; however, pink eyes have always been a trait of royalty. This one must be a princess of ours!”

Hearing him say that, Markham looked at Yaya uneasily. He had not actually noticed immediately. Although he did not often see the king, and he was unfamiliar with pink eyes, this was still a failure to adhere to his duty. His straight back slumped at this.

“A princess, huh...” Shooting Star tightened his hold, his heart uneasy. Anabelle was a princess, so no matter how much he had liked that

cute heart-shaped face of hers, he had had no choice but to give up on her. Now, his little angel had also turned into a princess. *Don't tell me she's gonna get snatched away too?*

"We're here."

Since they were here to see the king, Barna was of course even more cautious than earlier. He ordered Markham to bring a pair of chains over and wrapped them around the despicable human several times over, to the point that the human could barely walk. Only then did Barna feel satisfied.

As for the heartless demon, Barna had him swear countless oaths in the name of the Demon King, promising not to touch a single hair on the king. Only then was Barna willing to take them to see the noble king.

Because this was the first time in his life that Bai Saya was meeting someone with as lofty a position as a king, he was extremely excited. However, with his body wrapped in more metal than what full body armor could provide, he really didn't know if he was lucky or unlucky that he would meet the king with such an appearance.

Barna nodded at the guards to each side of the door, indicating for them to open it. He turned and warned Shooting Star and company, "Do not ever..."

"Harm the king, not even a single feather!" Shooting Star cut him off and even finished what he was saying. He also rolled his eyes exaggeratedly at him. He didn't know how many times he had heard

him say this on the way here. His ears were about to fall off.

Barna nodded. Then, he turned back around to face the slowly-opening door.

“Geez, who would want to harm an old, balding... king...”

In the end, Shooting Star was unable to utter a single word more. He stared stupidly at the sight beyond the entrance.

The hall was actually not all that large, and it was not all that magnificent either. Compared to the palace halls found on the other continents, this was simple to the point of a joke.

On their way here, Shooting Star had long since realized that the humongous stone gate and the streets of the city within were not comparable at all. The stone gate was utterly majestic, but the streets after entering the city were only around the size as those found in the small city of Stella where Shooting Star and Bai Saya had met. Even the population seemed to number around the same as a small city’s worth.

A small city having a simple palace such as this one was not strange. What drew Shooting Star and company’s unwavering gaze, to the point of speechlessness, was not the palace hall, but the person sitting on the king’s throne.

He possessed a pair of pure, snow-white wings; dazzling, star-bright, golden hair; soft, smooth skin; and a faint smile framed by an ethereally beautiful face. His pink eyes made him appear as gentle as

lapping waves. He sat easily, yet not ungracefully on the king's throne, gazing at Shooting Star and company.

This avian, even if he were to sit amongst a simple hall, no, even if he sat amongst a pile of weeds, would make people feel that the pile of weeds was as precious as exotic flowers.

"Angel, the angel of my dreams!"

Shooting Star suddenly shouted and ran toward his dream.

"What are you trying to do to the king?!"

Barna immediately raised his spear, using his body that was as sturdy as a mountain to block Shooting Star's path, with every intention to protect the king with his life. Meanwhile, Markham hesitated for a moment before he stepped forward to block Shooting Star. He really did not feel that this little cat would harm the king.

"Ahh, move out of the way. I can't see my angel like this!" Shooting Star stuck his head out from behind the mountain of muscles in displeasure, fiery, golden eyes unwilling to leave the sight of his dream angel even upon death.

"Hehehe, it is fine. Let him come over. I wish to see the little avian he brought."

Barna's mouth tightened at that, and he unwillingly turned his body to the side, allowing Shooting Star to pass; however, his eyes stayed glued on Shooting Star. If he dared to take a single action that was

harmful to the king, a long spear would immediately pierce through his body.

Shooting Star bounded across the hall in three steps that seemed like two yet still could not stop. He even set foot upon the steps that led to the throne...

"Shooting Star, you can't be so rude!"

Bai Saya wanted to put a stop to Shooting Star's fooling around, but his entire body was firmly wrapped up by steel chains, and the guard captain was even warier of him than Shooting Star. He did not dare to approach the king, or a fight might actually break out on the spot.

Shooting Star bounded up to the throne. Even though he was already so close, the king did not appear nervous. He merely smiled and looked at him gently. He even waved his hand to stop Barna and Markham from rushing forward to stop Shooting Star.

Only, Shooting Star was as fast as lightning. In an instant, he had finished climbing the few steps and arrived before the king. Then, as everyone's faces lost all color due to horror, Shooting Star brashly pounced on the king's... wings.

"Shooting Star, you are really being too rude!" Bai Saya was about to faint. Before, Shooting Star had understood that they couldn't take Anabelle with them, yet now he actually dared to touch a king! *Alan, please hurry back, I beg you. You can return home later, but the problem of Shooting Star's discipline can't wait a single moment!*

The king evidently felt a little helpless and said, "Little lion, do you know that touching an avian's wings is a confession? It can even be a marriage proposal."

As Shooting Star touched the snow-white wings, he exclaimed, "Who cares! What a pretty pair of white wings! I wonder how long it will take for Yaya's wings to grow as big as these ones?"

He was so captivated by the wings that he wasn't even able to pay attention to Yaya, who had been in his arms. She fell with a "plonk," right onto the king's knees.

Even though she had fallen onto a stranger's legs, this little girl who treated lightning as a toy was clearly not the least bit scared of a small matter such as this. She just gave an, "ah ah." Seeing Shooting Star touch the wings, she struggled to grab the king's long golden hair so she could stand up. Then, she extended her chubby little hands, wanting to touch those large wings, too.

All of a sudden, Shooting Star stopped. *Did the king just say that I'm...*

"You know I'm a lion?" Shooting Star asked excitedly. He just *knew* he was a fierce lion, not some little cat!

At this time, the king lowered his head to look at Yaya's face. Most of his attention was focused on that pair of pink eyes, and he did not seem to hear Shooting Star at all. He seemed to be gazing faraway, and his voice was indistinct as he mumbled, "In the end, it was inevitable that only this child and myself are left."

Barna cried out in shock, "Your Majesty, what do you mean? Has His Royal Highness met unexpected misfortune?"

With this shout, the king slowly came back to himself and smiled bitterly. "If he and the princess have not both perished, then how could they allow themselves to give their own child to someone else?"

"How do you know if Yaya's mom and dad are alive or dead? Maybe they just didn't want to look after a kid, so they had us bring the child over to you, a readily available dad!"

Shooting Star retorted in disapproval. Even though the truth was exactly like what the king had surmised, it was his own brother's life and death he was talking about. *Shouldn't he make sure?!*

The avian king rubbed Yaya's head lovingly and sighed. "My little brother and his wife had always loved children. If they have not left this world, they would never be able to bring themselves to abandon their own child."

"So, Yaya's dad was your little bro?" Shooting Star asked doubtfully, "Your bro kicked the bucket. Why don't you seem very sad?"

The avian king stopped rubbing Yaya's head. His gaze found Shooting Star, and with a thread of sorrow in his voice, he said, "Since long ago, I had already warned him many times that if he continued to adventure outside, death would be just around the corner. However, this little brother of mine had always been an anomaly among avians. He did not appreciate settling down. Rather, he yearned for adventure and even took a wife who similarly loved traveling. In the end, I was

unable to stop him and could only let him go. He left White Feather. At the very least, during these years, he was able to live life the way he wished."

Shooting Star and company were taken aback by these strange words. It sounded like he had known from the start that his brother would die.

The king smiled and introduced himself properly.

"My name is Saiximili. I am the king of White Feather Nation. At the same time, I am a 'starseer,' a person who observes the stars to predict the future.

"I welcome you all, you who will decide the future."

Those words made everyone blanch. Dan's heart dropped. He thought of the Stone of Fury that Bai Saya possessed, and thought even more of the doomsday mentioned in the elven poem. Now, with these words from the self-proclaimed seer, he practically did not dare to imagine the kind of matters that would await his checkmate in the future.

Shooting Star turned around and used a grave tone to call out, "Barna..."

Barna was frozen for a moment before he was able to react. Markham was even more surprised. *Wasn't he calling him Agid, Agid, all this time? How is it suddenly Barna now?*

"There is a very serious problem right now."

Dan and Bai Saya both nodded to themselves. It was indeed a serious problem.

"What is the problem?" Barna asked in confusion.

Shooting Star seriously said, "Your king seems to be off his rocker, and it's a very serious case!"

"..."

Barna growled, "You're the one who is off his rocker!"

Seeing his own guard captain burst in anger, the king Saiximili did not know whether to laugh or cry. He quickly put a stop to it. "Calm down, Barna, they are our guests. Do not take offense with the little cat. You know that this race loves to fool around the most."

With these words out in the open, it was now Shooting Star's turn to burst in anger. "You just said I'm a lion. Who's a little cat?!"

"Little cat, you cannot be so rude to the king!" Barna glared at Shooting Star.

"Cat, my ass!" Shooting Star glared back.

The king coughed and said with a smile, "Little lion, are you hungry?"

"I'm full from my anger—I'm super hungry!" Shooting Star instantly transformed into a little kitten. He fell before the king, and his furry ears even drooped, making him appear pitiful and hungry.

King Saiximili looked at Markham and said with a smile, "Undo the chains on that guest first. Then, arrange for the best rooms and delicacies. These people have safely brought our little princess back to us. We must treat them with the best hospitality."

With the king's gaze on him, Markham was flustered and quickly responded, "Yes, Your Majesty."

The king gently asked, "Little lion, what do you like to eat?"

"First is meat, second is more meat, and third is delicious meat!" Shooting Star turned into a real lion on the spot.

The king chuckled and said, "Barna, go and have dinner readied. Braised whole lamb and roasted pig must be on the menu. We must welcome our little lion well."

"Understood!"

Seeing how Shooting Star was grinning like an imp who had prevailed, Barna was very reluctant to do so, even though the king's words were law. Still, he could only clench his teeth and accept the command. He took the group to a room so that they could rest, and then he had the kitchen prepare a bountiful dinner.

"Tch tch, dinner was way too good!"

Right? Dan glanced at Shooting Star's stomach that was clearly sticking out. He had no clue where Shooting Star was putting it all.

Even though demons indeed ate more during puberty, wasn't this too ridiculous?

Bai Saya was carrying Yaya. The little girl had fallen asleep after eating her fill. Afraid that he might wake her, he quietly agreed, "It was indeed delicious. Although it was mostly roasted, it was all very delicious."

"Especially the roasted lamb!" Even though Shooting Star was so full that he was about to burst, thinking of the tenderly roasted lamb made him about to salivate.

"I had hoped to ask the king some questions during dinnertime, but he never showed up." Dan had not cared much about the contents of their dinner. He was so worried about what the king had said that he was barely able to stomach the food.

Thinking logically, if the king wished to entertain them, he should have made an appearance, but he had not throughout the entire dinner.

Could this be a scam?

Shooting Star only needed a glance to figure out what Dan was thinking. He scoffed. "It's not like he can avoid us forever. We'll get our chance to question him. Besides, we have to stay and wait for Yaya to learn how to fly and for Alan's return. Even ten days or up to half a month would still be a short stay."

Hearing that, Dan frowned and said with unease, "We should try our best to leave earlier."

Shooting Star snapped, "To go where? Did you forget that Xiao Bai said that the holders of the stones can sense each other's positions? Rather than staying in the dark and waiting for them to strike at us, we should take our time to figure out what the heck these Stones of Sin are!"

Dan could not help but admit that Shooting Star was right. He sighed. *Haste makes waste. I was too hasty with my decisions and focused too much on taking Bai Saya as far away as I could.* They had already escaped from the Western Continent to the Southern Continent, yet they had gotten involved even more deeply. *What escape is there?*

"As expected of the Guide. You see so clearly."

Everyone jumped in shock. Dan stepped forward with his sword, earth magic on standby. He was ready to erect an earth wall for protection at any moment. Only then did he look ahead and saw a person standing in the shadows before them. The person wore a full-length cloak. Even the person's face was obscured by the hood.

"Who is it?" Dan demanded.

Once he lowered his hood, King Saiximili's brilliant golden hair brightened even the shadowy corner.

"Please follow me."

After the king issued the invitation, he turned and left.

Bai Saya didn't think anything of it and briskly began to follow; however, Dan stuck his hand out to stop him, yet Shooting Star brushed him aside. Dan glared at him, feeling that they really weren't cautious enough.

Shooting Star rolled his eyes at him and said, "Why are you glaring? We're already in White Feather. You think the king can't trap us here?"

Dan stilled. Only then did he realize that his actions were indeed meaningless.

"Hurry up and follow. The king has already walked far ahead!" Shooting Star chided, "You've been checkmated so hard by your checkmate that your brain has stopped functioning."

Dan fumbled for a moment before he retaliated with, "You're a full-blooded demon. When you meet your checkmate, I'm sure your brain will stop functioning even more than mine."

Shooting Star gleefully said, "It's rare beyond rare that a demon will meet their checkmate. Who would be like you, you who can even run into a checkmate when he clearly obediently stayed in human territory?"

Bai Saya asked curiously, "Don't all demons meet their checkmates?"

"Normal demons rarely meet theirs. It's usually only the demons who live for a long time that have a chance..." Shooting Star abruptly stopped and slowly asked, "Xiao Bai, since when have you known

about checkmates?”

Dan abruptly grew nervous.

“Alan told me.”

Shooting Star gave an “oh.” Then, seeing that Bai Saya’s expression was no different from usual, he figured that Bai Saya didn’t think much of this matter, which wasn’t unexpected. Humans had a difficult time understanding the kind of existence a checkmate was for a demon. Besides, Dan had always treated Bai Saya well. Even though there was now an extra name of checkmate to his care for Bai Saya, Xiao Bai most likely didn’t think it was any different.

“It’s not a bad thing for you to know. Now, you can order Dan around. You can even work him like a horse or cow!”

Bai Saya’s face darkened and he quickly told Dan, “I won’t work you like a horse or cow. Don’t listen to Shooting Star’s nonsense.”

Dan smiled faintly. Even though Bai Saya attracted great trouble, Dan felt very fortunate that his checkmate was Bai Saya and not some corrupt checkmate.

“Everyone, please come this way.”

At the end of the corridor stood the king by himself. They hurried to catch up with him.

Once they had caught up, they actually stepped foot outside of the

palace. They were on a small hill outside.

This seemed to be the king's destination. He took off his cloak and turned to face everyone.

As night had fallen, they could not see the emerald green of the grass, but this was not a pity. Under the embrace of the night sky full of stars, dots of silver starlight reflected across the grass. The starry sky stretched above and below them, beautiful beyond words.

Between the two starry skies, a pair of wings as white as snow gently fluttered, while the person who possessed those wings did not at all pale in comparison to the wings. His golden hair trailed behind him in the wind, his beautiful face carrying a gentle, heart-rending smile. His long, slender, and fair fingers slowly counted the stars in the sky. This kind of avian, this kind of beauty, even if one were to claim him to be an angel, no one would counter that claim.

Saiximili saw the three of them stare blankly at him. By now, Yaya had also awoken. Seeing the wings glow in the starlight, her eyes also shone, and she gave a cry of "ah ah," waking everyone up from their stupor.

Saiximili said with a gentle smile, "As a starseer, I often come to this hill behind the palace to observe the stars. Isn't it a beautiful sight?"

The three of them nodded one by one.

"Ah ah!" Yaya copied them and nodded as well.

Saiximili was smiling as he looked at Yaya, yet his gaze carried a trace of sorrow and regret. "Yaya is my little brother's child. She is in the line of succession for the throne, especially since I am yet to be wed and do not have offspring. And I do not plan... to marry."

Hearing that, Shooting Star immediately snatched Yaya from Bai Saya's arms and hugged her tightly.

Even the big angel isn't allowed to steal my little angel!

Seeing that, Saiximili chuckled. "Do not worry. I won't steal her from you. Her destiny is already deeply entangled with yours. Even I would not dare to rip apart the bonds of destiny."

He paused momentarily, the king's gentle smile dropping from his face for the first time. "Forcefully interfering leads to little success and could even cause the path to lead to a darker one."

"Then, I can leave Yaya with me?" Shooting Star cheered.

"You want to leave Yaya?" Bai Saya worried.

"What do you mean by the bonds of destiny?" Dan looked for answers.

Saiximili turned around. He lifted his head to gaze at the night sky full of stars. He lifted his hand and pointed at the sky. "That large, red star is you, Shooting Star."

"I'm a large, red star?" Shooting Star lifted his head excitedly, wanting to see which star he was.

Red star, red star... There are so many stars! The entire sky is full of stars! Shooting Star was about to burst a blood vessel.

"Guide of Doom, that is the name of the star."

Hearing the word "doom," Dan's face fell. He even lost his urge to ask more questions.

"Doom?" Bai Saya's face grew serious and he quickly turned and said, "Shooting Star, Shooting Star, pay attention. It seems very serious!"

"Is it because of the word doom again... Hey! You actually nodded! Stupid Xiao Bai!" Shooting Star rolled his eyes at his pet in annoyance. Then, he turned and asked, "Big angel, make it clearer! What do you mean by Guide of Doom? Don't tell me that I'm some guy who will attempt to destroy the world! I haven't played enough! I don't want to destroy the world!"

Besides, isn't Xiao Bai the person who has a Stone of Sin? What does that have to do with me? Shooting Star frowned but didn't plan to say this out loud. *Since you claimed to be a seer, let's see how much you actually know!*

The king smiled helplessly. "My name is Saiximili. I am not an angel, just an avian."

"Fine, 'Saimi,' tell me what a Guide of Doom is!" Shooting Star was not at all deferential to the king.

"Oh, Saimi is easy to pronounce and remember." Bai Saya nodded to the side and kept the name "Saimi" in mind.

"..."

Saiximili decided to generously overlook these two people's impolite terms of address. He gazed far away into the sky.

"I do not know the exact meaning of the Guide of Doom, only that when I look at that red star, the name of that star naturally comes to mind. This is one of the powers of a starseer.

"Next to the red star is a brilliant, white star. That is you, Bai Saya. Your name is Wrath."

Shooting Star and Dan exchanged glances. This clearly pointed to the fact that Bai Saya possessed the Stone of Fury, Wrath. Saiximili really was a starseer like he had claimed—or this could be a huge hoax. He could have known from the start that Bai Saya was the holder of the Stone of Fury!

But other than themselves, the only person who knew should be Braids. If the king and Braids were in cahoots, then they were in deep trouble.

As Shooting Star and Dan exchanged glances, Shooting Star suddenly had a bad feeling. *Don't tell me that stupid Xiao Bai will...*

Bai Saya honestly admitted, "Your words are so accurate. I indeed possess a stone, the Stone of Fury. His name is Roth."

... reveal that he has the Stone of Fury. Shooting Star suddenly had the urge to burst his pet's head open, while Dan sighed helplessly beside him.

Saiximili merely smiled and moved his finger to the side. "That blue star is currently approaching your two stars."

"See!" Shooting Star pounded Bai Saya on the back and gleefully said, "I knew Alan would definitely return!"

Bai Saya smiled wryly. *The blue star doesn't necessarily mean Alan, right?*

Saiximili paused for a moment before he clarified, "However, its advance appears to have stagnated."

"Why has it stopped?" Shooting Star and Bai Saya asked simultaneously.

However, the starseer did not stop to explain. Instead, he moved his finger and pointed at another star. He continued to say, "Here is a green star, whose path will soon cross with yours. Its name is Sloth."

"What about Gluttony? Where is it?" Dan immediately asked. If they could find out where Braids, who had attacked them, was, then he could immediately send out his subordinates to assassinate him!

Saiximili did not respond right away. His gaze remained on the starry sky for a long while before he opened his mouth to say, "Gluttony's

whereabouts are unclear. In the short term, there is no chance that your paths and his will cross.”

“Who is Sloth?”

Dan once again had a serious expression on as he pressed for answers. By doing so, he had learned that their enemy from last time would not find them in the short term, yet now there was also another sin, Sloth. Saya’s situation really was precarious, yet he himself did not seem to be aware of the danger he was in, which endangered him even more.

Saiximili shook his head with a faint smile.

You don’t know? Dan frowned even harder.

Saiximili looked profoundly at this group of people and gestured in a certain expanse of the sky. “What you should pay the most attention to is that black star.”

Holy shit, you can even see a ‘black star’? Shooting Star rudely looked Saiximili up and down. *I bet this king is no starseer but some crackhead, right?*

At this time, Bai Saya said in great frustration, “Shooting Star, I still can’t find my white star. Were you able to find your star?”

You were silent for so long because you were searching for your star this whole time? Shooting Star snapped, “Idiot! You would need a hundred eyes to be able to find it!”

"That black star is called 'Guide of Existence.' Existence and Doom. That is right. You are two parties destined to oppose each other."

Saiximili gazed far into the distance, as if he saw through everything through his divination.

Bai Saya did not at all believe Shooting Star and countered, "But Saimi only has two eyes. How was he able to see our stars?"

"However, Doom's light far pales in comparison to Existence's. That is because the starseer who belongs to the Guide of Existence has already met his destined companions long ago."

Saiximili's gaze was still distant, but his pale fingers were slowly curling into a fist.

Shooting Star propped his hands on his waist and shouted, "How do you know that he doesn't have the other ninety eight eyes under his clothes?"

"Oh, so they're actually hidden under his clothes?" After saying that, Bai Saya then felt that such a sight was a little scary. *That can't be true, right?*

"Yes, you are correct in your assumptions! I am the Starseer of Doom..."

The avian king, who was as beautiful as an angel, had veins beginning to throb on his forehead.

Bai Saya abruptly felt that something was wrong. He exclaimed, "Shooting Star, Saimi seems to be talking about something really serious?"

Shooting Star's face twisted, and he growled, "Don't tell me that you feel it's very serious because you heard the word 'destined'!"

"Even though destiny dictates that I become the Starseer of Doom, I am given the opportunity to decide if I am to choose this path..."

His prophetic, distant gaze grew more and more human, and that human expression was usually dubbed, "enraged."

Bai Saya honestly admitted, "Yeah, 'destiny' sounds very serious."

"Idiot, it's not like every time destiny is mentioned means it's serious!" Shooting Star rolled his eyes.

Bai Saya wanted to continue arguing, but he suddenly paled, looking beyond Shooting Star in shock, not daring to utter a single word more.

"Hey, Xiao Bai? Why do you look like you've seen a ghost..."

Shooting Star asked in confusion, until a shadow fell upon his entire person. *How strange, what is big enough here that I can be "shadowed" completely?* He reflexively glanced down at the shadow on the ground.

A huge shadow spanned across the grass, and a humanoid shape with large wings could possibly be made out. If it was just the wings, that wouldn't be scary, since this was a nation of avians after all, but other

than the wings, the shadow had wildly dancing hair!

It was merely a shadow, and it was fully black, so nothing could be seen from it, yet Shooting Star swore that the location where the eyes should be on the shadow gleamed with a dangerous light that could make anyone pee their pants!

"Won't. You. All. Listen. To. What. I. Have. To. Say?"

The words were polite, but the tone was extremely frightening. A deathly pale, white hand akin to a devil's lightly rested next to Shooting Star's neck, and a bone-chilling coldness seeped through his skin, spreading throughout his entire body.

"Okay... I'll listen obediently to what you're saying!" Shooting Star nodded as if his life depended on it, almost wanting to cry. *Sob, sob, sob, the big angel has turned into a devil!*

After nodding, the person behind him did not take any more action. Shooting Star gulped. He really did not dare to turn directly to face the devil, so he could only sneak a glance at Xiao Bai's expression. *Eh?! Xiao Bai's fright has already settled? Does this mean Saimi has turned back into an angel?*

Shooting Star glanced out of the corner of his eyes, only to see that Saiximili's golden hair was gently being caressed by the wind, and the smile on his face was kind. His wings weren't devilish at all, shining white as usual, completely an angel. He did not at all look like a devil.

By now, Saiximili seemed to have completely forgotten his devil-mode

from earlier. He returned to being a distant seer. With a sorrowful gaze, his eyes bore into Shooting Star and company, and he softly murmured, "Even though I do not wish to bring up conditions with you, as a starseer's power should not be bargained for..."

To hell with that! By saying this, you clearly plan on bringing up conditions! Shooting Star rolled his eyes and came to a conclusion. *Saimi is just as longwinded as Alan!*

"However, destiny dictates that I cannot omit the condition." Saiximili shook his head sorrowfully, as if he was very unwilling to speak further. "The condition is..."

"Wait a moment!" Shooting Star abruptly cut Saimi off loudly. "Why do I need a starseer? Let me tell you, I have no interest at all in horoscopes!"

Saiximili lowered his head, half of his face shadowed. The golden hair framing his face slowly began to drift up, and his voice changed from distant to hollow, like a cry echoing from the depths of hell.

"A starseer has nothing to do with horoscopes! I'm sorry, I don't seem to have heard you right. Did you just say you don't need a starseer?"

Bai Saya tugged on Shooting Star's sleeve with horror, afraid that the latter would let slip even more shocking words. It had been frightening enough seeing a devil appear earlier. He did not want to see with his own eyes the complete process of an angel morphing into a devil!

"No. Way!" Shooting Star's eyes began to shine. Earlier, he had been

afraid of the devil to the point of shivering, yet now, he appeared completely fearless.

Such a resolute refusal shocked Saiximili still. He had considered many first encounters between him and the Guide of Doom, but never before had he thought that the other would not want his own starseer so resolutely.

Shooting Star's shining eyes make me feel... Bai Saya suddenly had a familiar bad feeling!

"I don't want a starseer, but if you want to be my pet, I'll consider taking you in!"

Like I thought! Bai Saya did not know whether to laugh or cry. *That shining just now was indeed Shooting Star's pet collecting sparkle!*

Pet? Saiximili's mouth twitched. He wondered if he had heard wrong.

Bai Saya sighed and helplessly said, "Shooting Star, what did you fall in love with this time? His wings?"

"No way!" Shooting Star retorted, "I already have Yaya's wings, and Yaya's tiny wings are so cute. When she grows up, her wings will definitely be even prettier than Saimi's wings!"

"Not the wings?" Bai Saya asked curiously, "Then, which part makes you want Saimi to be your pet?"

Shooting Star passionately shouted, "Does it even need to be said? His

hands, of course!”

Shooting Star hungrily stared at Saimi’s fair fingers. Since earlier when Saiximili had been pointing at this star and that star, he had noticed those hands! Where else would he find such breathtaking, beautiful hands?

Ahhh, I want those hands!

As if struck by lightning, Saiximili pulled his hands back. Then, he turned to look at Dan, as if asking him with his gaze, *Are these two really involved with the end of the world?*

“... Don’t pay them any mind. Continue on. What is the condition? As a starseer, what benefits can you provide?” Dan said rather helplessly. Clearly, he was the only one who had seriously listened to Saiximili speak.

“In the end, which path this world takes will be decided upon by the Guides. What I can do is to help illuminate the Guide’s path, allowing him to more clearly see the path before him, so that he can make his choice.”

Saiximili explained in all seriousness while looking at Dan. He inwardly lamented why his Guide wasn’t this one but the one next to him.

Shooting Star childishly said, “Hey! I said I don’t want a starseer. Be my pet. At most, I’ll let you hold a torch. You can still illuminate my path that way!”

You're actually comparing my power as a starseer with a torch! Saiximili felt like rational thought was leaking out of his brain.

Bai Saya hurriedly tried to put a stop to this. "Shooting Star, Saimi is a king. He can't be your pet."

Shooting Star boldly said, "He's the one who said he wanted to be my pet!"

Bai Saya corrected him, "He wants to be your 'starseer.' Don't twist his words. That isn't a good habit."

"Then, you tell me, what's the difference between a starseer and a pet?" Shooting Star harrumphed. Then, he said without a care, "After all, both stay by my side, only that he likes to watch the stars at night. Perfect. In that case, he can take the night watch!"

Bai Saya could not help but nod his head in agreement. "You are right. This way, Alan and my responsibilities will lessen."

"I told you!" Shooting Star nodded as if it were a matter of fact.

"... In any case, as long as you agree to my condition, I don't care if you want me to be a starseer or a pet with a torch!"

Hearing the conversation between these two, Saiximili finally gave up on his deep and profound image, and he also gave up on the dignity of a king, directly breaking down and providing the condition.

In a discussion about the end of the world with the two of them, one

believed that disciplining a child was more important, while the other felt pets and his next meal were worthier of his time. Saiximili's profound image of a seer was like a famous painting placed among museums—a lot less practical than a platter of stir-fry beef on the dinner table.

"What's the condition? Go ahead and say it!"

When it came to a problem as serious as the end of the world, Shooting Star could still goof off to the side with Xiao Bai, but when it came to capturing a pet, he immediately became so serious that he could not become any more serious.

"I have already seen that my nation will suffer a great calamity..." Saiximili turned, gazing faraway into the starry sky, sorrow sweeping across his face.

"A great calamity! Shoot, Xiao Bai, I wonder if it will be difficult to resolve?" Shooting Star's brows scrunched deeply together. *I hate trouble!*

Bai Saya heatedly said, "Shooting Star, helping others solve their problems is the duty of a swordsman!"

"It's not like I'm some swordsman. At most, I'm a 'whipman'..."

If I don't get straight to the point, they won't hear a single word I say. This realization suddenly came to Saiximili.

He quickly said without any expression, "I have prophesized that White

Feather will suffer a great calamity soon. According to what I have seen in the stars, this calamity should be a large battle. If you are willing to help White Feather win this battle, then I will be a torch-bearing pet!”

“A battle?” Shooting Star did not look well as he said, “But winning a battle is super hard. If it’s just for the sake of one single pet, it doesn’t seem to be worth it.”

Saiximili clenched his fists, a vein throbbing on his forehead, yet he flatly said, “I am a starseer. When there is a fork in the road, I can help divine which path leads to good fortune and which leads to calamity. This is a good deal. Why don’t you consider it for a bit?”

Bai Saya and Shooting Star immediately came to a realization and finally understood what a starseer was. Shooting Star even had an expression that implied, “So that’s how it is. You should have said so from the start.”

Yes! They finally understand the worth of a starseer! The king practically had the urge to cry.

Bai Say raised both hands in approval. “Awesome! Shooting Star, now that we have Saimi, we won’t ever end up lost again!”

... *lost?* Saiximili’s emotional response was popped like a bubble.

“Really? But I feel like Saimi doesn’t look like he’s good with directions?” Shooting Star looked doubtfully at Saimi. For some reason, he felt that the chances of a king getting lost were much higher than a

king being good at directions.

That is completely not what I mean by guiding your path! Saiximili looked at these two people before him in worry. For these two fellows to be in charge of determining the future of the world, does this mean GOD has already forsaken this world?

Perhaps, directly giving up on the right to determine the future of the world, leaving it for the enemy side, "the Guide of Existence" to decide, would be better for this world?

Shooting Star tilted his head and thought about it. "Okay, for the sake of pet Saimi who can find our way for us, I have decided to fight this battle!"

"Have you fought a war before?" Dan coldly asked.

"Yup!" Shooting Star answered confidently.

However, Dan glanced at him in great suspicion.

"You don't believe me?" Shooting Star glared at Dan in great dissatisfaction. Then, he lifted his chin up and proudly said, "When I was a kid, I often led a bunch of kids to fight a bunch of other kids!"

"..."

Saiximili's composure finally completely collapsed.

Before the adventure had even begun, he already wanted to give up

on life. *Why am I not the starseer of the Guide of Existence instead of the Guide of Doom?*

I really want to jump ship...

I wonder if the Guide of Existence will be willing to accept a second starseer?

Chapter 6: The Blue Star, Part One

"I don't approve of participating in the battle."

Dan said it bluntly, without a care that Saiximili, who had brought up the request, was also present.

Saiximili, however, did not seem to mind at all. Although he was unable to learn of the exact future, as a starseer, he knew which people were the ones who could truly affect destiny's tracks. Dan was not among those who would guide destiny.

"But not fighting isn't an option. I want his hands!" Shooting Star brashly gestured at the hands.

Dan frowned and looked at Bai Saya, who didn't have a very insistent expression. Relieved, Dan said without holding back, "You don't know anything about how to fight a battle. Your only use in the battle would be joining the battle yourself and fighting. Even if all three of us joined the battle, in terms of a war, that's merely throwing three pebbles into a lake. We wouldn't make much of a difference."

"Who says?! I can be the commander!" Shooting Star lifted his chin, his face indicating that he didn't want to be some soldier.

Dan demanded, "You know how to guard a city? Do you know what siege equipment the opponents will have? How many soldiers? What kind of soldiers? Do you know how tall the walls of White Feather are? Even when we first entered the city, you never paid any attention to how unusual the width of the bailey was between the inner and outer

curtain walls. Am I right?"

"Guh!" Shooting Star was bombarded by what was said and stumbled backward by several steps. *So mighty!* He turned his head and asked Bai Saya in a quiet voice, "Xiao Bai, what's a bailey?"

"No idea." Bai Saya was also taken aback. *Inner and outer curtain walls? But the walls of this city are clearly made of stone.*

Dan gestured in agitation at Bai Saya and Shooting Star and accused Saiximili, "Do you believe that there would be any benefit to the battle for these two to join it?"

Saiximili answered with a gentle smile, "Of course. I am even offering myself in trade. Do you think I am joking?"

"They are merely children who have never seen war. They can't lead soldiers in battle."

Saiximili just looked at Dan with a smile. His knowing smile was so wide that one couldn't help but shiver. Dan looked at him suspiciously, confused over why he was so confident.

Shooting Star glanced at Saiximili's deep smile, then turned to look at Dan. He tilted his head in thought and smacked his hands together in realization!

Following that, Shooting Star copied Saiximili's example and looked at Dan with a mischievous smile.

Dan was perturbed as he looked at these two people before him smiling strangely.

"Since neither of us understand warfare, while Dan, you seem to understand it well, you should be the commander!"

Bai Saya happily assigned the commander's duty to Dan.

With what Saya had just said and the smiles the seer and Shooting Star sported, Dan came to an epiphany, too.

So that's how it is. Once Shooting Star and Bai Saya joined the battle, Dan could not stay uninvolved. Even though he felt that he too only knew how to fight and would not be a good commander, he was probably more than qualified to command against the primitive beasts of the Southern Continent. Moreover, he even had several subordinates with battle experience in the nearby village.

Not only that, if Shooting Star's guess and Saiximili's divination were both correct, that meant that Alan was currently on his way to this city in a hurry. As an elf who should love peace, he was instead extremely contradictory and actually specialized in offensive lightning magic. This would be very beneficial to protecting the city.

After all, this was a continent of beasts. The beasts were not a race that specialized in magic. With a powerful mage like Alan in the fray, not only could he provide practical, offensive power, he could also deal them a mental blow.

"Sigh, although our White Feather Nation is one of the few nations of

the Southern Continent, we have never started any wars and have even forbidden slavery from the start. However, what is saddening is that even though we have never treated other races as slaves, our own people are often captured and sold as exotic slaves. Every battle against our nation has been for the purpose of capturing our people. Even though we have constructed city walls that tower into the sky, it is still not enough to hinder hearts full of greed.”

The king’s expression was anguished. He lamented, “Sigh, the battle will soon be upon us. I do not know how many of our poor citizens will become slaves of others as a result and live amidst pain, never able to return to their homeland.”

Hearing that, Bai Saya was unable to hold back the passion that surged within him. He grabbed Saiximili’s hands, and righteously declared, “Saimi, don’t you worry. We will definitely stop the enemies for you and win this battle. We won’t ever allow your citizens to become slaves!”

The king showed a grateful expression at just the perfect time and emotionally declared, “Kind yet righteous sinner of Wrath, I, King Saiximili, thank you for your virtuous deed on behalf of everyone in White Feather Nation!”

“Your Majesty, you are most welcome. This is the duty of a swordsman. You need not thank me!” Bai Saya exclaimed in high spirits, emotions still running high. He finally had the chance to say what a swordsman should always say after performing a righteous deed!

Having witnessed a historical, hot-blooded act, Shooting Star

scratched his cheek and turned to explain to Dan, "This time, it really has nothing to do with me!"

Dan was speechless.

Following that, Bai Saya, who was shining with righteousness, dragged Dan away, planning to have an in depth discussion with him. On the surface, it was to "discuss how to fight the battle," when in actuality, it was to "force him to fight the battle."

"Huh, I've only ever heard of checkmates being big baddies, so you get forced to do bad stuff. I never thought that if a checkmate was too righteous, you'd be even more unfortunate. Poor Dan!"

With a single sigh, Shooting Star's compassion dried up, and he even gleefully waved at Dan who was getting dragged away.

The king relaxed a bit. "Now, White Feather Nation finally has a commander who can lead us in battle."

This could not be helped. The avians loved peace too much. They had no one among them who knew how to fight a war. For this reason, White Feather had such a towering and sturdy city gate.

The city looked like it had a large city gate, but in reality, it was just something carved in the shape of a gate. They did not actually have a large door, only a small steel one that allowed merchants to enter for trade. Once war broke out, the avians would heat up the steel door and melt it into the stone, melding the door and the city wall together, making it impossible to ever open it again.

After all, the avians had wings. They did not need to enter or leave through a door.

Moreover, if an avian were to leave the city, they often got captured and ended up as a slave. Therefore, White Feather Nation was used to being self-sufficient since long ago. Not only did the city possess a large quantity of fields, it even had all sorts of water sources, from rivers to numerous wells, in case their source of water got poisoned.

To sum it up, the avians were clearly declaring: *If you want to attack, we dare you to do it! The power of our entire nation and hundreds of years of endlessly strengthening our walls isn't just for show. If you want to lay siege, then come! After all, the ones who will die of hunger or thirst in the end will definitely not be us!*

But for this same reason, the avians who depended heavily on the city walls were complete novices at fighting a war.

No matter how strong their defense was, Saiximili still used himself as a bargaining chip to make Shooting Star and company join the battle. Not only did he want to stop the enemy, he needed to defeat them even more in order to use this as a learning opportunity on the ways of war for his people. This was because he knew that his position as a starseer would be even more important than his duty as a king in the days to follow.

He must leave White Feather Nation where he had lived his entire life for unfamiliar lands. He had to guide these companions who did not look very dependable, and who could very well lead to the world's

doom.

Saiximili shook his head despondently. What made going down this misguided path even worse was that he had never wished to set foot upon it, yet he had been forced onto this path.

"Hey, Saimi, how did you know Dan would never ignore anything to do with Xiao Bai?"

At this time, Shooting Star's voice dragged the remorseful seer's attention back. Shooting Star deliberately pretended to be curious, but he was actually inwardly alarmed. *I won't hold knowing about the Stones of Sin against Saimi since that stuff's way fantastical anyway, but he actually knows all about something like Bai Saya being Dan's checkmate? Could the king of White Feather have been monitoring us all along?*

"How could I know that? What I know is that you are the ones who will guide destiny, so you will not easily perish on the battlefield. In order to survive in battle, naturally, you must win. Therefore, as long as I drag the two of you into White Feather's battle, then my nation will naturally come out victorious."

Saiximili displayed a profound and gentle smile, but what he was saying was very irresponsible.

"... Has it ever crossed your mind that according to what you've told us earlier, even if I kick the bucket, there's another group out there with the Guide of Existence who can continue onward?"

Shooting Star reminded the seer.

"Oh..."

Saiximili's fair finger lightly rested upon his chin. He appeared as if he were pondering the difficult question of how the universe came to be. Then, with a saintly expression of sacrifice, he said, "If such a development occurs, then we should hand destiny off to the other group!"

The world may actually be better off if that happens, and I can continue to remain in White Feather as its king and will not need to traverse the whole wide world.

Saiximili suddenly felt that the future seemed brighter...

Shooting Star growled, "To hell with that! I definitely won't die. I'll definitely take you in as my pet. Be ready to hold a torch!"

...and now it was dark again.



"Saya, do you really wish to fight this battle?"

After getting dragged away by Bai Saya, Dan felt helpless but did not plan on easily giving in and fighting a battle they did not need to participate in. He was truly unwilling to join, so even if it were the will of his checkmate, he would... do his utmost to convince him against it.

Dan felt that he had fallen very low.

Bai Saya asked solemnly, "Dan, be honest with me. Is what Saimi said true? Do avians often get captured as slaves? You work with the Guild. You should be very clear about this, right?"

Dan was a little surprised, having not considered that Bai Saya would have learned to ask for confirmation first.

He nodded and said, "The avian slaves in the market have mostly been captured a long time ago and are getting on in years. These avians don't go for a high price. On the other hand, young avians are much rarer, and their price is only slightly lower than an elf's and could even be priceless. Some days ago, I heard that the Fischer Merchant Guild seems to want to incite the beasts to attack White Feather Nation to acquire avian war slaves to sell to them."

Even though Dan did not wish to get involved in this battle, he knew he could not lie to Bai Saya. After all, Shooting Star was around, and that devious demon seemed to have seen plenty. If Bai Saya went to him to seek confirmation, exposing Dan's lies, Bai Saya would definitely be extremely angry. He wouldn't easily believe Dan's words anymore in the future. That wasn't something Dan could allow to happen.

"This means that Saimi was telling the truth?" The righteousness shimmering in Bai Saya's eyes grew even stronger.

"He should be," Dan could not help but admit.

"Wonderful!" Bai Saya clenched his fists in high spirits.

You want to help other people that much? Dan suddenly felt that his stomach hurt. The pain seemed to warn him that this kind of thing was probably going to happen a lot in the future.

"Saya, have you killed people before?" Dan smiled bitterly and asked a key question. If Bai Saya could not even kill someone, then he would definitely not allow his checkmate to participate in the battle. A battle was built upon corpses.

"Yes?" Bai Saya simply nodded and responded, "Plenty too."

"Plenty?" Dan was stunned. He had not thought that Bai Saya would give him this kind of answer.

"In the past when I was on the Eastern Continent, Shifu often took me to kill dastardly bandits or flower thieves who violated women. Ever since I turned fifteen, Shifu has had me kill evil people with my own hands."

Then, how are you still so naïve and innocent? Dan did not understand this at all.

"However, it may be because Shifu left this world too early and was not in time to teach me this, but I do not know how to determine which people should be killed, and which should not be..."

Bai Saya frowned, having recalled unpleasant memories. He quietly murmured, "It was only after leaving my homeland that I discovered that people are extremely complicated. Some people's conduct make

me feel they should die no matter what, yet when I am about to rid the world of this evil, that person's wife and children would shout for me not to kill him. He has his troubles..."

Bai Saya looked bitterly toward Dan and helplessly said, "In the end, I became less and less able to deal the final blow. When I am about to strike to kill, I would begin to wonder if this person has a wife or a child, or if he is facing some sort of hardship he cannot solve. After overthinking, I can no longer swing my sword."

Dan understood now.

"However, after meeting Shooting Star, it has actually become easier again." Bai Saya's sorrowful expression turned cheerful instead. "After all, killing or not killing isn't my decision to make. At first, I still had to make sure to prevent Shooting Star from fooling around, but now that Alan has joined us, I don't even have to worry about that anymore!"

So, you have completely given up on thinking? Only now did Dan understand the truth behind why Bai Saya had become more and more naïve as time passed. He had returned to his natural state!

"Oh!" Bai Saya suddenly thought of something. He solemnly said, "Dan, don't think that changing the topic will make me forget about the battle. This battle is one we must fight!"

Dan persuaded patiently, "Saya, battle is very cruel. A lot of people will perish. You just told me that you are unable to deal the final blow. A battle requires you to kill. There is absolutely no room for hesitation."

However, Bai Saya interrupted him without a second thought.

"Is it not cruel to allow these avians to be captured and live a life worse than death, a life of slavery? Before, I could not follow through because I am just one person. If I make a wrong judgment call, at most I can only pay with my own life. However, I am no longer alone now. When I need to protect the important people behind me, I will kill all enemies before me without the slightest hesitation!"

Dan was stunned. He actually saw Bai Saya's gentle amber eyes slowly darken into a deep, brownish red, appearing a bit like... drying blood!

"I wish to join the battle not just for the sake of the avians. What Saimi said also worries me. He said that Shooting Star is the Guide of Doom. Doom..."

This word made Bai Saya frown and his heart feel uneasy. When he lifted his head again, only determination could be seen on his face. He resolutely said, "Even if it isn't for the avians, I would join for Shooting Star and even more for myself. After all, I possess a Stone of Sin. According to Saimi, I am Wrath, right? I believe that in our journey to come, we will have need of the starseer Saimi."

Dan gazed at Bai Saya. *It turns out that Saya is not as naïve as I thought, but that's a good thing. I won't have to overly worry about him.*

He pondered for a moment and nodded. "I understand. I will prepare for battle, but I will need Shooting Star and your complete cooperation, as well as Alan's help, to be able to seize victory."

Bai Saya was grateful from the bottom of his heart. He understood that Dan did not need to do any of this. Dan was doing this for him.

"Thank you, Dan. I will do everything I can. At the same time, I will make sure that Shooting Star and Alan also give it their all."

Dan nodded. He began to consider the battle as a whole. The Fischer Merchant Guild was not an entity one would wish to cross, especially when he was acting on his own. The enemy had an entire guild behind them. Their resources were way too different. Fortunately, White Feather Nation had outrageously tall walls. Destroying them would not be an easy task...

He needed to strategize.



"Hey, Saimi, aren't you too laidback?"

Shooting Star brashly stuck his hands on his waist and yelled at the king who was sitting on the throne. Even he couldn't bear to keep watching. There was actually someone even more skilled at lazing around than him, the genuine successor of the School of Lazing Around! How can this be acceptable?

Saiximili sat elegantly on the throne. A high table was in front of him, but there were no documents, maps, or any drawings depicting how the soldiers would be assigned on it. There was only a clear crystal ball on top of it.

This king is really not taking it seriously at all! Shooting Star rolled his eyes. Ever since he had gotten up this morning, the king, who wasn't doing his job, had been staring at the crystal ball. After Shooting Star finished breakfast and came to pass the time, the king was still sitting on the throne, staring at the crystal ball. Now, Shooting Star was even done with lunch, and the king was actually still staring at the crystal ball. He didn't have battle in sight at all. The only thing in his eyes was that crystal ball!

This also made Shooting Star very curious. *Just what is in the crystal ball for him to look at it an entire morning?* He could not help but shove his head over to stare at the crystal ball.

Saiximili did not react at all to a head taking over his space. His consciousness was currently wandering in the world of starseers, a condition similar to drifting about in space. The Milky Way filled the sky, every single star representing a person, while the trajectory of each star revealed the path each person's life would take.

In the world of starseers, Saiximili himself was a star, so he could not move around. Neither could he move eyes that did not exist. His vision was limited. This highlighted the limits of a starseer's power.

Even then, he could still see that the blue star had almost reached the intersection of an orbit, and it was an intersection of grave importance. This intersection would determine the future of the blue star, and it would influence the direction the entire world would take.

It is time to light the way and have the Guide make a decision...

Saiximili slowly pulled his consciousness away from the starry universe, returning to the normal world. He worried over running out of time. He needed to find the Guide of Doom in the shortest amount of time possible and have him make his decision immediately.

He lifted his head...

"Ah!"

A pair of large, sparkling golden eyes, with an expression like that of a foodie who had seen bear's paws, was currently staring at the hands Saiximili had placed on top of the crystal ball.

"So beautiful. Such beautiful hands!"

Shooting Star gazed emotionally at this pair of fair, slim hands. This was what true beauty looked like! It was a hundred times prettier than some glass orb that he couldn't make heads or tails of!

The king was gasping for breath. *R-really, next time I must find a secluded location when I meditate. I was nearly frightened to death...*

Shooting Star asked in great suspicion, "There's nothing in the crystal ball. You were staring at it for so long. Don't tell me you were sleeping with your eyes open?"

Can people sleep with their eyes open? Saiximili did not believe that he could learn this kind of high level skill. Then, he immediately remembered the matter at hand. *We are running out of time!*

He coughed twice and quickly stood up. He lifted the crystal ball with both hands, grave responsibility reflected on his face. He used a distant voice to say, "I had not thought that my first duty as a starseer would leave us so little time to act."

Crunch, crunch... Shooting Star chewed on the avian's local specialty, wild mushroom crackers.

"Guide of Doom, your time to choose your companion has arrived. A fork has appeared in the path of the blue star. One path leads to becoming your companion. The other leads the opposite way, never to cross yours again."

Slurp, slurp... Shooting Star drank a mouthful of the juice Xiao Bai had bought for him.

Saiximili did his best to ignore the sounds of eating. With great difficulty, he maintained the mysterious demeanor of a seer.

"Tell me, Guide of Doom, do you wish to choose this blue star to become your companion on the path ahead of you, or do you wish to let him leave and wait for the next star to appear?"

"A blue star?" Shooting Star pouted. "But I don't like the color blue."

Don't like the color blue... Saiximili fell over. *Sigh, fine! Making a decision based on color is at least better than deciding by flipping a gold ducat.*

"Then, you do not want the blue star?"

Saiximili remained expressionless. He suddenly felt that no matter how profound his image as a seer was, he would be no more mysterious than a cracker of unknown flavors to this boy. There was no need for him to make things difficult for himself. He should just quickly finish saying everything and wrap things up.

"Of course..."

Saiximili slowly lowered the crystal ball. *Then, there is no need to trigger the crossroad...*

"Wait!" Shooting Star suddenly shouted.

Saiximili froze and only lifted his head to look at Shooting Star without any expression.

Shooting Star asked doubtfully, "I remember you saying yesterday that the blue star is Alan, right?"

So you actually heard what I said yesterday? The king felt moved. He immediately answered, "I am unable to tell you an actual name. A starseer is only knows about stars."

Shooting Star crossed his arms over his chest, a doubtful expression coming over his face.

So is that star Alan or not? If it was, he of course wanted Alan to come back. *But if it isn't, then what?* It was fine if it wasn't Alan, but if the person wasn't pretty at all and was actually an ugly pig, then Shooting

Star would be in deep trouble!

The king honestly said, "You still have ten seconds left to decide. Nine, eight, seven... Do you want him or not? Make your decision! Three... two..."

Ah! I don't care anymore! If that blue star isn't Alan and doesn't look pretty either, I'll just toss them to the roadside later on. It would be better than Alan not being able to return!

Shooting Star made his decision and shouted, "I want him!"

One! Crossroad, activate!

Blue light burst forth from the crystal ball, but the light vanished after a mere moment. It had all happened so quickly that it could have been a trick of the eye, making one wonder if anything strange had happened at all.

From start to finish, Shooting Star didn't know what exactly was going. He had a confused expression on his face as he turned to ask Saiximili, "Did it succeed?" Although he asked about its success or failure, he didn't actually know what "it" was.

However, the seer had on the same confused expression as him and answered, "I do not know. The time cut too close. I do not know if we made it in time."

"What!" Shooting Star cried out in alarm, "If that blue star is Alan, what will we do if he can't make it back? It's all your fault!"

"You were the one who decided too slowly!"

Saiximili could not believe this person. He actually pushed all the blame on someone else. What was even sadder was that this person was his Guide, and he had a fifty percent chance of deciding the future of the world.

"Guh!" Shooting Star frowned. *Will my golden-haired pet really be unable to return?*

In the end, he stubbornly yelled, "I don't care anymore. Come with me to find Alan. In any case, you're useless here, Your Majesty!"

Saiximili was speechless. *Don't you feel that a king is the most useful when he stays obediently in his own kingdom?*

Chapter 6: The Blue Star, Part Two

The elf was quietly perched on a tree. Even if one were to peer closely, he would not easily be spotted.

Alan was currently stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Even though he had ultimately decided to return and search for Shooting Star and company, he did not know where the avian village they wanted to find was located. He could only return to seek information in the beast village where they had stayed.

By the time he had hurriedly rushed back to the village from the forest he had been in, it was already the next night. The starry sky that night was particularly resplendent. As a moon elf who loved to dance under the starry sky, Alan would have found a beautiful field of grass to dance in to his heart's content, if not for the fact that he was in a hurry to return to his companions' side.

The moment he approached the village, the vigilant elf felt that something wasn't right. The beast village had originally been peaceful, yet a harsh, withering atmosphere seemed to envelop it now. Seeing that the situation didn't feel right, Alan did not dare to enter the village. He could only hide in the forest on the edge of the village, awaiting his opportunity.

"An army?"

Alan's pupils abruptly shrank. He backed up a step, hiding his figure even more thoroughly.

On the narrow path leading to the village, the fully-armed beast army could only advance in three to four filed lines. This caused the army to stretch into a very long line. Even with the elf's superb eyesight, he could not make out the end of the line. The army slowly advanced to a grassy plain near the village, with only a few among them entering the village proper.

Alan hesitated. He did not wish to get involved with an army. He could probably acquire information about the whereabouts of the avian village from a different village. But for some reason, he had a premonition that Shooting Star and the others would get entangled with this army...

No, he was overthinking things. No matter how much Shooting Star liked to fool around, he wouldn't want to get involved with an army.

However, Alan had forgotten that when a certain someone's righteousness shone brightly, that someone's ability to stir up trouble did not at all lose to Shooting Star's.

After considerable thought, Alan still could not squash down his intuition. He decided to follow the army and check the situation out.

The elf used nimble steps to leap to the largest tree closest to the village. He skillfully melded into the shadow of the tree and used the gaps between the leaves to survey the village. Even though this tree was of some distance away from the central plaza of the village, the elf's excellent eyesight still allowed him to somewhat make out the situation.

There were several groups of people conversing in the plaza. Alan recognized the village chief and some beasts of the cow race. The other beasts wore armor and appeared to be warriors of some sort. They should have been brought here by the army. Other than beasts, there were also...

Alan squinted and murmured doubtfully, "Humans?"

It was not surprising to see humans present. After all, humans also lived in the village. What was surprising was that Alan could tell from a glance that those humans weren't villagers. They did not look like farmers of any sort. Some of the humans wore armor more exquisite than most of what the beast warriors had. Others even wore formalwear.

"Are they the ones behind this army?" Alan guessed to himself. In his opinion, the humans must have been behind this. It was not strange for humans to cause wars wherever they went, and, in actuality, he was not wrong.

This means I cannot go into the village to find out about the avian village. Alan was a bit vexed. He did not know how long it would take for Yaya to learn how to fly. If she learned it quickly, and Shooting Star and the others left the avian village just like that, then he really wouldn't know where to find them.

At this time, Alan spotted a beast he knew well: Mama Cow. She often brought pancakes for them to eat. She had also always urged him not

to be a mean, abusive stepmother to Shooting Star, so Alan remembered her well.

Alan watched Mama Cow walk over to the outskirts of the village where he was. She held buckets in her hands. She was coming over to fetch water from the well below the tree.

After hesitating for a moment, he jumped out of the tree.

Mama Cow was in the middle of fetching water when she suddenly saw a person jump out of the tree, giving her a huge fright. She almost screamed, but luckily noticed in time that it was Alan. She quickly covered her own mouth.

"Mama Cow..." Alan hesitated but still called out.

"Alan!" Mama Cow looked around nervously. She said in a quiet voice, "When did you return? It's very dangerous here right now. Quickly take Shooting Star and Yaya away with you."

Alan hurriedly said, "I got separated from Shooting Star and the others. They went to the avian village. I want to know where it is."

"The avian village is also currently very dangerous. You can't go there..." Halfway through speaking, her eyes widened and she cried out, "Don't tell me Shooting Star and the others are already there?"

Alan nodded.

Mama Cow frantically sputtered, "Oh my god! Hurry over and get them away from there, as far as you can! The battle is about to start. These people want to attack the avian village! I'll tell you how to get there right away. You have to hurry and get there before them. Take those children out of there!"

Alan frowned from hearing that. Battle was something that elves, who loved all life, detested the most.

As Mama Cow instructed Alan on how to get to the avian village, a suspicious voice suddenly shouted, "What are you two doing over there?"

"Hurry and leave!" Mama Cow cried out, frantically pushing Alan to leave immediately.

Alan quickly fled. Before he left, he glanced at the person who was walking over. It was a blond-haired knight wearing light armor. Alan felt that the person looked rather familiar, but the current situation didn't allow him any time to ponder over it. He did not stop moving his feet the entire time.

When the blond man saw Alan, he was actually stunned and said, "You're..."

However, he was only able to say this one word. With his swift agility, the elf had already escaped into the forest. The blond man was about to follow after him, but Mama Cow blocked him like a mountain while carrying two large buckets. She had the bearing of a woman who could singlehandedly stop the advance of ten thousand foes.

"..." The blond man felt a little helpless, but he still stopped. With this snag, the person was long gone into the forest. Their agility was unbelievable, so he did not think he could catch up.

Behind him, a few knights wearing the same kind of outfit as the blond man walked over. Their expressions were wary. Even though the other person was a bucket carrying auntie, a beast auntie's appearance was incredibly threatening and should not be considered the same as that of a human race housewife.

"Captain Philo, is something wrong?"

Philo frowned. His heart was uneasy, especially when the other person who he cared a lot about came to mind...

"Captain?"

Philo turned and smiled at the knights. "Nothing. I just wanted to ask for some water." He looked at Mama Cow, using his gaze to give her a hint.

Mama Cow understood immediately. Her posture relaxed, and she transformed back into a chatty and pleasant auntie. She passionately welcomed them. "Our village's well water is the best, cool and sweet! Come, come, everyone have some water."



Alan headed in the direction of the avian village that Mama Cow had pointed out. At the same time, he thought of the blond knight. He

looked very familiar, but Alan could not remember who he was. He was only certain that he had seen this person before.

Guh! Shooting Star had claimed that an elf's memory was always muddled. These words held so much truth that the honest elf could not refute it.

But currently, Alan had no time to try and remember a familiar person. What was important at the moment was hurrying and meeting up with Shooting Star and the others.

According to Mama Cow, the army was planning on attacking the avian village. Even though Alan thought it was really absurd that an entire army was assembled just for the sake of attacking a village, the army had been right there. He had no choice but to believe it.

The unease in Alan's heart grew heavier and heavier. He planned on putting everything he had into making haste. Once he was far enough from the previous village, he directly cast the Spell of Flight and flew from night to day, all the way until both his magic and his body could hold up no longer. He landed on the ground to rest.

He slept lightly for a bit until he was abruptly shocked awake. He frantically shouted, "Shooting Star? Yaya?"

All he saw was darkness all around him. Stunned, he tried calling out, "Bai Saya?"

Other than the cries of a night owl, the surroundings were silent. The sounds of murder he had just heard, the blood red sky he had just

seen, and the familiar wailing of a child that had just pierced his heart, were all gone without a trace.

So it was a dream? Alan held his forehead and discovered that he was sweating profusely. The elf, who loved cleanliness, wiped the sweat away uncomfortably. He should have found some water to clean it off, but instead, he stood up and tidied up his belongings to continue on the road. The magic he had exhausted had not recovered yet, so he could only continue on foot.

Fortunately, the forest had always been the elf's dominion. Elves always leaped from tree to tree. Branches, which should have been obstacles, were instead springboards for gaining speed. This was the way that elves learned how to "walk" since childhood.

This was why even an elven mage, who had never trained his body, still possessed such nimble feet—an elf with poor skills would have already fallen to their death. There would have been no opportunity for the elf to leave the forest and risk being seen.

In such a way, Alan hurried for two days without stopping. He flew or he walked, as long as he made progress. He calculated and discovered that he should almost be at the avian village according to what Mama Cow had told him. This actually made him stop. He sat down on a branch to think.

Alan was unable to ascertain Shooting Star and company's situation. If he haphazardly showed up with his magic exhausted, he would only become a burden to them. The current most important task was to let his magic recover.

He sat and meditated for three hours before slowly opening his eyes and standing up. He opened his hand. Electricity danced across his palm.

Good! If Shooting Star and the others were in trouble, Alan's lightning magic could help them out. If they weren't in trouble... then he could also use it to discipline Shooting Star. In any case, Shooting Star would definitely cause trouble!

He dispelled the lightning. Alan lifted his foot and jumped off of the branch. Just as he did so, a thin streak of blue light flashed below his feet, and the branch snapped.

Alan looked back. Once the branch broke, it fell directly down, but he did not hear the sound of it hitting the ground. He suspiciously brushed away the leaves layer by layer and looked down. Only then did he discover that he had actually been sitting on top of a cliff to sleep last night!

If that branch had snapped any earlier, he would have fallen along with it to the bottom! Alan could not help letting out a sigh of relief. Then, he jumped forward.

Snap! A branch broke again.

Alan's body abruptly fell a great distance, but his agility was no joke. He immediately stuck his hand out at a quick speed to grab onto another slim branch...

Snap!

"Ah!" He cried out.

This must be because I haven't been watching what I eat because of Shooting Star's influence, so I've gotten fat! Alan regretted it a lot. But after that bout of regret, he regretted even more that he hadn't quickly rattled off the incantation for the Spell of Flight. Why am I regretting getting fat? Later, when I fall to my death and end up as a skeleton, I'll be skinny enough then!

"The element of freedom, the child of the wind... Ah!"

Alan lay there without moving, his eyes gazing up at the blue sky. He began to wonder if this whole thing was a sign from the elven tree.

Why would the branches snap three times out of nowhere?

And why, when the cliff is so steep, would there be a sunken terrace right below where I'm falling, and why would I have just so conveniently fallen on top of it before I could even cast the Spell of Flight?

Alan slowly sat up. The moment he straightened, pain struck his lower back. *Ugh!* He had sprained it.

The elf who had sprained his back currently resembled a hunched over old man. With one hand on his back and one hand on the face of the cliff, he stood up with great difficulty with his back hunched over.

This won't do. I have to quickly recite the Spell of Flight to fly up and reunite with Shooting Star and the others. The nightmare had made him uneasy. He would not be able to stop worrying until he saw everyone with his own eyes.

Alan immediately began to recite the Spell of Flight. His back naturally began to straighten...

Snap!

The elf wordlessly sank to his knees, unable to move for a good long while.

He finally understood that if he didn't allow his back to recover, he would not be able to do anything else.

A few droplets of water trickled down the elf's beautiful face. Soon, it began to drizzle, then the rain came down harder and harder.

It actually started to rain, too. Now the elf was even more speechless. Ever since he had joined Shooting Star's adventurer team, he felt like he hadn't had any good luck at all.

Alan helplessly lifted his head, surveying his surroundings to see if there was any place he could use to rest and hide from the rain. He discovered that what he was currently on wasn't just a terrace. There was actually a cave in the cliff behind him. Overgrown vines covered it so he had not seen it right away, but a closer look revealed the cave.

The elf dragged his faltering feet, his hand holding his aching back, as he slowly entered the cave.

He was unaware that he was walking into a fate that he had once had a chance to avoid. The elf's return to his homeland was destined to be a long way off...

Once he walked into the cave, Alan faintly heard a voice calling out to him. This gave him a huge fright. He had not thought that there would be anyone there.

Even though he felt that something was wrong, the voice calling for help was urgent and full of despair. The kind elf was unable to ignore it, and thus followed the guidance of the voice and walked deeper and deeper into the cave. The cave was dark, but fortunately, the elf's eyesight allowed him to somewhat discern the tunnel's trajectory.

In such a fashion, Alan ambled along with great difficulty for a long distance, his back hunched the entire time. If not for the incessant call, he would have given up.

As the elf began to suspect that his ears were failing him, he finally saw a faint glow in a small chamber to the side.

Someone is actually in a place like this? Suspicious and wary, Alan walked into the chamber. He did not forget to have lightning ready in his hands.

But once he walked in, a very surprised expression came over his face.

"T-this is..."

Chapter 7: Misfortune

"Let's go. Take me flying. Let's go and find Alan together."

Shooting Star commanded the king without any qualms. This guy Saimi was his starseer after all, who was even depending on Shooting Star to fight his war... All right, so it was Dan that Saimi depended on, but in any case, Dan was Xiao Bai's, and Xiao Bai was Shooting Star's, so that meant His Majesty was his!

Whether or not it was logical, Shooting Star already considered the king with fair fingers among the ranks of his pets.

However, a solemn expression actually appeared on Saiximili's face. He shook his head in refusal. "No, you must not leave to seek the blue star. He must find his own path. Only then will he discover the path back to your side!"

Shooting Star frowned, feeling that something was off. He took measure of the king who was sitting properly and narrowed his eyes. "You're lying!"

"...I am clearly not," the king responded mildly.

"You definitely are!" Shooting Star claimed with great certainty, "Every time you tell a prophecy, you always appear like your soul has left your body, yet you have a serious expression this time. You're definitely lying to me! You just can't be bothered with searching for Alan, right?"

The king was greatly taken aback at the discovery that his guide could actually make such an acute analysis. He had thought that Shooting Star was just a willful child who liked to cause trouble. He actually had another side to him—*But why isn't he using this analytical ability to decipher actual prophecies?*

Shooting Star lifted his eyebrows and threatened, "Don't forget who is helping you fight this war."

It's Dan!

"In the future when you're traveling with us, as a king and starseer who has never traveled far before, who do you think will be taking care of you?"

It should be Bai Saya. Saiximili was not going to deny that he had never traveled far before, nor that he would need to be taken care of.

Shooting Star concluded as if it were a matter of fact, "That's why it's very reasonable for you to do as I say right now, yes?"

No, it's not reasonable at all...

"Right, should we take Yaya with us? If Alan refuses to come back with me, we can use the fact that Yaya is young and needs someone to take care of her to influence his decision. But we'd have to take care of Yaya along the way, and that's troublesome. Forget it. If Alan refuses to come back, then we'll just knock him out and drag him back!"

The king was speechless. *Why can't you apply your craftiness to more important matters? Such as saving the world?*

"Come on!" Shooting Star urged impatiently, "You're just flying me to find Alan. You can divine where we should head while you're at it. I promise to only search nearby. We won't go far and will return within the day. That's fine, right?"

"No, I cannot take you flying."

"Why not? I'm very light. Adult avians should at least be able to take one person flying, right?"

Shooting Star had inquired all about avians earlier, all for Yaya's sake. Although he was usually impertinent, when it came to matters relating to his important pets, he would of course make careful inquiries. He did not want to raise his pet wrong.

"Adult avians can indeed take a person flying, but my problem isn't that..." The avian king's face reddened as he lowered his head and said in a small voice, "I-I'm afraid of heights."

"..." Shooting Star was silent for a long while before he asked uncertainly, "What did you just say? Please say it again. I was out of it for a moment. I seem to have heard wrong."

Saiximili repeated in a voice as quiet as a mouse, "I'm afraid of heights."

There was complete silence for a long time. The king resembled a kid who had done something wrong. He sat on the throne, twisting the bottom of his shirt. Shooting Star resembled a father who was about to reproach him, his face full of frustration and his hands trembling in fury.

In the end, the furious father Shooting Star flipped a table and growled, "You're an avian, a race that can fly! Why in the world are you afraid of heights? The fact that you're afraid of heights is like a demon opening an orphanage, a human staying faithful unto death, or an elf deserting someone after fooling around with them—they're all impossible!"

"In any case, I have been afraid of heights since I was a child. I can't fly!"

The king's sad embarrassment transformed into anger, and he used his snow-white wings to wrap himself up. He even tucked his legs in, hiding on the throne without moving, appearing just like a large, white egg that even had its own pedestal.

Gazing at this large, white, feathered egg, Shooting Star suddenly felt the exasperation of a parent watching their child throw a fit. *Are you kidding me? I'm the child, okay?*

Shooting Star knocked on the egg... No, the wings.

"Fine, fine! It's fine if we don't fly, right? Just come with me. We won't use your wings but our legs. That's fine, right?"

"No!" Saiximili wanted to wrap his wings shut.

Shooting Star said frankly, "You said you'd direct my way. How would you do that without coming with me? This concerns the blue star. If you won't lend me your hand as a starseer, then what use will I have for you?"

At that, Saiximili stopped trying to wrap his wings shut. He even asked doubtfully, "You really want that star? You're not sneaking out to play?"

Shooting Star snapped, "Play my ass! Alan is my important pet. I can't lose him!"

This time, the king stood up swiftly and said, "Since that is the case, let us depart. The crossroad was triggered too late. I do not know if we were able to detain your star. It would be best for us to personally head over to find out."

Shooting Star thought the same, only it had nothing to do with the crossroad. Earlier, he had thought that Alan would be like Dan and mistakenly believe that Bai Saya had not asked him to stay and had let him leave due to danger. With Alan's personality, he would definitely have rushed back to accompany them through this predicament the moment he realized it.

However, many days had already passed, yet Alan had not caught up with them. Shooting Star was truly worried. *Could my elf possibly be the super dumb type who hasn't given this much thought?*

He had been growing more and more worried. Now, Saimi had even told him that he did not know if he had activated the crossroad in time. Shooting Star decided on the spot that they needed to go and search for him to see if they could directly haul the elf back.

However, he also knew that unless Alan was currently heading their way, there was no way he would find Alan. That was why he had thought to drag Saiximili with him. At the very least, this fellow claimed to be a starseer and that he could see paths or something. *He should be of some use?*

Shooting Star grabbed the king's hand. The feeble king could not shake him off and could only allow himself to be dragged out of the palace.

As they entered a corridor, they ran right into Bai Saya. Bai Saya was overwhelmingly busy, his hands full of weapon inventories Dan had instructed him to inspect. However, when Bai Saya saw Shooting Star tightly gripping the king's hand, with the king clearly being dragged along, he halted immediately out of nervousness and spluttered, "Shooting Star, you can't grab the king's hand and refuse to let go! No matter how much you like his hands, you can't be so impolite! Saimi is a king!"

Saiximili believed that the problem was not that he was a king. *Besides, if you feel this is impolite, then why are you shortening my name to two syllables?*

"We're off to find Alan." Shooting Star continued on and blamed Saiximili despite being in the wrong. He gestured at Saimi and said,

"Just now, this guy cast some hocus pocus on Alan and failed at it. We have to hurry over and see if anything happened to Alan."

Saiximili turned and stared at Shooting Star in disbelief. This guy who was misrepresenting the facts was actually pushing the blame on him? Besides, if the activation of the crossroad had failed, at most it would mean that the blue star would be unable to become Doom's companion. Nothing would happen to him. Now that Saiximili thought about it, perhaps it was a stroke of good fortune for the blue star to be unable to become Doom's companion!

Bai Saya also grew worried. As a swordsman, he really did not understand things like magic. Hearing that something could have happened to Alan, he could not help but blurt, "Wait for me. I'll hand these papers over to Dan and accompany the two of you."

Saiximili's expression immediately changed. The dignity of a king that had almost vanished earlier surfaced once again. He declared, "The most important matter at hand is aiding my nation in winning the war. If you are unable to achieve this, leaving White Feather one after another, reneging on the promise you have made, then it is not necessary for me to help you either!"

Bai Saya stilled. He quickly explained, "I am not very familiar with warfare. Dan will be here. He is the one who actually knows how to fight a war."

"You are unfamiliar, but you are a powerful sinner." Saiximili stubbornly said, "None of you understand how powerful the strength of the sinners are..."

"We understand." Shooting Star pouted. Xiao Bai's great explosion had been super scary. *How could we not understand? With that kind of power, he really would be useful in a war.* It was no wonder that Saiximili himself had not cared about being dragged off, but once he heard that Bai Saya wanted to leave White Feather, he had immediately grown furious.

"Xiao Bai, stay here. I'll go out with Saimi to take a look." Shooting Star saw that his pet was still worried. He could only add on, "We won't go far. We'll just take a look nearby. Alan is probably fine. Saimi only said earlier that if it failed, Alan just wouldn't come back for us. In that case, he would probably go home."

Hearing that, Bai Saya was finally able to relax. He then felt that he had been too willful about abandoning the battle. He was clearly in the wrong. He immediately gave a sincere apology, "Saimi, don't worry. Before the battle ends, I won't leave White Feather. I will do everything I can to win!"

Only then did Saiximili's expression turn gentle. The dignity of a king once again disappeared without a trace. The thought of needing to step outside made him unable to muster any energy. He was reluctant as Shooting Star dragged him away.

At that time, Barna led a squad of avian guards into the corridor. Upon spotting Bai Saya, he shouted, "Bai Saya, Dan asked me to help you take stock of the weapons—Your Majesty!"

Halfway through his shouting, he abruptly realized that the king was present, too. The guard captain quickly saluted the king.

As an avian who possessed two large wings, Saiximili felt that he should be a lot more conspicuous than Bai Saya.

"Dan asked you to come?" Bai Saya heaved a sigh of relief and smilingly said, "That's wonderful. I was just worrying over how I don't even know where the armory was and wouldn't be able to finish the inventory!"

Barna nodded. "The armory is this way. I brought help so it should take no time at all to finish the inventory."

Saiximili regarded his guard captain in surprise. *Didn't he hold Bai Saya in great enmity? How is it that they seem to have become great friends after only a few days?*

Shooting Star was not surprised. He shrugged and said, "My Xiao Bai has always been loved by everyone who meets him. That's why it was a great shock to Xiao Bai when you avians treated him like a bad guy. These past few days, he's been representing the humans while socializing with the avians. He has helped Dan make preparations for the battle, trained with your guards, and accompanied them during dinner with small talk. He has helped drunk guards cross the road and coaxed babies (Yaya) to sleep. He pretty much turns no one down!"

Come to think of it, Xiao Bai had been so busy that he had had very little sleep, yet he seemed to be more energetic than ever. Shooting Star was beginning to suspect whether this was one of the powers of

the Stone of Sin. It had given his Xiao Bai explosive power—did it also have the effect of energizing him? This stone was way too powerful. No wonder so many people wanted to steal it!

After following Barna halfway, Bai Saya suddenly halted and turned to shout, "Saimi, remember to help me look after Shooting Star. Don't let him wander too far. Shooting Star, don't you be too impolite to Saimi either. He's a king! If you aren't obedient, be wary of Alan electrocuting you the moment he returns!"

Shooting Star puffed his cheeks out and reluctantly responded, "Fine!"

The two of them actually left just like that. Saiximili blankly stared at his own guard captain and suddenly felt as if he had been poached away... But if the person being poached was Barna, then so be it!

Shooting Star gleefully said, "I really don't know what use you have as a king. Even your guard captain has run off and forgotten your existence."

Saiximili was actually not bothered and replied, "A king has always acted more as a spiritual symbol than as a practical one. Besides, being a king is only a hobby of mine. My true job is that of a starseer!"

Hey hey! Aren't you getting it backwards? Shooting Star thought helplessly. Saiximili had even dared to claim that he would jump ship. This kind of truant starseer who had wings but could not fly, and who would even turn into an egg while throwing a tantrum, was not a starseer that Shooting Star could see the other guide accepting.

"Let's go find Alan."

Shooting Star pulled along the spiritually symbolic king. On the eve of the war, the truant Guide of Doom and the truant starseer left the nation together to embark on a journey to seek their companion who had defected from the team. The time limit was one day.



Bang!

The moment Shooting Star heard that sound, he knew that things weren't good. He turned and was spot on. That noble king, that mysterious seer, that angelic avian, had smashed his wings into a branch *again*. This time, his embarrassment had even turned into fury, and he directly used his wings to wrap himself into an egg. Then, he huddled underneath the shadow of the tree.

Xiao Bai wanted this guy to look after me?! For the first time, Shooting Star felt that it wasn't someone else who had to look after him, but that he had to look after someone. That someone was an adult avian and was even the "starseer" who was supposed to illuminate his path!

Shooting Star could not help but to roll his eyes and complain, "And he claims to be a starseer! All he can do is turn into an egg!"

He walked over and extended his hand into the egg, dragging out his starseer. Then, he pulled him along. If it wasn't for the fact that he could take this chance to grab those fair hands in broad daylight, Shooting Star would have long since lost his patience and left behind this troublesome egg under some tree.

"Why must we walk among the forest instead of taking the roads?"

Saiximili was very unsatisfied. The forest was dense. Not only did it cause his wings to keep bumping into branches, but his white clothes had also been dirtied. Even the exquisitely made boots he wore on his feet had pretty much transformed into two lumps of mud.

"Alan is an elf. He would have chosen the forest. He wouldn't take normal roads."

Shooting Star carefully took stock of the magic around him. If Alan were nearby, Shooting Star would most definitely be able to sense an abnormal occurrence of lightning element. That kind of element rarely appeared in forests, unless it was a thunderous day. Therefore, if it was present, then there was a high chance that it was Alan!

Saiximili was still very dissatisfied. He stomped across the mud under his feet in displeasure, but it only got him muddier.

Shooting Star unhappily added, "We're on the verge of battle so it's very dangerous around White Feather Nation. Did you want to walk on the main road in those extravagant clothes with your wings on full display, declaring to the opposing army that you're an important person from White Feather Nation?"

Saiximili fell silent. He looked at the Guide of Doom in confusion. No matter how he looked at him, he could not figure out just what sort of person he was.

"You sure are full of surprises. You normally appear like a child who doesn't know better, one who loves to play around and gorge on food. But you often suddenly turn wise. Could it be that you possess two completely different people inside you?"

"How can you say that about me, when you're both a king and starseer who likes to be difficult!" Shooting Star rolled his eyes and could not help throwing this back at him.

"I..."

Saiximili wanted to clarify that he was a starseer and king. *The order is very important!* He had not originally planned on succession because he knew that he would have the even more important role of a starseer in the future. However, none of the avians had believed him, nor did they even understand what a starseer was. All they had known was that he was the current prince, the future king.

The other prince, his own younger brother, had stolen ahead of him and run off with his wife after marrying her. Saiximili had no choice but to succeed as king. *What other choice did I have?*

"Shh!" Shooting Star extended his hand to stop him from speaking. He even made a shushing motion. He hesitated for a moment before quietly saying, "Don't move. I'm going to hide."

Saiximili's gigantic, snow-white wings were even larger than the average avian's. Even if he tucked them in, they would be two meters wide. Only someone blind would miss the wings, so Shooting Star could only hide on his own to observe the situation.

Saiximili froze. He stared at Shooting Star, who was hiding in the tree.

"Don't look at me!" Shooting Star clenched his teeth and whispered, "Pretend you're picking mushrooms under the tree."

The king could only go and pick mushrooms. But he was at a loss for words upon seeing the rainbow colored mushrooms all across the ground. *My hand will rot from touching those!* He could only squat down and count just how many colors there were among the mushrooms.

Soon after, three fully equipped beast soldiers walked over from among the trees. They had not thought they would run into anyone, let alone an avian. First, they stared at the wings in a stupor. Then, they got lost in Saiximili's appearance. The appearance of an avian king was not one to be underestimated.

They're actually so close already? Shooting Star's gaze hardened. They had to hurry back to warn Dan. There was no time to leisurely take stock of the weapons. They had to immediately raise their spears and get on their horses... Er, raise their spears and open their wings, and get ready for the battle to start!

But the first order of business is to shut these beasts up! Shooting Star pulled out his whip and inwardly called out to Bones. He planned to deal with two of them, leaving the last one to Bones.

In an instant, the blood red whip wrapped around the neck of the beast on the left. Pulling it taut, Shooting Star planned to directly snap

the beast's neck, and then instantly dispatch the other beast as well. Only then could he keep the commotion at a minimum. He was worried that there might be other beasts around.

However, things did not go as planned. Even though the beast was being choked to the point of his eyes bulging out, his neck had still not snapped. He did not appear like he would die. The beast's neck was much sturdier than Shooting Star had imagined, so much so that he could not snap it.

With this turn of events, Shooting Star could only extend his claws to at least get rid of the beast who was being choked.

At the same time, Bones leaped from Shooting Star's body, using its small but deadly skeletal hand to stab into the other beast's neck. It ran into the same problem as Shooting Star, unable to rupture the opponent's blood vessel to cause a great loss of blood. The beast hollered in pain and tried to grab Bones. However Bones was slippery, slipping back and forth on the beast's shoulders without forgetting to stab the beast now and then.

Shooting Star looked over and rolled his eyes at Bones. *Seems like it is currently idiot time for Bones. If he was operating under intelligent conditions, he would have definitely avoided this huge mess by going for the throat instead of a blood vessel.*

After Shooting Star and Bones each got rid of an opponent, they pounced on the third beast simultaneously. The last beast saw that things were looking bad. He made a prompt decision and stormed

toward the only one who had not struck, the avian, planning on taking him hostage.

Oh no! Shooting Star's heart lurched. *Saimi...*

Snap!

The beast weakly collapsed to the ground with wide eyes. His eyes were fixed on the person before him even in death, as if in disbelief that the person in front of him had actually possessed the strength to kill him, and that it was even by directly snapping his neck.

Saiximili took out a snow-white handkerchief and wiped his hands. Then, he glared in disgust at the handkerchief with beast fur stuck on it. He offhandedly tossed the handkerchief on the ground, no longer wishing to keep it.

Shooting Star stared with a dropped jaw at the dead beast on the ground. The neck was in a strange, distorted condition. *The neck bone must've snapped!* He could not help but touch his own neck and gulp. Xiao Bai was right. It was best not to bully Saimi.

Likely due to seeing Shooting Star's disbelief, Saiximili lifted an eyebrow and explained, "In order to utilize the wings on our backs for flight, we avians have strong upper body muscles, especially in the upper back to the arms. Therefore, a small matter such as snapping a neck is nothing."

But, just where in the world are your strong upper body muscles? Shooting Star stared in disbelief at Saiximili's figure. *You're*

*even skinnier than Xiao Bai! Where are these muscles you speak of?
Have they all gone to Barna instead?*

Saiximili honestly divulged, "We avian royalty all have this sort of figure. It is extremely easy to tell us apart. However, there are very few avians around who possess royal blood now."

Shooting Star now understood. *This is why the entire city is full of buff angels! What a pity!*

"Let's go. These three beasts were probably scouts and were here to investigate." Shooting Star said in frustration, "I can't believe the army is already so close. We can't keep searching for Alan. We'd better head back and warn Dan."

Saiximili nodded. The two of them turned to retrace their steps. Among the forest, only the three corpses of the beasts remained, like a gong that had been sounded, signaling the start of the war.

Only a few minutes had passed since Shooting Star and Saiximili left when a hand suddenly reached out from the pile of grass by the side. It pulled apart the bundle of vines and grass, wildly patting around. After grabbing a hold of the fur on one of the beast corpses, it pulled and tugged. After confirming that its hold was stable enough, the hand tightened and grabbed it firmly, using the leverage to slowly climb up.

"Phew! I'm finally back."

Alan breathed heavily as he climbed up. He turned to glance back at where he had crawled up from and mumbled, "There are so many

vines and weeds covering it up. No wonder I had not noticed the deep chasm below me while I was pondering on the tree.”

He glanced toward the ground, wondering what he had grabbed. The sensation had been peculiar...

“Ah!”

Without warning, the corpse of a beast with bulging eyes came into view, shocking Alan so much that he nearly fell back into the valley. Fortunately, his foot merely slipped and he did not actually fall.

Alan stood back up. He looked at the three corpses around him in confusion. The blood of these corpses was still squirting. It was obvious that they had only just been killed.

The elf who loved all life could not help but wonder, *If I had climbed back up earlier, could these beasts have escaped death?*

However, this thought did not remain for long. The beasts wore a familiar outfit. It was exactly the same as the outfits of the soldiers he had seen in the village. The regret he had felt immediately disappeared without a trace.

Elves loved all life. Therefore, they detested war. He knew that even if these soldiers had not died here, they would probably have died on the battlefield. If they did not die on the battlefield, then that meant enemy soldiers had died instead.

In regard to the battlefield, where loss of life was unavoidable, the elf would not pity anyone. Once someone steps foot onto the battlefield and dons the garb of war, then they must have the resolve to put their life on the line. They do not need to be pitied, nor should they be pitied. This was the pride a soldier should have!

Is this what pride is?

Alan froze. He glanced back reflexively.

A magic staff was firmly fastened to his back with vines. The staff's appearance was plain. The wooden body of the staff pretty much resembled intertwined branches that extended all the way to the top where it separated into many branches and formed the shape of a leaf. The leaf held a green gemstone on top of it. Light shimmered from the translucent gemstone, like a bud glimmering with dew in the early morning. It was just much larger than a bud. The stone was as large as a fist. If it were real, then it was probably priceless.

"I really don't know if bringing you up with me was the right or wrong thing to do."

Alan could not help but to feel some misgivings. Even though this was a staff without an owner, and he had fallen in love with the staff at first sight, the elf did not like taking things that were not his. It was just that the cave was completely dark, and if not for the series of coincidences, no one would have been able to discover the staff.

Is this why I was able to hear it calling out to me? Alan felt that this matter was mysterious. Other than the staff, he really had not

discovered anyone, and when he picked up the staff, the voice calling out to him had stopped.

Alan did not have time to ponder over it. He really had to find Shooting Star and the others. He had only been delayed for a moment, yet the army had already come so far. The battle was about to break out. *I must meet back up with them, the sooner the better.*

He removed the staff from his back and held it in his hands since he did not know what would occur next. With the misfortune that had plagued him for several days, no amount of vigilance was enough. *I'd better hold onto the staff tightly so that I can attack at any time.*

Swish... swish...

He suddenly heard the sound of grass swishing. The elf lifted his head and saw a blond haired knight staring right at him.

What a coincidence. Isn't this exactly the knight from that village whom I thought looked familiar?

The knight's gaze slowly moved downward. Alan's gaze could not help but follow his, landing on the three silent corpses that gazed back at them.

The knight once more lifted his gaze, fixing it on Alan.

Alan stared back at the knight expressionlessly. Borrowing an idiom from the humans, would this situation be wrongly considered "caught red-handed"?

Alan's grip tightened on the staff. Even though he did not know the element of the staff, it was still better than having nothing. Even if he could not actually cast with it, he could at least use it to block a sword.

When the knight saw the other person's hand tighten on the staff, he frowned and took a few steps forward. The knight opened his mouth, wanting to explain.

However, Alan nervously raised the staff. If the knight approached any closer, he would be ready to attack with magic at any moment.

As a mage with a weak constitution, letting someone approach too closely was the biggest taboo. The naïve elf merely wished to stop the other person's approach. He could tell that the other person did not bear him much ill will, so Alan did not intend to attack first. However, he had not considered that to an outsider, by pointing the staff at the knight, with three corpses at his feet, he would look exactly like a wild mage who had just murdered three people and was about to continue his spree by attacking the knight.

"Philo, watch out!"

A slim man who resembled a rogue burst out. He used a piercing voice to warn the knight as he threw two daggers at the mage that was "currently attacking" his companion.

"Wait, Pisce, stop!" The knight cried out.

The first dagger knocked away the staff in Alan's hand. The second one nicked his hand. As the staff landed on the ground, Alan's blood also dripped down at the same time. In midair, the crimson blood and the emerald bud finally met. The crimson drop of blood stood out conspicuously on the green of the gem.

The emerald bud suddenly glowed oddly. Alan's eyes abruptly darkened for a moment, and a thought flashed across his mind—*If I had known that the path back to Shooting Star and the others would be so perilous, I would never have chosen to leave in the first place. I would definitely have chosen to obediently stay with the team. I wouldn't have left even if Shooting Star made my blood boil!*

Philo anxiously checked Bai Lan's condition.

"Pisce, how could you be so reckless? Have you forgotten who he is? He is Bai Saya's little brother, Bai Lan."

Pisce yelped, "I'm reckless? Don't tell me these corpses all over the ground aren't his handiwork?"

Philo glared at him and said, "Perhaps the beasts attacked him first. Haven't you almost gotten into plenty of fights with the beasts yourself? These beasts are impulsive and easily angered. I wouldn't be surprised no matter how the fight broke out."

Pisce scratched his face and apologetically remarked, "That's true. Those beasts in the army are always looking for a good fight. I wouldn't put it past them to be the ones who stirred up trouble with Bai Lan in the first place."

“Strange, only his hand got injured. Why has he fainted?”

Philo had finished looking over Bai Lan’s injuries. No matter how he searched, he could only find the cut on Bai Lan’s hand. It was not an injury that would cause him to faint. Even though Pisce indeed had poisonous projectiles, it was clear that this was not one of those. Pisce had taught his teammates how to determine which projectiles were poisonous by their shape. The dagger could not have caused Bai Lan to faint.

“Maybe he fought too hard with the beasts earlier and exhausted his magic. Then, after receiving this fright, he fainted right then and there,” Pisce said as if it were a matter of fact. He did not even forget to comment mockingly, “These mages are all so feeble. Even a gust of wind can topple them. There’s nothing strange about this.”

Philo thought it over and believed this really could be possible. After all, three beasts could not have been easy to deal with, especially when the mage had been by himself. Without a warrior on the frontlines, it could not have been easy to singlehandedly deal with the enemy.

“Hehehe.” Pisce suddenly laughed lewdly. “Since Bai Lan is here, then Bai Saya must be nearby, too. This must make you happy!”

Philo reddened and chided, “What nonsense are you spouting? I don’t wish for her to be here at all. War is about to break out. It’s very dangerous.”

Pisce waggled his eyebrows. "Oh~, war is about to break out. It's so dangerous! But don't worry, our big bro Philo will protect you, cute little Saya."

"Pisce!" Philo growled, but his blushing face wasn't persuasive at all.

"Shh, shh!" Pisce made a shushing motion and whispered, "Lower your voice. What if we attract the attention of other beasts? If they see these corpses, your brother-in-law will be dead meat!"

That made Philo shake his head. The first part of Pisce's words were pretty reasonable, but the last part turned into nonsense again. Pisce really had no filter between his brain and his mouth.

However, it was true that they should not dally here. If other beasts chanced upon this sight, then they would be in deep trouble.

Philo picked Bai Lan up and indicated for Pisce to grab the staff. They hurried away from the scene of the crime.

Chapter 8: The First Arrow Starts the Battle

Shooting Star and Saiximili had no idea that they had just missed Alan by a hair. They were in a rush to return to White Feather Nation. However, on their way back, Saiximili abruptly paused and looked into the distance behind him.

Shooting Star kept running for a bit before he noticed that Saiximili had not followed him. He could only turn back to retrieve him. He glared at Saiximili. If this fellow dared to tell him that he wanted to rest or anything along those lines, he would render His Majesty unconscious with a single punch and then drag the other back by the hand. In any case, the only important thing about this guy was his hands. Every other place on him could be dragged across the ground with no problem whatsoever!

"The Sinner of Pride has been born." Saiximili's gaze was distant as he looked far away.

Huh? Shooting Star scrutinized Saiximili's very vacant expression. His voice was enigmatic too. *Could this be the real starseer mode?*

The Stone of Pride has also appeared? Pride sounds difficult... Thinking of that, Shooting Star's expression suddenly turned a bit strange. "Wait a minute! Don't tell me that the Sinner of Pride you're talking about is Alan?"

Saiximili woke up from starseer mode and nodded. "It is exactly that blue star."

"Ahhhh, it really is Alan! We're in deep trouble!" Shooting Star wailed, "That guy's lightning magic was already off the charts, and now he even has a Stone of Sin. Sob, sob, sob! He's gonna put me on a tight leash. This won't do!"

Shooting Star lifted Saiximili's collar and growled, "Hey! Saimi, there are seven stones, while there are only two guides. Going by the principle that 'things that are rare are more precious,' the guides should be stronger, right? I must have some kind of treasure I can use too, right? Let's find it quickly!"

Saiximili did not know whether to laugh or cry as he responded, "Your starseer and sinners are your treasures. The starseer is the prophet who will illuminate the path of the guide, while the sinners are the guards who will protect the guide. What need do you have of other treasures?"

Shooting Star loudly complained, "Protect me? Alan will electrocute me to death!"

Is he really that scary? Saiximili began to worry. He would also need to associate with the Sinner of Pride! Saiximili could only suggest for a way to solve this, "You could have the other sinners restrain him?"

Shooting Star angrily puffed his cheeks out and complained, "When Alan zapped me with lightning the last time I was disobedient, Xiao Bai's expression was all 'thankfully you're here to zap him.' Do you think that guy would help me?"

Then you should be more obedient! Saiximili did not dare to give voice to this. However, the Sinner of Pride did not sound like an unreasonable person and was only disciplining Shooting Star. This relieved Saiximili.

Shooting Star's expression abruptly changed. He shoved Saiximili away and dodged to the side at the same time. As he landed, the blood red whip was already gripped in his hand.

In the place where they had just been standing, protruded an arrow.

"Saimi, get behind me," Shooting Star barked.

Having not expected anything, Saiximili had been pushed straight to the ground. He cut a sorry figure as he crawled back up, immediately running behind Shooting Star and staring ahead with slight fear. Even though he was strong, neither his position as a king nor a starseer had given him any chances for practice in battle. If a fight truly were to break out, he did not have much fighting ability.

The ground rumbled consistently and slowly, the time intervals about the same as a person's footsteps, just on a much larger scale.

Saiximili frantically asked, "S-Shooting Star, this seems to be an army?"

"It's not 'seems.' This is an army!" An odd expression came over Shooting Star. He asked, "Saimi, if we don't fly too high, can you fly?"

In the distance, billowing dust from the marching was already visible. The dust reached so far that he actually could not see the end...

"Y-Yes, but I haven't flown in so long." Saiximili's face fell. As a king, he rarely even left the palace.

As he made out the banner, adrenaline shot through Shooting Star. In a single motion, he grabbed Saiximili, who was a whole head taller than him, and lifted him up in a bridal carry. As if the bride's father was chasing behind him, Shooting Star ran for his life.

"Ahhhh!" Shooting Star yelled as he ran. He utilized the fastest speed of his life, giving it his all, to the point that veins popped out on his face. His two legs crossed back and forth at such a quick speed that they resembled a fan. It was a speed that even the army panther beastmen, who were speed specialists, had to praise.

"Ahhhh!" Saiximili, who was being carried, yelled and flicked Shooting Star's blood red whip at the same time, knocking away the many arrows being shot at them.

Fortunately, the army behind them did not know that the king of White Feather was among the duo. After all, there truly were very few kings who would randomly stroll outside on the eve of war. If they knew that the avian before them was actually the king, they would have long followed suit in yelling as they gave chase. Even if they could not catch up, they would shower them with arrows to kill them.

As it was, the army was only playing cat and mouse, trying to chase these two people straight to the city walls to assert their dominance in front of the avians.

In this manner, Shooting Star and Saiximili screamed in their wild run all the way up to White Feather's towering walls.

Under the commander's orders, the entire beast army halted their chase and stood uniformly in order to prevent falling into a trap. After all, it was very odd for these two to appear. It would not be strange for them to be bait.

Following the commander's orders, all of the beasts began laughing their heads off, treating the two fleeing people in front of them as laughingstock.

By this time, the walls of White Feather were beginning to stir. Many of the avians had already made out that their king was actually one of the two fleeing figures. Their faces immediately paled so much that they were almost whiter than their wings.

Shooting Star and Saiximili were finally able to pounce on the steel door in the wall, pounding on it heavily and shouting at the top of their lungs to quickly open the door and save them!

Several avians flew down and respectfully said, "Your Majesty, this door has already been welded shut. Please let us fly you up!"

Saiximili's face twisted. He was afraid of heights.

"You can close your eyes, Your Majesty."

It was evident that the avians all knew that their king had an "incurable disease."

"It is still frightening even with my eyes closed." Saiximili's face was sullen as he let one of the avians lift him up. In the process, he tightly closed his eyes.

Seeing an avian having to get flown up by another avian, the beast army laughed even more heartily. Even the commander of the army could not suppress a smile. However, if he were to learn that he had actually let the enemy faction's king escape back to the city when he had been no more than five hundred meters away from his army, he most likely would not be sporting this expression.

"They arrived so quickly. This is even earlier than anticipated."

Dan stood on top of the wall, his expression rather serious. He mumbled in bewilderment, "It seems that the Fischer Merchant Guild will be giving these beasts a lot more compensation than I originally thought. If they only wished to acquire avian slaves, isn't this cost way too high?"

"The Fischer Merchant Guild?" Bai Saya turned his head. *Merchant guilds actually participate in wars?*

"It's a merchant guild that ranks among the top three in the Western Continent. They're much larger in scale than our Goldenstyle Merchant Guild."

At this time, several avians flew Shooting Star and Saiximili up to the top of the wall. The two of them were both in a sorry state. One of them had exhausted his energy in a burst of power, while the other was suffering from his fear of heights. Even after the avian that had flown him up told him several times, "Your Majesty, we have already arrived," Saiximili refused to let go of the other avian.

"Shooting Star, you weren't able to find Alan?" Bai Saya was greatly taken aback that there were only the two of them. Even though Shooting Star usually liked to fool around, when it came to his companions, he was extremely serious. Whatever he said, there was a great chance that he would be able to do it.

After climbing down from the avian, Shooting Star directly plopped himself onto the floor. Hearing Bai Saya's question, he huffed and shook his head. Then, he thought of something and opened his mouth to say, "Dan, their commander is a human."

Dan was shocked. He doubtfully asked, "Could it be a human from the Southern Continent who has lived among the beasts since childhood?"

These kinds of humans were not uncommon, but Shooting Star should know this fact. Purposely pointing it out probably indicated that something was not quite right.

As expected, Shooting Star firmly shook his head. He detailed, "He's a regular soldier, and he looks to be a knight. His riding position on the horse is proper, and his expression arrogant. He looks like a noble."

Dan's face fell further at that.

Unable to make sense of it, Bai Saya questioned, "Why, is there something wrong with having it be a human?"

"A merchant guild, in the end, consists of merchants." Dan gazed at the beast army below them. *This is probably just the vanguard. A larger army will likely arrive after them.*

"A merchant will indeed use war to make money. For the sake of profit, a merchant will often fan the flames of war to make them break out faster and even expand in scale or prolong in length. None of that is strange. But this time..."

Dan frowned. Many misgivings came to mind. He stopped abruptly to consider them and did not continue to explain.

Shooting Star stood up with great effort and continued where Dan had left off. "A beast army of this size couldn't have resulted without earlier preparation. There must be a human of higher standing behind them pulling the strings. The fact that they have a human commander proves that it was very likely that humans recruited and formed this army through careful planning. What we thought earlier about the humans merely forming the army on the spot was wrong."

In this war, the beasts were no different from mercenaries, while the true mastermind behind the war was the Fischer Merchant Guild!

Shooting Star and Dan exchanged a glance. The two could tell they had the same misgivings.

The Fischer Merchant Guild had traveled across continents all the way here to the Shaosi Continent to start a war, all for the sake of capturing avians as slaves?

I highly doubt it! Shooting Star and Dan both saw this belief in each other's gaze at the same time.

There was suddenly movement among the army. With a wave of the banner, the entire army uniformly yelled, "Hear us out, avian nation. Hand over five thousand slaves, and this battle can be stopped!"

"What?" Saiximili growled angrily, "My nation only consists of a little more than seventeen thousand avians. You want me to hand over nearly a third of our citizens? Over my dead body!"

Dan calmly explained, "This was an impossible condition from the start. He does not want you to fulfill it."

Hearing that, Saiximili was still full of anger. Thinking of the tragedy of five thousand of his citizens becoming slaves, the king's heart nearly shattered.

Shooting Star worriedly asked, "Will they start laying siege to the city today?"

Dan nodded and said with certainty, "Yes, but it should just be a feint."

"A feint?" Bai Saya quickly asked in confusion, "Why won't they attack for real?"

Dan shook his head and answered, "The walls of White Feather are ridiculously tall and strong. There are no city gates either. Even catapults can't launch anything inside, let alone bows and arrows. They won't be able to use siege towers either. It's much too difficult for them to construct a siege tower as tall as this wall. Besides, the nation they're trying to attack is a nation of avians. All the avians have to do is pour oil on the siege towers from high up and set them on fire. They can easily destroy the towers in such a way. No matter what, it is an unwise move to directly attack this city."

Dan gave it some more thought. He had originally been thinking that since their opponents were beasts, who were more naïve, then they might need to spend some effort guarding the skies. However, their opponents' commanding officer was actually a human who specialized in crafty warfare and would likely not commit such a mistake and would directly give up on siege towers.

"Their only ways of breaking through are to break the city walls or to dig an underground tunnel. However, in order to break the wall, they would need sufficient mages, or else it is nearly impossible to destroy this wall head on. Meanwhile, a battering ram is used to break down gates. It won't be too effective against this wall either."

Dan was truly impressed by many years of dedication from the avians. The thickness of these walls and the sturdiness of the materials were practically unheard of. It was no wonder that although the avians fetched a high price as slaves, no beast tribe had dared to attack White Feather, a nation full of avians.

However, only the avians were capable of carrying out such a tactic. After all, having no city gate was overkill. No race that could not fly would waste their effort on doing something like that. No matter how tall or sturdy a wall was, having a city gate meant having a weak point.

Shooting Star frowned and crossed his arms. "The Shaosi Continent is a land of beasts. Mages are rare creatures here. The beasts don't specialize in magic, so I think it's way more likely for them to dig a tunnel. You said they'll come at us with a feint. Is it to hide that they're secretly digging a tunnel?"

Dan nodded, looking at Shooting Star in a new light. He could not help but admit that Shooting Star might actually be a lot more dependable than Bai Saya in critical moments.

"Then, what should we do?" Saiximili asked frantically. This was his nation, his citizens!

"Obstruct their construction and drag things out." Dan said without any hesitation, "Such a massive army requires a large amount of food. Most beasts are unskilled at farming. Many are nomadic hunters. Even if the Fischer Merchant Guild is providing them money, it is impossible to continuously purchase sufficient food for such a large army on the Southern Continent! They would more likely than not have to transport food from the Western Continent. The Fischer Merchant Guild would definitely be unable to support such massive food consumption once too many days pass by."

Bai Saya understood what was shared and cheered, "The avians are completely self-sufficient. In that case, there should be no problems, right?"

Dan nodded. There were still problems, such as how the city did not produce salt. Although the avians had accumulated a good amount of salt, it would probably still not be enough to last for long. However, the avians' capability of flight provided too great of an advantage. They could send out ten to twenty avians at the same time. Even if a few of them got shot down, there would still definitely be someone able to successfully bring back salt.

Still, it was best not to explain this in too much detail to Bai Saya.

"Drag things out? Sounds super boring!" Shooting Star gave a tsk. He had thought that he would get to see a great battle.

Boring? Dan smiled bitterly. He could only hope that this war would be boring from start to finish. However, with how the Fischer Merchant Guild stirred up this war with no regards to the cost behind it, could it truly end so simply?



"Ahhh! I'm so bored! It is so utterly boring!"

Shooting Star plastered himself against the table, looking as if he was going to die of boredom. He muttered in annoyance, "What war! How can a war be this boring..."

"You don't know how to use a bow, and you don't know offensive magic either, or else you could at least follow them out for sneak attacks."

Saiximili leisurely peeled an apple to the side.

Shooting Star lay on the table in silence for a good long while before he abruptly leaped up and flipped the table with a scream.

"Hey! Don't you feel like you're too idle? Your Majesty, king of White Feather, your nation is currently under attack! Yet, here you are, peeling an apple!"

The king froze for a moment before he continued to peel the apple. He indifferently said, "I do not understand warfare. I am of no help at all, so I am here, peeling an apple."

Shooting Star rolled his eyes and pointed at the king's nose as he said, "I really don't understand just what kind of king you are. You actually handed off fighting the war to outsiders. Aren't you afraid that Dan will snatch your position from you?"

Saiximili finished peeling the apple. He gracefully picked up a piece to eat, yet he very ungracefully spoke as he ate, "What is there to be afraid of? He is not an avian. It is impossible for him to become king."

"Then, aren't you afraid of him stealing your authority? Or making you into a figurehead?"

Shooting Star, who was bored out of his mind, wanted to help add some variables into this super boring war. Weren't there always stories of commanders getting too big for their boots, making the king suspicious of mutiny, thus leading to sabotage or a take back of military power?

Saiximili swallowed the apple and asked full of hope, "Do you feel Dan really will be willing to steal my authority? If that is the case, that would be wonderful. Truthfully, I have never been good at being a king. If he is willing to steal my authority, then I am willing to be a figurehead."

"..."

Shooting Star snapped, "And you dare to say that I'm a lousy Guide of Doom. I bet that you're a defective starseer that GOD accidentally made with a slip of the hand!"

"Blasphemy! I am an exceptional starseer!" Saiximili solemnly denied that he was a defective starseer. At most, he was a defective king.

Shooting Star seriously replied, "Yeah, I'm sure you're solidly ranked number two among starseers!"

"Indeed, you finally understand how amazing I am..."

As he spoke, Saiximili realized something was not quite right. *Aren't there only two starseers?*

"I'm not number two, I'm definitely number..."

Saiximili planned on arguing back with great effort, but an explosion cut him off, followed by violent shaking. The two of them exchanged glances. After ascertaining that the explosion had nothing to do with each other, they immediately ran in the direction of the city walls.

“Oh no, oh no, it’s all because you kept saying it was boring. Now, they really have fought their way in!”

As he ran, Saiximili was so worried that he tripped over his words. He was deeply afraid that his nation would get conquered, and his citizens would all get forced into slavery.

Shooting Star snapped, “You’re blaming me? Do you think the army outside is here to entertain me or what? Cut the crap. Run faster!”

The two of them ran straight to the walls. Only then did they discover that Dan and Bai Saya were located in a different place than before. In the past few days, they had always stood on the outer wall, the wall that was farther out, to observe the battle. However, they had now retreated to the inner curtain wall, which was the second defensive wall.

There was a narrow area between the two walls called the “bailey.” Therefore, even if Shooting Star were to climb up the inner curtain wall, he would not be able to see what was happening outside.

At this time, a few explosions coincidentally sounded again.

“What in the world happened?” Saiximili hurriedly asked.

Even though he knew not how to navigate government affairs and was a failure of a king, White Feather was a small nation with a small population, so there was not much he had to handle. Only then had he been able to barely manage. Despite this, Saiximili's greatest strength was that he was a king who truly loved his nation.

"Mages," Bai Saya turned and explained to them. He had never seen such destructive magic before. His face paled because of it. He was a bit frightened.

"Is it a large scale spell cast by several people working together?" Shooting Star was much more familiar with magic. He was actually fairly knowledgeable about offensive magic; he just did not have a knack for it. Plus, learning how to fight had already taken him a lot of time, so he was not in a hurry to learn offensive magic and instead spent his time learning a bunch of miscellaneous, useful stuff.

Dan merely nodded.

"How do you plan on dealing with that?" Shooting Star glanced at Dan's expression. Even though this fellow's reaction was rather calm, his expression did not look good. It was clear that he was not truly unbothered.

Not having mages was their biggest weakness from the start. It was just that they had originally thought that the enemy faction would not have any either, so it would not have been too big of a problem. However, now that the opponents had master mages able to cast cooperative spells, they were in deep trouble.

Even though most mages were so feeble that the wind could blow them over, they were truly rather suitable for destroying an unmoving wall that would not retaliate.

Dan replied, "I have already sent out a few squads of avians to attack the mages. Even though there are many guards specially protecting them, I have ordered the avians to throw rocks at them from high up in the air. Although this kind of attack has low accuracy, it is also difficult to defend against. The avians that will be attacking will also be flying high up, so there is a low possibility for the enemies to shoot them down. They will be unable to land a hit so high up."

The force of a rock falling from high up in the sky might be even scarier than magic! Shooting Star tilted his head in thought. *How can I miss such an amusing sight?* He snickered for a bit and jumped down from the inner curtain wall, tossing behind only the words, "I'm gonna head to the outer curtain wall for a look."

"Shooting Star, it's dangerous!" Bai Saya worriedly called out, but Shooting Star was already long gone. He could only quickly follow after him.

Seeing that, Dan had wanted to open his mouth and stop Saya from heading over, but he gave it some more thought. Ever since he had sent out the avians, the number of magic attacks had lessened greatly. Considering the sturdiness of the wall, it was far from being destroyed. There was no need to worry too much. Bai Saya was not some weak baby.

Besides, going to the outer curtain wall meant that they could see the situation of the battle better. Dan only hesitated for a moment. He decided not to stop them from heading over.

With a "tap, tap, tap," Shooting Star hastily climbed up the steps of the outer curtain wall. The moment he reached the top, he saw several files of avian soldiers flying above the wall. The avians near the outer edge held bows and had their gazes fixed below the wall. The moment any enemies dared to take a step toward the wall, they would immediately let loose the arrows in hand without any mercy.

However, the mages were currently using powerful magic to attack the wall. No beast soldiers were approaching, so the archer squad was currently useless and could only stay vigilant.

On the inner edge of the wall, avians awaiting orders held rocks around the size of a human head in their hands. They solemnly stared at the skies before them, waiting for their captain's next order. Once given, they would fly out immediately and take the place of their returning comrades who had already thrown their rocks... Or, they would take the place of their comrades who would never return, following the same fate of having their bodies plummet.

Shooting Star leaped toward an empty spot on top of the wall. Then, he use both hands to hold onto the wall as he stuck his head out, eager to see if a real war was as eye-opening as his imagination...

Nearby the city wall, a few hundred avians were currently circling in the air, a sight to behold. Shooting Star could not help but cry out, "Wow! It finally looks like a war!"

Even though it was a rather spectacular sight to see avians uniformly throw several dozens to several hundreds of rocks, their accuracy was low due to how high the avians flew. Even if the rocks landed in the correct spot by chance, the mages would often get pulled aside by the beasts guarding them before the rocks could land, thus escaping the danger of getting smashed into a meat patty.

Although the rocks were very successful at disrupting the casting of magic, no mages were actually killed by the attack. At most, the rocks had pummeled a few unsuspecting beasts in the head.

Some of the avians in the air were a bit disgruntled. Unwilling to accept this, they flew a bit lower. Lower, and lower...

"Fly higher! You're too low!"

Dan, who stood on the inner curtain wall, paled. He quickly commanded Markham, who was next to him, to fly over and warn those avians who were launching an attack.

Markham nodded the moment he received the order. He extended his wings and flew over to warn his fellow avians.

On the wall, Shooting Star excitedly pulled Bai Saya over when he noticed the avians' action. He pointed at the avians in the air and shouted, "Look, Xiao Bai! Those avians seem like they want to fly lower to launch an attack!"

At first, Bai Saya had wanted to scold Shooting Star for running off, but when he heard that, he immediately gazed up into the air with worry. Like Shooting Star had pointed out, dozens of avians uniformly glided toward the location of the mages, as if they had discussed this in advance. From the trajectory of their flight, by the time they flew above the mages' location, they would be lower than twenty meters above the ground.

How can that be? Dan clearly ordered them to maintain a height of at least fifty meters. Bai Saya paled, an uneasy feeling coming over him.

The group of avians formed the shape of a V and quickly glided above the mages. The rocks in their hands were thrown down one after another. By now, they only held a height of fifteen meters or so. A dozen rocks were thrown down, leaving the beasts below no time to react. They dodged one by one, and some even abandoned the mages they were protecting, lifting their shield to protect their own heads first.

For a moment, the enemy army was in complete disarray. Even though none of the mages had been directly hit by the rocks, many of them had been knocked to the ground by the beasts. Some had even gotten their staves knocked out of their hands, and the staves had then been stomped into smithereens by the beasts' giant feet right on the spot.

"Wow! Amazing!" Shooting Star excitedly gestured at the battle nearby. He turned and asked, "Xiao Bai, Xiao Bai, did you see that?"

"I have. Thankfully nothing went wrong." Bai Saya, on the other hand, did not feel any excitement, only relief.

"They plan on doing it again!" Shooting Star saw that another squad had formed a V shape. They planned on copying the previous squad, giving the army below them a head on attack.

At this time, Markham had almost reached them. However, he saw that the squad of avians in a V formation had already started to glide downwards, about to launch the second attack. "No, come back!"

Shooting Star had originally been cheering them on, but he glimpsed the glow of magic from the enemy mages below. He cried out, "Shoot, the mages are gonna retaliate with magic! Quick, stop them!"

Unfortunately, Shooting Star's voice did not reach the avians at all. Encouraged by the success of the previous attack, the avians flew even lower, pretty much only twelve meters off the ground. Their hands loosened, about to throw the rocks down...

A gigantic pillar of fire soared into the air, immediately engulfing a dozen avians right above it, instantly turning them into ash before the handful of avians could even cry out in pain.

Even though the back of the squad did not get hit head on by the flames, they were unable to dodge in time either. Several avians flew right into the flames. The temperature was no longer high enough to burn them to ashes, so they were still able to emerge on the other side of the flames. However, their entire bodies were on fire by then, causing them to painfully flip around in circles in the air, eventually burning to ashes and falling.

An avian in the very back was able to dodge the flames just in time, but a portion of their wings got burned and they dropped from the air powerlessly. Soon after, the beast soldiers surrounded them. The battle had started several days ago, yet no blood had been spilled. The war-hungry beasts had long forgotten that they were there to capture slaves. The moment they saw the avian fall down, they swung the weapons in their hands without a second thought.

In the end, when the beasts split to chase another avian that had fallen, there was only a lump of unidentifiable flesh and bloody feathers left on the ground.

Seeing such a scene, Bai Saya's face lost all color. He even reflexively covered Shooting Star's eyes.

Shooting Star had been clamoring about watching the battle earlier, but he now silently allowed Bai Saya to cover his eyes and did not struggle or complain that he wanted to see.

Even though Bai Saya used his hands to cover Shooting Star's eyes, he himself did not break his gaze and watched the ugliness of war play out before him.

He was the one who had been persistent about joining this war, but up until now, Dan had been the one who had contributed the most. All Bai Saya had been able to do was complete trivial tasks Dan had assigned him.

Therefore, Bai Saya felt that he must at least witness the battle from start to finish. No matter if they succeeded or failed, no matter how

ugly or bloody, he would deeply engrave everything into his mind. He was the one who had decided to participate in the war, so no matter how ugly it became, he must keep on watching and take responsibility for his decision.

All of a sudden, a strange feeling burrowed into his heart. In the encampment at the very back of the army, there was... a thing? No, not just one. There were two!

Bai Saya clearly felt that there was something there. They were so clear, like they were shining. But in actuality, he knew that they were not really shining. At least, it was nothing that could be seen with the naked eye. The light was something he sensed with his heart.

What you sense are two other stones, stones that already have owners. Roth informed his own master.

What? Bai Saya cried out, "Shooting Star, there are two Stones of Sin in the enemy army!"

Hearing that, Shooting Star jolted. Even though his sight was obscured by Bai Saya, he suddenly felt enlightened. Before, he and Dan had both been suspicious about why the Fischer Merchant Guild would spend so much effort to form the beast army to attack White Feather. Could it really only be for the sake of avian slaves?

Now, with holders of the stones, "sinners," appearing among the beast army, Shooting Star finally knew the answer.

The opponents' true objective was not avian slaves. Aside from avians, White Feather had something else, the avians' king, Saiximili, the starseer of the Guide of Doom!

Chapter 9: The Sinner of Pride

"Saimi, I want to ask you about a very important matter. Will the Guide of Doom and the Guide of Existence come into conflict with each other?"

Shooting Star asked this with utmost solemnity.

Saiximili blinked. He turned to look at the other person, who sported a head of fiery red hair and a pair of large, golden eyes, a bright combination that hurt his eyes. His expression was blank. He was utterly incapable of understanding what was going on.

"So I'm dreaming then?" he mumbled, slight relief on his face.

Shooting Star looked at the king who was deluding himself with pity and cruelly said, "No, what you just saw was all real."

Saiximili's face instantly paled.

On the wall just now, he had seen with his own eyes, dozens of his citizens turning into flames and meat paste on the spot. His eyes simply rolled back, and his whole body directly collapsed against the ground. Following that, Dan had people carry him back to the palace with orders for him not to come back and cause trouble.

"Hey? Hurry and answer my question!"

Saiximili stared blankly at him, still unable to recover from the devastation of his citizens' deaths.

Shooting Star gripped the king's shoulders and shouted by his ears, "Will Doom and Existence come into conflict? Hurry and answer me. This is really super important!"

Such a strong grip made pain shoot through Saiximili; however, this pain also allowed him to finally wake up.

"Doom and Existence were in conflict from the start!"

"Why?" Shooting Star asked in confusion.

"Because the two of you are able to decide the trajectory of the world, but only one of you can make the decision. Therefore, you will conflict, and the resulting victor will decide the future of the world!"

Shooting Star frowned and tried asking, "Since you said that I can decide the future of the world, then can I have a discussion with the Guide of Existence about choosing the same future? That way, we don't have to fight!"

"Uh..." Saiximili hesitated and stutteringly said, "Even though it is your choice, truthfully, both of you have already chosen, and they are two completely different futures that oppose each other."

Shooting Star was shocked. "Are you kidding me? I haven't chosen anything!"

"You have chosen." Saiximili said with certainty, "You are called the Guide of Doom. Of course you have chosen the future of 'doom.'"

Dang it! Aren't you the one who told me that name? Who wants to choose doom?

Shooting Star was about to cough up blood. Before, he had thought it was a little amusing, and one of his pets had become a sinner, thus coming into great power, so it was fine to give it a try. But now, he really had a bad feeling, especially since doom was involved... There was no way to put a positive spin on that! He, Shooting Star, was not some crazed person who wanted to destroy the world!

"I'm not playing anymore!" Shooting Star shouted, "I give up! Give the victory to the other side!"

"Give up, how?" Saiximili laughed bitterly and sighed. "GOD, the one who created this world, is the one behind this game, and the stage of the game is the 'entire world.' There is no resignation form you can sign."

Shooting Star screamed, "Are you pulling my leg? I'm forced to play this game? GOD is way too whimsical!"

Saiximili said with a shrug, "He is GOD. No one can control Him. A bit of whimsy is normal."

Shooting Star was speechless for a while before he snapped, "Hey! Shouldn't you be telling me that GOD left the final decision to this world, so I'm definitely not allowed to lose? If I lose, the world will be destroyed and turned into hell. Finally, you should be telling me that GOD loves the world, so I should give it my all or something?"

"It's not like I know what your intention is." The king said completely irresponsibly, "Maybe your victory would mean the end of the world."

Hey! Then, am I supposed to win or not? Shooting Star felt his head throb. He attempted a final struggle and said, "The Guide of Doom just doesn't sound any good. Can I change my game name? To something like the Guide of Happiness and Fortune?"

"What do you think?" Saiximili asked in response.

"I can't." Shooting Star's face fell.

Saiximili nodded as if it were a matter of fact.

"Forget it!" Shooting Star gave a heavy whack and boldly stood up to shout, "No matter what messed up game this is, I'm gonna play my pet capturing game. GOD can play His end of the world game for all I care. I'm not gonna follow the script!"

Saiximili's face paled—because what Shooting Star had just whacked was Saiximili's thigh.

Shooting Star said with a solemn expression, "Saimi, I suspect that this army was formed by the Guide of Existence—such a long title is so hard to say, so I'm shortening it to 'Stench.' Anyway, I suspect that Stench purposely formed this army to capture you... or to kill you!"

Stench... Saiximili was speechless for a moment until Shooting Star's words had registered, and his face immediately fell. He mumbled, "I see. It was actually because of me. I endangered my citizens."

Thinking of the avians who had been burned to a crisp, Shooting Star could only pat the king on the shoulder to comfort him.

"Bai Saya sensed that there are two sinners in their army." Shooting Star hesitated before asking, "You said that the Sinner of Pride has been born. That should be referring to Alan, right?"

"I believe so." At last, Saiximili could no longer persist in calling him the blue star.

As I thought! It's been so long, yet Alan still hasn't returned. Is he actually in that army? Shooting Star frowned. *Could the little elf have been captured by the opposing sinner?*

He asked worriedly, "Will sinners kill sinners?"

By now, Saiximili had also come to the conclusion that Alan was among the army. His expression changed, and he shouted, "Of course! Sinners belonging to opposing faction have the mission of protecting their guide and killing the enemy guide and sinners. This is terrible, Shooting Star! The blue star is in danger!"

Shooting Star's face fell, but he was a lot calmer than Saiximili.

"Fortunately, they shouldn't be able to tell whether or not Alan is a sinner who belongs to a faction, right? Xiao Bai said that he couldn't tell any difference between the two sinners. I'm thinking that the

opponents shouldn't be able to tell either, so they will choose to win him over and not kill him. After all, there is a possibility that Alan will join them."

Saiximili let out a sigh of relief at that. "Right, you are right. However, if Alan lets slip that Bai Saya also has a stone, then he might be in danger. Two sinners coming together only happens when a guide is near."

Shooting Star nodded with a serious expression. He believed that Alan would not easily divulge Bai Saya's power. But it wasn't a guarantee that he wouldn't be tricked. It would be bad if he let anything slip!

"We have to hurry up and bring my golden haired pet back!"

Saiximili asked worriedly, "But what do you plan to do? He is in the enemy's grasp."

Shooting Star placed his hands on the king's shoulders and solemnly said, "It's up to you now."

"What?"



It was currently dinner time in the great hall of the avian palace. Because they were in the midst of battle, even the king's dining table only consisted of bread and potato stew, a simple meal that was plenty as long as it could fill their stomachs.

The table had been set up for six. Saiximili, Dan, Bai Saya, the guard captain Barna, and even Markham had been invited to sit, yet there was still one empty seat.

"Where is Shooting Star?" Bai Saya grew nervous on the spot. *Shooting Star is actually not around during dinner? This is a crisis on par with the end of the world!*

Saiximili hurriedly covered for Shooting Star, just like he had told him to do. "He said he's not hungry, so he's not having dinner."

Shooting Star isn't hungry? A strange, indescribable expression came over Bai Saya, while Dan was completely expressionless.

"Um, is something the matter?" Saiximili asked guiltily.

"Just say it. What is he doing?" Dan asked dryly. At the same time, he understood that there was no need to wait for Shooting Star before eating. He began to eat. As the commander of this battle, he did not have a lot of time to waste on something like eating.

"He's j-just not hungry... Anyway, Shooting Star doesn't want me to tell you guys."

Saiximili's voice grew smaller and smaller. In the end, he simply changed what he was saying. Bai Saya's expression had been so strange that Saiximili couldn't continue lying, while Dan's expression implied, "You can keep lying, since it's not like I'm going to believe you."

"His Majesty is definitely not lying to you. He is only relaying the message. That kitty must be the one who wants to trick you. The cat race always loves to play around!" Even though the guard captain had not been paying enough attention to his king lately, he was still extremely devoted and quickly spoke up on behalf of His Majesty.

To the side, Markham did not dare to say anything and just stuffed his mouth with food, trying hard to squash the disloyal opinion that "His Majesty is obviously lying."

Dan refuted, "If Shooting Star really didn't want us to know, he would not have asked you to tell us an excuse that no one would believe."

"Exactly! Even if the world is ending, Shooting Star will eat his fill before dying." Bai Saya nodded several times and gazed at Saiximili with pity. "I bet Shooting Star just wanted you to make a fool of yourself. Afterwards, I'm sure he will ask me if *you* knew what you looked like when you got tricked. Did your lips twitch, or were you expressionless? Questions like that."

Hearing that, Saiximili expressionlessly rolled off, "He surmised that the Guide of Existence's sinner brought Alan back to their army, so he plans to sneak in and rescue Alan to prevent the opposing sinner from discovering that Alan is on the side of Doom and killing him."

He's expressionless and talking really fast! Bai Saya took note of that to avoid not being able to answer if Shooting Star asked him about Saimi's reaction in the future, which could lead to Shooting Star playing a prank on him instead—*Wait a minute! What did Saimi just say?*

Bai Saya abruptly stood up, worried to the point of wanting to rush out right this moment to help Shooting Star.

Saiximili helpfully reminded him, "If you head there, the opponents will immediately find out. Sinners are able to detect each other's presence."

Bai Saya fell back in his chair. *Right, I nearly forgot about that. If I go, that can't be considered sneaking in anymore. I would instead expose Shooting Star.*

Dan consoled him, "Don't worry. Shooting Star is sly and full of tricks up his sleeve. On top of that, he is currently disguised as a beastman. He shouldn't run into any trouble."

Bai Saya felt that Dan made sense. Shooting Star wasn't able to help much in a war, but when it came to sneaking into places, even Dan wasn't as adept at it as Shooting Star.

"It doesn't seem like I can help." Bai Saya felt a little discouraged. In the battle with Braids last time, if he had been stronger, he would not have caused such heavy injuries to Shooting Star and Alan.

"If you really wish to help Shooting Star, then quickly master your power as the Sinner of Wrath." Saiximili said with a grave tone, "As of now, the Guide of Existence has taken the initiative to declare war on Doom. I am afraid that he has a better hand than our side. Please keep this in mind..."

With half-lidded eyes, the starseer spoke, his words half prophecy, half narration. "The wager at stake in the war between guides is the entire world's future. The war will become even more devastating than you can ever imagine. Everything that is happening now with the war my nation is embroiled in is merely the tip of the iceberg."

Bai Saya was still ignorant in matters regarding sinners, but hearing that this war had started because of the guides and their sinners, he had begun to pay closer attention. At first, he had just thought of the Stones of Sin as artifacts that could increase one's power, such as the Sword of Sacred White he wielded. However, he now understood that this was a frightening object that would incite war!

Dan asked, unperturbed, "You know so much. If you know this much, then why can't you make things clearer?"

He had been suspicious from the start. He had heard of divination before, but claiming that what Saiximili knew came from divination did not make sense. *Don't tell me that names like guides and sinners can be learned through divination?*

Saiximili hesitated over how to explain his ability.

"I dreamed of many of these matters. I am unable to choose what I dream of, so I am only able to see bits and pieces."

"You are able to see the future in your dreams?" Bai Saya exclaimed, "Then, do you know if we will win?"

Saiximili said in a conflicted tone, "I am uncertain if those dreams are of the future. It is of the same time period and the same group of people, but many things do not add up..."

Bai Saya was a bit puzzled. He turned toward Dan, who was also frowning.

Saiximili gave an example. "In the future that I saw, you should despise me a lot, but you do not."

Bai Saya was taken aback. He asked in confusion, "Why would I despise you?"

Saiximili answered seriously, "Because dream me is despicable."

"What?"



"One furry tail wags, wags, wags. Two furry tails get tangled together. Three furry tails fight and fight..."

As Shooting Star wagged his own furry tail, he sang a marching song.

In order to rescue Alan, he would have to sneak into the enemy army. As for weaseling his way into the beast army, hehe! *How hard could that be? What do you think I currently look like? An imposing lion!* It would be very normal for him to appear among the beast army.

Therefore, there was no need for him to sneak around. *I can just walk right in under everyone's nose!*

With the notion, "I'm a lion, so why would I be afraid?" in mind, Shooting Star swaggered into the enemy's army, but of course—

"Brat, where'd you come from?"

The moment he reached the entrance, the guards stopped him. One of the guards was a beast with a pig's head and a bad attitude. Fortunately, Shooting Star's behavior was really too open and difficult to doubt, so they weren't very suspicious.

Shooting Star said as if it were a matter of fact, "I'm one of the soldiers of the army. It was just by accident I was unable to keep up with the army."

"Haha, this little fellow actually claims to be a soldier."

Hearing that, the pig-headed beastman burst into laughter and clapped the soldier standing guard with him on the shoulder.

The dog-headed beastman beside him laughed along and mocked, "Little kitty, are you lost?"

"I'm a lion, not a cat!" Shooting Star exploded. *I'm clearly a lion. Why does everyone keep saying I'm a cat?! It's so frustrating!*

"Lion, hahaha, this little kitty actually claims to be a lion. My sides hurt!

The two beasts collapsed in laughter.

Shooting Star puffed up his cheeks in anger. He wanted to pull out his whip to flay them, but then he recalled that he needed to be able to get in to rescue Alan, so he could only do his best to squash the desire to flay them until their faces were swollen like pigs... Wait no, one of them already had a pig's head.

Thinking of this, Shooting Star calmed down. The guy already had a pig's head without Shooting Star hitting him. *I should take pity on him.* "Lion, cat, whatever. In any case, you have to let me pass."

The pig-headed guy and the dog-headed guy both stopped laughing. The pig-headed guy frowned and warned, "Little kitty, you can't come play at a place like this. Scram!"

Hearing that, Shooting Star really wanted to pull out his whip and make his face swell up like a pig's—Wrong again, make him an even worse pig-head!

But I have to bear with it! Thinking of Alan's beautiful, golden hair, he endured it. Rescuing the elf was what was most important!

Shooting Star's lips wobbled. His bright, golden eyes began to water, and then large tears promptly fell from them. He used shimmering eyes to stare at the pig-head and dog-head.

"Sob, sob, sob, Big Bro Pig Head, please let me in. My dad was forced to become a soldier. Once Dad's enemy learned that he wasn't around, he came to our house and murdered my mom, my older sister, my

younger brother, my little sister, and even my aunty. If I don't go in to find Dad, I'll definitely get killed by my dad's enemy, too!"

Shooting Star's tearful eyes, along with his furry ears and toe beans, made him look both cute and pitiful. Even the pig-headed guy who hadn't had a good attitude since the start softened at that. He gently said, "Little kitty, are you sure you're in the right place? There are no cats in the army."

I told you I'm a lion. Are you deaf or what? Shooting Star inwardly bristled with anger, but he outwardly still tried to squeeze out tears. He shook his head and said, "It's not that. My mom is a cat, but my dad is... is a pig beastman! Big Bro Piggy, you won't leave a kid of your own race out to dry, will you?"

The pig-headed guy exclaimed, "So your dad is a pig!"

Your dad is the one who is a pig! Shooting Star rolled his eyes.

The dog-headed guy pushed the pig-headed guy and couldn't help saying, "Hey, since you're the same race, why don't you give him a hand? He sounds quite pitiful."

The pig-headed guy scratched his head and said with difficulty, "But we can't just let him in and have the run of the place. If someone sees, we'd be in trouble."

The dog-headed guy said, unconcerned, "Why don't you bring him in? His father is from your race. You can help him search among the pig race. I can help stand guard here. Hurry in and hurry back."

"Fine." The pig-headed guy nodded and called out to Shooting Star, "Little kitty, follow me."

Shooting Star quickly caught up with him. Even though his eyes still swam with tears from acting pitiful, his mouth twitched up into a sly smile.

The pig-headed guy led Shooting Star into the encampment. The latter observed the size of the encampment as he walked. Even though he was unable to ascertain a specific number, he could at least figure out whether or not the army had high quality equipment.

"Those of us of the pig race live fairly far. We'll have to walk for a while. Follow closely. Don't lose your place."

"Okay." Shooting Star looked around, wanting to find the best place. Then again, this place was currently a good distance from surrounding tents...

The pig-headed guy turned around to say, "Hey, you know, you look just like a cat. Why don't you have any characteristics of us pigs? Just what exactly—"

Bam! Whack! Thud...

Shooting Star walked out from a corner of the encampment. He glanced at the corner while he slowly patted the dust off of his hands, even though there wasn't actually any dust. *It's just a great feeling to do this motion after beating someone up!*

"Hmph! How dare you say I'm a cat, damn pig he... No, you're just a 'ball head' now! Haha!"

Having just beaten someone up, Shooting Star was in particularly high spirits. With a bounce in his steps, he wove through the encampment. Since the army had just had a small victory during the day, they were also in high spirits. Many soldiers of all sorts of races came and went. Therefore, Shooting Star did not particularly stand out. It was just that he was rather young and would occasionally attract some attention.

However, even with some people wondering over his young age and appearance, it was hard to suspect that such a young beast, who seemed on the verge of humming and was skipping along out in the open, could be a spy. At most, they wondered which beastman had actually dared to sneak their child into the army. It was just that it was too much of a bother for any of the beasts to report such a small matter.

"Ugh! Even though I won't get discovered since I didn't bring Xiao Bai, it's also really hard to figure out where Alan is like this."

Shooting Star looked in frustration at the humongous encampment. He felt a little helpless. If only Alan could release some lightning, then Shooting Star could follow the magic to find him. *Ugh, this camp is way too big. A little lightning might not be enough. More lightning would be better...*

Boom!

A pillar of lightning pierced the sky, as if splitting the sky in half. The dark night instantly shone as bright as day, and the beasts in the army also froze on the spot, staring at the lightning pillar with wide eyes, unable to react at all.

This is a bit too much! Shooting Star was also among the frozen. He stared blankly at the magic. *W-will I still be able to snatch Alan and run like this?*

After the lightning pillar vanished, it still took a while longer for everyone's eyes to adjust. Only then could they see clearly. The magic had come from a certain tent. Of course, that tent had been completely obliterated and was unable to obstruct anyone's sight.

A few strands of blue lightning danced around a beautiful, blond elf. However, at the moment, no one had the spare attention to marvel at the elf's beauty. Everyone's faces were full of shock. If the lightning pillar had landed on them, then there wouldn't even be a speck left to find!

Next to the elf sat two men with ashy faces who had fallen on their butts. But from how potent the lightning pillar had been, the fact that these two men only had ashy faces and were not a pile of ashes made all of the beasts around them marvel with respect.

The blond elf's head was lowered, covering his face half in shadow, making what should be a gentle elf appear frightening and cold instead. He turned his head and saw that the two men on the ground had not perished. Crackling lightning gathered at his hands again.

"W-wait, calm down, Bai Lan!" The man who was sitting on the ground immediately got back on his feet and quickly shouted, "I am Philo. Don't you remember me? I am your sister's friend, Philo. We met in a private room at the auction."

The golden-haired mage did not have much of a reaction to that. He even opened his right hand in Philo's direction, lightning about to shoot out from his palms toward the latter without any mercy.

"Alan, stop!"

At this moment, Shooting Star did not have any time to use Alan's fake name. Even though he didn't know what was going on, he did know that Alan did not have much magic left after casting the pillar of lightning. They were currently among the enemy, so choosing to fight was definitely not a good option.

Hearing the familiar voice, Alan froze. He turned and looked in Shooting Star's direction. By now, Shooting Star had already reached him.

"What happened to your ears?" Alan dispelled the lightning from his hands, leaving only the lightning dancing around him. He was confused as he stared at the furry cat ears on Shooting Star's head, but he felt that they suited Shooting Star. The image of a beast fit Shooting Star a lot more than a demon!

Shooting Star hurriedly said, "My ears don't matter. Why did you get into a fight with Philo?"

"Who is Philo?" Alan asked strangely.

"The guy you struck at with the lightning pillar!" Shooting Star glanced at the two guys with ashy faces and added, "Don't tell me you attacked them with the lightning pillar without even figuring out who they were?"

Are you really an elf who loves all life? Why do I feel like you're getting more and more violent...

"When I woke up, I suddenly had this strange feeling, like I could feel someone's presence, and they were very close." Alan frowned and said, "The moment I opened my eyes, that presence was right in front of me. I thought I was in danger, so I..."

So you attacked with your ultimate move without even knowing what was going on? Shooting Star began to wonder if he really should have come to rescue Alan. Will this really not turn into a case of reaping what I sow? Cause, really, Alan zaps me a lot more than he zaps anyone else!

Seeing Shooting Star's conflicted expression, Alan finally regained his senses and realized that he had casually cast a lightning pillar, magic that could easily kill several people at once, without even knowing what was going on! The elf frantically surveyed his surroundings and discovered that no one seemed to be heavily injured. Only then did he relax.

However, that odd feeling he had arose again. He could sense the “presence” of the man beside him, as if the other person was shining. But in reality, that person’s body was not giving off any light.

“Shooting Star?” Philo stared at Shooting Star. *H-how did she turn into the beast race?*

Shooting Star snuck a few glances at Philo, who did not seem to bear them ill will. He immediately rushed over to pull on him and quietly said, “It’s inconvenient to speak here, right? Why don’t you find a place for us to have a good chat? You know, I’m really worried about Xiao Bai... about Saya-jiějie’s safety!”

“What? Is Saya in danger?” Philo’s expression changed.

Shooting Star quickly nodded. Of course he was in danger. Xiao Bai could choke on his dinner, fall down the stairs, or get squashed to death by a collapsed ceiling while he slept!

Philo nodded. With a serious expression, he commanded the beasts around them, “Disperse. Don’t hang around here. Also, find me a new tent.”

The surrounding beastmen all seemed to be quite wary of Philo, and they were even more afraid of the blond elf, wishing to be as far away from him as possible. Thus, when they received such a command, the surroundings immediately emptied out. No one wanted to linger at all.

Philo waved Shooting Star and Alan over, as well as Pisce, who was so scared that he still couldn't speak. They walked to the new tent that had been prepared by a servant.

As they walked into the tent, Philo waved his hand to dismiss the beast servant who had led the way. As soon as there were no outsiders, Philo immediately turned to look at Shooting Star and Alan. He straightforwardly asked, "Why did you leave without a word again? You clearly said that you would go with us, yet you sneakily left right after. Don't you know that Belle was saddened by your departure?"

Shooting Star had not thought that he would open with that right off the bat. During that moment, he could not come up with any excuses.

"Belle wasn't the only one who was sad." Pisce finally recovered from his fright and teased, "Our Captain Philo yearned after his dream lover so much that he couldn't even smile anymore."

"Pisce," Philo warned lowly, "stop fooling around. I have serious things to ask them."

Seeing that his captain was serious, Pisce did not dare to fool around like usual. He fell silent right away and quietly sat down.

Even though Pisce had only interrupted Philo's questioning for a short few seconds, it was enough for Shooting Star. He was someone who could lie without blinking and put on a pretense of innocence like a second skin. A few seconds were plenty for him to think of a number of excuses.

Although he had hundreds of excuses in mind, Shooting Star planned to reveal a bit of the truth to make these excuses sound more believable. This would prevent him from being exposed. They were currently among the enemy. Failure was unacceptable here.

"I'm sorry, Philo-dàgē. I actually tricked you guys." Shooting Star's face fell, like a child whose lie had been revealed. He glanced at Philo uneasily.

"What did you trick us about?" Seeing that Shooting Star was admitting to tricking them, Philo's tone gentled a bit. Besides, Shooting Star currently had the appearance of a kitten. *Her ears have even drooped down. How can I scold her?*

"I'm actually a boy!" Shooting Star put on a relieved expression that implied "he was finally able to say it."

Philo was stunned. He had never thought that the so-called lie would be this.

"Back then, you all thought that Saya-jiějie and I were both girls. I thought it was fun, so I pretended to be a girl, but later on, Belle kept wanting to bathe with me. H-how can I bathe together with her? I'm a boy!"

Shooting Star explained his gender in distress, but this was not an act. Who knew why Belle wanted to bathe with him so much? *Don't tell me that girls always bathe together?*

Then again, Shooting Star's gender was a small matter. Even if it was revealed, he believed that Belle would at most kick up a small fuss. There wouldn't be any big problems. What was more worrisome was that Xiao Bai had two admirers...

Seeing Shooting Star's distressed expression, Philo could not help but shake his head with a smile. He had not thought that it would be because Belle kept wanting to bathe with Shooting Star, who was a boy, that he had run off in fright.

With the matter illuminated, Philo no longer spent any more time mulling over it. He then thought of how Shooting Star had said that Bai Saya was in danger. He quickly asked, "What do you mean when you said Saya is in danger?"

Shooting Star simply said, "Saya-jiějie is in White Feather Nation and refuses to leave."

"Why is she refusing to leave?" Philo asked, unable to understand. If she was stuck in White Feather Nation, it was not a problem. If he gave the command, no one would dare to harm Bai Saya. But if she was unwilling to leave, she might eventually get caught in the crossfire.

"Once she heard that people wanted to capture the gentle avians as slaves, she immediately joined the ranks protecting the city. No matter how I tried to get her to leave, she refused to listen."

Shooting Star put on a helpless expression as he gazed at Philo. Even though he didn't know how high of a position Philo had, so he didn't know if this could hinder the battle, as long as he could disrupt a

leading officer of the enemy faction, it was something that would benefit Shooting Star. *So, it's best to strike while the iron is hot!*

Philo frowned. For a moment, he could not think of a method to solve this, so he could only temporarily put it aside. Besides, the beastmen would be unable to invade White Feather in the near future, so Saya's safety should not be a problem in the moment. There was an even more important matter to handle first.

"Shooting Star, I have some things I would like to tell Bai Lan. Could you go outside and eat first?" Philo tactfully asked Shooting Star to leave.

Shooting Star was trying to think of an excuse to use so he could stay when Alan bluntly said, "Anything that Shooting Star can't hear, I don't want to hear."

Philo frowned in thought for a while and glanced at Shooting Star several times. Right now, Shooting Star's appearance was really completely harmless. On top of that, Alan's blood had dripped on the Stone of Pride right before Philo's eyes, so he naturally believed that since Alan had just become a sinner, he had yet to choose a guide.

However, he completely overlooked another possibility, that Alan had met the guide long before he had become a sinner.

"Then, hear me out together. Bai Lan, you just said that you were able to sense my presence, right?"

Alan nodded. He really disliked this feeling. He was completely unable to ignore the other person, his attention pulled over out of his control.

"That is because of this stone." Philo pulled out a chain from below his collar. The pendant was a yellow gemstone the size of a pigeon egg.

At this time, Shooting Star was finally certain. The other sinner was Philo.

"My Stone of Sin is the Stone of Lethargy, Sloth. What about yours?"

Since the other person had already revealed his stone, Alan also answered in good faith, "The Stone of Ego, Pride."

"So it is the Stone of Ego, one of the Stones of the Yisite Continent." Philo nodded, thinking to himself that one of the goals of this venture had finally been accomplished. The next step was to convince Bai Lan to return with him and join their faction.

Even though he knew official matters were important, he still could not help considering that Bai Saya would have to follow along as well if this were the case.

Alan frowned and looked down at the staff in his hand.

Philo asked, "Have you heard of the legend of the Stones of Original Sin?"

"From the song." Alan's response was neither short nor long.

Shooting Star was grateful that Alan was the one here and not Bai Saya. If it were him, after Philo said he had Sloth, Shooting Star bet that Bai Saya would admit that he had the Stone of Fury, and then he would also say without a thought that Shooting Star was the guide, and Saiximili was Doom's starseer, and so on. In any case, Shooting Star guaranteed that nothing was easier in this world than getting Bai Saya to spill important information!

"There are some things that the song does not mention." Philo nodded. Since Bai Lan had heard the song before, that made explanations easier. In order to accomplish the goal of bringing Bai Lan with him, Philo continued to explain, "Those of us who possess Stones of Original Sin are called sinners. You possess the Stone of Ego, Pride, so you are the Sinner of Pride."

"What is the purpose of sinners?" Alan frowned, his thoughts turning to how Bai Saya also possessed a stone. This meant that he was the Sinner of Wrath. They had both become these so-called sinners. *Could there be a reason behind this?*

Philo said without any hesitation, "To protect their guide and destroy the other guide."

"And what are guides?" Alan was even more confused now. *Why should I protect some unknown guide?*

"The guides will determine the future of the world." Philo said in elation, "It is fortunate that I found you first. If you were discovered by the Guide of Ending, Doom, then the results would be disastrous."

"The Guide of Ending, Doom?" Alan continued to ask. Then, he snuck a glance at Shooting Star with a clear warning: *You better not have anything to do with such a dangerous name, or else be ready to eat my lightning strikes.*

Shooting Star began to wonder: *Should I take this chance to hand Alan off to the Guide of Existence?*

"Yes, there are two guides in this world, the Guide of Beginning, Existence, and the Guide of Ending, Doom. The victor of the two will determine the future of the world."

Alan asked in thought, "So, you are on the side of the Guide of Existence?"

Philo nodded. "Indeed, I have already joined the Guide of Existence. That person is a great person, worthy of my loyalty. Besides, there is no way I would ever join the Guide of Doom. Doom is definitely not the future I wish for. In fact, I am completely unable to fathom what kind of wicked person they must be to wish for the world to end."

How rude! Who's wicked? Besides, I don't want the world to end either, okay? Shooting Star rolled his eyes unhappily. He knew that the Guide of "Doom" was a terrible game name. *Look! It's so easy for people to think it means the end of the world.*

Then again, he himself didn't know what it meant either. *If I won, would the world truly end...*

"If Doom means the end of the world, then what about Existence? Would it mean that the world would return to the beginning of all existence?" Alan said as if it wasn't a big deal, "If that is the case, then doesn't it mean that to the 'current world,' no matter if Existence or Doom wins, the current world would no longer persist? So, what difference is there in who emerges as the victor?"

Hear, hear! Alan makes so much sense! Shooting Star greatly appreciated his words. If we're heading toward doom, then we'll experience doom together. Only then would it be a fair game!

"That isn't the case." Philo began to worry. He was really worried that his clumsy words would cause them to lose a precious sinner. He hurriedly explained, "Prince Fylost personally told me that he wished for the people to return to the purity found at the beginning of all existence. That is the meaning behind existence."

Prince Fylost? Shooting Star's eyes gleamed. It seems that the identity of the Guide of Existence is now clear, and Fylost and Fischer Merchant Guild? I bet that the mastermind behind the Guild is the prince of the Kingdom of Pegasi himself.

Not only had he been clumsy with his words, he had also revealed important information. Philo smiled bitterly. Then again, these were things he would have to tell Bai Lan sooner or later, so he explained on the spot, "The Guide of Existence is Princess Anabelle's older brother, Prince Fylost of the Kingdom of Pegasi.

Alan still didn't have much of a reaction. No matter who it was, they were all strangers to him. What difference did princesses or princes make?

It was Shooting Star who paled in response. The Guide of Existence was actually Belle's brother.

He had originally thought that since he had accidentally captured a king as his pet, how difficult could getting a princess as his pet be? He might as well return to the Western Continent and capture her as well, but it turned out that the rival guide was actually Belle's brother...

I really, really want that gorgeous, heart-shaped face!

Chapter 10: Encroaching Death

Dan frowned in thought. *Since Shooting Star is the Guide of Doom and the Fischer Merchant Guild has the Guide of Existence, then why is the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild that I belong to searching for the Stones of Original Sin?*

Saiximili had already confirmed that there were only two guides and two starseers, so it was impossible for the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild to have a guide. *Since it's impossible for the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild to have a guide or even a starseer, then how did the guild learn about something like the Stones of Original Sin?*

Just as Dan was thinking of asking for Saiximili's opinion, a pair of slim, pale hands rested behind his neck before he could open his mouth. The touch on his neck was a little cold and highly unsettling.

Dan's expression abruptly changed, but he did not duck out of reach. There was only one person who possessed the ability to silently approach him from behind without anyone's notice, and who possessed the sheer cheekiness to do such a boring thing.

"Darling, I haven't heard anything from you ever since you got on the boat. I've been so worried!"

Just like I thought. Dan sighed. *I don't think I'll be able to get used to this kind of greeting even after experiencing it for another one hundred years.*

"H-how did you get in?"

The two guards Barna and Markham both leapt to their feet and stood firmly in front of their king.

"Ice Chess?" Bai Saya called the intruder's name out of shock. He asked in confusion, "Why have you suddenly appeared?"

The bewitching demon smiled and looked at Bai Saya. A pair of purple eyes danced in mirth. As he lightly twirled a strand of his silver hair with a finger, he put on a pretense of innocence and explained, "I'm a mage, so of course I would have a little trick like teleportation, right?"

"Teleportation? I see. Shooting Star knows that, too."

After hearing the explanation, Bai Saya had an "I got it" expression on his face. He was somewhat uncomfortable with the playful way Ice Chess was twirling his hair despite being a guy, but then he thought of how Ice Chess was a demon. Perhaps all demons were like this, and Bai Saya was just ignorant.

Dan smiled wryly to himself. Saya really didn't understand magic at all. If Shooting Star were here, he would be blowing his top. There were few people in the entire world who could use teleportation to move right behind him without any error, let alone without a single sound. Moreover, his presence had not been detected until he had spoken. Only Ice Chess was capable of using teleportation to that degree.

"My apologies, too much happened. I did not get the chance to report back yet," Dan explained simply. The truth was of course no such

thing. Instead, since everything involved Bai Saya, he had no way to report back.

However, Ice Chess would definitely not believe what he had just said. A thousand year old demon who was well connected naturally had his own information network. Dan believed that what had happened these past few days must be fairly clear to Ice Chess already, so there was no need for him to go out of his way to make up an excuse.

Hearing this, Ice Chess lifted an eyebrow and said, "Tsk! I've really spoiled you too much. I don't care about what already happened. You're coming back with me right now. Things have gotten too serious. You shouldn't be getting involved in something like this."

Dan frowned and said, "I can't leave right now."

The battle had only just started, and the foe was nothing to scoff at. If he left the battle now, the avian nation would definitely not have a good ending. Even Saiximili might lose his life.

Although Dan did not care about what might happen to the avian nation or Saiximili, he knew that Bai Saya was not someone who would give up half way. Even if Dan left, Bai Saya would still remain to fight. Moreover, Saiximili was involved with the guides and sinners, so Dan had no choice but to remain and win this war.

"That's right, Dan can't leave." Bai Saya grew nervous. Shooting Star wasn't in the city at the moment. If even Dan left, then was Bai Saya supposed to command the battle by himself? Honestly speaking, it was better to leave it up to Barna and Markham instead.

Ice Chess's eyes grew cold, and he warned, "Shut up! If you hadn't stolen the elf, then why would Dan have been sent to such a desolate place? Now, you've gotten involved in something dangerous again. If I don't quickly take Dan away, he will one day get killed by you!"

Guilt arose in Bai Saya. Ice Chess was right. Ever since meeting Dan, Bai Saya had brought him endless trouble. Now, he had even gotten Dan involved in a dangerous battle, and Bai Saya's identity as a sinner was bound to be an even greater problem. Perhaps the right choice was to let Ice Chess take Dan away, or else Dan may one day die because of him. How could Bai Saya ever live with that happening?

"Don't feel guilty, Saya. A demon who has found his checkmate will give his everything in response." Dan consoled Bai Saya and lifted his eyes to look at Ice Chess. He asked, "Aren't you the same?"

Ice Chess dropped his lazy attitude and harshly snapped out, "Ever since my brother handed a bundled up baby—you—to me, I knew I was done for!"

Truthfully, being able to help Dan made Ice Chess very happy. However, right after, he would be frustrated by his high spirits, as he clearly knew that he should feel annoyed instead. Ever since the child found his checkmate, trouble found him again and again, and each one was more serious than the last. What was there to be happy about with this? Yet, he was happy.

Ice Chess could not help but scold again, "You damn checkmate."

Hearing that, a smile spread across Dan's face, and he thanked him, "I've troubled you since I was a kid, Uncle Ice Chess."

"Shut up! Don't make me sound so old. At most, you may only call me big brother." Ice Chess rolled his eyes and used a tone that allowed no negotiation, "You *must* come back with me this time. There is no room for discussion!"

Dan's expression was calm, but he showed no intention of complying at all. Ice Chess could only hatefully add on, "I guarantee that if you leave with me, this battle will immediately cease. Will that do?"

"What about Saya's safety?" Dan would never leave without hearing Ice Chess personally guarantee Bai Saya's safety.

Ice Chess impatiently said, "I promise you that if anything happens to your darling, then it must be the Guide of Existence at fault and nothing to do with our Goldenstyle Merchant Guild! Will that do?"

Dan nodded. He believed that Ice Chess must be spending considerable effort to make sure the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild would not harm Bai Saya. As for the Guide of Existence's faction, that was out of Ice Chess's control. Dan knew that he could not demand Ice Chess to guarantee Bai Saya's safety on that end either.

Even though Dan did not want to leave Bai Saya when the future was still unclear, he gave it some thought and believed that leaving with Ice Chess was more beneficial. First of all, the battle would end, and second of all, he wanted to go back and investigate how much his own guild knew of the guides and sinners.

"Saya, you must be careful," Dan beseeched him.

Bai Saya nodded and said, "I will."

"W-wait, you can't leave. There's no way the battle will stop."

Saiximili was beside himself with worry. He wanted to stop Dan from leaving. After all, this was his nation. There was no way he could take the stranger at his word and watch his commander get taken away before his eyes.

Ice Chess pulled Dan over and turned his head to give Saiximili a sinister smile and said as if in prophecy, "A battle needs an army in order to fight, right?"

After saying the last word, he and Dan turned into a streak of white light, shooting out from the palace's window.

"What does he mean? Isn't there a large army out there?" Saiximili immediately turned to ask Bai Saya, hope coloring his words as he asked, "Does he plan on annihilating the army? Is that possible?"

"I don't know." Bai Saya hesitated for a moment. Even though he didn't understand Ice Chess's intentions either, he could see how worried Saiximili was. He quickly comforted him, "Don't worry. Since Dan has left me here, he will take responsibility for dealing with the army outside. I am his checkmate. He would never abandon me."

Saiximili turned his head to look at him and asked in suspicion, "I have heard about demons and checkmates. But, just because you're his checkmate means he will sacrifice everything for you? Death is a possibility in war. Dan said that the army outside has a human guild supporting it. Now, they even have mages. It's very difficult for us to win."

Bai Saya froze. Everything he knew about checkmates, he had learned from Dan and Shooting Star. He had never understood it fully, only understanding that Dan treated him so well because he was his checkmate.

Sacrifice everything... I hope he won't?



After leaving White Feather Nation, Dan was flown into the air with Ice Chess. This was not just a simple teleportation. Rather, it was more like a fast spell of flight with an occasional teleportation thrown in. The speed was still very fast. Even though this method was not as ridiculously fast as direct teleportation, it was superior in covering long distances. Of course, wishing to move across long distances like this required magic like Ice Chess's, which he had trained for a thousand years.

"What do you plan to do?"

Dan really could not think of how Ice Chess would be able to make the battle disappear, so he was a little worried and wanted it spelled out to him first. He really could not think of any normal means to instantly

stop a war, so he had not asked back in the palace. He did not wish for Bai Saya to hear.

"You should really thank me for thinking of this plan that can kill two birds with one stone."

Ice Chess smiled mysteriously. After circling in the air, he slowly began to descend.

"We're here."

Once they landed, Dan could not help but step forward, wishing to see more clearly.

Before them was a gigantic magic circle. Other than Ice Chess and himself, there were a dozen or so mages already there. From their robes and staves, Dan could tell that each and every one of them was a top mage from the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild. In fact, there was no way to easily judge them based on proficiency levels.

As far as Dan knew, no organization's mages had better talent than the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild, as they were all demons who had possessed a long time to study magic. Perhaps only the faraway elves deep in the forest could compete.

Dan, as a mage blade, had some familiarity with magic. He also worked in the Guild and had seen his share of all sorts of magical items and magic circles. However, he did not at all understand this large magic circle. The circle's lines and patterns were too complicated

for him to grasp. *Does it actually require a dozen powerful mages to activate it?*

No, Ice Chess is also here. He might be the main mage who will activate this magic circle, while the others will all assist him.

"What in the world is this?" Dan asked lightly. He had a faint idea what Ice Chess might be planning.

"Encroaching Death. It can somewhat be considered a forbidden spell." Ice Chess stretched lazily. If not for Dan's sake, he would be too lazy to do something like this. Even though Encroaching Death just barely brushed the surface of forbidden spells, and it could still be debated whether or not it was even a forbidden spell, it still took considerable effort to cast. Afterwards, he might need to take a long rest.

Dan's face stiffened. He had thought that it was just a large cooperative magic spell. He had not thought that his uncle would directly get involved with a forbidden spell. "You're going to cast a forbidden spell? Then, you might as well head back and call the army over."

A forbidden spell required too much energy. Besides, casting a forbidden spell would incur too much criticism. If the higher ups in the guild were to learn of it, even Ice Chess would find himself in a lot of trouble.

If the Goldenstyle Merchant Guild were just a normal guild, then it was fine. Even if Uncle got kicked out, he clearly would not mind. However, things weren't so simple, and Dan had no way to ascertain who was

behind the Guild. Even though his uncle must know, he had not told Dan, and Dan had never asked him either.

Seeing Dan's worried expression, Ice Chess chuckled and explained the magic circle a bit.

Encroaching Death was a magic spell that would spread like smoke under the caster's direction. Anyone who entered the smoke's reach would get poisoned, their skin would fester, their limbs would turn purple, and their seven orifices would all spurt blood. It was terrifying.

Its prowess was what labeled it as a forbidden spell. The spell required dozens of high-leveled mages to power, and activating it required a main mage with sufficient magic ability.

Ice Chess smiled lightly and said, "There's a very awkward part to this spell, which is how the death it inflicts is too slow. Even though the results look frightening, it takes a long time for anyone to die from it. If someone is not at the very center of the spell, where the pressure and strength are the highest, then they are likely able to run from it on their two legs. Therefore, the spell is not considered among the ranks of forbidden spells, so using it won't count against me, unless the higher ups purposely want to make things difficult for me."

I see. Then it is a good plan to use it against the army, especially a beast army. Beasts were not familiar with magic. They both respected and feared magic, their fear far outweighing their awe. On top of that, Encroaching Death was a spell with frightening results. The moment it was cast, the beast army would never be able to recover from it.

"In order to help you forever get rid of future trouble, I've been observing the situation, waiting for this chance to appear. I immediately gathered my most powerful mages to come here to resolve this once and for all!"

Ice Chess flew to the center of the magic circle and looked below at Dan. "Although you should have guessed what I plan to do with how smart you are, I'll still tell you in advance. I don't want you to misunderstand me and hate me."

Dan gazed at him silently. He had indeed already arrived at an answer, and he even secretly wished Ice Chess would not explain anything to him, but he did not say anything to stop him.

"I plan on annihilating the Guide of Doom together with that army!"

Dan remained silent. In that instant, he thought of Bai Saya's saddened expression, but he still nodded.

Without the Guide of Doom, there would be no conflict between guides. In the days to come, Bai Saya would then be able to avoid all those troubles. That was enough. This was the way demons showed their heart. As for what would happen to the world in the end, that did not matter. This was the way demons showed their heartlessness.

Meanwhile, Ice Chess had already known... In fact, any demon would have already known Dan's choice because that was the nature of demons. They spent all their feelings on a single person, leaving nothing for the rest of the world.

How am I any different? Even knowing that it's Shooting Star... Ice Chess laughed. Forget it. Why bother overthinking it? Every demon understands that after meeting one's checkmate, one must have the resolve to make sacrifices. There is no other choice.

"Encroaching Death, activate!"



"Even if Dan is washing his hands of this matter, I know how to use some of the power Roth taught me now. Later, when Shooting Star returns, he'll have a lot of ideas, so we'll be fine..."

Halfway through his comforting, Bai Saya suddenly stood up. He spun around to face the hall's balcony, a frown taking over his usual gentle, smiling demeanor, making him appear uneasy.

"Bai Saya, what is it?"

Saiximili looked at him in confusion. There was nothing outside the balcony. Ice Chess and Dan had already left for a while, too. *What in the world is Bai Saya looking at?*

Bai Saya said uncertainly, "Nothing really. I just feel panicked, as if something bad is going to happen. I don't think it's anything. I should be mistaken, right?"

Saiximili was stunned for a moment before he quickly said, "Could the Guide of Doom have run into trouble? As Doom's sinner, you should be able to feel it when he is in danger."

"What?" This was the first time Bai Saya had heard that he had this kind of power. After his shock, he immediately began to worry about his companion and hurriedly asked, "Is Shooting Star in danger?"

Saiximili smiled bitterly. "You have to ask yourself that question. I am the starseer responsible for pointing out the guide's path. I can only tell you the results of choosing a path when we come to a fork. You are the sinner responsible for protecting the guide."

Bai Saya had wanted to ask Saiximili how he could figure out what he was feeling when that sense of unease suddenly exploded. The feeling was so overwhelming that he blurted, "Shooting Star and Alan are in danger!"

After Saiximili answered with a stunned "oh," he finally understood the meaning of those words.

The Guide of Doom is in danger? Heavens, GOD's competition hasn't even started yet, and now it's already about to end? What happens if Doom dies and only Existence is left?

Faced with the dangerous possibility of the world about to end, Saiximili leaped up and shouted, "Hurry and think of something! Aren't you a sinner?"

Bai Saya was also beside himself with worry, but what could he do—
Right! I can discuss this with Roth!

"Roth, Roth! Shooting Star is in danger. Hurry and teach me what I should do—"

Right after shouting this, a familiar voice sounded in Bai Saya's head.

Grasp the entity housing me and close your eyes. You are able to sense the guide's location. I want you to closely sense where he actually is. Search for him. You should be able to see him then.

The entity housing him? Right, Roth is embedded in the Sword of Sacred White, so he should mean the sword! Bai Saya quickly pulled out the sword and grasped the hilt with both hands. He followed Roth's instructions and closed both eyes, trying his best to sense Shooting Star's location.

But no matter how hard he thought about it, only a sea of black greeted his eyes. He couldn't see anything, let alone Shooting Star. After a long while, Bai Saya felt that this action of his was too idiotic. He could not help but open his mouth and say in some embarrassment, "I-I still can't see him."

Place your attention in the right place first.

Bai Saya tried it out. This wasn't a difficult matter. Shooting Star and the two sinners' presence made their direction as obvious as a torch among the darkness. He asked, "I sense them. What now?"

Imagine what condition they might be in right now.

What condition would Shooting Star and Alan be in? A strange expression came over Bai Saya's face. *When those two people are*

together, other than trouble, there can only be more trouble. What else could there be?

Strangely enough, as he thought this, the sight of the two of them in trouble really did appear before his eyes...



"What in the world is this?"

Alan's face, which was usually expressionless, twisted in extreme disgust, something that normally only happened when he accidentally opened his bag and saw something he shouldn't see within, such as Shooting Star stuffing into the bag underwear that hadn't been washed for days and socks rolled into a ball.

However, Alan's gaze was currently focused above him. Unless underwear could grow wings and fly, he should not be seeing anything like dirty underwear.

Following Alan's disgusted gaze, nothing could be seen!

Black fog descended around them, their visibility dropping to zero. Only the place where Alan and the rest stood was devoid of fog, but that was only a small area. It wasn't that the black fog avoided them, but rather that Shooting Star had cast a protective barrier to protect them.

The black fog was not like normal fog and looked like faces with wide open mouths that shrieked at them soundlessly. Other than that, they even acted like wolves pouncing on sheep, scrambling and pushing to

pounce on the protective barrier, the dark faces flattening against the transparent protective barrier into all sorts of distorted appearances, as if they would not be satisfied unless they scared everyone out of their wits.

Shooting Star put everything he had into maintaining the protective barrier. He clenched his teeth as he responded, "This is 'Encroaching Death,' a horrendous, large scale spell, also known as a forbidden spell! I-It requires more than a dozen mages ranked higher than archmages, a super duper complicated magic circle, materials so expensive you could cry, and a mage with ridiculous magic ability to lead the casting in order to cast it..."

"Hey! Can you focus on the protective barrier? Why are you spouting a bunch of useless information? There's no reward for the right answer!" Pisce was so worried that he began yelling. With how frenzied the black fog faces were, if the protective barrier were to break, they wouldn't be any safer than a naked woman among a bunch of men. They were bound to be gobbled right up until not even a single bone was left!

"So what! I-It's not like I can keep the barrier going," Shooting Star yelled hoarsely.

This was a forbidden spell, a forbidden spell! How was he, a regular mage, supposed to withstand this? At most, he could help them survive three minutes longer, which was already an amazing feat!

"I am unable to cast teleportation," Alan said solemnly. Teleportation and lightning magic were both wind type magic, which he specialized

in, so there was no reason he could not cast it. However, no matter how the elf tried, he could not cast teleportation.

"Magic is disrupted here, unless you're stronger than the lead mage! Otherwise, it's impossible to cast teleportation to escape. If it were that easy, it wouldn't be considered a forbidden spell!"

Shooting Star explained unhappily. Alan was a mage himself, so why didn't he know this? Besides, if they could escape through teleportation, Shooting Star would have already done so. Would there be any need to wait for Alan to cast it?

Since what he withstood was a forbidden spell, even though it was a slow-acting spell instead of one that exploded instantly, so he could withstand it momentarily, it was still a forbidden spell. Merely withstanding it for a moment made his magic deplete as fast as a dam breaking.

Shooting Star quickly shouted, "Alan, I can't hold on anymore! Don't you have a Stone of Sin? Quickly use its power!"

Alan frowned and said, "I don't know how to use Pride's power. Let me ask Pride."

Damn, is there time for that?! I wish we had time for you to ask! Shooting Star was so angry that he gnashed his teeth. His magic was about to be sucked dry!

Guh! Should I give up on maintaining the protective barrier? Should I quickly sneak in the chance to comb Alan's hair before going to

Hell? After all, if he died while combing beautiful hair, he could get his beautiful pet even as a ghost!

Just as Shooting Star was planning on giving up on life, about to stop his magic and pull out a comb, he glimpsed the people beside him, Pisce, and—Philo!

Ah! Doesn't this guy also possess a Stone of Sin?

Discovering a slim chance of survival, Shooting Star immediately shouted, "Philo! Are you lazing about? Don't you go thinking that just because your stone is the Stone of Lethargy that you can slack off! Why aren't you using the stone's power? I really can't hold on anymore!"

"I can't use my power right now." Philo said hesitantly. But seeing how Shooting Star's eyes were about to roll back, he quickly explained, "But, once your protective barrier is gone, I'll be able to."

Damn! Just what kind of messed up power do these sinners have? They're all so troublesome! Shooting Star simply gave up on maintaining the protective barrier and despairingly said, "Then, you can use it now!"

After all, with what was left of his magic, he would have only been able to keep it going for at most a minute more. He might as well save it, just in case something strange were to happen while he had nothing in reserve left.

"Wait..."

Philo paled. He wanted to stop Shooting Star, but the latter was already beyond pissed from having to maintain the protective barrier on his own. Before Philo could finish shouting, Shooting Star had already dispelled the protective barrier, crossed his arms, and plopped himself down, clearly washing his hands of this matter.

The moment the protective barrier was gone, thousands of twisted black faces slammed toward Shooting Star and the others. The moment the black fog touched them, blood nearly instantaneously leaked from all four people's ears, noses, and eyes. Besides Shooting Star, who was already seated, the other three's legs lost all power, and they crumbled to the ground.

Alan's situation was the most dire. First of all, he was a mage with a weak constitution. Second of all, he was an elf whose nature leaned toward light. Thus, his defense against dark elemental magic was particularly weak. Therefore, the moment he came into contact with Encroaching Death, he pretty much collapsed to the ground, unable to get back up.

"This is unbearable. Philo, you liar!" Shooting Star said with blood choking him. Even so, he did not forget to glare at the big liar Philo. Though even without being glared at, Philo was nearly half dead himself.

Far in the distance, Bai Saya was currently using his "mind's eye" to observe his guide. Seeing the devastating sight of Shooting Star and Alan dripping with blood, Bai Saya's mind went blank with a "boom."

Philo grabbed the Stone of Sloth hanging around his neck and closed his eyes to recite a bunch of words. Through his closed fingers, a yellow light shone from the stone.

Even though blood was leaking all over Shooting Star, even Encroaching Death could not put a damper on his curiosity. Even in such a life-threatening situation, Shooting Star did not forget to eavesdrop. After all, Philo could very well be chanting some kind of incantation to activate the stone's power. If he could learn the contents of the incantation, then wouldn't his two pets be able to use their stone's power?

A pet's power equated to the owner's power, so this incantation would be something that could power him up! Of course he had to quickly eavesdrop!

Of course, he and his pet also had to survive Encroaching Death first.

Shooting Star perked his ears up, only to hear Philo mumble a bunch of nonsense.

"I am really lazy, truly really lazy. I wake up at four in the morning to practice my sword because I'm too lazy to sleep any longer. I do my best to protect the palace's safety because I'm too lazy to hear from a bunch of long-winded officials. I hide in my room to slave over piles of documents because I want to escape from Belle's ridiculous adventuring plans. Stone of Lethargy! I am really super lazy. Please lend me your power!"

You're totally trying to trick the stone! Philo, who had "diligence" written across his face, was eons away from laziness! But, his Xiao Bai who rarely got angry possessed the Stone of Fury, so maybe the stone they possessed was whatever they lacked...

Finally, Philo opened his eyes and his fist, revealing the Stone of Lethargy within. The stone shone with bright yellow light, so bright that the stone's shape could barely be made out.

"Ultimate Heal!"

Yellow light abruptly burst forth, making even those ugly fog faces back up by several feet.

When the healing light enveloped them, Shooting Star immediately felt his weakened body grow stronger. Within a few seconds, he recovered to the point where he could jump up and shout, "Idiot! Why'd you cast a healing spell? We're still inside the range of the spell. Even if you heal us one time, we're still going to die after this!"

Philo smiled bitterly and said, "We won't die, but we won't have a good time either."

What? Shooting Star was full of doubts, but before he could say anything, he saw those black fog faces rush over again. Their frenzy was on par with Agid spotting Bai Saya. The group was surrounded by the black fog, the strong curse of Encroaching Death flattening them once again.

"Ultimate Heal!" Philo shouted once more.

The black fog faces were pushed back again, and the four of them who had been about to die were once again healed. But right afterwards, the fog faces rushed over again...

"Ultimate Heal!"

E-Even though we won't die, this is even worse than dying!

Shooting Star wanted to cry but had no tears. Heavens! Even though I don't want to die, I don't want to die and get revived and die again and get revived again in this frightening, endless loop!

"Stoooooop—"

Alan was the first one unable to endure it. After he was healed again, he stood up and a lightning pillar burst into the sky, far more powerful than even his outburst from earlier. The blue lightning beat back the black fog faces by several feet, its effect several times better than even the healing spells Philo had cast using the stone.

Although the power of the lightning pillar was effective in chasing away the black fog faces, its harmfulness toward humans and demons was also exemplary. Other than Alan who had cast the magic, the other three were screaming in pain from the lightning. First came the smell of cooked meat, then charred meat...

Fortunately, Philo had just cast ultimate heal. Under the remaining vestiges of the healing light, the pillar of lightning did not kill the three of them, which also prevented the elf, who was very lacking in

awareness of his companions, from bearing the criminal charge of “murdering his companions,” a crime that no elf had ever committed.

Shooting Star was frothing from his mouth while lying pitifully on the ground, all four of his limbs twitching. While his entire body shuddered, he still tried to glance to the side. The tall and strong Philo had been electrocuted to the point of unconsciousness, and the same went for the slim and weak Pisce, so why was Shooting Star still lucid? Maybe it was because he had been zapped hundreds of times by Alan, so his resistance against electricity had gone up considerably.

“Wait, Philo fainted? Oh no, that means no one can heal us?”

Shooting Star suddenly thought of this very important issue and immediately began to shout. Even though he had just complained about not wanting to die and revive again, that didn’t mean he really wanted to die, okay?

Stupid GOD, You don’t make good things come true, but the bad things come true 100% of the time!

Those black fog faces are here again! Shooting Star pushed himself to crawl toward Alan. Then, he grabbed the elf’s thigh without letting go. Even though this elf might be even scarier than “Encroaching Death” when he went crazy, when he was sane, he was still a reliable companion.

Alan, as he had thought, went all out with his lightning, forcing the black fog faces back by several feet, but once the lightning disappeared, the fog faces surged forward again relentlessly.

"Aurora Lightning, Aurora Lightning... Gasp..."

Alan continuously cast lightning magic. Even though lightning magic was powerful, it was also the magic type that used up the most magic. Besides, he had already cast Pillar of Lightning twice, so his magic had already been depleted. But with those black fog faces approaching them, he could not choose to hold anything back, so Alan could only force himself to squeeze out some more magic. Even then, he could not hold on for much longer.

"Aurora Lightning! Shooting Star, I can't hold on anymore." Alan calmly calculated the magic he had left. Even if he pushed himself to the brink, he could at most cast Aurora Lightning three more times. At most, that would only buy them one more minute.

Shooting Star froze, his mind all jumbled up. He didn't know what to do at all.

"Aurora Lightning!"

Alan cast the second to last spell, which meant that they only had the time of casting one last lightning spell left to their life.

Is this... the end of the rope?

An odd expression came over Shooting Star. Unable to accept it, Shooting Star said, "Are we really going to die?"

Alan lowered his head to look at Shooting Star. That pair of large, golden eyes that had always swam with mischief now looked lost. The elf could not help but soften. No matter how mischievous Shooting Star was, he was still a child!

He used his left hand to release the final bolt of lightning, while he rested his right hand upon Shooting Star's head and rubbed it. The latter was at first stunned by the sudden weight upon his head before he felt Alan caressing it...

My eyes feel hot. Shooting Star's mouth wobbled disappointingly, and he cried out in a hoarse, spineless voice, "Alan, I don't want to die yet."

Alan rubbed Shooting Star's head and comforted him, "I know. Don't worry. We'll be fine."

How is that possible? Alan, you're an idiot! Shooting Star puffed up his cheeks and called the elf all sorts of names in his head, from stupid idiot to lightning devil to violent elf, forgetting that he was still dancing on the verge of death.

Once the last bolt of lightning faded, the black fog faces seemed to detect their despair. All of them pounced upon them, as if knowing that they could no longer fight back.

Although he knew it was useless to struggle against the menacing curse, Alan still turned around to hug Shooting Star, firmly protecting the latter in his arms.

Shooting Star froze, the heated feeling in his eyes strengthening. He really wanted to cry. He really wanted to hug something and cry his heart out, but that would be super embarrassing—*I'm about to die anyway! Who cares if it's embarrassing!*

Besides, Shooting Star had never cared about whether or not something was embarrassing!

Shooting Star turned and hugged Alan back, his face twisting, his mouth wobbling. His tears and wails burst out at the same time.

"Sob! I don't want to die. Alan, I'll be good. I won't ever cause trouble again!"

Now that Shooting Star was crying, even Alan felt his eyes grow wet. If he had known that they would lose their lives here, he would never have left Shooting Star and Bai Saya in the first place.

Really, why do I never let Shooting Star comb my hair? Combing my hair isn't a big deal at all. Why was I so against it? Endless regrets welled within Alan.

Shooting Star continued to wail. The black fog faces had reached the two of them by now, the immense power of the curse making them bleed through all their orifices once again. However, this time, they did not have Philo to cast Ultimate Heal to save them.

Shooting Star buried his head in Alan's arms and cried, "I don't want to die! I haven't played enough. I want to go around and play more with you guys..."

"I won't let either of you die!"

A frighteningly angry roar sounded. Before Alan and Shooting Star could see who it was, a stark, white light abruptly blinded them, making them unable to see anything. However, they could feel the pressure on their bodies easing. They had originally been vomiting blood like a waterfall, but that had completely stopped.

The two of them, who had just been on the verge of death, were now strong and healthy all of a sudden.

At least, they now knew that the newcomer was a friend, not a foe. *Just who saved us in the nick of time?*

After their eyes finally adjusted to the blinding white light, they quickly opened their eyes.

"Are you okay?" That person knelt beside them and even asked worriedly, "Are you hurt anywhere?"

This person could not be any more familiar to them. Shooting Star and Alan both blurted out, "Bai Saya!"

Bai Saya turned to the left to look at Shooting Star, then to the right to look at Alan. Seeing that neither was gravely injured, he finally relaxed a bit, and the furious, worried crease in his brows finally loosened.

Fortunately, he had finally been able to protect his companions this time.

"How were you able to enter the curse's reach?" Shooting Star asked in disbelief.

Even Philo had no way of busting out of the spell. *How was Xiao Bai able to treat it like his own backyard and rush right in?*

Not only that, he even pushed "Encroaching Death" away by dozens of feet, using a barrier of white light to prevent the black fog faces from rushing back in again—Heavens! He stopped the curse so easily. Is Xiao Bai actually the strongest among the sinners or what?

"Huh?" Bai Saya blinked and asked stupidly, "What's a curse?"

Shooting Star rolled his eyes exaggeratedly. He already knew that Xiao Bai was a fellow who asked "what's that" in response to everything he encountered, yet Shooting Star had still been foolish enough to ask Xiao Bai a question. It wasn't like this guy actually understood that he had rushed into a most dangerous curse that could erode even one's bones.

He might even think that this fog is so thick because someone is burning garbage! Shooting Star thought to himself derisively.

"I'm so glad that you are both fine. I saw that the two of you were about to die to this strange black fog. I was nearly scared to death!" A panicked expression came over Bai Saya. He said, relieved, "Fortunately, I was able to save you in time. It was lucky that Barna

and Markham were able to fly me over together, so that I could rescue you in time. They really flew super quickly!”

“You saw that we were injured?” Shooting Star froze for a moment, ensnared by a twinge of guilt. *So, Xiao Bai already knew that this curse is dangerous, yet he still rushed in to save us...*

“Yeah, I don’t know why you vomited blood from touching this fog though. Is it because this fog is too disgusting?”

Bai Saya was a little confused about it. He stared at the twisted black fog faces that had been walled off far away. Ever since he had rushed into the black fog in fury, the stone had automatically released a barrier of white light to push away the black fog faces. Therefore, he was completely unable to understand how the fog was able to hurt anyone.

It was as if Shooting Star had been dealt a heavy blow by these words. The sliver of guilt he had felt just now disappeared without a trace. What was left was the urge that always surfaced each day, the urge to “open Xiao Bai’s head to see just what was inside it.”

Bai Saya saw Shooting Star’s head drop and immediately asked in worry, “Shooting Star, what’s wrong? Don’t tell me that the black fog is still affecting you even from that distance? Then, I’ll push it farther!”

The barrier of white light that had dimmed into a soft glow abruptly brightened into blinding white again, forcibly pushing the black fog faces away.

Bai Saya gripped the Sword of Sacred White tightly, the white light coming from the Stone of Fury that was embossed on the hilt.

Okay! Power of Fury, release...

Bang!

Shooting Star clobbered Bai Saya on the head and roared, "Idiot! Stop playing around. What will you do when your fury isn't enough to feed Roth? We haven't even escaped from the curse's reach yet! Quickly grab Philo and let's scam!"

Bai Saya rubbed the back of his head and painfully said, "Oh, okay."

"Him too," Alan said and pointed at Pisce. As an elf who loved life, there was no way he could leave someone to die.

"Then, you carry him!" Shooting Star straightforwardly said.

Alan lowered his head to look at Pisce. Even though this person looked slim and small, so he should not be very heavy, to a slender mage, even the lightest of weights wasn't light enough. Besides, who knew when the guy had last bathed? Body odor wafted from him, making the elf who loved cleanliness hesitate even more.

Should he follow his nature of loving all life and carry this person to save his life, or should he follow his nature of being too physically weak while loving cleanliness and directly give up on this heavy and stinky human?

The elf bent down by several degrees, but the body odor that came from the rogue who hadn't bathed for several days, several weeks, or perhaps even several months, forced him several steps back.

In the end, the elf made a decision. Even if he did not save the rogue, Bai Saya would not sit by and do nothing. Besides, carrying people was a warrior's responsibility in the first place, not a mage's.

After arriving at such a good excuse, the elf who loved all life expressionlessly said, "He is too heavy. I am unable to carry him."

Hey! You didn't even touch him, and you already know you're unable to carry him? Shooting Star rolled his eyes and asked extremely suspiciously, "Are you sure you're an elf who loves all life? You actually have demon blood right? You are my kin?"

Although he had heard Shooting Star's dig at him, both his guilty conscience and his lack of magic caused him to turn his head away to ignore him instead of bursting with lightning like usual to punish Shooting Star.

"Whatever! Xiao Bai, you can carry another one too, right?" Shooting Star had no plans to carry him himself either.

Bai Saya smiled wryly and nodded acceptingly. Then, he carried Philo over his shoulder and Pisce with his left arm, while his other hand gripped the Sword of Sacred White to maintain the protective barrier of white light. Then, he departed together with his two companions who completely lacked gratefulness and compassion.

They walked through the curse, as if they were taking a stroll in their own backyard. From time to time, someone could even be heard saying, "Hey, Alan, I'm so bored. Give me your head over here! I want to comb your hair!"

"Impossible!"

"Hahaha! It's better for you to obediently let me comb it! I know you don't have any magic left to zap me."

"Do you think it takes so long for my magic to recover?"

"... I don't care! The hair is here, so here I will comb!"

"And here is your death!"

Epilogue: Character Introductions

The largest change in this volume was Saiximili's personality, conduct, and some of his small quirks.

In the old edition, Saiximili's personality was much more bumbling, and he didn't show much responsibility toward his nation, though this could be because I depicted too little of the avian nation. The importance of his own nation to Saiximili was not shown properly. Anyway, when I examined this later on, I felt that this kind of Saiximili did not match the Saiximili I had in mind.

Perhaps he really doesn't like being a king much, and isn't very good at it either, but he is still the king, and he does his best to be a good king. Therefore, I highlighted his responsibility toward his position as king more. Finally, the king, Saiximili, is properly depicted.

Other changes include strengthening the guard captain Barna and Markham's presence, paving the way for future plot related details regarding the avian nation.

Also, through writing about Dan and Ice Chess, I explained checkmates in more detail. I hope that this will make this aspect of the demon race even more intriguing.

Finally, I added some foreshadowing for new plot points around the corner, such as mentioning the two starseers' love and hatred for each other(?).

Even though I had also somewhat brought up the "shared past" of

Doom and Existence's starseers in the previous edition, it was not touched upon much. You had to fill in most of the blanks yourself, which shouldn't have been necessary. Therefore, I've added some foreshadowing on this topic. Later on, the "shared past" that the old edition had only hinted at will be clearly written out. This will be a great chance for everyone to get a better understanding of Existence's faction.

I've written so much about Shooting Star's faction. As their rival, the Guide of Existence's side needs to be even more captivating than before! An evenly matched battle is much more interesting, right?

I want both guides, both starseers, and the seven sinners to be even more interesting than before.

And the avians!

The demons!

The elves!

And...

In short, let's make the world of GOD even more interesting than ever!

By Yu Wo



Character Introductions



Sex: ♂

Race: Half demon.

Profession: Mage blade.

Age: One hundred fifty years old.

Personality: A mature and steadfast guy.

Favorite color: Purple.

Favorite food: None.

Least favorite food: None.

Most afraid of: Death.

Weapon: Long sword.

Greatest dream: Protecting Bai Saya well.

Dan

Sex: Male.

Race: Half demon.

Profession: Mage blade.

Age: One hundred fifty years old.

Personality: A mature and steadfast guy.

Favorite color: Purple.

Favorite food: None.

Least favorite food: None.

Most afraid of: Death.

Weapon: Long sword.

Greatest dream: Protecting Bai Saya well.



Character
Saiximili

Sex: ♂

Race: Avian.

Profession: A starseer
part-timing as a king.

Age: Thirty-eight years old.

Personality: An awkward
starseer who likes to
pretend to be mysterious.

Favorite color: White.

Favorite food: Fish.

Least favorite food:
Chicken.

Most afraid of: Snakes.

Weapon: Crystal ball.

Greatest dream: Winning
against Existence's starseer.

Saiximili

Sex: Male.

Race: Avian.

Profession: A starseer part-timing as a king.

Age: Thirty-eight years old.

Personality: An awkward starseer who likes to pretend to be mysterious.

Favorite color: White.

Favorite food: Fish.

Least favorite food: Chicken.

Most afraid of: Snakes.

Weapon: Crystal ball.

Greatest dream: Winning against Existence's starseer.



Old V3 Character Introductions

Roth: Actual name, the Stone of Fury, Wrath. The second victim to Bai Saya's random naming, as Bai Saya did not understand the elven language. Roth is Bai Saya's Stone of Sin. As long as Bai Saya provides it fury, Roth will give Bai Saya power in exchange.

Yaya: An avian child who hatched from the egg the dragon entrusted to Bai Saya. Because Alan was the first person she saw, she considers Alan her mother.

Braids: Real identity unknown, but because he has a bunch of braids, Shooting Star and company call him Braids. He possesses the Stone of Indulgence and attacked Bai Saya because he wanted to fight against

the other holders of the stones. Afterwards, he was gravely injured by Bai Saya's exploding power. His whereabouts are unknown. Currently, his known abilities are that he can use a thorny whip, control plants, and manipulate people.

Mama Cow: A random villager in the beastman village who gave Shooting Star a pancake for his "mom," Alan, to eat.