

Chapter 1 - Departure

"(Mother, I'm going to set off on my journey to the outside world tomorrow! Please have a peace of mind as I will return after becoming a man grown by one or two sizes!)"

Right now I'm standing in a cemetery exclusively for high-ranking nobles located close to the royal palace. My mother, who has given birth to me and my elder brother, is resting here.

My mother passed away due to her weak body soon after giving birth to me. I have almost no memories of her, but my father and brother always told me that my mother continuously worried over my well-being as I was born when she was on the verge of dying.

In addition, even nowadays I clearly remember the warmth of my mother's embrace.

I must become a man stronger than anyone else so that my mother can spend her time in heaven without a worry! That's what I strongly vowed to myself while offering a multicolored bouquet of flowers in front of my mother's gravestone.

"Ah, Klimt-onii-sama. So you were here?"

"Ohh, Nina! What's the matter?"

Ninan is my half-sister. Her mother comes from the Earl Vitalzen House, rumored to have many schemers among their ranks. Immediately after my mother passed away, Nina's mother married my father, as people said, 『The family head of the Earl Armstrong House, the leading family of the military faction, needs to have a level-headed first wife of good pedigree』.

People like Cardinal Hohenheim, an authority in the church, frankly suggested, 『I won't tell you to wait for the whole mourning period, but can't you at least wait for one year?』, but the Vitalzen House didn't heed his advice. I heard that Earl Vitalzen hated the idea of having a march stolen on him by another house.

There was also the matter of Nina's mother having lost her husband to sickness just around that time, immediately after marrying into the Viscount Windland House. Because there were rumors circulating along the lines of 『She's an ill-omened daughter who lost her husband right after marrying him. No, we're talking about the Vitalzen House here. They are quite capable of poisoning their son-in-law』, Earl Vitalzen, who dotted on his daughter despite being a schemer, hurried to remarry her.

Of course there's no way for the Vitalzen House to have poisoned their son-in-law or anything like that. It's just, in noble society such rumors are often spread with ill intent to sabotage rivals.

I've just heard that Nina's mother, brother's and my mother-in-law, married my father after some complications. Leaving aside myself as a second son, what would happen to my brother's standing if my mother-in-law gave birth to a younger brother...

Because such worries existed, my father discussed the matter with the Vitalzen House, and they

apparently agreed upon brother being the heir of the Earl Armstrong House. However, those worries proved to be unnecessary. My mother-in-law only gave birth to Nina.

Only father and mother-in-law know whether this was coincidence or intentional. But because of that, my mother-in-law always treated my brother and me well, despite not being connected by blood to us. I never felt unhappy with my mother-in-law.

"Wondering where you might be planning to go, I followed you, Klimt-onii-sama. I thought that you might intend to go on a date with a cute girl while hiding it from me."

"That's out of the question. I'm unpopular with women."

The men of the Earl Armstrong House have big, muscular bodies, far detached from being handsome in appearance. There's no way for me to be popular with women or children.

"Is that so? I think that you'd definitely be popular with women, though."

"I'd be happy if this was the case, but... I'm envious since you're such a beauty, Nina."

Nina completely comes after her mother, and will definitely become a pretty woman in the future. Although it's a complete mystery, the women of the Earl Armstrong House never become as muscled and largely-built as the men.

"I've heard that you're going to marry into Cardinal Hohenheim's family, Nina!"

"It looks like it. Grandfather said that it'd be bad for the Earl Armstrong House to be only blood related to military-based nobles, and that I should get married to an influential person of the church to offset this a bit."

I heard that Nina's marriage into the Hohenheim family was a scheme by Earl Vitalsen. Since my father accepted my mother-in-law, Earl Vitalsen helped with this marriage to repay the favor.



Even if he had some selfish motives in this, Earl Vitalsen wouldn't fail to follow his debt of gratitude.

"So, what kind of person is the heir of the Viscount Hohenheim House?"

"HmMMM, I think you could describe him as a kind man."

A kind man, huh...? Then again, the current head of the family, who's a cardinal of the church, simply stands out too much, resulting in the other family members fading in his shadow.

"I'm pretty sure it'll be alright. Rather than that, Klimt-onii-sama, you've come to bid your farewell to Lela-sama as you're going to leave, right?"

"You've heard from father?"

"Yes."

As always, father has a soft spot for Nina. Lela is the name of my mother, who's resting in this cemetery.

"But, why to the outside world? Klimt-onii-sama, you can use magic, so wouldn't it be possible to remain here?"

Regardless of small or large noble houses, the standings of second sons and further down are difficult in noble houses. However, if it's high-ranking nobility at the level of the Armstrong house, I can look forward to a reasonable treatment as long as I don't ask for too much. Much more so as I was born with the talent for magic. Far from being allowed to stay at home, talent in magic is precious enough to negate any blood relationships.

Rather, it's normal for magicians to be detained from leaving home.

But!

"I have no intention to discard my status as a member of the Armstrong house! However, I'm still inexperienced! I want to experience the outside world, broaden my view, and become a full-fledged magician!"

My abilities as a magician are lacking. Because I'm still young, my mana capacity continues to grow. Having said that, I can only use elementary spells as a magician. It's still a precious talent, but currently the types of spells I can use are simply too limited, and I also don't know for how long my mana might continue to grow.

Therefore I've decided that I should experience the harsh outside world for some time.

"That's why you've made up your mind to enroll into an adventurer prep school, correct?"

"Quite so."

I'm 14 years old right now. I'll study for a year at the prep school, become an adventurer, and

strengthen my combat skills, including magic. This will be the most ideal way to help my brother with magic, as a member of a soldier family.

"It's for the sake of helping brother!"

"Klimt-onii-sama, you're kind. But, I have a hunch that you've also got another objective. You do hate stiff formality after all."

Ugh! Nothing less of my sister who's descended from the Vitalsen house! She has realized my other desire!

"I think you understand, but....."

"...Klimt-onii-sama, I'm looking forward to your presents and interesting stories of the outside world."

"Leave it to me!"

There's another reason why I'm leaving home. It's...because the Earl Armstrong House will never release me, seeing how I've been born with a talent for magic. And since I can't escape my fate of helping my brother in the future anyway, I'll fully enjoy the outside world until then!

In other words, this is my period of grace that also serves as an opportunity to train myself.

Mother! I promise you that I'll enjoy the outside world to the fullest!

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"I see. That's enviable. The outside world, huh...? It'd be great if I could freely leave this place as well..."

Parting with Nina at the cemetery, I go to inform a certain person of my departure. That person is my best buddy and my childhood friend, His Highness the Crown Prince of the Helmut Kingdom.

The reason for me to have become His Highness' friend stems from me having been summoned to the royal palace as His Highness' playmate during my childhood, and immediately hitting off with him. Although I'm the second son, I'm still a family member of the prestigious Armstrong house. That also means there will be opportunities for me to get in contact with royalty.

According to His Highness, he apparently got interested in me because I'm an unconventional, funny guy for a noble. Thanks to that, I'm nowadays allowed to enter His Highness' private rooms.

Today I've visited to tell him that we won't be able to meet for a while since I'm going to be busy with my life at the adventurer prep school.

"Your Highness, that would be problematic since you're slated to become the next king!"

"You know Klimt, to be honest, it'd be wonderful if the royal family had a tradition of letting one experience the outside world as training for kingship... Well, half of the reason for your leaving is the wish to have a blast in the outside world anyway."

"You're correct! I see I can't trick Nina and you, Your Highness!"

"Your cute sister, huh? It looks like she's going to be married to the son of that demon."

"Demon...you say?"

"Despite having just past his 50th birthday, he still seems to quarrel with father every once in a while. He's a man you can't take lightly, really."

Now then, I wonder who is meant here, Cardinal Hohenheim or Earl Vitalsen!

"Since his son seems to be a sensible, capable man, your sister should feel relieved as well, no? Becoming the wife of that demon would make anyone choke, I'm sure. The son should be the better option, right?"

"Now that you're asking, I feel like she's relieved."

But, since we're talking about Nina here, it could be that she regards Cardinal Hohenheim's son as lacking.

"A student's life over the period of one year, eh? It makes me jealous."

"I must still become much better at magic!"

If possible, up until intermediate level...but, having said that, reaching intermediate level until adulthood might be harsh at the current rate of my mana growth!

Hence it's necessary for me to lower the amount of mana used when casting a spell, make sure to increase the firepower at the same amount of mana, and generally boost my fighting abilities by combining my magic with combat skills that don't rely on magic.

One year will never be enough for all that. I've got no choice but to train myself in real combat as an adventurer after graduating from prep school.

"It definitely won't be a walk in the park."

"But, I still envy you, Klimt. You'll be able to enjoy the outside world before coming back here. I guess it feels like the grass being greener on the other side of the fence. But you see, I'd like to also try living like a commoner for a while."

"Your Highness..."

Thoughtless people might be jealous of His Highness for having been born into royalty. Same could be said about my position as well, but although I'm bound by my duties as a noble, I'm also responsible for the lives of the commoners. Many nobles and royals wish that they could carefreely

live as commoners for some time.

Of course they're well aware that a commoner's life isn't all fun and sunshine. Some of them let their sick children die as they're unable to get them treated because of their poverty. Some rot away in the slums of the capital after leaving their territories as they couldn't inherit their family's fields.

Us nobles are striving to somehow improve these circumstances, but politics are complicated, and nothing you can solve easily. All of this is too difficult for me. But, I'd like to help His Highness to become a marvelous king in the future.

This is something I believe from the bottom of my heart.

"But, I already know that you'll become a much stronger man in the outside world and then come back, Klimt. And then you'll stand by my side."

"Your Highness."

"I'm looking forward to all the nice stories of your travels. Since we're talking about you here, I'm pretty sure that you'll experience plenty of funny things."

"Your Highness, I'm a very decent and sensible man."

"I guess you're right. Do as you see fit while watching out for yourself."

With this my farewell from His Highness came to an end. In the evening of the same day, my father, brother, mother-in-law, and Nina held a farewell party for me, and then, early in the next morning, I departed the Earl Armstrong House's mansion.