

Earths GMagus 351

Chapter 351: Ultimate Secret

Getting the title of 'Silver Knight' was all about skill. But, the same couldn't be said about getting the 'Golden Knight' title. Being a golden knight was not all about strength.

Those who want to become a golden knight must be a silver knight first. Afterwards, they have to obtain as many achievements as possible. The more merit you have, the more you would be considered for the position. Then, comes the hardest part, that was, to be recommended by a knight commander and gain the approval of all five of them.

There was also the additional rule that there can only be 50 golden knights among all the seven kingdoms.

With Sir Bagdemagus's untimely death last year and the retirement of another knight, two seats were now open, hence the appointment of Sir Percival and Sir Maleagant.

It was certainly a unique situation to see in a way that Sir Maleagant somehow replaced his father's seats. Emery decided to keep him in mind. Though he could be a problem in the future, right now he was more interested in what lied behind the huge door.

More than 30 knights walked towards the door, with the knight commander leading them. It needed two keys to unlock the door, one was held by Sir Owain the Aegis knight and another by Sir Agrival the Wise. Both keys were given to King Uther Pendragon. He took the pair of keys and used them on both sides of the door to unlock it.

Emery looked around and noticed the other knights seemed to be eyeing each other. Some looked at the door with an odd fascination. Even some of the golden knights whispered amongst each other.

Right when the door was opened, the other knights stopped in their tracks. Some kind of weird aura was enveloping their bodies.

Emery recognized the 'weird aura' as a massive concentration of spirit energy similar to the feeling just outside of the origin stone room, except this time, it was not limited to a single element. It felt like it was made of several elements mixing together at the same time.

Behind the door, there was a path made inside a massive carved stone.

As they walked, Emery touched the sides and felt the smooth stone underneath his fingers. It seemed this path was not natural and, considering its size, the fort was made to hide the existence of this place.

The stone walls radiated a soft, flickering golden glow reminiscent of a bright torch.

At the end of the path, there was a large cave-like opening and Emery saw a glowing item right in the middle of it.

There he finally sees it, the most stunning thing he ever sees.? A blade glowing in a silver color and multiple gems were embroidered upon its crystal body.? There were some engraving glowing within its body.

Just like what he saw in the vision, the sword was stabbed in a massive stone.

"You are all standing in front of the divine sword, The Excalibur!" The knight commander exclaimed.

The sight certainly brings awe upon all the ones who came to this place. Even the golden knight who supposedly has seen the sword before still amazed by the sight. Certainly, it gives a much more impact to the 10 new silver knights.

Emery looked at the sword, it was certainly very much different to see in vision and to actually see the real one in front of him. He was really tempted to touch and hold the sword when suddenly a hand gripped his shoulders. He looked up and saw Yvain, the golden knight.

"Isn't that the most beautiful sword you have ever seen, Lanzo?"

Emery nodded in response.

The knights made a small circle all around the sword, with the two knights Percival and Maleagant standing in front of the sword.

The knight commander walked to the center of the circle, immediately, everyone went quiet, while he started explaining the history of the sword.

It was said the divine sword was put here by the first knight and it had been waiting for the chosen knight. According to the prophecy spoken at the beginning of this order, the one who pulled this sword would become the king of kings. But, a thousand years passed and no one was able to pull it out. Hence in times, the knight's divine order was built on top of it.

Emery sighed in his heart. If no one was able to pull it, why were all of them even here? For what purpose did they even protect the sword in the first place?

Knight Commander Uther Pendragon now led what appeared to be the final ceremony of becoming a golden knight.

"Sir Percival! Are you ready to accept your sacred duty as the guardian of the order? Speak!"

"With all my heart and my strength, I put my oath and my life on the line for the sake of my duties. Here, with the divine sword as my witness, I swear it!" The muscular knight bowed and responded.

The knight commander open up a wooden box and gave Percival a small vial fill with a golden liquid. Without hesitation, the knight uncorked and drank it.

"What is that, Yvain?" Emery whispered.

"That is what we call the divine water, Lanzo. Wait and see."

Everyone was quiet for several seconds, before the water started to react.

The knight shouted and Emery looked at him in surprise. Though they were a bit far apart, he could feel the knight's body bursting with energy.

The knight approached the sword, put both his arms on the handle and pulled with all his might.

Emery saw there was one light shining like a star from the body of the sword before it starting to move and shift entering Percival's body. In response, the knight's body gives a certain glow and His pupils started to turn white.

He shouted once more before he released the sword. Though he did not manage to pull it, his face was one of pure excitement.

"Congratulations, Sir Percival." The knight commander smiled. "You have received the blessing of the divine."

Seeing such a scene, made Emery finally understand. He remembered the last moments when he fought Sir Badgemagus. The old knight showed a burst increase in power with the same glow that Sir Percival had just now. Apparently, it was all the power that was given by the sword of the divine.

This was the ultimate secret of the divine order.

Chapter 352: The Chosen One

Emery still baffled by the scene unfolding in front of him. This raised the question, which item gave the golden knights their strength? Was it the sword, or was it the divine water?

The knight commander turned to look at the ten new silver knights and said.

"The things you see today are part of the most guarded secrets of the order. Here, you stand as a witness to the things this order can provide for the sake of this realm's safety. Perhaps one day, with enough merit under your belt, this power could become yours as well."

All the silver knights started whispering to each other with confident smiles, as if they conveniently forgot about the deeds required.

After Sir Percival was done, it was time for Sir Maleagant's ceremony.

"Sir Maleagant! Are you ready to accept your sacred duty as the guardian of the order?"

The knight recited the same oath down to the letter, but somehow, Emery could sense his insincerity. From the way his lips slightly quirked down in distaste with each word and his slight relief after he finished speaking... Though he spoke his words with vigor, Emery was not fooled.

Just like Sir Percival before, the knight commander gave him a vial of golden liquid. His body started to glow with power and without hesitation, he touched the sword.

The knight with long black hair tried to pull out the sword, but unlike the muscular man before, he didn't seem to exert as much effort. Though he used both hands, there was no visible strain on his muscles, unlike Sir Percival's attempt before.

Still, it seemed sincerity was not required in this ceremony. The crystal sword started to glow under his touch.

Right when the light started to emerge, the knights and the commanders' expressions suddenly changed. No one was able to hide their shock.

Unlike before, there were two bright lights instead of one. Meanwhile, Sir Maleagant merely smiled a small, cordial grin right before the lights went into his body.

The knight closed his eyes and froze for a second, right as everyone in the room started speaking amongst each other.

Emery looked up at the golden knight next to him, who showed a similar shocked expression. Seeing the normally collected knight so flustered, Emery decided to ask.

"What is going on here, Sir Yvain?"

The knight of Lion next to him let out a long sigh

"This might become a problem, Lanzo. Normally the sword's blessing only emits one light, only rarely it emits two. Two lights only appear to a knight every 50 years or so." The Lion Knight explained.

"But then, why is it a problem?"

Sir Yvain looked at Lanzo, glanced at one of the golden knights and answered.

"The sword of Divine just bless one of us with the two lights last year. It was the golden prince Arthur Pendragon, now having the second one this quick is..."

Sir Yvain then went silent. Either he had no idea or was unwilling to answer.

A moment later, Sir Maleagant opened his eyes, and right after, Emery could sense a strong aura from him. The room was locked in a poignant silence for a few seconds.

Even the knight commander was stunned into silence, to the point he almost forgot to respond.

"Co... Congratulations, Sir Maleagant!" The knight commander stuttered a little like he was forced to find his voice.

The knight commander Agrival the Wise quickly took charge of the situation and smiled. "This is quite a blessing to the kingdoms, too. To have two blessed knights protecting the kingdoms... It is the will of the divine."

Right after the old veteran knight spoke, everyone congratulated the new golden knight. When it was Sir Arthur's turn to shake Sir Maleagant's hand, everyone started to whisper. There seems to be a slight, invisible tension between them.

Seeing this, Emery could finally put it all together. Receiving two bright lights from the sword no one had been able to pull for the last 1000 years was the closest thing to the prophecy. To be king of Kings. If only one golden knight received such a special blessing every 50 years it surely gave an indicator that such a golden knight was chosen among the others. However, having two of them in the same era. It could become a problem.

He wonders, won't it become even more of a problem if he also receives the same blessing? What if he actually pulls out the sword? How shocking would it be?.

The knight's yearly ceremony was finally over. The whole group was led back out of the room and the place would be locked once more until next year.

Emery closed his eyes while walking, trying to map out the place using his spirit force. Right after the door closed in front of him, he opened his eyes and couldn't help but smile a little. Now, he has familiarized the spatial condition inside the room, he believes with enough concentration, he could open up a [Spatial Gate] leading inside.

As this was a very important quest given by the high priestess for him, he didn't plan to wait long. After the golden knights spoke their cordial goodbyes and went their separate ways, Emery decided to wait up in the woods until the sun fell.

When he walked out, torches had already lit up the place in a warm yellow glow and the knights had started patrolling the area.

He looked left and right, cast [hide in shadow] before running towards the direction of the fort and sneak in.

He made it inside the ceremony chamber without issue. It seemed the place was kept empty unless there were ceremonies or important meetings to be held. Emery stood right in front of the large door leading to the divine chamber, concentrating his spirit force, and then he successfully felt the room at the other side. He cast [Spatial Gate] and a portal was open.

He appeared inside the cave. Now, it was just him and the legendary sword.

Chapter 353: Excalibur

Emery walked through the glowing cave towards the sword. With each step, he could feel his heart pound wildly. The center of the cave was brighter than the already rather bright walls, it felt like looking at a small star.

He stood just a few steps away from the legendary sword, the divine sword Excalibur.

According to the story passed down by the order, the sword has been stuck inside the glowing void-colored stone for more than 1000 years. Give or take, that was around 20 generations ago.

The legend states the one who could pull out the sword would become the king of kings and would lead the whole nation into glory. Emery himself had no desire to be one, what's the point of being a king of an island with the Nephilim faction dictate the whole planet.

But he would be lying if he said he wouldn't like to be the chosen one among all the other thousand legendary knights from the past 1000 years.

But then again, Emery realized a long time had passed since this sword was stuck here. It's possible during that time the message has been exaggerated or just warped into something completely untrue.

Either way, there was no one between him and the sword hidden in this dark cave right now.

Step by step, he walked closer, reached out and touched the golden handle of the sword with the tip of his fingers.

"..."

There was no response. No glowing, no emerging bright light, no reaction whatsoever.

"This is... disappointing," Emery mumbled under his breath.

Though he had failed the first time, he didn't give up. He tried to grab the handle of the sword with both hands and pull it out with the help of his maximum battle power.

"Urrrrggggggghhhhh!"

He pulled and pulled until his hands started to hurt, but the sword did not budge. There was nothing to indicate the weapon reacted to his attempts.

Emery could possibly be the strongest man on earth right now, him or Thrax. Therefore it really shouldn't be about physical power at all.

He started giving up on pulling out the sword and would settle on receiving what the order called the 'divine blessing'. This could already be a good enough achievement, who knows it might be a very useful skill.

Emery decided to make one last attempt.

He touched the sword, closed his eyes, and concentrated. He tried to channel the power of his spirit force through his dark core.

This time, he finally felt some sort of reaction, but not the kind he had expected. At first, when he saw the sword begin to glow, he felt a bit ecstatic, even more, when he felt energy start to flow into his arm. But the next second, the same energy turns painful and piercing his arm like needles. The shock and the stinging pain actually pushed him back a few steps.

"What the hell?!"

Emery cursed, forgetting he really should keep quiet. After all, he was not supposed to be here.

He looked at his hand and was, fortunately, did not find any wound or bruise at all from the attack. The stinging pain seems harmless to his body.

Instead, he surprised to see the faded symbol on his hand started to glow white. Emery concentrated on the symbol and lines of information came into his mind.

[Caliburn]

[Long sword – Tier: ???]

[Length: 1.2 meters, Weight: 28kg]

Emery was dumbfounded, there was no helpful information at all coming out of it. This only made him even more curious about the sword.

With no other way to find out more, Emery could only assume he currently lacked the right preparation to receive the blessing.

It seemed the divine water, the golden liquid given to the knights before they try pulling out the sword, played an important part in this.

One way he could use to get the vial was by obtaining enough merit. That way, he would get a shot at the golden knight title and thus get access to the vial in the right way.

Unfortunately, this is not an option for him, it would take too long, considering even the powerful Sir Percival needed seven years before he was chosen. Even after being chosen, he would still need the approval of the five knight commanders.

He sighed and tried to find the fastest way to finish this quest, but no idea came to mind except by stealing. He merely needed to know where the knight commander kept the wooden box, then he could use [Spatial Gate], finishing one of the major tasks he had in one fell swoop.

But, on the other hand, such a tactic would break a few of his principles and Emery was reluctant to stoop that low. No matter how hard he tried, he could not come up with anything to justify the theft.

Fortunately, he realized something.

If the sword really was given to this world by the fey, then shouldn't the high priestess know about the divine water, or at least what it was actually made from?

That was the only solution he could think of at the moment.

Emery prepared himself to open a spatial gate back to the Forbidden Forest right away, but before he started chanting, he realized it was very late right now. It felt inappropriate to suddenly go to see the high priestess for information in the middle of the night.

He could always return to this room and the forest anytime. Thus, he decided to postpone looking for a way until he returned to Lioness.

He opened another spatial gate, went out, walking back to the Lioness camp. Right after he entered, he was welcomed with smiles and congratulations from the squires and new knights. These people apparently have been waiting for him.

Some asked him about what the ceremony was all about, which Emery could only answer with half-truths. Others want to see the silver knight medals that he just receives.

That night, he also heard about how the princess decided not to stay for too long in Logress and planned to return back to Lioness right away.

Tomorrow, they will be heading back together, so for this night, some were busy packing while other squires were busy chatting amongst each other, talking about their experience, and swapping fighting tactics for the future.

Though Emery was smiling, from inside he felt really bad. Though he did win the tournament and received some new information about the sword, there was still no clue about Morgana's whereabouts.

Should he tell the princess he would not be returning with them tomorrow?

Chapter 354: Permission

Morning came and the Lioness entourage was busy preparing for their return. The estate lent to them by the Order was rowdy with shouts, laughter and conversations. Some talked about their victory, some joked about small things to lighten the mood and others expressed regret over their failure.

The knights were ready on top of their horses, while the squires and former squires all stood in front of the estate, waiting for their princess to come, so the journey could start.

Emery, on the other hand, decided to come in to ask permission not to join the trip back.

Although Emery could always use his [Spatial Gate] spell to return back to Camelot to search for Morgana later, he really lacked the patience to follow the 4 days journey back, pretending to be Lanzo and unable to do anything.

It's 4 days he could use to do more important things, he could use the time to inquire about the divine water from the high priestess, to catch up on his training in the Khaos space and also to find more information about Morgana. He had no time to follow the princess' entourage for 4 days.

Based on this realization, he decided to ask permission from the princess, after all, he's not really in active service like the other knights. It should be fine... at least he thought so.

Right after the princess walked out, he came closer to her and quickly said his intention.

He had braced himself for the worst-case scenario, if the princess ended up getting enraged over his decision, but her face was expressionless.

Calmly, she nodded and said. "I guess you have made your decision, Lanzo. Yes, I don't mind, do whatever suits you. I hope you find what you are looking for."

While the princess didn't react much, Yvain on the other hand was offended. Even though Emery was not officially assigned as a knight to guard the princess, it was still a knight's duty to always protect members of the royal family. The golden knight tried to block Emery's way and make him change his mind.

But before he could approach Emery, the princess extended a hand to stop him.

"Yvain, don't worry about him. Just let him be, he has his own path" The princess stared at him and said "Lanzo you need to decide if you really want to follow the path of the knight, we will be here when you are ready"

From her tone, Emery realized the princess was somehow still troubled by their last conversation, but to her credit, she still tried to be casual about it.

But, Emery could certainly understand what the golden knight was getting at, and he would be lying if he said her response didn't stir his heart. He has been raised, trained, and dream about being a knight since he was a child. The path of Justice, Truth, and Honor.

Currently, he can't be true to himself until his many troubles are solved. But now that he thought once more about it, what would 4 days mean, considering he still had three years before his recall? He probably should finish his current responsibility appropriately.

Without realizing it, he called on to the princess. "Wait, I..."

The princess turned around, waiting for him to finish. But before Emery could say anything, a ruckus and a shout could be heard from the front gate of the estate.

"Princess Gwenneth, why are you leaving so soon?"

The trotting noise of a horse could be heard from the side. A knight with a blue and gold emblem came to a stop, jumping down from his white horse. It was no other than the golden prince, Arthur Pendragon.

"Princess Gwenneth, why are you leaving without saying goodbye? That is impolite."

From the way she clenched her hands, Emery could tell the princess was in no mood to talk to the prince, but she decided to indulge him anyway.

"My apologies, my prince, there is something I suddenly must do."

"Does it really have to be done right away? Perhaps, if you allow me to change your mind... What about a little tour around Camelot City? Although it's probably not as pretty as the Lioness territory, I am sure there will be someplace that interests you."

It was clear, the princess was just trying hard to be friendly and in the end, she rejected his offer.

"I apologize once more my prince, the truth is last night I just receive an urgent letter from my father telling me to return right away"

For such reason, of course, the golden prince could not force her, but with his smile, he asked the princess to promise to spend time with him on another day.

While they were in the middle of a conversation, the prince glanced at Emery, who was watching them talk, and said.

"Ah, it's you, Lancelot! We haven't officially met, have we?" The prince gave Emery a kind smile.

To Emery's surprise, the prince seemed to be more friendly than he thought. During the five days event, he never had the chance to really talk to him. All Emery knew about him was his position as the Logress prince.

But, when the prince approached him and stand in front of him, he felt a chill going down his spine.

Something about him made his whole body tingle, goosebumps spreading down his skin. It was clear, the prince held something that was important to him.

But what is it?

The prince turned around and said "Alright princess hope you have a safe trip, my knights will escort you until the border"

"Thank you"

As for Emery, he still stood there suddenly realizing what it was that bothered him from the prince before.

Before leaving the princess called his name and asked. "Lanzo... What is it that you were about to say before?"

Emery took a deep breath, sighed, and said. "My apologies, princess, I simply wanted to wish you a good journey back."

He could see a slight disappointment in the princess's expression before she gazes into his eye and said "Good Bye Lanzo"

She turns around and walked into her carriage.

Though his heart was shaken a bit, Emery's decision was now firm thanks to what he just felt from the prince.

The prince unmistakably reeked a familiar scent. It was a fey wolf scent.

"Morgana's"

Emery was sure the prince interacted with her recently, or the smell would not be as pronounced. He stares intently at the prince standing in front of him.

What did he know? What was his involvement in this mess?

There was only one way to find out. Emery couldn't wait anymore, before leaving Camelot, he must definitely give this prince a personal visit.

Chapter 355: Pendragons

Thinking more about it, that information shouldn't really come as a surprise. After all, Prince Arthur was deeply involved in Sir Bagdemagus's affairs and, by extension, in the old knight's death. Logically, he should be the one with the most information.

The prince jumped on his horse and left the estate, while Emery concentrated his spirit reading ability to track him down.

Right as the horse ran, he ran. He used everything he had, from [Blink] and [Hide in Shadow], he kept himself at the closest safe distance possible. This was the most solid lead he had; he would not let the prince go that easily.

He kept on following him, even if he had to do everything in his power to stay out of detection. He followed Prince Arthur and watched the golden prince do his daily activities from afar, ranging from a casual stroll in the city, training with the knights on the city's outskirts and returning to the palace.

Now that the prince had entered the Logress Castle, it became harder to follow him, as the knights patrolling the place would watch for every shadow.

There was a high chance of him being found.

Right as the prince walked into the castle, Emery decided to enter, hide in a corner and use the [Shapeshifting] skill to turn himself into a completely different person. Right now, he had an identity as Lanzo, but he would rather not expose that and end up having to create another identity.

Emery casted [Spatial Gate], teleported to the castle roof and spread his spirit force to track the prince down.

He focused on a room on top of the castle, went down and casted [Hide in Shadow] to avoid the dozens of Logress guards stationed there.

In hindsight, infiltrating such a formidable place, fully guarded with dozens of knights and during daylight to boot, was probably unwise. In addition, at a time without much shadows, [Hide in Shadow] would be half-effective. But there was no more time to waste and he had no other lead for the moment.

With each second he wasted, Morgana's fate became more uncertain.

Using his spirit reading ability, Emery tracked the movement patterns within the castle. All he had to do was dodge and move accordingly, so he would not get spotted by the guards.

Such an ordeal was easier said than done. Emery had a few close calls and he had to [Blink] onto the nearest corner every time he was at risk of being spotted.

Finally, he reached the slightly ajar double doors leading to the throne room; he stayed there while focusing on their conversations. He had to move every so often as to not risk getting spotted by the guards.

Even with his magic, there was no way to avoid complete detection in daylight.

There were only two people in the throne room and Emery was shocked the moment the king spoke his first words.

"How did you even let the princess go?!" The king shouted, his expression a little emotional. "You can't even deal with such a small task?"

Princess... Are they talking about Princess Gwenneth from Lioness? Considering the other kingdoms, it seemed there was little to no princess worthy of the golden prince's attention.

The king scolded him sternly, but the prince didn't lose his straight face. In fact, he had the audacity to smile.

"Father, I sincerely apologize, but the princess had something urgent to do. I can't really dissuade her. If I insisted I would just risk angering her and souring the plan further. Please, do not worry, I will see her next time. We can deal with this with a cool head."

The response was polite and reasonable, but the king seemed even more annoyed.

"Arthur, you can't be too relaxed about this. A lot hinges on your success and you have to remember your position is not secured yet, especially with what happened yesterday."

"Father, there was no need to be so concerned, I am sure Sir Maleagant's appointment as one of the golden knights will only improve the Order standing."

"Huh, Arthur! You have the makings of a ruler, except for that optimism. Why can't you see the human heart is very unpredictable? You need more experience, see betrayal and politics for yourself. Maybe then, you can be a strong king!"

"For that, father, I have you to thank for. I will learn more from you, father."

"Remember, the Lioness girl will be a perfect candidate to be your queen. The kingdom might be weak, but they are rich in resources and marrying her will ensure Logress' position as the leaders of the seven kingdoms of Briton."

"Yes, Father. I understand your advice and I plan to visit the Lioness kingdom soon."

The king quirked his eyebrows.

"Was it about the Bagdemagus affair investigation? Remember Arthur: now that Maleagant is a Golden Knight, we have more reasons to investigate this matter thoroughly. We can't have him questioning our capability to investigate his father's death. You understand?"

"I understand father..." The prince seems hesitant to ask his next question 'Father... Please, tell me, do you have any information about Sir Bagdemagus that I should know?'"

The king's eyes widened for a second, a fact that didn't go unnoticed by Emery.

"Nothing... I haven't talked to him in a while, nor have I given him any orders or missions." The king slightly averted his eyes. It was clear, he was most likely hiding something.

"If that is really the case, father, you should not worry. I will settle this problem as soon as I can."

Either Arthur did not notice, or he pretended not to notice. Emery tried to match what information he obtained with what he had before.

Before the prince left the place, the king stopped him.

"Arthur, if you find anything even slightly suspicious about this matter, you have to tell me as soon as possible."

"Yes, father."

Chapter 356: Confront

Emery's efforts to follow the prince all day had finally paid off with the conversation between father and son he managed to witness.

First, from how they spoke of it, it seemed both father and son were still in the dark regarding the circumstances surrounding Sir Bagdemagus' death.

Second, it was evident the prince's friendly demeanor towards the princess was not purely out of kindness, but clouded with ulterior motives. Like the other kingdoms, Logress was tempted to seize the Lioness' rich territory and lands to secure their own power and had no regard for the princess herself.

He was not too concerned about the first part, but he would be lying if he denied feeling annoyed due to what the prince said. At first, he thought of the prince as a decent man and perhaps, a good companion for the princess, but after what he heard, he changed his mind. The shell of a chivalrous, smiling golden knight he saw at the tournament has cracked, revealing the manipulative character underneath.

Emery waited still even as their conversation ended and followed the prince, as he walked out of the throne room. This time, he was more determined to find anything that could be used against the prince.

It was not long past noon, but after the throne room fiasco, Emery only saw the prince head back to his chamber to rest.

He waited, cloaked with his spell, for the prince's next move. Though he considered waiting as wasting time, it's somehow too risky going in right now. He would rather not have the whole Logress castle residents chasing him in an open daylight.

He waited just a little bit more, but when the sun sets, his patience wanes.

He decided to move into the chamber, not caring about the risk anymore.

However, before he managed to cast his [Spatial Gate] spell and sneak into the prince's chambers, the door started to open with a creak. The prince looked around and walked with quiet but hurried steps.

The prince walked out of the Logress castle, took his horse from the stables and rode away in the middle of the night. This was definitely suspicious, naturally Emery followed him in hopes that, this time, the prince would lead him to Morgana.

Emery ran as quickly as he could and followed the galloping horse towards the forest. The prince kept on riding and went into a forest around an hour away from the Logress family.

Finally, the prince stopped at an estate standing right in the middle of the forest. Though the house was not particularly big, it was quite luxurious, with gilded gates and pure white walls despite being hidden this deep.

Around the gate, stood a few guards, some of them nodding as if on the verge of falling asleep. Emery hid himself behind the trees and used his spirit reading around the area to discover at least a dozen people inside the estate.

By concentrating his spirit reading, Emery felt there was a multiple-layer barrier on the basement of this building, which of course only made him worry. What if Morgana was held against her will inside one of those dungeons? What did they do to her?

Emery's heart started to race. The thought of her being tortured scared him more than he would like to admit.

There's no need to hide, not anymore. There was no one here and, if Morgana wasn't here, he would confront the prince, beat him senseless if he had to. Emery was determined to find out the truth about Morgana.

Emery dashed through the gate, his spell ensuring he would be able to move undetected. But, when he was just a few steps away from the estate, he heard a shout.

"Who is there?!"

Someone had spotted him. Considering it was not easy to detect his presence while cloaked under [Hide in Shadow], the person must be really skillful.

He could just cast [Blink] and run away just like last time, but he decided against it. He walked closer and approached the figure who shouted towards him.

Now that he was closer, Emery could see it was Gaious, the court wizard. Not long after the golden prince himself walked out of the estate and stood next to the old man.

"Who are you? What do you want?" The prince stared intently, trying to find out about the unknown face beneath the black robe.

There was no need for introductions. Emery decided to go straight to the point.

"I came here regarding a certain girl, a Chrutin girl. I have reasons to believe you kept her here."

The prince and Gaious were both startled and took a step back. The guards from the gate had gathered around and started to surround them.

"My prince, fortunately I have prepared a barrier spell, or else we wouldn't have been able to spot him."

The prince narrowed his eyes and he pulled his sword before pointing its tip at Emery. Whoever he was, he decided to sneak around at night and that was never a good sign.

"So, tell me, who you are and I will consider your question"

Emery was quite surprised with the prince's response, but considering what he heard today, he would not trust this two faced prince

"Just tell me where she is?!"

The golden prince seemed lost for words not answering the question. The old man next to him said.

"Prince, we should capture this person first, and ask the question later. If this is the same person I felt before, I'm worried he could run without a trace like last time"

The prince nodded and said

"Yes but refrain from hurting him too badly, I need to interrogate him"

Hearing such words made Emery curious how strong this wizard is.

He was sure this old wizard won't be able to defeat him unless he's a legendary being like the lady of the lake, but he can't be too careful.

To further hide his identity, not to get his sword skill recognized by the prince, Emery decided to take out his pitch black dagger instead.

The old man raises his hand and Emery can feel the weave of spirit energy formed around him and a spell was cast.

The next moment? Emery felt the ground under his feet shake and roots come out trying to catch him. It was a very familiar [Entangled], a tier 1 plant element.

If this old wizard can only cast tier 1 spell, there's really nothing to worry about

Chapter 357: Fights

With Emery's current power level, tier 1 spells were of no worry to him at all. Besides, it was one of the spells Emery had the most experience with, so he could tell the strength of the spell by monitoring the flow of spirit force within the vines.

The spellcasting speed was also slow and the root's movements were nothing to write home about, but Emery was unwilling to show off his cards right away. He casually jumped up and landed right as the root passed his feet.

Two more roots approached him from the side, attempting to trap him in a pincer formation. Their movements curved every so often to catch him off guard.

Still, too slow.

Woosh!

Emery did a few side steps and gracefully dodged the incoming roots.

The prince looked at Emery's movements with surprise. As a precaution, he pulled his sword from its scabbard and prepared his sword stance.

"He is very agile... he must be an assassin!"

Emery stared at them without worry, waiting for their next move. He hasn't even used much of his strength to dodge, as due to his plant elemental affinity, he knew the ins and outs of plant spells far too well.

Then a root appeared under his feet, catching him off guard. But Emery was still able to dodge easily, as he felt the flow of spirit force from it.

It appeared that, ever since he returned from the Magus Academy and started studying in the Khaos space, he not only gained a better understanding of space magic, but also a better feel of the spirit force's movements in his surroundings.

He didn't need to see it to know when the root started to move towards him.

Seeing how easily someone was dodging his spell, the old magician became worried. "My prince! This guy is more dangerous than I thought. I suggest you quickly return to the castle, I will hold him here!"

"No! Gaious, I definitely won't just leave you alone with him!"

From what he was able to glean from the spirit force flowing in the roots, Emery believed the old man was at most comparable in terms of power to a rank 5 acolyte. His strength was about the same level, as when he just got out of the Khaos space last year.

At most, probably he would only be able to cast up to tier 3 spells.

Now that he got an accurate gauge of his opponent's strength, Emery started to increase his movement speed. Though he was more than willing to stall, right now fighting for too long would just invite more trouble later on.

Emery decided to go on the offensive. He pulled out a small pitch black dagger dotted with white, each spot sparkling like a piece of the night sky. He charged forward, aiming to disable the magician first.

The golden prince dashed and jumped between them, parrying Emery's pitch black dagger with his special sword.

Clank!

Sparks flew between them and Emery was able to push the prince several steps away. He was quite surprised by the sword held by the prince that was able to block the strength of his tier 3 dagger. Meanwhile, the prince's face twisted into an expression of pure shock.

"Gaious, be careful, he's not just fast, he's awfully strong. Who is this guy really!"

Arthur twirled his sword and took a fighting stance, while shoving the magician behind him in a protective manner.

The prince certainly did not expect to see someone with power similar to a golden knight attacking them here. There were only two explanations for this mysterious attacker – either he came from the north, or he came from outside Briton.

Emery stopped for a moment and said.

"Just tell me where the girl is! What did you do to her?!"

The prince gripped his sword tight and dashed forward.

"You stand down and tell me who you really are!"

The longer this fight went on, the more Emery lost his patience. Now that he thought things through, he should've just taken the prince hostage and with the prince's life in his hand, the path would open up to him. There was no need to waste time and spirit force in this farce.

But, it seemed that life was determined to throw him curveballs in his quest. The golden prince raised his sword high with both hands and a bolt of energy rose from the blade before entering the prince's body.

Arthur's eyes turned white and in an instant, a gust of wind accompanied the intense glare of his spirit force. Considering the form, this power increase must've come from a divine blessing.

Emery dashed forward, charging towards the prince, while the prince met his attacks in earnest.

Clank!

Both the prince and Emery were thrown back a few steps at the same time. This genuinely caught Emery off guard, as he did not consider the fact that Arthur could match his 34 points of battle power.

Amazing.

The cool night air started to boil hotter and Emery glanced at the old magician.

So, the attacks from the prince were a distraction.

Both of the old magician's palms blazed with orange-gold fire. He clapped both hands, causing the fire to merge together before dashing towards him like a bullet.

[Firebolt]

The strike was too fast to dodge, or at least, too fast in his current state. Emery decided to take off his black cape and toss it to the front, letting the garment be set ablaze and turn into ashes in a few seconds.

The fire was probably similar in power to one of Gerri's regular attacks in the Magus Games. It was strong, but not nearly enough to wound.

Nevertheless, Emery couldn't risk anything.

The two opponents had an almost flawless coordination. Now that he lost the element of surprise Emery would have had to face a dual element magician and a golden knight with a divine buff.

This battle would not be as easy as he thought, after all.

Chapter 358: Outstrength

Clank!!

The two met in the middle yet again, but a powerful push from the prince was able to repel Emery's dagger strike.

It was hard to believe everything unfolding right in front of his eyes. How could anyone on Earth, without the aid of something like the magus academy, possess such strength?

From experience, Emery knew that a normal human being from Earth should only have around 10 battle power, reaching 15 at most. Back when he had 20 battle power, he was able to defeat anyone who dared to stand in his way.

The strongest warriors he ever fought on Earth were Cavvi, the akavi of Forbidden Forest, and Kastan, the former Silver Knight. From what he knew of them, their battle power should not be much higher than 20, and, at his state, he should now be able to defeat the two effortlessly.

[Emery Ambrose]

[Restriction spell has been placed]

[Battle Power : 49 (34)]

[Spirit Force : 193 (118)]

The restriction spell not only prevented him from speaking about the Magus Academy, it also took away about 30% of his overall strength. In other cases, 34 points of battle power would still be enough to defeat almost any enemy in this world.

But it appeared this divine buff that the golden knight received from the Excalibur sword had something that allowed its users to exceed their limits. Emery assumes with the buff, the golden prince's battle power at the moment is in the mid 30 range.

With such a great increase given by the divine buff, it was no wonder Sir Bagdemagus managed to beat him last time.

Apparently It's not gonna be easy for Emery to outstrength him without using any spell or skill.

There were also two other problems he had to deal with. One was the annoying old magician who could throw around his fire spells at any moment, necessitating him to dodge every so often. Though his spells weren't that strong, it would be harder to fight against the prince if he got wounded.

Two, he was only using a dagger for the moment and he was not as proficient with it as with swords.

Emery realized the golden knight standing in front of him was probably one of the strongest, if not outright the strongest among his peers. He wondered if this opponent could push him to use his battle art or his spells.

Clank!!

Under the influence of his divine blessing, the prince seemed to be ablaze with excitement the longer the fight went on.

"You are very strong indeed, but still not strong enough!"

The prince started swinging his sword even faster than before. When he swung to the left, the blade connected from the right before going up. It looked random, but considering the movements of his arm, Emery could tell that it's some kind of sword skill.

Parrying and dodging the golden knight swordplay really tempted Emery to show off his sword skills as well. Unfortunately, he couldn't do that without revealing his Lanzo identity.

The prince did spin around and almost managed to plunge the blade into his neck,

Clank!!

Emery's dagger was able to block it at the right second. He then pushed back the prince's once more time

"Amazing!" The prince shouted.

The knights who guard the estate have all started to surround Emery and watch the fight.

Although many, He could tell they were normal knights who had no chance to stand against him.

Interpreting Emery's glance as worry, the prince jumped back before dashing and shouted.

"Don't you worry, they will not bother our fight!"

The tough act of the prince was amusing for him.

"You really should all attack at the same time! I don't mind, really." Emery taunted.

Watching Emery still acting so confident despite the fact he was cornered merely somehow annoyed the prince. He gritted his teeth, clenched his divine sword and threw a heavy swing once more.

Clankk!!

Again, Emery blocked the strike with his dagger.

Afterward, Emery started breathing differently, it's a breathing technique in preparation for his battle art. He concentrated, redirecting his spirit force towards opening several of the meridian points and instantly there was an explosion of power.

Baaaamm!!

Like a spilled dam, the wall separating him and his power broke down, letting out a massive explosion of energy

[Immortal gate technique - stage 3]

[Battle power increased by 8]

[Battle power: 42]

There was really no need for Emery to force himself to stage 4, and now with the newfound power, this time the pitch black dagger was able to easily push the sword back.

"This! How could this be!"

Emery could see the prince's shocked expression which also took away his previous confidence. But he managed to recover and dashed forward to throw another full-power swing towards him.

But this time the clash of the sword and dagger didn't happen, as the dagger suddenly disappear from his sight and the next second pierced his sword arm until he dropped the sword to the ground

[Dagger Battle Art - Hidden Stab]

This is the one dagger battle art skill he learned from the combat institute, it's able to move his dagger swing in a flash for a second.

The prince quickly jumped back a few steps in response with a bleeding hand.

"What the hell was that?!"

Now that the golden prince was disarmed, Emery wished to keep his advantage and finish this fight right away.

Unfortunately, the old magician wouldn't let him. Multiple roots were formed to block him from charging forward.

Emery could right away use [blink] and finish this fight, But he decided to dash through the roots while cutting it to pieces quickly.

At this moment, knowing they can defeat this stranger in the night, The old man decided to shouted to the guards

"Protect the prince!!"

The dozen knights around all took out their swords from their scabbards and all attacked Emery at the same time.

"These bunch can't stop me!!" Emery renewed his resolve and kept on charging, determined to catch the prey in front of him.

One by one, the knights attempting to bar his way were knocked down on the ground to the point of unconsciousness. There was not even a drop of blood from them, there was only bruises from Emery's attacks to escape from them.

Fortunately for them, Emery's plan did not go as far as needing to kill them off.

With the help of his 42-points battle power, an elbow or knee attack was strong enough to make a grown man much weaker than him fall unconscious.

The old magician was already standing next to the wounded prince trying to heal him but Emery's fast disposal of the knight seems to make him panic. He started to chant again. With his palm was set ablaze, this time, the old man cast multiple [fire bolt] spells out of desperation.

Emery could sense that these spells could hurt him, and with such close range, it wouldn't be easy to dodge it all. He slightly smiled to know he was forced to cast his spell, and he took all the spell with his body.

The fire bombardment sent a cloud of dust and smoke flying all around. Soon after, the cloud dissipated, revealing that both Emery's arms had turned black and hard, similar to the texture and toughness of granite stone.

[Granite skin]

"A... A Wizard!!" Shouted the old magician.

A terrifying fighter and a wizard, the old magician seems to have finally decided their next move.

"We can't win this one prince, he's too strong! Give up, give him what he wants or run!"

"No! how can we retreat now! let's fight together Gaious!"

The prince stands tall again this time he took a random sword from the ground and uses his other hand ready to give this another round.

Emery can somehow applaud the prince's bravery. But there's no room for hesitation for him. Today he must know Morgana's fate.

He starts making his approach, but before both of them clash, suddenly Emery feels another spell being cast towards him. But this time it's not from that old man, it's coming from a different side.

Emery saw a cloaked figure cast the spell while rushing towards him

"Another wizard?!" He exclaimed in disbelief, considering how rare a wizard was.

It was another [firebolt] spell which once more blocked with his granite hand.

Another tier 2 fire spell and from the movements of the spirit force within, it was somehow stronger than the spells used by the old man. With the added threat, Emery finally decided not to keep his cards hidden, He decided to use [Blink].

His sudden disappearance brought another shock until he reappeared right behind the cloaked figure and without hesitation, he let his blade touch the figure's neck.

But unexpectedly something made him freeze.

It was the scent of this cloaked figure.

Although hidden behind a black cape, there was no way Emery would mistake the familiar smell and the thumping of his heart. From their bond, Emery could sense who the figure was.

"Morgana!"

Chapter 359: Captive

4 months ago...

After being locked in a cage like some kind of wild animal, finally the cart arrived at a house in the middle of the woods. The distinct smell of black mold permeated the place and the chill of the night could be felt from the slight breeze.

The knight who carried her was seen panicking during the whole trip, but now that he had arrived at his destination, he appeared to have calmed down. He dropped the cage from the cart in the middle of the room.

"I will go for a while, you stay here! Understand, girl?"

The girl was only able to understand a few words from the guy, but she heard of the words 'go' and 'stay' and figured out the rest from that.

This wooden shack was devoid of life. Though a few rotting chairs and tables could be seen all around her, there were no signs of life. To the heightened sense of smell of the fey, the stink of black mold became unbearable.

As soon as the guy left, she quickly used her transformation ability to turn into her fey form and crashed onto the steel cage several times in an attempt to break free, but to no avail.

She sat on the edge of the cell, trying to think of a way to set herself free. While she was thinking, the knight returned with a tray of food.

But, being mad with the treatment as she was now, she knocked away the food and screamed for the guy to release her.

The guy muttered some curses under his breath and left the place.

One day, two days passed...

The guy did not return and the girl started to feel weaker because of hunger. She was forced to reach out for the stale food on the floor that she knocked away yesterday and was barely able to swallow it down.

Another day passed and there was still no sign of that knight returning. Would she be left here to die and rot? Would no one ever return?

Alone with her thoughts, she remembered her family back in the forest. She regretted pretending to be so tough in front of her sister and volunteering for the task just for the chance to see the world outside the forest.

After a while, she started thinking about a guy, a reason she ended up in this place.

She followed him out of her obligation to tradition, but deep in her mind she had always promised herself, when she found a guy who could defeat her, she would stay loyal to that guy.

At first, she thought that being beaten down by an outsider was unfortunate on her part. But, after she knew the guy as one of their kind, just like her sisters, her heart started to beat differently whenever she was close to him.

Besides, she had to admit he looked so much better compared to Cavvi and the other village warriors, who seemed to perpetually smell like bears and other animals of the forest.

When the guy agreed to take her outside, she knew in her heart that this was it. From now on, she would follow him wherever he ended up.

It was what the traditions dictated and it was her destiny. She would accept what was bestowed to her.

Each day she was close to him, seeing him fight or even do something simple like eating, everything he did made her smile though she was reluctant to show it to him.

Until that night, when they were both in trouble, she thought it was the end for them.

When she woke up held inside the cold steel cell, she was honestly more afraid than she wanted to believe. Trapped like a real animal angered her. But seeing him chase after her made her smile. It was more than a person like herself could ask.

She was happy to see him fight tooth and nail for her, until right before he managed to touch her cell, he was engulfed in light and disappeared in front of her eyes.

Was it magic? Whose magic was it?

Where did he go? What happened to him? Was he in more trouble than she was right now?

Another day passed and she could only look at the world from the gaps of the cage, while sometimes rattling it to try escaping. Thanks to hunger, she felt weak and delirious. Her concern for the guy was the only thing keeping her sane through this ordeal.

On the sixth day, she could only lay on the floor, unmoving. She had no energy left to stand, let alone do anything.

Her concern for the guy had turned into questions.

Where was he? Did he die? If he didn't, why hasn't he come for her?

The next few days were all blurry. She spent most of them in a confused, barely-alive haze in her hunger. While she was unaware, it seemed someone came for her and took her away.

The next thing she knew, she was awake in a different cage. Unlike the previous wooden shack, the place was clean, though only decorated with sparse amounts of furniture. A guy sat on a wooden chair just outside her cage, staring at her from beyond.

"Are you awake?"

The girl couldn't understand his language. As the guy approached her closer, she merely stared at his golden hair that looked like it was spun from the rays of the sun. She never saw such a thing before in her life and this mysterious guy also smelled sweet, like ripe peaches in summer heat.

"What's your name?" The guy asked casually.

"Name...?" The girl could not understand his words, but she caught one word she knew. 'Name'.

"Morgana." Unconsciously, she said. She had no chance to think and the thought that said guy might be hostile did not even cross her mind.

The guy gave a small charming smile and replied.

"Hello, Morgana. My name is Arthur."

Chapter 360: Arthur

The boy was born to be a great king, they said.

Wealth, education, the best of anything Briton could offer. Everything could be in his grasp with a snap of his fingers. After all, didn't a king deserve the best?

He was also born with an irresistible appearance most women would fall on each other for. His excellent talent in the art of the swords was the icing on the cake. But, above all else, he possessed the surname 'Pendragon'.

It was a name that commanded power and respect from anyone who lived in any of the seven kingdoms' territories.

However, with all the privileges, came many expectations. Logress was an old kingdom, where generations of great kings ruled and safeguarded their hold on Briton for millennia. With such a history, the boy had a lot to catch up to.

Fortunately, his talent was supported with a great character and commitment to the way of the knight.

Justice, Truth and Honor.

Three principles all knights should live by, which their deeds must show.

Every day, the boy practiced diligently with a continuous thirst for growth, without ever complaining. His efforts paid off and he became a silver knight champion when he was 17. Knight Arthur Pendragon, the youngest squire to obtain the title of silver knight champion.

With such an achievement under his belt, the King of Logress, Uhtred Pendragon, placed even more expectations on the shoulders of the young Arthur. He then was involved in many tasks related to the kingdom's safety and a visit to the battlefield became a regular occurrence.

Still, young Arthur triumphed over all the challenges. Quickly, his popularity climbed and spread beyond the walls of the Logress Kingdom.

With his talent, his achievement and the right surname, none of the 50 golden knights would argue his place among them even if he hadn't reached his 20s yet.

When he received the invitation, there was even whispered that this young Arthur might actually be the chosen one.

The one who finally could pull out the legendary sword

The hope and support for the new golden prince to be able to pull out the sword was so huge, not even the rare two lights occurrence was able to stem the disappointment of the knights of the Order.

But...

Little did everyone know, the day Arthur became a golden knight and received his blessing, something inside of him changed.

From the blessing, he not only gained strength, he also believed he was given a higher purpose by the sword.

From that day onwards, he started questioning everything around him, especially after he started to receive information that was only shared amongst golden knights.

The Knights of Divine Order merely projected an illusion of stability.

From inside, he could see how rotten they actually were. Factions splintered the Order and secret fights for power happen almost on a daily basis. Those he considered good took part in the cover up with excuses regarding the masses, while the king watched it all unfold without doing anything.

Even the enmity between them and the people of the Forbidden Forest were covered up.

Arthur had witnessed conflicts develop over seemingly insignificant things in there and, with every question he asked, the rift between him and his father, the king and knight commander, merely grew even more.

"Why do we need to hide the existence of the sword from the public?"

"Who, or what, actually decides who is worthy to be nominated as a new golden knight? What is the true reason for the restriction?"

"Why were there many secret activities involving the seven kingdoms that could be traced back to the Order, or even outright orchestrated by the Order itself?"

Most of all, the most important incident weighing his heart was the hidden black history moment from 20 years ago, when the conflict between humanity and the Chrutins reached a boiling point. For much of his life, he thought of that war as the darkest moment of Briton that claimed thousands of lives.

There was no one who had any answers to those questions except for the five knight commanders, his father among them. The king's refusal to address Arthur's questions only further broke their relationship apart.

The last two years, they maintained the appearance of being very close in public, but both had been keeping their own secrets, waiting for their chance to strike in the future.

Up until four months ago, Arthur had no chances to ever get to the bottom of all his questions.

That day, late at night, a certain knight came asking for an audience with the king, but Uther Pendragon was away. So, Arthur met the person whom he later discovered was a silver knight from the Lioness kingdom named Keane.

The knight looked wary about the situation and from his behavior, the message he had seemed to be urgent.

Arthur tried to pry the information out of the knight, but even after the knight learnt who he was, the knight still refused to give the information he sought and left the palace that night. Since then, no one had any information regarding his whereabouts.

A few days later, Arthur learned of the mysterious death of the golden knight Bagdemagus. He looked up the golden knight's background and was surprised to find that the golden knight was related to the same knight that went missing after what he asked.

With his authority, he quickly launched an investigation. As his father was away on official kingdom business at that time, by sheer chance he was assigned as the main investigator to the case.

Following the clues related to the golden knight, he was led into tracking an abandoned house in the middle of a forest.

To his surprise, there he found a weak, barely breathing girl slumped inside a cage, which he later found named Morgana.