

EARTHS G MAGUS 31

31 Deep Marsh

The forest was becoming more and more dense as the orange ray of the setting sun passed through the small gaps between the leaves of the towering trees. Soon, he breathed in the damp air, jumped over large mossy roots and the ground beneath his feet were starting to become muddy. Emery arrived at the swamp with many others but started his search alone with the golden moon as his light.

It was dark and Emery rubbed his arm, trying to warm himself. In the distance, he noticed a ball of light hovering below a large glowing plant. He moved closer, readied his hand on the sword's sheath on his waist, and a buzzing sound came from the ball of light. It apparently was a large flying insect the size of a bird. The symbol on Emery's palm glowed as new information entered his mind.

[Firefly]

[Level 1 beast]

[Battle Power 10]

[Not aggressive unless provoked]

Emery furrowed his brows, a little conflicted. This insect had a battle power almost the same as him. He was about to draw his sword but considering how fireflies usually gather around a light source in groups, he let go of his sword and took a different path. If he could avoid fighting for now, he would.

"Time to start looking for that plant," he said to himself.

Emery began searching for the four-leaf moon clover at the foot of trees, bushes, near vines, sometimes near glowing plants where there were no fireflies gathering. Two hours of walking around had already passed but not a single moon clover he had found were four leaves, they were all three leaves. He kept on looking though under the light of the golden moon. Just one would be enough to complete his quest and possibly break through the spirit power requirement.

His nose was turning red and the cold air was slowly seeping to his bones. If ever he couldn't find one, he would try training at the institute of darkness' origin stone institute tomorrow. But based on what he had heard from Chumo regarding how difficult it was to cultivate the darkness element, Emery kept on brushing plants aside in hopes of finding a four-leaf moon clover.

Soon, Emery saw a bunch of yellow dotted plants across the distance from where he stood. He wasn't sure whether they were four leaves but when he stepped closer, his forward feet sank in the mud, ankles high. Emery pulled back his heavy feet and focused his eyes. It was faint but he could see he was about to walk into murky waters, making him unsure whether to proceed. However, risk came with rewards, he steeled himself after considering his situation and placed the same foot again.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you."

Emery turned around and a young chubby acolyte was standing not far from him.

"What do you—"

The swamp beneath his feet bubbled.

"Hurry, get out now!" shouted the boy.

Emery's heart did a somersault while yanking his feet hard, making him unbalanced as he fell to his bottom. He clumsily pulled out his sword, on guard, as the bubble popped and out came a frog the size of a dog.

"..."

"Hahaha! You're a bit jumpy, aren't you?" The chubby acolyte had a big grin while holding his stomach laughing out hard.

Emery tightened his grip on the sword. He had been made fun of by another stranger on the same day! He tried to get back to his feet, not saying a word, while staring at the brown frog that was several times bigger than the frog in Briton, which simply gazed back at him like a fool.

Just when Emery felt his ear pounding from anger, the muddy water of the swamp rippled before a large splash erupted and a beast as big as a crocodile jumped out devouring the frog.

[Drake]

[Level 2 beast]

[Battle Power 20]

[Aggressive beast but doesn't attack human unless provoked]

The drake gave them a glance before diving back into the swamp. Emery's face no longer had a trace of anger rather it was replaced with shock.

"Here let me help you," the acolyte said, offering a hand to help Emery up his feet. "Are you a first year like me? Call me Fatty. What about you? What's your name?"

Now that Emery had a good look at the guy, the acolyte's short hair stuck to his big round head, his eyes were small and slanted, looking a bit like a fat Chumo.

"Emery," he answered, sheathing back his sword.

"Nice to meet you, Emery," Fatty said while nodding. He added, "I advise not wandering alone in this swamp. It's dangerous for us first years."

Emery narrowed his eyes and said, "Aren't you a first year yourself?"

Fatty showed his pearly white teeth. "Well I didn't say I was alone, did I?"

Behind Fatty, silhouettes of people moved closer to where they were standing.

Emery noticed they were wearing a slightly different uniform from the one he and Fatty were wearing. They must be second or third year acolytes that Fatty tagged along with.

One of the senior acolytes walked past them and kneeled, touching the ground. A green glow lit up from the senior acolyte's palm then the surrounding roots crept toward the direction Emery had been wanting to go to. The roots formed a bridge and the senior acolyte walked on top of it.

Emery, Fatty and the rest followed suit and crossed the bridge. As soon as they arrived at the area where the pile of spotted plants was, the first senior acolyte said, "Found one!"

32 Senior Acolyte

They walked back the bridge made of wood when the senior acolyte in front stopped. Emery readied his stance when he had heard the acolyte said 'Entangled'.

The calm murky water became turbulent and a drake from beneath them shot up tied with roots. The senior acolyte touched the ring on his finger and a spear flashed from thin air before stabbing the drake right to where its heart should be. He waved off the blood before swiping his ring again, making the drake and spear disappear at the same time.

Emery wanted to come over and ask the senior acolyte about his ring and spell, however, the acolyte had some kind of aura that made you feel he wasn't an easy person to talk to. Still, this was the first time Emery had seen an acolyte or magus in action. He dreamed of the day when he'd be able to use such spells and items but first things first, he had to find a four-leaf moon clover.

After crossing the bridge, the senior acolyte turned to Emery and said, "You, kid. What's your name?"

"It's Emery," he said, his eyes slightly twitched.

"Okay, mine's Cole, kid. Would like to join us?" Cole asked with his arms crossed.

Emery bit his lips before sighing. He hated being called like a kid. Moreover, this acolyte named Cole didn't seem to be that older than him. Maybe around one to two years gap only. Anyway, he tried to place his emotions back in his head and focused on the mission's objective instead. He asked, "What's the catch?"

"I'll lead and watch your backs while you guys search and give all the plants to me," Cole said nonchalantly.

"Hey, then doesn't that defeat the purpose of why we're here in the first place?" Emery said, brows furrowed.

"I need to get as many four-leaf moon clovers as I can to secure my acceptance in the ranks of alchemists. I don't care about the potion since they're useless to me. Master Grom said for each acolyte exchanging a four-leaf moon clover, he would give only one potion, so I'll give one moon clover to each person part of the group. Another catch is that you'll have to stay with the group until we get back," Cole explained.

Emery thought for a moment and turned to Fatty. "Did you all agree to this?"

Fatty nodded. "I'm not interested in alchemy, but I can't pass up the opportunity to increase my spirit power."

"So, have you made up your mind?" Cole asked.

"Okay, I'll join you guys," Emery said.

"Good. Fatty, introduce the others to him," Cole said, walking away.

Fatty gave Emery a rundown of the other two people Emery hadn't talked to yet. The first one had a large, muscled, body and was named Topper. Fatty mentioned how he had seen Topper lift a drake with just one hand. He thought Topper was not a human at first, but fortunately, he was. Fatty couldn't tell if Topper had another element aside from plant since Topper had been using brute strength to deal with most things.

The second person he introduced was a female named Mags. She had a small frame and pinkish hair. Her elemental affinity was both fire and plant. Fatty mentioned Cole had asked her first because it would be difficult to stay the night in a moist, damp, swamp.

Lastly, Fatty presented himself having an earth and plant elemental affinity. He was a rank two acolyte, while Topper and Mags were rank three and Cole was rank five.

Wandering around the swamp, they eventually found a flat ground at the foot of an aged tree. Cole stopped and turned to face them and said, "Let's eat."

"Alright, it's dinner time!" Fatty exclaimed.

They still hadn't found another moon clover but when Cole mentioned eating, Emery's stomach rumbled. He took a seat at one of the large roots and opened the supply bag he received in Elder's Respite. Emery whipped out a bread-like food that felt hard like a rock to the touch.

Fatty said, "Hey, brother. Please put that away. It gives me shivers whenever I remember eating that. It tastes like an old tree bark. Let's wait for Mags to cook the drake meat."

Mags finished roasting the drake meat and the moment it touched Emery's tongue, the rich flavor of warm meat, complemented with the charred, smoked portions, made Emery salivate further as he devoured it right up to its bones.

After everyone had had their fill, Emery decided to strike up some conversation wherein he found out that Cole was a second year acolyte, the same as Mags and Topper, and had gone through the same quest last year but failed to gain entry into the alchemist institute.

When they had finished resting, they got up and began searching under the guidance of the golden moon. Emery and the rest searched every nook and crannies where the little rare plants might be hiding. Wandering in a place filled with wondrous, glowing, small, large, various colors of plants made Emery feel like he was back home.

Two hours had passed and they had found three more four-leaf moon clovers. It wasn't Emery that had found them, but when he walked among the bushes near a glowing vine that had a bluish glow, he saw a similar plant.

"One, two, three, four leaves!" Emery tried to pick the plant but the moment he tugged it, it didn't budge. He pulled harder and the soil trembled, then the vines nearby started moving and from the ground, a plant sprang out that was as tall as three meters(9.8 Feet)!

[Angler Vine]

[Level 3 beast]

[Battle power 30]

33 Spoils

Emery held on with both hands at the sword and positioned himself facing the fuller of the sword to make sure he wouldn't meet his own demise.

"Damn boy, I don't know if you're lucky or unlucky. It's rarer to find level three beast in this forest than the plant," Topper said, pulling out the large axe on his back before starting to hack wildly at the monster's feet.

Roots, vines, branches, flew everywhere every time Topper's axe slashed but as soon as he pulled the axe out, vines crept to where he had hit, reinforcing the damaged part that was already as hard as a metal. Nevertheless, Topper kept on swinging his axe like a crazed lumberjack.

Mags, on the other hand, had her fireball ready at the top of her palm. She was looking for an opportunity to burn this monster down but Emery kept on holding tight on his sword, despite the violent swinging of the angler vine.

"Jump now!" Fatty exclaimed.

Emery dazedly looked toward the direction of Fatty and noticed a faint green light behind him. He didn't know what it was but it gave him an ominous feeling. He used the force of the angler vine's swing and threw himself toward the body of a nearby tree and braced himself. As soon as he hit the tree and fell on the ground, his sight became blurred as he watched as the green light shot toward where had been hanging on.

The angler vine managed to narrowly dodge the green light but one of its shoulders got hit instead and dropped to the ground. Mags threw the fireball, burning its other shoulder. It uttered a high pitched screech, which made all cover their ears and close their eyes.

At that moment, Emery heard the rustling of the bushes beside him, then a woman wearing light-greenish uniform, pale skin, and long white hair appeared as if she had come straight from a fairy tale scroll he had read back in his father's estate. His pupils dilated at the sight of her.

"Ohh, it's you again" Silva said, her snake-like eyes stared at him with coldness.

Emery tried to get up but his body sent shocks of pain. He watched Silva got on one knee, her palm glowing green.

"Entangled," Silva said. Several larger roots and branches than the one Cole had made, appeared and wrapped around the burning angler vine. The angler vine thrashed violently and managed to send Topper flying with a kick.

Everyone was dumbfounded on how she had easily killed the level three beast, angler vine. She approached its corpse, touched the ring on her finger and made the angler vine disappear before turning around.

"You! How are you—" Cole saw her eyes and his face darkened—"no wonder. You're a half-breed."

Silva ignored him and simply walked away from the group.

"Get back here you beast and return what you stole!" Cole snapped while lifting his spear.

Silva appeared indifferent and simply stood there. She stared at Cole with her sharp eyes and said, "I killed the rare beast, therefore the spoils should go to the killer. So why should I?"

She turned away, but Topper, Mags and Fatty blocked her way.

"And what's the meaning of this?" Silva said coolly.

"Isn't it obvious, filthy half-breed,?? Cole said with his teeth clenched, making his spear light up with green glow.

Silva's glare even turned colder to the point where Emery, who had just stood up, could feel her bloodlust, sending electricity up his spine.

Cole then thrust his spear, sending a green bolt of light toward the large tree behind Silva, purposely scratching her cheek. "The next one won't miss, so hand over the damned magical beast, you disgusting snake!"

"Four against one. Aren't you too much of a man needing backup to fight against a single girl?" Silva said, her lips had half a smile, looking at Cole.

"Shut up, half-breed. You're not a human, you're not even a girl. We don't acknowledge all of you. Therefore, you're our enemy," Cole said, pointing his spear at her neck.

This line of reasoning. It was absurd. Emery was starting to feel the pounding in his ear, heart against his chest. Memories of that night resurged in his mind. The raid. The marauders racial hate for the chrutin.

"Everyone, can't we all just calm down?" Emery said. Actually, he was saying that to himself the most.

"Apparently, these dimwitted purists think we're an abomination," Silva said, staring at him. "But what about you? Which side will you fight with? Them or your own?"

Emery's brows twitched. What was this girl talking about? Them or your own? Did she perhaps mean because she was from the same class as him?

Cole clicked his tongue and spoke while turning his head, "What did she mean by that?"

Cole didn't get to finish his sentence, however, when Silva suddenly whipped out a sword from her ring and slashed!

34 Entangle

He made the roots beneath Silva creep up, but Silva's palm glowed and the creeping roots stopped. She dashed to Cole and thrust with such killing intent that even Emery could also feel a chill up his spine every time she attacked. Still, Cole managed to dodge every single one of them.

The two were on equal skill in terms of using the sword and the spear. No one had an advantage over the other.

Cole used another spell and made spikes out of the vines from the ground. "Vine spike!"

Silva jumped out of the way, dodging every protruding sharp spikes. She readied her stance and waited for Cole to make his next move.

Cole, on the other hand, got out of his stance as he squinted his eyes and stared at her uniform. "You're a first year, aren't you?"

"So what if I am?" Silva replied, her eyes keeping track of Cole, Topper, Mags, Fatty and Emery's positions.

"I won't ask again, you know you can't win against me. Now hand over the beast corpse or I'll turn you into a snake wine," Cole said, his voice rough.

Silva slightly stepped back as Cole moved closer in front of her, Topper and Mags on the side, while Fatty behind her. She still had her guard up and said, "Okay. I'm willing to trade it for you. Give me two four-leaf moon clovers in return."

"Bitch, I don't think you understand your situation. Leave it there and you'll get to keep your life," Cole said, making his spear glow with green light.

"One plant in exchange for my service of killing it. That's my final offer. Sounds like an equal trade, yes?" Silva said, her tone as cold as ice.

The other four looked at each other. They seem to be considering the offer Silva made. Emery, however, had a different hunch. He noticed her grip on the sword tightened and her foot shifted at an odd angle.

He asked himself what he would do if he got surrounded and realized what was about to happen. Emery picked up his sword from the ground and searched his bag for whatever thing he could get a hold off. It was at that moment though that his prediction came to life.

Silva slammed the earth and spikes also sprang from the ground where the four were standing. As the four people jumped back, she shot forward toward Emery.

Emery snatched her wrists, placed all his weight on her and buried his face on her chest. He shouted, voice muffled, "Hurry!"

She thrashed around but Emery kept pushing her. He couldn't see it but her face was turning red as she said, "Get off me, y-y-you pervert!"

"Entangle!" Cole issued his spell and the roots tightly wrapped around the two.

"H-hey! What are you doing?" Emery questioned Cole as he felt the roots circling his skin along with Silva.

"Shut it! Stop talking!" Silva made every effort she could but the roots had finally tied the two of them. She was unable to cast her spell in such conditions.

Emery moved his head trying to get out of Silva's chest and travelled above. His and her face were only an inch away from each other. Silva turned her head away, but Emery could still feel the slight heat radiating off from her cheeks and breath.

Cole ignored Emery's remarks and pointed his spear to Silva just above Emery's head. She didn't respond so Cole moved the spear close to her forehead.

"Can you please just give the guy what he wants so we can get out of this situation?" Emery said.

Silva clicked her tongue before having the angler vine's corpse appear.

Cole then used his ring to store the dead beast. He added, "Now hand over your moon clovers as well."

"I don't have any on me," Silva said.

"So, you still dare lie to my face, you bitchy snake," Cole said as he grabbed her hand that had her ring.

"Let me go or I will—"

Cole slapped her before she even finished her words. "You will what? What can you do right now?" Cole said with a dark grin, loosening the roots near Silva's hand. He then pointed the spear to her index finger and added, "I'm going to give you a choice, either you relinquish your ownership of the ring or I'll cut you pretty little fingers one by one like the snake you are."

"Wait, aren't you going a little too far?" Emery said. He could feel Silva's body shaking and her heart beating against his chest.

Silva hissed, "Try me, you purist! I'll have you hanged for this!"

"Is that so? Then, so be it." Cole raised his spear and thrust down. Emery tried to shake themselves but the roots were too big that they were unable to dodge fast enough.

The spear grazed right next to his neck. It missed but somehow Emery and Silva was able to roll on the ground.

"Hahaha! Of course I'm not serious! I'm not stupid enough to be punished by the academy for such a lowly half-breed," Cole said, pulling back his spear.

"Asshole! Let me go now!" Silva shouted at the top of her lungs whilst trying to break away from the roots that tied them.

Emery was now at the bottom while Silva was on top. Their eyes met when Emery noticed a lightning flashed in the clear night sky, lit by the golden moon. A loud boom soon followed then a domineering voice resounded in their minds, giving chills to all acolytes in the swamp.

35 Run Away

Everyone became dazed for a moment, including Emery. When he opened his eyes, he could hear a buzzing sound in his ears, lingering.

"What just happened!" screamed Fatty, backing himself toward a tree.

Cole could also be seen trembling. His voice was shaking as he said, "S-Something bad. That was either a powerful spell or powerful being. But how?"

"What should we do?" Mags asked, holding her staff close toward her chest.

"Whatever that was, we need to get away here as far as possible! Let's return to the institute!" Cole said, gripping his spear tightly.

"Let me go!" Silva screamed as she struggled to break free from the large roots.

"Stop fooling around guys, let us—"

Emery didn't get to finish his words when another boom entered their minds. This time, he lost consciousness for a second while Cole, Topper, Mags and Fatty fell to their knees. They tried to stand up but their knees were quivering. The first time shocked them, but the second one scared everyone to their core.

Fatty was the first to get up straight and ran deep into the woods, leaving the five acolytes. Cole was the second to stand up. He glanced at Emery, their eyes met for a second, before turning away with Mags and Topper in tow.

"Hey guys! Seriously!" Emery called out to them but no one was left, not even their shadows. It was only him and this girl with the snake-eyes. He bit his lips, and for a moment, he thought of himself as the unluckiest person in the world. Shouldn't have joined them, he thought. He should have just gone with his original plan since getting involved with other people always seemed to mess his life.

"Hmpf, those are wonderful friends you have," commented Silva.

"They are not my friends!" Emery snapped as he wiggled hard to the point where his entangled exposed skin was starting to burn from the tight roots.

His body was brushing up against Silva when she said, "Stop wiggling, pervert!"

Emery stopped. He had forgotten how he should be honorable in front of such a lady. He cleared his throat before looking at her and said, "I am sorry, my lady. Do you have any other plans?"

Silva simply stayed silent but the bushes rustled in response to Emery's questioning. Emery tried to see who it was and saw Topper coming out of the bushes. However, Emery's eyes widened when Topper raised his axe.

"Hey, hey, hey!" Emery cried out when Topper swung it down. He closed his eyes but the thing he feared didn't come to pass. Instead, he felt the roots hooked onto something so when he looked again, the back edge of the axe locked on one of the roots and Topper pulled.

Emery broke out a cold sweat as he raised his hands and said, "I am sorry, Silva. You know that wasn't on purpose. I think we should be more concerned about that scary sound and get out of here."

Silva gritted her teeth before lowering the sword. Just when Emery let out a sigh of relief, the edge of his vision noticed a flash of a hand and was once again on the ground. His cheek now had a red mark of a palm as it stung in pain from Silva's slap.

Emery rubbed his burning cheek and said, "Haha I think I deserve that." He then looked at Topper and added, "Thank you for coming back. Really..."

Topper nodded without saying a word and turned to the direction where the institute of plant should be. Emery and Silva went with Topper, not wanting to waste one more second in the forest. They didn't

know where the sound came from but it was best to stay in Elder's Respite where there were tons of acolytes and magi were staying.

The three of them sped through the forest but after a few hundred meters of running, another boom rang in their heads, making them stumble.

"Do any one of you have an idea—"

Not able to finish his sentence, a speeding object flew past them and crashed into one of the aged trees. They all paused for a moment, looked at each other, and decided to take a detour still in the general direction of the Elder's Respite. They hadn't gotten far yet when they heard a scream filled with terror.

Emery thought the voice was familiar so he ran to where the sound came from. When he had arrived, however, regret quickly churned in his stomach. In front of him, was a huge beast, thrice the size of a bear from Earth. It was chomping on the lower half of what appeared to be the silhouette of a chubby boy. The cloud had blocked the moon's light but when its ray was finally clear once more to shine on the land, it slowly showed Fatty's horrified, disfigured face.

Not far from him, Emery heard a cough and when he looked over, he saw a woman dressed in a magus robe holding her bleeding stomach. Her dark skin almost blended with the tree she was leaning but Emery could clearly see the white stripe on her face. It was Magus Erica, the one who announced the mission of gathering four-leaf moon clovers from Master Grom.

Emery placed one foot back but the crunching sound of a branch behind him rang out. The hulking beast's bloodshot eyes then suddenly shifted straight to him. It stared at Emery as it munched the broken bones of Fatty along with blood dripping from its mouth. A chill ran from the bottom of his spine up to his nape.

36 Eyes Opened

He hadn't noticed it but when he had somehow gotten a clearer view, all he had initially seen so far was its dragon-shaped head. The hulking monster had two large horns protruding from its head and spikes starting from the top of its head up to its back. Its two wings were retracted at the moment as it simply enjoyed its meal.

On its head, there was a figure of a man with long, golden hair wearing bulky scarlet armor. The red dragon didn't mind the man as it continued chomping on the last bit of Fatty, which was the arm peeking out of its mouth. When Emery's eyes met the man's, he could feel a tremendous pressure that was making him look down. The man's presence was so overwhelming that a simple glance from him made Emery want to throw himself on the ground.

Emery tried to resist the urge even though he felt like an ant facing a god of death and continued watching as the man raised a hand toward Emery's direction and Magus Erica suddenly flew as if the air had pulled her.

Emery could hear his deep, cold voice, filled with intent to kill and said, "Pretentious human, die."

The man in red armor grabbed Magus Erica by the throat. Her legs were kicking in the air as she struggled to break free from the man's clasp.

Emery watched helplessly. He wanted to run away from here as far as possible, but his feet were stuck to the ground, even his arms and head. He couldn't move. His eyes were glued to Magus Erica's weakening struggle when suddenly a lightning from the sky struck the man's arm and a thunderous boom soon followed.

A halo of light opened on top of Emery and several figures wearing magus robes burst out including a fireball hitting the dragon's head. The fireball exploded on the dragon's head, making it fall down and issued a powerful shockwave that threw Emery back to a tree. Topper and Silva had actually followed him not far behind and were also caught in the wind and sent back.

Emery's head was buzzing once again and coughed out blood. He dazedly got up, his vision, and barely made out the figure of a large thing that was no less smaller than the dragon fighting. The thing pounded the dragon's head downward, issuing another blast. The ground beneath Emery's shook as if an earthquake had occurred, making him lose his balance once more.

After Emery's vision had cleared, he saw the thing fighting that smacked the dragon down was a giant version of the stone monster he had seen in the institute of stone. At that moment, he heard a familiar friendly voice.

"You guys, get away from this place immediately and run!" Darius said to Emery, Silva and Topper, who were still half-shocked. "Get going!"

Emery hadn't had the time to reply when Darius' palm glowed yellow as the nearby rocks darted to his body, making an armor made of sparkling stone. After covering his whole body from head to toe, he jetted over to the hovering man wearing red armor, still clasping Magus Erica while fighting the other magi, and enlarged his fist with the rocks from the forest before punching the man.

Emery, Silva and Topper turned back and ran toward the general direction of Elder's Respite but when Emery took another look, the man in red armor knocked Darius and destroyed sparkling stone armor. He noticed though that the man was no longer holding Magus Erica but still fending off the other magi.

His eyes then fell to the dragon. The dragon had the stone monster beneath its feet and when Emery and the dragon's bloodshot eyes met, it opened its jaw and light was converging inside. A sharp sound was ringing out as the light was turning brighter and redder. Emery's instinct then went haywire as he could feel his life was knocking at death's door. He shouted at the top of his lungs. "Jump!"

The dragon's wings opened before flapping back as a blazing ray of flames gushed from the dragon's mouth toward Emery, Silva and Topper's direction. Emery jumped, pushing Silva on his side as the dragon's breath hurled just behind them. It barely missed them but the searing heat from the flame prickled Emery's skin. Two seconds hadn't even passed yet but Emery was sweating everywhere.

Smoke rose to the sky and when he got back to his feet, Emery searched for Topper. He found him, however, what he saw once again shocked him to his core. "Topper!"

Topper hadn't jumped in time and got caught in the blast. His lower half had melted like a pile of goo, bones sticking out, the smell of burnt meat filled the air as his face was becoming charred. Topper was still somewhat alive and had his hand reaching out to Emery.

Emery stared at Topper with wide eyes opened. Five seconds had just passed but within that time, all that Emery could see of Topper was the white eyes and mouth that was making the words 'Help me'.

He unconsciously moved forward, wanting to help the Topper who had helped free him and Silva earlier, but Silva grabbed his arm. She said, "It's too late for him! Don't be stupid!"

Emery's mind was blank.

Silva took it upon herself and didn't let go of Emery's arm as she dragged him away. The look on Topper's face kept on running in Emery's mind as they ran deeper into the forest leaving the battlefield that kept on issuing thundering blasts behind.

37 Mortal Enemies

Silva turned around and tried to pick up Emery. She said hastily, "Do you want to die? Get up!"

Emery's mind was blank. He couldn't think properly even though he could hear a woman's muffled voice asking him to stand up. After having his face hit the ground though, slowly things were becoming clearer. First the images of the magi fighting against a pair of a hulking monster and a man in red armor. After that, Fatty and Topper. Emery's chest tightened as a burning liquid rose to his throat, making him vomit.

His ears now finally registered the things happening around him. He wiped his moist eyes as he tried to at least sit up. Then he noticed the sound of explosions, ground still trembling, and the occasional flashes of lights echoing in the sky behind them, letting them know that they were still far from the word safe.

Emery shook his head at Silva while he tried to catch his breath. Every bit of his body; arms, chest, back, legs, feet, were all issuing a sting that made him feel hot as if there was a volcano ready to erupt inside him. He gritted his teeth, his heart pumping blood as hard as it could to all parts of his body, which felt like it was about to explode. He forced himself calm, looking at Silva and said, "Run... run without me. There is no reason for you to wait for me."

Silva appeared shocked at Emery, speechless she was before sighing. "You really are hopeless."

She faced away from Emery, took one step, before going back to him and checked his pulse.

Emery sweated profusely and tried to pull back his arm but she wouldn't let go. "What are you doing?"

As she checked, her brows furrowed. Silva said, "Stop struggling. You shouldn't fight it. Embrace it and let go."

It was now Emery's turn to make a frown, whatever she said didn't make sense to him. Embrace that he was feeling hot all up to his bones, embrace the stinging pain and let it go? Emery opened his mouth to ask but another familiar voice rang out and he looked over.

"What are you doing!"

Emery forgot what he was about to ask and forced his body to stand up with his wobbly legs. He rushed toward the direction of the voice, not minding the pain traveling throughout his whole body with each step he took.

She followed him, however, before sighing and taking out her sword. "We really shouldn't waste time with this. If you are feeling fine, then let's just keep running from this place."

"You don't have to follow me if you don't want to. I'm not forcing you to come with me, I can go alone," Emery said before clenching his jaws.

Emery kept his mouth shut and focused on his objective. He started to run and after a hundred steps or so, he finally saw Mags and Cole cornering a bloodied man fire sitting on the ground.

That man had his clothes ripped with blood stains on whatever was left of his shirt. His hair was disheveled, looking like someone who had just stepped off a battlefield.

The same as what Emery had seen from the man in red armor, this man on the ground had a distinguishing characteristic that clearly told he wasn't a human like them. Apart from the pale skin, free of freckles and unique gleaming eyes, this man's pointed ears were almost twice the size of a human's.

"Cole... what's happening here?" Emery said, his voice's tone low.

Cole had his spear on top of the bloodied man's neck while Mags stood behind the man with her staff readied. He turned to see Emery but didn't even try to explain himself. "Dispel your magic, Mags."

"This elf is dying. We should report him to the higher-ups and let the one in charge decide on what to do with him," Mags said, making her staff glow brighter.

"By killing it we can get the contents of its ring. Now stand down and let me finish this filthy thing," Cole said, greed apparent in his eyes.

"Elf?" Emery said unwittingly.

"You don't even know what an elf is? You're worse than I thought," exclaimed Silva before placing her sword in front of her. "Elves are humanity's mortal enemies. This is one of the reasons why the academy was founded."

Emery finally understood why Cole was acting like this over the bloodied elf. However, Emery wouldn't forget what Cole had done to him and Silva. Still that didn't stop Emery from warning them of what they had just experienced. "Much as I hate you for leaving me and Silva to die, we shouldn't waste time and get out of here. Fatty and Topper had been killed by a man who looks like him, so I am sure he is linked to whatever is happening now."

Cole's lips curled downwards. His face got darker as he pulled back his spear seemingly ready to strike with more force. "You heard him, Mags. I'll kill this wretched thing."

The injured elf suddenly coughed blood and hunched over. He opened his eyes and said, "Little human kids, you all should leave before they come for me."

Cole shouted and thrust his spear toward the elf's skull but a simple wave of the elf's hand warded off Cole's spear to the side.

"Too slow, kid," the elf said before suddenly vanishing and appearing behind Cole. He touched Cole's shoulder and said with a knowing look, "But hmm... your physique is not half-bad and there's an ounce of talent. I guess you're acceptable."

After saying that, a light flashed not far from them. It looked like the same teleportation portal but the figure that came out was different from what they had thought.

38 Orcs

Mags and Silva took a step back while Emery glanced at the information showing on his palm.

[Orcs]

[Battle power 50]

"Orcs!" exclaimed Mags as she turned around and ran. However, after taking two steps, blood spilled as she was thrown and stuck to a tree with a spear on her back.

"Krr. Nobody leaves!" an Orc said with his rough and raspy voice.

Then another humanoid creature stepped out from the portal. It had long golden braided hair, pointy ears and a dark cloak. Two more elves came out after the first, one had short dark hair, while the other a brown short hair, and they emitted the same pressure as the elf wearing red armor.

Emery shakingly tried to keep his head straight at them before looking at his palm. However, unlike the orcs, Emery's palm only showed they were elves but the battle power '???'.

When Emery's eyes fell once more at elf in the forward position, the elf glanced back and Emery could feel his whole being held by an invisible force keeping him in place. Not even a slight twitch of his legs or fingers could be done and he could hear Silva was also struggling the same as him.

"Ugh! Your misfortune is rubbing on me! This is all your fault!" Silva said with her gritted teeth.

Emery couldn't say anything, he hadn't expected that whatever the invisible pressure these elves were emitting would also affect his ability of speech. He racked his brain, thinking what could he even do. Not again, he couldn't watch and do nothing. He moved around his eyes, searching for anything or something that could give them at least a chance to escape.

The elves made their way in front of the bloodied elf with the orcs behind them.

"Cin nin eriol... (elvish language) can't you leave me alone for old time's sake?" the elf said, his eyes seemed to have a gloomy light.

"You know it's not possible," the cloaked elf with the golden braided hair said, shaking his head.

The elf sighed. "Then I have no other choice."

Wind converged around them and their surroundings became darker for a moment. The invisible pressure holding back Emery and Silva was lifted off as they were pushed back several steps. A black wisp exited from the injured elf's chest and pushed it in Cole's chest before the elf dropped to the ground with his eyes wide open.

"GRAAA!" one of the orcs grunted as he jumped to the side. However, the black orbs followed the orcs and they tried to deflect it with their weapons. It didn't prove effective and when one of the orbs touched one of the orcs, the orc shook slightly before falling lifelessly on the ground. Only a few seconds

had passed but three orcs were dead. The three cloaked elves, however, stood still, unfazed. They were chanting something underneath their breaths as the orbs flew toward them.

The cloaked elf in front raised his hand, creating a mirror like liquid substance that halted the black orbs in its path. The black orbs shook violently but no matter how hard it tried, it couldn't escape the liquid substance.

Another elf summoned a staff from his ring and a bolt of lightning shot to Cole. More bolts of lightning darted at Cole but he repelled all of them with a simple wave of hand. The lightning struck the nearby trees, knocking some of them down and some succeeded in lighting up a whole tree on fire.

An orcs charged Cole with their weapons held high but with a simple gesture, the lightning bolts were swayed and incinerated the orcs instead.

The smell of charred rotten meat wafted in the air as Emery watched and believed that this Cole was different from the Cole they had known.

Seeing an opportunity, the third one disappeared from sight before reappearing behind Cole. Cole was half-expecting it and managed to jump out of the third elf's two knives, however, the elf dispersed like smoke and revealed himself once again behind Cole, managing to cut off Cole's two legs.

Cole plummeted on the ground and the elf sat on top of him before plunging the knives in his shoulders. He screamed as the orbs spun stronger and flew toward his direction but lightning strikes erupted again from the staff of the second cloaked elf, deflecting the orbs. The elf sitting on Cole withdrew his knives before stabbing again, making Cole lose consciousness.

When the energy emitting from Cole pressure was starting to diminish, Emery managed to take one step forward, however, the elf, who seemed to be the leader, struck another gaze at him and Silva, disabling them from moving once more.

"Take him," the first cloaked elf said to an orc that just walked out of the portal, his voice seemingly unconcerned.

The orc grabbed Cole by the uniform and dragged him back to the portal, leaving a line on the ground. Meanwhile, the other two elves approached their leader.

"That is more effortless than I thought," the elf with the staff said.

"We are fortunate he has been fighting with Agis for days and we managed to catch him when he had just moved to another body," the elf with the knives said, sheathing his daggers before pointing at the dead elf. "What about this one?"

The first cloaked elf moved closer. Emery couldn't help but notice the darkness in his eyes and heavy tone as he said, "It's now an empty vessel. Just... leave him here..." He turned around and said in almost like a whisper, "Namariel."

"What about them?" asked the elf with knives pointing at Emery's

"We have no use for them. Kill them all."

39 Live saving Items

"Emery, if you have any life saving items. It's now the time to use it!" Silva shouted as she summoned a triangle pendant with a round purple gem in the middle.

Emery could only laugh inwardly, he was just a lowly noble from a lowly family in a lowly world. Never mind life saving items, he didn't have any useful objects at all.

The elf with the staff didn't say much and waved his staff, shooting a line of lightning in their direction.

Silva lifted the triangular pendant; it lit up as she said, "Ye my queen dowager grant me your protection!"

The necklace floated in the air and released a wave of energy that made a spherical shield with them two inside, deflecting the lightning bolt toward a nearby tree. After she had done so, Silva coughed blood but kept on chanting with gritted teeth the same mantra over and over keeping them safe from the continuous lightning bolts.

"This kid... so troublesome..." The attacking elf clicked his tongue and prepared another bigger lightning strike that made the air surrounding them crackling, which also made Emery and Silva's hairs on the back of their necks stand up with a tingling sensation.

Just then, the dark sky lit by a miniscule amount of moonlight flashed as bright as day momentarily as the earth trembled as if a giant had walked on land.

The cloaked elf with the knives said, "Stop playing around, Ezekiel. If that human magus appears, it'll ruin our chances of escaping. Let's go."

"Fine, Talaro," Ezekiel said with his staff's light diminishing. Soon, the tingling in the air subsided and he, along with the other two elves, entered the portal and vanished with Cole, whose two legs were cut.

The major threats had disappeared into the void of the portal, however, Emery and Silva weren't out of danger yet. Two orcs had stayed behind with a demonic grin on their awful faces, probably thinking of how to chop their two little prey into pieces while caressing their axes and spears.

Granted that with the departure of the elves, whose strength were unimaginable, had made their survival chance increased by a huge margin, these orcs were also not a walk in the garden. Emery and Silva had seen the battle power of these orcs earlier and these orcs still eclipsed them.

"Ugh, it's definitely not my day today! I just used my most precious treasure and almost all of my strength." Silva braced herself and picked up her sword from the ground. "I would have run if I wasn't more injured. Why are you still here?"

"I won't leave you and Mags," Emery said, picking up Cole's spear.

Silva shrugged. "Hmpf! At least you're not a coward. There might be some hope for you." Her eyes kept on switching between the two nearing orcs. "Their battle power is fifty. We will barely have a chance if we work together. Mine's thirty, you?"

"Eleven." Emery said, not even a hint of hesitation. He then saw turn around with her eyes wide open and mouth agape.

Silva said in a high note, "What? Oh my goodness. I changed my mind. You're not brave, only an idiot. We're both gonna die."

The two orcs dashed toward them.

"Entangled," Silva said and the roots nearby didn't waste time and wrapped around the two charging orcs. It was able to stop them from charging, momentarily. The two orcs with their bulging muscles ripped the roots from their bodies. It, however, was enough to give Silva a precious few seconds to drink a bottle of something she had summoned from her ring before throwing the remaining half to Emery. "Drink it now!"

Emery caught the bottle; its strong medicinal scent almost made his stomach turn upside-down, but he pinched his nose and drank it anyway. He tasted the overwhelming bitterness the liquid had but that got taken out of his mind as all his veins responded with a stinging pain.

He rolled on the ground, screaming in pain as his blood boiled. Barely, he saw Silva's appearance changing into having green scales on her otherwise white pale-white skin. Then his hearing became incredibly clear as the sound of what appeared to be a nearby river entered his mind. His sense of smell picked up the scent of the earth and blood that was dripping underneath Mags' body.

A furious wind blew past them and the golden moonlight's rays shone directly on Emery. He managed to crouch gasping for air; the hairs on his body as well as his skin were becoming thicker and thicker. The searing pain in his body was rising and he felt hot all over as if he was being burned alive. His fingernails were growing at a visible rate until its sharpness clutched the soil itself.

[Bloodline activated]

40 Euphoria

Barely left with some sliver of consciousness in him, his palm glowed once more and showed the following:

[Battle power has increased by 25 points]

[Emery Ambrose - Fey Bloodline Activated(Temporary)]

[Battle power 36]

[Spirit power 28]

Fortunately, his consciousness was returning to him as he forced his feeling of rage to calm down. He tried to read over his status once more with a clearer mind but the orcs had already broken free and charged him and Silva with their weapons held high.

The orc with an axe ran straight to him, and in his vision, it felt like the orc's movement was a bit slower than what he had witnessed earlier. He then ordered his body to take one step and stab the orc with Cole's spear but to his surprise, he underestimated his speed and dashed through the orc, crashing to a tree instead.

"Sstop fooling around! Our livesss are at sssstake here!" shouted Silva, whose voice sounded crisp-clear despite the deafening shouting and grunting of the orcs, dueling the other orc with a spear.

The orc with the axe appeared dumbfounded seeing its prey able to pass through him. It turned around and gave chase once more.

Emery's wolf-like ears twitched for a moment as he got up. He clearly hadn't expected crashing against the tree. He needed to get accustomed to his newfound strength first. Once again, Emery dashed forward and after he had somewhat gotten used to his speed, he charged the orc, narrowly missing its axe, before stabbing it to the gut.

What he had was speed exceeding this orc, however, the orc's dense, heavy armor had more than enough sturdiness and thickness to put a stop at the inch-deep thrust Emery had executed, making the spear's vanguard stuck in between in its rock-hard abs and armor.

The orc grinned widely with its large fangs while holding the spear with its overly large hand. Emery's instinct alarmed him of an impending danger and jumped, letting go the spear and dodging the solid punch the orc had released. He withdrew the sword on his waist and slashed down, targeting the orc's head, but hitting the orc's shoulder instead after it managed to sway its head in the narrowest of margins.

A loud bam resounded and Emery crashed once again into another large, old, oaken tree, which remained intact despite the powerful force that had thrown him. Emery coughed out blood and tried to move his trembling, weakened legs while watching the crazed orc running toward him.

He spared a glance at Silva, who on the other hand, had more success in fighting against the orc she was facing, evident by the blood dripping from the countless number of slashes on the orc's armor and face. She still, however, wasn't in the best condition. He could hear very well how she was gasping for air and see how paler she seemed despite being covered with green scales up to her face.

Emery turned his attention back to his orc, who once again felt like an insurmountable giant in his mind. When he tried to get up, Emery felt a smooth rock on the ground. An idea then popped in his mind, it was an old story passed from generations to generations of how a little boy had managed to defeat a man, whom others had feared as an undefeatable warrior. He grabbed the stone tightly in his hairy, claw-like fist, took a deep breath before throwing it with all his might.

The stone cut into the air like a powerful slingshot and hit right in the center of the orc's forehead. It didn't pass through the head but it was enough for the orc to drop onto the ground. Still, Emery could also hear how it was still breathing, grunting and alive.

Silva had seemed to have noticed how Emery had made the orc fall as she issued a powerful slash that pushed back the orc before jumping and landing not far from Emery.

Emery was now regaining back his strength in his legs and took a closer look at the Silva beside him. Her hands and face were filled with green scales and the slit in her eyes appeared more like that of a genuine snake unlike before.

"What is that we just drank?" Emery asked.

"Isn't it obvioussss? It'sss bloodline booster potion!" Silva answered.

"So I do have a bloodline?" Emery asked, tilting his head.

"Of course! Didn't you hear me sssaying I can sssmell it but it wasss weak?"

Emery's eyes then fell on Silva's sword. And even though it had blood all over it, he saw his reflection before exclaiming, "What the! How come I look like that!"

His face still looked a boyish human but he had a sharp fang, furry face with furry ears. Greenish, curly lines also appeared on his face and body.

"Never mind that! Let'sss finish thiss now else the potion'sss effect would disappear in a minute! Do you have any spellsss at all? I remember you having multiple element affinity."

Emery's blank face answered the question by itself as he tried to feel the furry ears on top of his head.

"Oh my goodness!" she screamed. "If we sssurvive thiss you owe me big time!"

Her shout drowned out the thoughts of him looking like a pup, her voice sounded louder even more so with his enhanced hearing. Emery said after releasing his hands on his ears, "That orc on the ground, he's still alive. We should focus on him first while he's still dazed."

Silva nodded. "Okay, thiss iss the last time I can use a ssspell. Don't waste it. Entangled!"

Instantly, a crowd of thick roots wrapped against the orc holding a spear and restrained its movements. Emery and Silva lunged at the orc lying on the ground in two directions.

Silva was still faster than him and arrived first; she was about to strike down when Emery heard a whistling spear slicing the air. The other orc had managed to throw its spear and send it flying toward Silva.

Emery caught the spear in the midst of transit and hurled it back, targeting the entangled orc. He immediately looked back at Silva, however, the orc on the ground had already regained consciousness and had grasped Silva on the neck with its burly hand.

He grabbed his sword tighter and used the momentum of his speed to cut one of the orc's legs, a bit concerned that if he targeted the head, he would slash Silva instead. He succeeded in cutting one of the legs off but that wasn't enough to make the orc release its death grip on Silva, instead the orc tightened its clasp on Silva as it tried to stand on one knee.

Emery saw Silva's face turning purple and at that moment, he knew he shouldn't hesitate anymore. The smell of blood awakened his instincts further as he decided to let the underlying desire he had been wanting to unleash since he had first felt his body become unsettled. Once again he used his speed to jump between the trees to gain more momentum and finally...

Blood splashed across Emery and Silva's faces. The orc's head slipped from its neck and Emery had an air of wildness with his wide, grim, grin. It was his first kill, and surprisingly, he felt nothing but satisfaction.

The orc's grip was released and Silva fell on the ground, coughing hard. Emery was in euphoria, looking up at the flying orc's head. That moment of elation, however, made him forget of the remaining threat.

The other orc had actually caught the spear as well and ripped the roots entangling it while Emery was picking up speed. It managed to sneak up behind them and found this an opportune moment to kill the human who had given it a hard time.

Emery, still in his elated state, looked back at Silva and pulled himself back together just as the orc jumped. "Watch out!"

Silva turned her head, saw the orc and rolled out of the way while Emery lunged in.

Emery managed to stab his sword into the orc's body. however, blood spilled also from his chest. The orc's spear pierced through Emery's body