

## Earths GMagus 171

### Chapter 171: Kinsman

"You are now in the presence of the Champion of the Realm, the one who is named as The Hunter of the Wind, The Bow of the Banished, Lord Izta," said a man clad in armor, who appeared to be the figure's personal guard.

Emery had heard about this Lord title of a Magus. Different from other Magus, combat magus often become commanders in the war with the elves. They tended to have their personal guards and troops under their command, some were even given a place to govern such as the magus in front of him.

The guard continued his words, "Now, move forward and kneel before our Lord, acolytes."

Emery and the others felt compelled to comply when they heard the guard's words and saw the figure who sat on the throne. However, just as they were about to get on their knee, the man on the throne suddenly lifted up his hand.

"There is no need to do so". He then turned his gaze to the side, towards the wall, and said, "You can all leave now"

As soon as the man finished his words, Emery and the others found there were dozens of guards on standby inside the hall, hidden from plain sight. All those guards gave the figure a salute, before they swiftly walked out of the hall. When the figure saw that his guards were all gone, he returned his attention back to Emery and the rest.

"All this secrecy is quite necessary, so don't be too bothered by it".

Emery and the others were confused by the situation. At first, they thought this figure would be imposing and full of authority. Unexpectedly, beyond his crushing aura and the golden armor that could intimidate anyone, the man in front of them looked friendly, at least now.

Klea stepped forward and proceeded to kneel in front of the figure. She then said, "I give my respect to you, Lord Izta. First of all, we want to thank you for the friendly gesture that helped us pass the first stage."

Klea made a gesture behind her back, which prompted Emery and the others to kneel in respect as well. However, the figure just silently raised his hand and Emery sensed a wind breeze passed through him, he felt as if there was a hook pulling him back on his feet. Shocked, Emery immediately turned his head to the others only to find they were the same as him.

"The formality is really unnecessary. You are in the presence of a kinsman" Lord Izta said, while calmly looking at them.

Upon hearing that, Klea was shocked inside, but still kept a calm expression on her face. Still being respectful, she opened her mouth again.

"Kinsman? Lord Izta, may I ask you some questions?"

"Go ahead," he said lightly.

"May I know how you knew about the pyramids? And, please, tell us who you are".

Hearing that, Lord Izta didn't answer the questions immediately. The man looked like he was talking to himself for a moment, before he said, "Ah? Yes. Me and my friend here are truly nostalgic right now. We watched that pyramid being built and finished, it was an amazing experience."

Emery was puzzled when the man said 'his friend here'. Quickly throwing his sight to the surroundings, Emery couldn't see a single shadow inside the hall beside theirs. While he was still confused by the man's words, Julian said something, "The pyramid of Giza was built more than 2 millennia ago, which means that Lord Izta is..."

As if the truth was revealed in front of them, Lord Izta looked at Julian and said, "You're right. It has been over 2.000 years now, it has been that long." Returning his attention back to Klea, "And yes, young lady. I have been known with many names, too many that I have now lost track of most of them"

Lord Izta suddenly turned silent as he thought for a while. He then started talking to himself again. "What was it called again? Do you remember?" he said.

Lord Izta's behaviour made everyone confused. They then noticed he seemed to talk as if there was someone standing next to him.

"Yes, a long time ago people called me as the mighty hunter that defied god" Lord Izta muttered. But then, he finally looked at them again and said, "However, it was a long time ago. Thus, it's not important. What's important is that all five of you are finally here."

The behavior of the man in front of them looked even stranger. Emery and the others were all even more confused. Lord Izta stood up from his throne and stepped forward. He then vigorously said, "You reached the Top 10! Amazing... Wow!"

Those words full of energy slightly made the wind blow and the floor shake. Seeing the phenomenon, Emery couldn't help but think if this was the strength of mere magus.

"At first, I thought it would have been good enough if all of you could reach the top 50. But with the fact you are top 10, we might have a chance."

'We might have a chance?' everyone beside Lord Itza thought. The words echoed and repeated in their mind as they were confused by them.

"Yes, although at the moment you are all too weak to pass through the second stage."

Hearing that, Thrax immediately rebuked. "I disagree. We are very confident that we can make it!"

"Confident, huh?" Lord Itza walked closer to them and asked, "How much do you actually know about the second stage?"

"Not much, lord. Just the fact that it was supposed to be a battleground between 3.000 top acolytes." Julian answered.

Lord Izta approached Thrax and began to walk around him. "So... Where does your confidence come from?" he asked.

"Our bravery and strength, of course!" Thrax exclaimed.

"Just another dumb muscle aren't you!" Lord Izta berated.

That word surprised Thrax. Seeing the reaction, Lord Izta continued his words. "Don't get me wrong, young man. I relate to you the most in my younger days. However, it is true that all of you are indeed weak." Before Thrax could say anything, the man beat him to it.

"I saw your fight and even though it's impressive, the reason all of you managed to win was only because of your teamwork and tenacity."

While walking past the others, he added, "But your strength is nothing special. In my eyes, without the equipment, you all wouldn't even have made it to the top 50"

Thrax, who was annoyed by the man's harsh words, loudly said, "So, you are saying we wouldn't win without the spirit stone you gave us?!"

Upon hearing that, Lord Izta calmly shifted his gaze to Thrax. Immediately, Thrax felt a pressure descend on him which made his knee weak.

"No, not so hostile, will you? And no, even though it's actually true, that's not what I am saying." Lord Izta continued, "I am saying the second stage, the battleground, will forbid the participants from bringing any kind of equipment."

Emery and the others were startled when they heard that. This was the first time they heard this rule, as they haven't had the chance to read the details of the second stage.

"The second stage will be all about your personal strength. So, did you understand? If not, let me make it easy to understand." Eyeing the five acolytes in front of him, Lord Izta slowly said, "All of you are in big trouble. Not just five of you, but the other acolytes as well."

"But it will be 5 against 1 battle between us and the elites, right? It should be possible." Julian said.

Hearing that, Lord Izta laughed. "You seem like a clever kid but apparently, you're not." His gaze turned sharp, "I have been in thousands of real life and death battles, and it's never really that simple, boy."

"First, the winners will be selected based on their personal point. Thus, I'm sure you aren't naive enough to trust your classmates and put your back on someone you barely know. Second, let me ask you something. Why do you think the elite acolytes didn't participate in the first stage? With their strength, it would have been easy for them to sweep the competition and earn a sum of contribution points. So, why?"

Thinking for a while, Emery hesitantly replied, "Because they already received more than that?"

"Exactly! The amount they received was much more compared to yours."

"That's not fair! What is this?" Thrax asked.

Glancing at Thrax, Lord Izta said, "Well, it never is, young man."

"From the beginning, the academy never really cared about the acolytes who were in the normal classes, that's why it was called the fortunate class. 2000 years ago, me and my friends were also facing

the same situation as you. You could even say the fortunate class only exist to serve as practice mates and grinding stones for the elite class' acolytes."

Emery and his friends were shocked when they heard that. The shock was then replaced by anger at their unfair circumstances.

Looking at the man in front of them, Klea asked, "Will you please guide us, Lord Izta?"

Lord Izta was silent for a moment before starting to talk to himself again. Emery and the others could faintly hear him say, "So, you really think we should help them, my friend Enkidu?"

Lord Izta then looked at Emery and the others. "Yes, of course. Obviously, we will help you. We have waited hundreds of years for this chance."

## **Chapter 172: Not Enough**

In the middle of a large training field, one could see several young teenagers fighting against a man clad in a golden armor. The man looked very relaxed as he effortlessly dodged, blocked and deflected all the attacks the teenagers threw at him. On the other hand, the teenagers continued to try their best to land a hit on the man.

[Fire Infusion]

\*Blaze\*

Burst of blazing flames appeared on the sword's surface as it made its way to the man in golden armor. Specks of ember trailed in the air as the blade headed towards the man's body, attempting to injure him.

Seeing the incoming attack, the man decided to dodge the attack by doing small steps to the back. The small steps served as a disruption towards the swing's rhythm, enabling the man to find an opening in the attack. The man immediately took the opening and calmly deflected the slash.

\*clank\* \*clank\*

"All at once" the man said calmly.

At the same time the man finished speaking, pitch black thorny vines suddenly rose from the ground beneath him. The vines immediately crept up the man's legs, immobilizing it.

[Dark Root Binding]

Thanks to those vines, the man's movement was momentarily hindered as his legs were bound to the ground. In a split second, two spells were seen approaching as they shot through the air towards the man.

[Thunder Bolt]

[Spirit Missile]

As the spells were fired, one could see erratic streams of lightning current and a missile-like of condensed spirit energy headed towards the immobilized man. The spells hit the man straight to the chest as his body jerked back.

A moment later, the man was finally able to free his legs from the vines. However, just as the man took a single step, a continuous spear strike appeared and struck him from behind.

[Vicious Barrage]

The metallic glow that was emanating from the bronze spear shone brightly as the spear stabbed the man continuously. The strike was so fast, that it left several afterimages of the spear.

Receiving the continuous attacks, the man shouted, "Not enough!"

It appeared Emery and his friends' repeated attacks were not enough in the eyes of Lord Izta. The man even asked for more when he received the attacks directly.

Hearing the dissatisfied shout, Emery once again immediately casted [Dark Root Binding] on the man, in order to restrain the man's movement. This time, Julian, whose attack was parried earlier, put his hand on the ground.

Pouring all the energy he could muster, Julian immediately chanted the [Mud Wall] spell. And in a split second, when the man's movements were restrained again, a wall of clay immediately rose from the ground as it surrounded all parts of the man except for his head.

Emery used his [Fey Transformation] and stomped his legs as he dashed towards the man along with the others.

[Strength Up] [Shadow Self] [Dark Infusion] [Thunder Bolt]

All the attacks were targeted on the man's head.

BOOM!

Dust rose as the mud wall was destroyed into smithereens by the attack's impact. When Emery and the others could see the man again, they saw he was standing there with an ax larger than his body in his hand.

Raising his ax, the man lightly swung it towards their direction, hitting nothing in particular.

\*SWISH\*

The light swing unexpectedly generated strong wind currents that were coming towards Emery and his friends. When the wind current hit them, they could feel their bodies being blown away, as they felt a pain like thousands of tiny knives piercing their skin.

All five of them tried their best to hold their ground as they were hit by the wind by stamping their feet into the ground. Unfortunately, they were thrown one by one, starting with Klea, who was physically the weakest and then Chumo.

The shield-wielding Thrax also quickly followed their steps, as his body flew in the air. Only Emery and Julian were left trying to defend against the current. Julian used his [Mud Wall] to create a wall in front

of him and his shield to block the wind, while Emery used his [Granite Skin] to protect his body against it.

But not long after, the wall was destroyed which exposed them to the wind directly. Despite that, the two of them still insisted on holding their ground. Emery was still with his [Granite Skin], while Julian used [Stone Skin] for extra protection.

Emery was very confident in the prowess of his [Granite Skin], but, maybe because Julian also used a shield to defend himself, Emery's spell was broken first, sending him thrown backwards just like the others. A moment later, Emery was followed by Julian.

"Alright, that's enough" Lord Izta exclaimed as he stored his ax.

Currently, Emery and his four friends were training at the training ground behind Lord Izta's palace. The reason they were doing so was to let Lord Izta know the firepower and endurance from each of them.

In the end, none of their attacks were capable of leaving a mark on this magus, much less injure him. Instead, they all were thrown and fell with one strike.

"Okay, gather up everybody." Lord Izta said.

He then muttered, "Not too bad, right? I think we were not that much better at that time."

Seeing the weird sight again, Emery couldn't help but ask, "I'm sorry, Lord Izta. But, who are you talking with?"

"Oh?! Him? Don't mind him. He's just my old friend who still bothers me," Lord Izta said, while pointing to his side.

Seeing the empty air, Emery and the others were pretty sure that the man in front of them had a mental disorder. No wonder they were a little worried. Not noticing the gaze he received, Lord Izta said, "Alright, I don't have much time so listen carefully."

In no time, Lord Izta could find out their advantages and disadvantages and explained it to them.

"Other than this idiot here, all of you have below average battle power!" said Lord Izta while pointing at Thrax. "You should make some time to increase your battle skill with the wooden puppet in order to receive more battle power."

"Me too?" Klea asked, surprised.

"Especially you."

Emery then opened his mouth, "Lord Izta, wouldn't it better to focus on our spirit force to become a great magus?"

"You're half right. But one hundred percent wrong!"

Emery was confused when he heard the contradiction in the man's words. Sometimes the words the magus spit out made no sense.

"You need a certain amount of battle power to become a great magus. Actually, this is a very basic requirement to become a great magus. It's very crucial to know this fact but most acolytes neglected it. I'm also sure that all those acolytes in the elite class were taught the same."

Baffled by the explanation, Emery said, "I'm sorry, Lord Izta. I don't understand. Please explain to us."

"I saw your fight yesterday, where all of you were already wasted after only casting a few spells."

"Lord, isn't it because our spirit force is limited?"

"Half right, one hundred percent wrong!" Lord Izta said again.

Seeing the puzzled expression on their face, he continued, "Your battle power is the reflection of your physical status, the vessels of your spirits. Now, if you imagine the spirit force is like water in a jar, where having a high spirit force might make you able to consume the water more efficiently. You will even be able to enlarge the capacity of the jar with a big enough spirit force."

"However, if your battle power, which is your jar, is weak. Then your condition will be like a jar made of a very thin fabric, that can easily be ripped apart. If that's true, how will you be able to increase the size of your spirit?"

"It will be difficult and problems will always arise on the road. Therefore, having a high battle power is very important especially during your early stages. Do you all understand?"

Hearing this, it seemed that Klea was enlightened. Meanwhile, Thrax, who didn't get called out having low battle power, smirking proudly. Realizing that, Lord Izta immediately poured cold water on him.

"What are you smirking about? You're the worst of them all!"

"Me? Why? Didn't you say-" Thrax asked, clearly confused.

"Even though you have a higher elemental aptitude than that innocent guy over there, why have you still not mastered any tier 3 spell at all?"

"I-I-I want to become a great combat magus!" Thrax exclaimed, raising his hand in the air.

"Great combat magus? I am a combat magus champion and I think you are a fool!"

Thrax froze, unable to find any reply.

Emery said "Lord Izta, please guide us."

"Alright then, I will first explain the difference between a combat magus and spirit magus."

### **Chapter 173: Combat Magus**

Every person with an aptitude in magic would be able to sense the Weave. Naturally, the better their aptitude, the better and faster they would sense it. The Weave was the powerful fabric magus accessed in order to cast their spells. Two methods to access it were either by internal means, grabbing it using their personal understanding, or by other external means, where they took advantage of artifacts or divine beings.

Any magic practitioner would be able to sense the Weave and nurture it into his or her spirit core.

There were two types of magus, a combat magus and spirit magus. A spirit magus was a magus who simply used the power of spirit to cast myriad types of spells, ranging from offensive, defensive and even auxiliary.

Meanwhile, the combat magus was an extreme opposite of the spirit magus. They were practitioners that channeled the spirit into other means: a technique or the physical body of the user itself. It was similar to enchantment magic, but it always conjoined with certain techniques.

Eyeing the five puzzled acolytes in front of him, Lord Izta asked a question that brought them into deep contemplation.

"If both types of magus are of the same rank and the same level of spirit force, which one would overpower the other?"

Thrax immediately chose the combat magus when he heard the question, which earned him a passive gaze from the magus champion. Meanwhile, the others kept their mouth shut as they continued thinking about it. Emery, on the other hand, replied with an answer that said neither,

Emery believed the ability to determine and use the right choice of spells at the right moment was the most important factor that decided the outcome of the fight.

Hearing Emery's answer, Lord Izta exclaimed, "You're one hundred percent right!"

"Ha! This one kid is quite clever, isn't he?" Lord Izta said, talking once again with his imaginary friend.

Returning his attention back to them, he energetically said, "The combat magus usually excel in prolonged battles. Most combat magus champions can fight non-stop for months without the need to rest. They can stay much longer in battle, because they use both their spirit power and stamina to maintain their skills."

Upon hearing this, Thrax's eyes lit up, as he grew even more excited.

"What about the spirit magus, Lord Izta?" Klea asked in curiosity.

"Practicing a combat magus technique is not an easy matter, whereas if you have no talent in it, you will never master it no matter how hard you try. However, the same could be said on mastering a spell."

"Mastering a spell?!" asked Klea in confusion as she didn't even think that she could 'master' a spell.

"Ha! I'm surprised that a talented girl like you still hasn't figured this out. It's truly a wonder how you all can become the top 10. All of you are truly in need of help, badly."

Lord Izta then beckoned Julian to come closer and used his [Stone Skin]. Scanning Julian's body, the magus said, "Even though you have dual affinity, I can tell that you are practicing your earth element much more than your other element."

"You are right, Lord Izta. I indeed prefer my earth element more as I find it much easier to understand."

Lord Izta then reminded them of the previous test that they did, where the [Granite Skin] spell that Emery used, which was a tier 3 spell, appeared not much stronger compared to the [Stone Skin] Julian used. When the five of them heard that, they realized what the magus said was true. Even though Julian



indeed had a shield at that time, the tier 3 spell [Granite skin] which should be superior to [Stone Skin] did not show too different a result.

Pointing his finger at Emery, Lord Izta said, "You, my boy. Is a very fortunate person, to have 4 affinity elements. However, your four affinity will also be the reason for your downfall. It's indeed true that having more elements means more options for magus to choose. However, it's also true that by having 4 different elements, your attention will be split up between them which will result in a half-hearted result."

"Therefore, you must choose one element over the other, or just master a certain spell from your many elements. This will allow you to focus your concentration when practicing, thus producing better outcomes."

The words spoken by Lord Izta were like a splash of water to his face, which made Emery see the direction in developing his skills and skill repertoire.

Seeing that, Lord Izta opened his mouth again, "You see... Now, it's really your choice on whether you use your time to study battle art technique or mastering spells. In the end, a suitable approach is the one that will decide the winner between the combat magus and spirit magus."

Lord Izta then suddenly looked a little gloomy. However, he quickly schooled his expression and turned towards Thrax.

"Now, let me tell you the reason why I say that you are a fool for focusing only on combat technique and neglecting the mastery of any tier 3 spells."

"The ratio of combat magus who can reach the grand magus level compared to spirit magus is 1 to 100. I used to think the same as you, that spells weren't important, thus I didn't improve my mastery over spell. And now, look at me, young boy. I have been a magus for over 2.000 years and always unable to achieve breakthroughs. Do you understand what I mean here?"

Hearing the information that had just been revealed to them, Emery and the others were thinking hard about the path they would choose, especially Thrax.

Seeing their serious expression, Lord Izta couldn't help but say, "You can slowly think about this matter later. As for now, you all should start by improving your physical bodies. Now, I will set a training regime for all of you, and don't you dare disappoint me. I expect that after being trained by me, you must reach that top 500 at all costs!"

Lord Izta then instructed them all to practice using combat puppets and chose at least one battle art to learn.

For Thrax, Lord Izta drove him to the fire institute to master one of the fire spells. Only after he succeeded that Thrax would be allowed to come back here.

Currently, Emery was once again faced with a familiar wooden puppet. Staring at this puppet, he thought, 'I think it's a good opportunity to think of a suitable combination of weapons for me.'

#### **Chapter 174: Choose your Weapon**

The wooden puppets were the best facility the combat institutes offered to its members. It was a facility that enabled acolytes to have the perfect sparring partners to practice their techniques. The puppets would adjust their battle power to equal that of its opponent. Furthermore, when one was using the facility they would be restricted from using any kind of spells. Therefore, the acolytes had to defeat the puppet using only their techniques and skills.

The puppet would also choose the same weapon as the opponent, so it could also act as a weapon instructor, due to the fact that the puppets brought out and displayed the full essence one's weapon could have.

Lastly, the facility would also give a reward each time the acolytes managed to clear a level. The reward could be in the form of weapon skills used in battle or essence that could increase a fighter's strength.

At the moment, the four of them were tasked to confront these wooden puppets in order to increase their strength.

Eyeing this familiar puppets, Emery remembered that the last time he tried this facility, he had only managed to finish up to level 3 before he fell unconscious. At the moment, Emery was watching Chumo and Julian fight the level 5 wooden puppets. As for Thrax, the bull currently went to the fire institute.

Shifting his gaze away from his two friends, Emery saw Klea who just stood there awkwardly, as she didn't know what to do. Chuckling in his mind, he immediately walked towards her. After all, this was the first time Klea tried these wooden puppets. She had indeed heard of the combat institute's combat puppets, but she had never actually seen them, let alone used them.

Seeing Emery approaching, Klea smiled and quickly said, "Emery, can you help me with this? What should I do actually?"

Smiling faintly, Emery replied, "Well... First, you have to choose the weapon you want to use. Do you have any weapon that you like or you have learnt before?"

Thinking for a moment, Klea said, "Hmm... I never- Hmm... Aaa! I don't know... I don't really like seeing blood, you see."

Hearing that, he thought it shouldn't be hard for Klea to use the same type of weapon she was currently using: a staff. Therefore, Emery recommended her to choose the blunt weapon path and pick the staff as her weapon.

Klea nodded her head when she heard Emery's suggestion. "Alright, Emery. I'll give your suggestion a try then. Thanks, Emery."

"Anytime," Emery lightly replied, while waving his hand. She then immediately went ahead and practiced her new weapon.

After helping Klea, Emery's thoughts turned back to find a type of weapon that could be suitable for him. Julian seemed to be firm with his choice of shield and sword, Chumo looked comfortable with his bow and short sword. As for Thrax, although he was not here at the moment, he was definitely adamant with the spear and shield.

Previously, Emery had only used a sword as his main weapon. Therefore, after thinking for a while, he planned to use a secondary weapon just like the others. Making up his decision, Emery immediately accessed the panel.

[Choose your weapon]

"Sword"

[Choose type of swords]

[Short sword, long sword, one-edged sword, broadsword, rapier, great sword, ...]

Without hesitation, Emery immediately chose, "Long sword."

Now, Emery could be seen wielding two swords. After swinging the two swords for a few moments to get used to them, he immediately began fighting against a wooden puppet.

Even though Emery was quite confident in his sword skills and also felt he could use both of his hands well, he strangely felt something was limiting him when he used both swords simultaneously in battle.

Luckily, despite the strange feeling restricting him, Emery still managed to beat the level 4 wooden puppet. This happened thanks to the fighting experience he had accumulated for the past year, which greatly helped him to beat the puppet, albeit barely.

[Congratulations, the level 4 combat puppet was defeated]

[Received 2 battle power]

Seeing the almost pyrrhic victory against the level 4 puppet, Emery wasn't sure he would be able to win against the level 5 combat puppet, at least not now. However, he still tried it and just like he predicted, he was beaten up and lost miserably.

Lord Izta walked over to Emery after he saw the boy getting beaten up by the puppet and laying on the ground, exhausted and breathless.

"Kid, why are you choosing two swords?"

Startled by the sudden question, Emery stuttered, "I-I'm not sure actually..."

"Huh?! You aren't sure?" Lord Izta asked with an incredulous expression. "This kid doesn't have a clue! Hahaha, that's hilarious."

"I hope you are not one of those people who doesn't mind losing as long as they look cool, kid."

Hearing the accusation, Emery immediately replied, "No, Lord Izta. I just... I wish to be a swordsman, but I don't find the shield to my liking."

Lord Izta gave him a weird look when he heard Emery's answer. Squatting down his body, he said, "Listen here, kid. When you choose a weapon it's not about you the wielder, but about the weapon itself. It doesn't matter if the weapon is a short sword, longsword, broadsword, or even rapier. Each of them has their own advantages and disadvantages and it is the wielder responsibility to optimised them"

Standing up and looking at Emery, he continued, "You can choose any weapon you want and unleash its potential. And to do so, you have to make sure that you understand the weapon inside and out."

Hearing the magus' words, Emery more or less understood what he meant. However, he couldn't help but ask the most important question right now.

"So... is using two sword alright?"

"Of course not!"

"..." Emery was confused again.

"What I said earlier applies to your main weapon. If we are talking about the secondary weapon, its purpose is to enhance and support the main weapon that you use. Therefore, choosing another sword as your secondary weapon isn't really the wisest choice."

Lord Izta then took out a sword and began swinging it.

"Shield is the best secondary weapon for one-handed weapons, while another long sword is the lowest ranking option. It's just not practical. It might be fun to use them to slaughter hundreds of weak opponents. However, you are currently looking for a way to increase your skill and defeat stronger opponents, not killing enemies for fun.

Although Lord Izta was a combat magus, who specialized in Ax and Bow, as a champion who had lived more than two thousand years, he had mastered the basics of all 10 paths of weapon. He was the best teacher one could wish to have, especially when choosing a weapon.

"If you truly wish to do a dual wielding, you are much better off by choosing a shorter secondary weapon, like a short sword, dagger, or hand ax."

Lord Izta then proceeded to show the difference and advantages of following and not following his suggestion. With a shorter secondary weapon, Emery could use it to parry the enemy's attacks as he moved closer to them and then, using the reach the long sword gave to defeat them. This was just one of the combinations Emery could choose with a short and long weapon. There were still many more possibilities Emery could unearth and master.

"If you still wish to dual wield using two swords of the same length, then I suggest you choose a one edge sword, instead of a longsword. If you can master them, there is a battle art technique that uses these two types of swords named [Whirlwind], which is quite noteworthy."

"Lastly, if your goal is to deal more harm by using two sword instead of one, then you should consider a broadsword or greatsword."

Looking at Julian and Chumo who were working hard, Lord Izta said his last explanation.

"In the end, the matter is about the characteristic of the weapon itself, not you.

Returning his attention to Emery, who still laid on the ground, he asked, "Do you understand now?"

"I do, Lord Izta."

Nodded his head, Lord Izta said, "Good, now show me what you can do."

## Chapter 175: Technique

The Lord Izta left the training ground at the moment and left Emery and the others to practice on their own. The task is to find the weapon of choice.

Emery was sure he would always choose a longsword as his main weapon of choice. Since he was a child, it always had been his long-awaited dream to become a knight who fought with swords, just like his father. The sight of his father training his swordsmanship at their house's courtyard was etched deeply in his mind. And even though he was now a magus, Emery had never forgotten about this dream.

However, the same couldn't be said with the choice of his secondary weapon. The choice won't be that easy. Emery's lack of understanding of any other weapon besides the longsword made him really careful on this matter.

Shield, short sword, small ax, dagger, and dual wielding of two longswords. There were the 5 weapons listed in his mind that he wanted to try and get a feel of. Emery was certain he would use this opportunity to not just increase his strength, but also to find his choice of secondary weapon.

And to do so, Emery decided to fight against the level 5 combat puppet using the longsword and every one of the possible secondary weapons listed one after the other. This would let him know their advantages and disadvantages and also help him determine which one would fit him best.

[Combat Puppet - Level 5]

First, Emery used the dagger to fight the puppet. At level 5, this combat puppet started showing advanced techniques of dual wielding. Observing and experiencing the technique, Emery could really tell the benefit of using shorter weapons. By using the dagger as a secondary weapon, he could really learn the technique to use a shorter weapon effectively.

Unfortunately, just before Emery could really understand the essence of dagger fighting, he was defeated. He only managed to last for a few minutes against the puppet.

When he was about to repeat the course again, Emery suddenly heard a loud cheer coming from the next court.

"Kyaaa!!! Yeay!! I did it!" someone screamed.

Apparently, Klea had won against the first level combat puppet and had received her very first reward. Klea was smiling brightly when she looked at the reward she earned. The boys quickly approached and congratulated her.

"Congratulations, Klea. I didn't expect you to clear the first level so fast." Julian said in amazement.

Nodding his head, Emery added and smiled, "The second level will be much more difficult, but don't be discouraged and go for it, Klea. Give it your best."

"Aaa... I'm not sure about that. I don't think I can, guys." Klea said, while her legs squirmed.

Klea then started her fight against the second level puppet, while Emery, Julian, and Chumo continued their struggle against the level 5 combat puppets. However, much to their surprise, another scream was heard.

"Kyaaa!!! I did it again! Second level completed!" Klea exclaimed, as she started jumping up and down happily.

The three boys were a little dumbfounded when they saw how fast Klea cleared the levels. Glancing at the time, they realized it had only been less than one hour since she had cleared the first level. However, they were still happy for her and once again congratulated her.

Just when they thought there was no way Klea would finish another level that fast again, reality slapped them on the face, when they heard another scream an hour later. This time they were truly flabbergasted by this friend of theirs.

"Boyssss! I'm now level 4! How great is that?.. it seems i am really lucky"

"..." Lucky? There's no such thing as luck when fighting against this combat puppet. The trio could only look at each other silently, while their gazes exchanged conversations.

"Did she say she never practiced combat before?" Julian said, while Chumo nodded his head as if saying, "That's exactly what she said."

Suddenly, the three boys started to feel worried in their minds thinking the same thing. Concerns about this monstrous talent of their friend and the possibility of her chasing in their expertise.

"There's no way I will let Klea chase me in combat technique. Let her be the queen of spells, but not queen of combat as well!"

Nodding their heads at once, the three boys immediately went to their court and jumped into the course again. Even though they were anxious about Klea nearly reaching their level, deep down inside they were really happy for her.

-

Returning back to the combat puppet, Emery himself was still struggling on deciding his secondary weapon. In the past hours, he had tried all the secondary weapons, from dagger to ax and then to the short sword. Trying out these different weapons definitely made Emery realize his basics were still lacking.

When people fought using a weapon, there were three basic attacks one could do: slash, thrust and strike. Meanwhile, the three basic defenses were: parry, block, and dodge.

A block was an action of strength using a body, weapon or shield to stop a blow. A dodge was an action of using speed and/or agility to avoid the blow completely. Finally, the parry was an action of using dexterity and finesse to use your weapon to turn aside your opponent's weapon, generally opening them for a counter if done right.

A slashing attack was easy to parry and block, but difficult to dodge. Striking attacks were easy to dodge and block, but difficult to parry, while a thrusting attack was difficult to block, but easy to dodge and parry.

When he tested the ax, the sensation he felt was genuinely new, as it was a complete new weapon for him. After using it for a while, Emery realized the ax was a weapon created for striking and slashing opponents, with no room for thrusting. Emery was sure he liked this ax very much.

The third weapon he tried was the short sword. Now, this weapon was very much similar to the long sword, so Emery's understanding with it had a higher starting point.

Having two swords of different reach, one long and one short made Emery feel the variations, but he still retained his proficiency and familiarity with swords.

Despite his countless failures, Emery kept repeating and training his basic skills, as he fought against the wooden puppet using the best of his ability. Emery was so concentrated on his task that he didn't realize Chumo and Julian had finally passed the level 5 before him.

Even Klea had reached level 5 just like him. However, Emery didn't really care about it anymore. He was currently in deep thought as he absorbed the techniques the puppet displayed. At the moment, in Emery's eyes, there was only him and his sword.

He tried his best observing and absorbing the knowledge of how the puppet utilized its variation with the short sword. He would then apply it to his own technique, before he replaced the short sword with the dagger and proceeded to do the same process of observing, absorbing, and applying. Emery employed this method on the shield as well as the ax.

As Lord Izta suggested, Emery experimented and focused on finding the best match for his longsword and learning to optimize its use. Slowly but surely, Emery was able to fight on par with the wooden puppets using the dual wielding.

When he managed to dominate the puppet using the short sword, Emery would then retry the process using another weapon.

Out of all the five choices. Emery actually preferred the short sword the best, but then he found the dagger to be the most versatile. There was also the fact that he had the mysterious tier 3 dagger in his storage ring that somehow made him think the sword and dagger combination would be the best for him at the moment. But deep down he didn't really wish to choose his future combat style based on the item he presently possessed.

With his increase in weapon proficiency, finally Emery managed to defeat the level 5 combat puppet.

[Congratulations, the level 5 combat puppet was defeated]

[Received 2 battle power]

[Received one battle art skill of your choice]

Seeing the notification, Emery couldn't help smiling and thought, 'Ah... Finally! The battle art skills!'

He then began checking out the available battle art skills he could learn.

There were two main categories of battle arts, one used to enhance his weapon and one used to enhance his body.

[Weapon technique]

[Sword - heroic slash]

[Sword - spinning blade]

[Sword - rending strike]

[Dagger - lunging stab]

[Dagger - hidden blade]

[Dagger - piercing strike]

[Dual- cross slash]

[...]

[Body technique]

[Strength up]

[Speed up]

[Defense up]

[...]

Looking at the list of countless different battle art skills, Emery clicked his tongue and said, "One skill as the reward is definitely not enough."

### **Chapter 176: Legacy**

The sheer number of battle art skills of the combat institute had amazed and numbed Emery's mind. Looking at the myriad kinds of battle art skills, he realized something. From the description the combat institute provided regarding them, Emery could tell sword arts skill relied a lot more on strength, while dagger arts relied more on speed and dexterity.

After thinking about it, this fact gave Emery more reason to choose the dagger as his secondary weapon. Not only would it give his dual wielding greater possibility of variations, but the dagger skill itself could complement and cover the shortcomings of his sword skills.

[Dagger - Hidden Blade]

[Battle Art Skill]

[A dagger technique that allows the user to attack at an increased speed and hides arm movements]

When he saw the full skill description, Emery thought such technique could be useful in so many ways. The only thing limiting it was the user's imagination and creativity.

However, Emery was still not sure if this path was the one he wanted to take. In his mind, sword skills like [Heroic Slash] that would allow him to concentrate all his physical strength into a single slash still looked much more practical.

Luckily, Lord Izta returned to the court right when Emery was confused and needed him the most.

Looking at the four young acolytes in front of him, Lord Izta asked, "So, how is it? Have you all found your weapon of choice yet?"



Julian, who had always been raised and trained with the Roman military training from his father, was determined to use his short sword and large shield. For Chumo, his choice was the longbow and dagger he always used. Meanwhile, Klea was extremely satisfied with Emery's recommendation of using a staff.

Turning his head towards the only one who still didn't speak, Lord Izta asked, "What about you, Emery? What have you decided?"

Emery fell silent as he was still confused about which one he should choose. "Actually, Lord Izta. I still don't know if I should pick a dagger or short sword."

Waving his hand, Lord Izta replied, "That's fine. I was also in the same boat as you. I practiced for dozens of years, changing between many kinds of different weapons, until I finally decided to specialize in bow and ax."

Emery fell into deep thought when he heard that. Meanwhile, Thrax finally returned after spending the whole day at the fire institute to learn a tier 3 spell. The vigorous bull looked a little worn-out at the moment, but besides that he was still good to go.

Seeing that all of them were here, Lord Izta clapped his hand and said, "Right about time! It's good that you all are already here. Now, listen up kids! Due to some urgent matter I have to take care of, I will unfortunately be going somewhere for a while. So, I probably won't be able to see your performance later in the game."

Upon hearing that, everyone's faces looked depressed. Seeing that, Lord Izta smiled and continued his words.

"However, I have a surprise to give you all. In fact, I was going to wait before I gave you this. But, because of the sudden matter, I'm afraid I don't have time to do so. Therefore, to make sure all of you pass the next stage, I will teach you my greatest skill! The result of my years of experience and wisdom!"

Hearing that, the five young acolytes became incredibly excited. They were wondering what kind of skill the magus was going to teach them.

"I'm sure all of you already know about the battle art. You can choose whatever weapon techniques you want. But! For body techniques, all of you only need to learn one art: the one I will now give you. My creation. The 7 Immortal Gates Technique!"

"!!!"

"This technique will give you the strength and boost you need to pass the next stage of the game."

[You have received a battle art technique]

[7 Immortal Gates Technique]

Nodding his head, Lord Izta continued, "Now that all of you have received the manual, follow my lead." He then brought them to the training ground, where they had spar earlier.

After reaching the place, Lord Izta went to a gazebo beckoning them to follow him. Emery and his friends immediately sat cross-legged on the opposite sides of Lord Izta. Seeing all of them were ready, Lord Izta proceeded to explain the method to learn this technique.

This battle art was a combination, using both a breathing technique and spirit force. By channeling spirit force through a specific point area on the body and using the help of the breathing technique, an energy burst would be formed that would allow the user to attain greater strength.

After listening to the magus' lecture, Emery and the others immediately began to practice the technique. Moments later, a notification appeared on their crests.

[You have successfully learned the first stage of Seven Immortal Gates Technique]

[7 Immortal Gate Technique - first stage]

[Battle power increased by 2]

Thrax was disappointed when he saw he only received a total of 2 points of battle power from the first stage. The reason was because the battle art skills [Strength Up] and [Agility Up] he mastered were able to increase his battle power by 10.

Thrax was about to complain to Lord Izta, but decided to not do so when he remembered the things that the magus did for them. However, an hour later he was immediately silenced when he reached the second stage of the 7 immortal Gates Body Technique.

[Battle power increased by 4]

It turned out every time he reached a new stage, the buff given was multiplied. Emery and the others were dumbfounded when they realized the value of the technique they just received.

Looking at the astonished expression they had, Lord Izta opened his mouth again. "The first and second gate should be easy to master. Meanwhile, one needs to be a talented combat magus to reach the fourth stage. As for the fifth stage, not everyone can master it."

Emery and the others could not imagine the strength they would receive from this technique if they reached the 7th stage. No wonder the person in front of them could become a combat magus champion.

Eyeing the magus with admiration, they found said magus once again was talking to himself. "Yes, yes... I did not create it myself. Of course! You had also a part in it."

Emery was truly worried about the condition of the man in front of him.

Realizing he was getting side-tracked, Lord Izta returned his attention back to the five of them.

"Remember! The next stage will be a battle of wits and raw talents. Therefore, you all should increase both of your battle power and spirit power as much as you are able to in the next 9 days, or you will just become cannon fodder."

"Don't disappoint me, kids. I have great hopes for you!"

## **Chapter 177: Spirit Force**

At the moment, they all were still practicing at Lord Izta's palace. The combat magus champion had given them access to the training facilities of his home, letting them use them as they saw fit. He even provided a quarter for Emery and the others to live in during their time there.

Seeing how much effort and trust Lord Izta had placed on them, the group was doing their best to increase their strength, so as to not disappoint the magus. There was no way they would let Lord Izta hear the news of them losing when he came back from his task.

All of them had been currently practicing with the level 6 combat puppets. The one in the lead was still Thrax, who completely exceeded his friends and had been practicing with the level 7 puppet for a while now. Each stage of the puppet was much harder than the previous one.

This time, Emery decided to start practicing using the battle art he picked as the reward: [Battle Art - Heroic Slash]. Since it was a sword-based skill, Emery decided to practice it with two swords: a longsword and a short sword, as he fought the puppet.

The sensation and feeling he felt when he used two swords was truly different compared to when he used sword-dagger combination.

After fighting against the puppet for a while, Emery found out the [Heroic Slash] skill was apparently not easy as he thought. It took him quite some time to be able to perform the skill, and the moment he managed to do so, the strength the slash produced did not appear to be as much as he hoped. However, Emery didn't become dispirited, as he knew it required a lot of practice to master the art.

When Emery was being pushed back by the fierce attacks the puppet displayed, courtesy to its better mastery and technique, he tried to use the [7 Immortal Gates Technique] to suppress it using raw power. Alas, his attempt was backfired at him because the moment his battle power increased, so did the puppet's.

After practising the whole day, even though they had tried their best, none of them were able to advance to another level of the wooden puppets. Emery finally took a rest from the training and decided to reflect on what he needed to prepare for the game.

Thinking about what he had on his plate now, Emery couldn't help but feel a bit overwhelmed. The battle art body technique, the sword skills, his 4 elements; plant, earth, water, and darkness. There was still his bloodline and apothecary he also wished to explore. In short, there were just so many things he had learned along his way to become a magus. Learning them all one by one, Emery didn't realize these things could be so addictive.

With the eight days they had left, and combined with the no-item rule imposed in the game, it meant he could cross out the apothecary from the immediate things he had to do. After all, the advancement exam would not be held until he finished the second stage of the Magus Games. So, he still had enough time and could put apothecary on the side for the moment.

The rules made it obvious the secret, or rather, the requirement of winning the second stage was raw battle power and powerful spells due to the lack of equipment that usually boosted the acolytes' strength.

Emery opened his palm and checked his personal information

[Emery Ambrose]

[16-year-old]

[Battle power: 34]

[Spirit force: 110]

[Plant Spirit - early foundation]

[Water Spirit - early foundation]

[Earth Spirit - early foundation]

[Spirit Core of Darkness - stage 1]

[Fey Bloodline - stage 2]

[Acolyte Rank 6]

Emery imagined that in eight days, he would have defeated the level 6 wooden puppet and would have increased his [7 Immortal Gate Technique] to the third stage. Coupled with his increase in strength when he transformed in his fey form, Emery thought he would have enough battle power for the second stage of the games.

As for the spells, Emery currently had dozens of them. However, he clearly remembered Lord Izta's advice about specialising in a few spells. Hence, he decided he needed to start choosing his main spells.

Among his dozens of spells, he already had one strong defensive spell, the [Granite Skin]; and one strong auxiliary spell, the [Dark Root Binding]. Therefore, he was currently lacking one dependable offensive spell. The most dependable offensive spells he had right now should be the [Enfeeble Blade - Tier 3 Darkness].

To cast a more powerful spell, he would need more spirit force, a lot more than what he had right now. Therefore, the spirit force should be the first thing he had to hone.

Emery wondered if he could reach rank 7 in eight days. If he managed to do so, that would give him and his friends the confidence boost they greatly need. Thanks to Grand Magus Zenoia, Emery now had a 110 spirit force.

Thus, Emery decided his goal would be to attain 150 spirit force and reach rank 7. More importantly, He also needed to increase his understanding over his four elements.

The fastest way to increase spirit force Emery could think of was the spirit serum, while the origin stone rooms were the most optimal place for him to increase his understanding of the elements.

Fortunately, Emery had quite a lot of spirit stones and contribution points saved up.

[Contribution point 10650]

[Spirit stone 16800]

With that amount of stones, Emery could buy 16 spirit serums. It was stated a spirit serum would give a rank 6 and 7 acolyte one to three spirit forces.

With a quick mathematical calculation, he hoped the 16 serum would be enough to increase his spirit force. If it was still not enough, he could only resign to his luck and spend all his contribution points into the stone origin rooms. Emery thought that should do the trick.

With a stronger spirit force, he could cast stronger spells and pass, or even win, the Magus Games. Without further due, later that evening, Emery spent all his spirit stones to buy 16 spirit serums.

Emery entered the place prepared for him in the quarters provided by Lord Izta and started injecting the spirit serum into his body.

Just like before, Emery could feel a wondrous sensation when the serum entered and flowed through his body.

[Increased spirit force by 1]

[Spirit force 111]

"Only one point?" Emery said, stunned. He suddenly had a bad feeling about this. Emery took a deep breath and injected another one

[Increased spirit force by 1]

[Spirit force 112]

Again, only one spirit force.

"Maybe I'm just unlucky. Don't worry, Emery. There's still 14 more." Emery said to himself, as he tried to calm down.

[Increased spirit force by 1]

[Increased spirit force by 1]

[Increased spirit force by 1]

Bewildered by the information he received, Emery tried to check the information of the spirit serum again.

[Spirit Serum]

[Pure spirit stone essence that can increase spirit force of one to three. For rank 6 and 7 acolyte only]

[Increased spirit force by 1]

[Increased spirit force by 1]

Emery's expression fell when he saw the continuous stream of one spirit force. It looked like this result was probably affected by his B aptitude. As if things couldn't get any worse, after a while Emery even started needing to inject two serums to increase just one spirit point. In the end, Emery ended up only obtaining 13 spirit forces out of all his 16 spirit serums.

[Emery]

[Battle power 34]

[Spirit force 123]

"Looking at my situation now... I definitely won't make it to rank 7 before the second stage" Emery said, while sighing deeply.

Alone in his room and late into the night, Emery felt like reality just gave him a slap on the face again. He was once again reminded that from the start, he was not the same as the other acolytes.

Reflecting on everything that had happened, Emery then realized he had been so fortunate: Killgragah, the lady of the lake, Magus Xion, Lord Izta, and of course, his four friends. These people had been helping him so much, without them he would have failed long ago. And then, here he was, thinking he was hopeless.

Emery remained himself he needed to work harder than everyone to become a magus. His shortcomings won't be the reason he failed.

Suddenly, to his surprise, the crest in his hand shone and showed a notification with two messages on it.

[You are invited to take the exam for the Destiny Path institution]

Reading the first part, Emery was both joyful and confused. These kinds of letters were normally received last year, after the power analysis. So, why now?

But then, Emery paused on his track when he saw the second part.

[Destiny Path - The Institute of Bloodlines]

### **Chapter 178: Zodiac City**

[Destiny Path - The Institute of Bloodlines]

[The entrance exam will be held tomorrow morning]

When he received this invitation, Emery did not need to think twice about this. These kinds of things rarely came across and there were plenty of reasons for him to join this institute, especially after he saw the word 'bloodlines'.

First, this institute could give Emery the solution he needed to win the next stage game. Ever since he obtained his bloodline, it had never let him down. The transformation his bloodline had given to him granted him extraordinary raw power without the need of weapons or items. Therefore, Emery believed this was his bloodline's chance to shine even more.

Second, Emery, to this date, was still unable to activate his second stage transformation no matter how hard he tried. Thus, he hopes to find an answer for this problem

The last and most important reason, the institute might have an answer about his true origin. Emery had always wondered about it, wanting to find his origins. He truly needed answers; answers about who he really was and why he was so different compared to the other feys.

Closing his eyes, Emery took a deep breath and went to rest. There was a long day ahead of him.

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As soon as the morning light peeked through the window, Emery immediately got up from his bed and prepared himself for the upcoming exam. Walking out of the palace and through the courtyard, where the five statues stood, Emery once again looked at the information listed in the invitation.

The invitation led him towards an unmarked portal, which would transport him to a secret location. Looking at the portal before him, Emery decided to take another look at the information, lest he went into the wrong one and got lost. After being sure that it was the correct portal, he immediately walked into it.

When he arrived at the other end of the portal, Emery was surprised the sight presented before him was not what he had thought it would be. The location was not in the middle of a mountain, nor deep into a forest. In fact, the place where Emery currently stood was a bustling city, where he could see a view similar to that of the Golden City.

One of the locals, who saw Emery just standing there and looking around, approached him and said.

"Welcome to Zodiac City."

This bustling city was located on a hill by the beach, the city itself swallowed most of the hill making it a unique yet strange sight. Besides, there was something very different in this city, when Emery compared it to Golden City, its inhabitants.

Most of the residents, who filled this city, were not like ordinary people, but rather 'special'. Looking around and observing everything that caught his attention, Emery found the people here had horns, tails, scales, and so on. A sight that was quite intriguing for him.

Emery then stepped out of the portal and began walking through the main road. As he walked, Emery was increasingly amazed by the beauty of this city and the interactions between ordinary people and 'special' people. These people interacted in a friendly manner with each other, truly a harmonious sight to behold.

Along the way, Emery could also spot several giant statues situated on the side of the road. Those statues depicted creatures that looked extraordinary. One of them looked like a tiger with wings on its back, there was also one who looked like a colossal turtle with a city on top of its shell. Looking at these statues, Emery believed there were many more of them spreaded across the city.

"Emery!" Hearing a voice calling his name, Emery turned around to look who it was. In the distance, a white-haired woman with pale skin was walking toward him.

"Silva" Emery felt glad to finally able to see her again.

Scanning Emery from head to toe, Silva crossed her arms and said jokingly, "It has been a year, but I see that you look as stupid as usual, Emery."

Scratching his head, Emery replied with a smile, "Yes, yes. The city is quite overwhelming for me. By the way, this place is amazing!"

"It's alright, I guess." Silva indifferently said, as she stared at the beautiful city. However, Emery could see a small smile on Silva's face when she said that.

Even though it had been a year since that eventful day, the things that had happened in Elder Respite were still crystal clear in Emery's mind. The girl he remembered was always angry and sullen all the time.

"It looks like she has changed." Emery thought, as he smiled faintly and looked at Silva.

Silva realized Emery was looking at her and immediately frowned. "What are you looking at, you dumbwit?!"

'Nope! She is still the same.' Emery thought loudly in his mind.

Waving his hands in the air, Emery said, "I was just surprised to see you smile. That's all."

Upon hearing Emery's reply, Silva was stunned and paused for a moment. But then, she immediately returned to her usual annoyed expression.

"Huh?! I smile because I like it here! Who wouldn't?!" Silva snarled. "In this place, our kind doesn't need to hide themselves."

After thinking for a while, Emery just realized the meaning of 'our kind' in her words.

"Since you are here, I assume that you finally got the invitation to enter the bloodline institute?"

"Yeah... that's exactly what happened."

"I see, I guessed you should have. By the way, I have seen your fight in the first stage. I gotta say that it was... quite interesting. But, don't think that's enough to compare with the elite class."

Hearing the word 'elite class', Emery's eyes lit up as he asked a question.

"Really? Tell me about it then."

Rolling her eyes at Emery, Silva said, "Huh?! You still know nothing, aren't you?" Silva then shook her head and beckoned Emery to follow her. "It's not the time to chit chat. We should head to the gathering area soon. You will see what I mean in there."

Emery nodded his head and followed suit. The two of them walked through the main road, as they went towards the hill summit, where Emery could clearly see a palace standing. As it turned out, the palace wasn't their destination, but it was the towering building right next to it.

Looking at the signboard plastered on the building's gate, Emery could clearly read two words.

[Bloodline Institute]

Emery and Silva then entered the building, as they made their way into a spacious, majestic-looking hall. Emery could see dozens of acolytes standing and chatting with each other. He then noticed there were dozens of figures standing on the top floor of the hall, watching and looking at them with interest.

On the walls of the hall, Emery could see several banners showing symbols that looked like nobles' insignia.



Silva came closer to Emery and whispered something to him.

"I will only tell you this once. Only once. So listen carefully and don't let me repeat."

"Alright, alright. Just say it."

Gesturing with her eyes, Silva said, "You see that guy over there? The one with the hairy body."

Following her glance, Emery spotted the said person. "Uhm. What's up with him?"

"He is Rofos, an acolyte with the Panthera bloodline. He is a rank 7 acolyte. The last intel on him said he had more than 50 battle power, that's even before he transformed!"

Silva then shifted her finger to the other side of the hall. Following the direction, Emery saw a young girl standing and chatting with a burly man. "That girl is Vida. If your weak brain remembers our last year's ranking, she was in the top 5 in both elements and combat ranking. She has a rare bloodline from the bird of prey species."

"And that guy talking with her is Zack, the prodigy, the special one, who was ranked number one. He has a dragon bloodline, so you should never mess with him. He has been nurtured since he was young. Hence, there is no doubt he is the very best among our generation."

Emery gave his best to digest the informations he had just received and remember the faces of those specially mentioned acolytes.

Crossing her hand, Silva turned and looked at Emery. "You see, these are the sort of people you will be competing against in the next game. I've already told you who you should avoid at all costs. The rest will depend on yourself."

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Not long after, a man in grand magus attire walked to the podium. Emery saw that the man had a coiled horn on his head.

"Acolytes of the bloodline heritage. Welcome to the Bloodline Institute."

### **Chapter 179: Bloodline Institute**

When the horned man wearing the grand magus robes walked up to the podium, the hall suddenly turned silent, as everybody stopped their talks and shifted their eyes towards the man. Hundreds of acolytes on the bottom floor, as well as the figures on the top floor, gave the man their attention. Looking at the situation, Emery realized this horned man should be someone extraordinary.

The man looked fairly old, with white hair and beard, plus many wrinkles visible on his face. His figure was a bit skinny, while his back was slightly hunched. If the man was not wearing the magus robe and exuding such an extraordinary aura, Emery was sure many would mistake him for a neighbor's frail and normal old geezer.

Seeing that everyone's attention was on him, the man slowly opened his mouth.

"Greetings, all. I am Esbern, a grand magus and the overseer of the institute. On behalf of King Alduin, I welcome all of you new acolytes to the Bloodline Institute."

Everyone immediately applauded when they heard Grand Magus Esbern's welcome. A few seconds later, Grand Magus Esbern raised his hands and the applause slowly died down.

"Now that the formalities are over, as the overseer it's my duty to tell you a bit about the institute history. From its origin to the purpose it was founded for," said Magus Esbern, while sweeping his gaze across the hall.

The grand magus then began to tell about the 12 mythical beasts that existed thousands of years ago. These beasts were the origins of the bloodlines, thus the ancestor of all half-bloods. He then explained the thousands of years battle between the elves and humans that were still ongoing until today.

During that time, half-bloods were treated as or even lower than slaves. Both humans and elves utilized half-blood as cannon fodder in their war. Only five millennia ago, the half-bloods were officially considered as part of human society.

The Zodiac Kingdom was built for this very reason, to protect and preserve the interest of half-blood people. The kingdom was currently led and protected by King Alduin, the one who became the keeper of the creed. Each year, the Bloodline Institute would choose talented half-blood acolytes to join their cause; the society where human and half-blood would live together harmony, without the prejudice passed down to them by their ancestors.

After explaining all of that, Grand Magus Esbern looked calmly at the acolytes. "Now, if you agree to accept the dream of our predecessor then you may join the institute."

The speech was closed with a thunderous applause from the acolytes and the people on the top floor. Not long after, what appeared to be an acceptance ceremony began.

The floor right in front of the podium, which had a unique symbol carved on, began to open up. A small fountain slowly emerged and showed its appearance. The overseer then got off the podium and walked to the front of the fountain, before he started calling out names.

His crisp and clear voice reverberated in the air as the grand magus opened his mouth.

"Rofos Trigeson."

A young man with red hair and muscular, hairy body stepped forward when the grand magus said that name. When he reached right in front of the fountain, the overseer looked at the young man briefly before proceeding to give him a knife. The acolyte named Rofos calmly made a cut on his palm using the given knife.

There was no change of expression when the young man cut himself. He then placed his hand above the fountain. The acolyte's blood immediately dropped into the fountain. In an instant, the fountain turned blood red.

A few seconds later, the majestic tiger symbol from one of the insignia banners placed on the walls began shining brightly. The sudden appearance of dazzling light caught everyone's attention.

"The Tiger Bloodline!" the overseer exclaimed out loud.

Clamorous noises immediately occurred when everyone heard that. Seeing that, Grand Magus Esbern immediately gestured for silence. After the noise subsided, the grand magus quickly started calling out

names again. One by one, the acolytes were summoned and carried out the same ceremonial procedure.

Silva, who had been standing next to Emery from the start, nudged him and asked, "So, what do you think? Are you going to join the institute?"

Rubbing his chin Emery replied, "Hmm... Well, I guess I will. Based on what I have seen so far, I really like what they are trying to achieve here. To be honest, there are also similar problems in my world too. Being part of creating a world in which everyone lives harmoniously, yes I am in."

Silva chuckled when she heard Emery's answer. Emery immediately turned his head towards Silva with a confused expression when he heard the chuckle. "Anything funny with my words?"

"I knew you would say that, you naive fool," Silva said.

Still with confused expression, Emery asked, "What do you mean?"

"Come on now, Emery. Wake up from your naive dream. There is no such thing as our kind is accepted equally."

Turning her eye towards the ceremony again, Silva continued, "This was just a nice speech, Emery. I also like what the city stands for... but the truth is this city is only a facade for peace between the two races, to let the humans not be scared of our superior being."

Hearing that, Emery was stunned. "This... can't it be that bad, right?"

Silva couldn't but shake her head in amusement. "You are a truly hopeless case, Emery." Crossing her hands, she added, "Believe me. The situation where humans and half-breeds are equal will never happen."

Glancing at Emery, who appeared to be contemplating his choices, Silva continued, "But of course, you will be stupid to not join the institute because of this reason. Out of the 10,000 acolytes in our year, there should be a few hundreds of them who have a bloodline heritage. But look, not even a hundred were invited here."

"Let me tell you one more fact, Emery. Almost all of the acolytes in this hall are from the elite class. You are lucky to get invited."

At the same time Silva finished her words, another renowned name was called out by the overseer.

"Vida Themari."

The young girl who last year entered the top 5 in both battle power and spirit force. After she dropped her blood into the fountain, the bird symbol on the banners glowed brightly exuding silver light.

"The Legendary Bird Bloodline."

Upon hearing that, Silva nodded her head in understanding. "So, she has a legendary bloodline. No wonder she's so strong." Silva said before she returned her attention back to Emery.

Silva then told Emery there were indeed 12 mythical animals in their bloodlines. However, their strengths were not equal and differentiated into tiers.

Pointing her finger towards the insignia banners, Silva said, "You see there? The insignia are separated into 3 tiers, according to their known potential and strength. The top tier are the tiger, the bird, the turtle, and the dragon bloodline. As for the bloodline we have, the serpent and the wolf bloodline, they are placed together with the bat and the goat bloodline in the middle tier. As for the lower tier... there's no need for you to know them, as those who have it generally don't get invited here."

Moving her finger to the top floor, Silva continued, "You see all those people upstairs? They came here to seek talents and recruit them in their group. They are waiting for any top tier bloodliner or any mythical-class bloodline."

At the same time, another acolyte was called out by the overseer. This time, the acolyte was a short man with a slightly chubby body, his appearance didn't look like a fighter at all. When he dropped his blood, an insignia shone brightly with a golden color.

"Mythical Boar Bloodline!"

"Oh? One of those lower tier bloodlines made it, but it's a mythical bloodline. The man might receive invites from those people. After all, a mythical-class bloodline is very rare."

Emery asked Silva why the insignias gave off such different lights. She explained that the brighter the light was, the higher the quality of the bloodline. When the insignia gave off silvery light, it meant that the bloodline was legendary-class. Meanwhile, the golden light indicated the bloodline was mythical-class.

Silva then turned her attention to the mythical guy, to see if there was anyone interested in him. Alas, since the acolyte's bloodline was in the lower tier, not many people took him seriously.

When it was the turn of the prodigy, Zack, to step forward, everyone held their breath as they waited for the result eagerly. Blood flowed into the fountain and then, the dragon symbol on the banners glowed golden bright.

"Mythical Dragon Bloodline!"

A commotion immediately broke out when everyone saw that golden light. Emery could clearly hear the words of praise from the acolytes around him.

"Zack is definitely the strongest in our year." Silva said. "Like I said before, the stronger you are, the better your position will be. The more people like Zack, who are blessed with extraordinary talent, the more those purist humans will never leave us alone. Hence, no chance for equality."

The grand magus then called out another name.

"Emery Ambrose."

## **Chapter 180: Bloodline Genes**

"Emery Ambrose"

The loud and firm voice of Grand Magus Esbern echoed through the hall as the man called out Emery's name. Emery, couldn't help but recall the first time he entered the academy, when his measly B aptitude was announced to the whole class.

Now, looking at the somewhat similar situation, Emery couldn't hold himself from sighing inwardly. He truly hoped the situation would be better and this time would not be as cruel. However, considering what fate had saved and provided for him all this time, Emery could only prepare himself for the worst.

Walking towards the fountain, Emery received the knife from the grand magus, who looked at him expressionless. Nodding his head in appreciation, Emery went ahead and cut his palm, doing the same procedure just like those before him. With his palm dripped fresh warm blood, Emery slowly put his hand above the fountain.

At this moment, Emery didn't realize his heart was beating faster than usual and his breathing had become irregular. He felt like time was running slowly, as he could see the drop of blood slowly falling into the fountain. The blood finally entered the fountain dyeing it red, Emery turned his head towards the wall where the insignia banners were placed.

On the wall, Emery and the others could clearly see the wolf symbol on the banner was slowly shining brightly. Grand Magus Esbern, who was standing next to him immediately announced his bloodline.

"The Wolf Bloodline!"

Emery's face couldn't help but fall when he heard that. Sighing deeply again, Emery had already turned his body to walk away, when he heard something that stopped him on his track.

"...Wait!"

Emery stood there frozen, the sudden word had baffled him, as the others who were confused as to why the overseer suddenly said that. Turning around and looking at the overseer, Emery realized the grand magus was seeing something. Curiosity got the better of him and Emery immediately followed the grand magus' line of sight.

It turned out that the wolf symbol still had not stopped shining. The light continued to grow brighter until it gave off a silvery glow. A wide smile immediately appeared on Emery's face when he saw the silvery light. And then, a shocked expression flashed on his face as he saw the silvery light begin to turn into gold.

"Myth...? No. It's a Legendary Wolf Bloodline!"

The almost golden light was fading into silver again and stayed the same. Even though the experience where his feelings were being mocked by the light was unpleasant for him, Emery was still happy. This was more than he could hope for, at least he was better than normal.

Unexpectedly, an information came out of his palm.

[Your bloodline has been analyzed]

[Species - Wolf]

[Bloodline Genes - Fey Wolf]

[Genes Classification - Legendary Bloodline]

[Bloodline Limit : Rank 6]

[Current Rank]

[Rank 2 -The Fey Beast ]

[Innate Skill - Wild Hunt, Transformation]

[You are eligible to join the Bloodline Institute, do you accept?]

"Accept"

[Congratulations, you are now the member of the Bloodline Institute]

This amount of information was enough to take Emery by surprise. He then turned and walked towards where Silva was, while his mind was still processing the information he had received. When Silva saw Emery absentminded, she waved her hand in front of his face.

"What's your bloodline limit? Tell me!" Silva curiously asked.

"It's rank 6." Emery replied softly.

"Rank 6?" Silva asked, surprised. "That is pretty amazing, Emery. It means your ancestor was a very powerful being. After all, there are not many people, who had an ancestor just one level under the mythical-class bloodline."

"As matter of fact, this also applies to me. My rank 6 Kimoyin Serpent bloodline is enough to make my Oroboros clan the ruler of our world." Silva said in a proud tone.

Glancing at Emery, Silva continued, "However, even though your potential is quite good, you need to remember that you are still at rank 2 of your bloodline. Hence, the reason for you being so weak. I hope you don't waste that precious bloodline of yours. Because currently, there are not that many legendary wolf bloodlines around."

Time continued to pass as the acolytes inside the hall were summoned. After a while, all acolytes finally had their turn and got their bloodlines tested, thus signaling the end of the acceptance ceremony. Seeing that, the grand magus clapped his hand as the loud sound caught everyone's attention.

"Congratulations! The acceptance ceremony is over and all of you are now part of the Bloodline Institute!" the grand magus said, and was greeted with another thunderous applause. "There are also representatives from each of your bloodline species that will contact you later."

Grand Magus Esbern then looked at the acolytes, especially the promising ones. "Before you all do your own thing, let me say a few words about the upcoming Magus Game which excites all of you. As I always say every year, I hope all of you half-blood will refrain from fighting against your half-blood brothers and sisters. But of course, that's just a hope of mine and you should always put your own interests first."

The grand magus then took out a small vial and displayed it to the acolytes. "In order to motivate all of you half-bloods to win the game and bring honor to the institute, we have prepared this as a reward."

Eyeing the acolytes who realized what inside the vial, the grand magus smiled faintly and said, "Those who manage to make it to the top 500 will be given one vial of the [Legendary Blood Elixir]. Therefore, you all should give your very best and bring honor to our institute. We will be waiting for your wonderful

performance." After finishing his speech, Grand Magus Esbern left the hall, his departure was followed by the acolytes' gazes.

Emery realized the acolytes' eyes around him were shining, as they stared passionately at the small vial in the grand magus' hand. Emery turned to his side and found Silva also stared at the vial with desire.

Sensing Emery's gaze, Silva said, "That elixir will help your bloodline to evolve faster. Hence, the desire in everyone's eyes."

With the ceremony over and the grand magus leaving the hall, the people who were watching from upstairs started to walk down and approach the acolytes they were interested in. It didn't need a genius to guess who they were talking to first.

While the other acolytes were busy talking with those people or leaving the place, Emery just stood there, as he was still a little bit overwhelmed with all the things he had just experienced. And then, Emery accidentally bumped into a guy with pale skin. Even though it wasn't Emery's fault, as he was standing there unmoving, the guy immediately turned angry and showed off the two sharp fangs on his teeth.

"Dogs! Don't you ever get close to me." the pale guy said.

Before Emery could say anything, another guy approached them and snarled at the pale guy.

"Back off, you bloodsucker! Go find somewhere else if you want to create trouble!"

The pale guy turned his head and was about to snap. But then, the pale-looking guy hastily left when he saw the big, hairy guy towering over him. The hairy guy walked towards Emery with a friendly smile on his face.

"Emery, isn't it? My name is Brutus. I expect more great things from you. Good luck in the next game." Brutus said. The guy immediately left after saying that.

Looking at the guy's back, Emery somehow felt some sort of familiarity with him. When he was trying to figure out the reason why, Silva suddenly snapped her finger breaking Emery's thought.

"Hello! You there?"

"Uh?! Oh! Yeah, I'm here. What's up?" Emery asked.

Realizing Emery was thinking about the guy, Silva explained, "Don't read too much into it. That guy named Brutus is also a wolf-species bloodline like you, I think he is also a legendary wolf, the Dire wolf genes if I am not wrong. So It's normal for you to feel some connection, the two of you have the same lineage after all. As for the pale guy's hostility to you, that's another long story."

Emery smiled at Silva, impressed by her knowledge. "How do you know all these things?"

"Hello, moron. That's called studying. Have you heard of it?" Silva said, as she ridiculed Emery. "Don't underestimate me. I have spent my entire life preparing for this academy."

"I see... Well, I hope you can do well in the game then, Silva."

"Of course, I will. I must..." Silva said firmly, the last part as a whisper. Emery not only could feel the determination and confidence in her voice, but also the burden in her tone. Emery was sure everyone came to the academy with an expectation, a responsibility, and a dream, just like him.

Apparently, there was not much the institute could help for Emery at the moment. The duo then decided to bid goodbye and go back to their own training.

Looking back at what he had experienced since he joined the academy, Emery couldn't help but smile. And then, maybe because he was around Silva or because of all the bloodline acolytes, Emery suddenly started thinking of Morgana.

13 days had passed since her capture. Not knowing what happened to her all this time was killing him. When he walked back to the portal, Emery decided to not return to Lord's Izta palace and made his way to the institute of Darkness.