

Chapter 3 - Life at the Prep School

"Klimt, you're definitely a son of that Earl Armstrong House, right?"

"What are you asking at this point!?"

"And you're not getting an allowance from your parents?"

"I turned it down!"

"You sure went all-in there. But, I have to say, this room really has nothing in it."

One week after prep school has started, I've finally grown accustomed to the lessons. Today my new friend Bruno has come to visit me. But, he's immediately surprised after seeing how my room looks. The place I'm currently boarding at is the attic of Mrs. Walkt's small home. She's an old lady living by herself near the prep school.

The room only contains a board I'm using instead of a bed, several books about magic which I've put on a beam, my wand, several sets of underwear and robes, and a small wooden box filled with my personal belongings.

For a change, Bruno, who's remained completely calm and collected during the entire week, is astonished by my livelihood, which you wouldn't expect from a noble's child at all!

"You refused an allowance?"

"That's only natural!"

"You call that only natural...?"

There would be no point in me leaving home to experience the outside world if I were to receive a high allowance from my parents! The whole point in me leaving home was to experience the life of commoners. I even went as far as deliberately choosing this lodging for being the cheapest I could get!

I'm frugally using the pocket money I've saved up until leaving home, so I think it's about time for me to earn some money by hunting. Bruno's visit today also has the objective for us to talk about this.

"I think it'd have been fine if you had handled it a bit more flexibly and obediently accepted the allowance. It's also important to live while not feeling bad about receiving help from others."

"That'd be boring then."

"Yeah, I expected you to say that, Klimt. You give people a much better impression than those guys."

There are noble youths who are studying at the prep school like me. However, the higher the status of their families, the more extravagant their lives are, through getting high allowances from their parents and commuting from home, despite having finally come to the outside world. I have problems understanding what's so fun about living like a noble in the outside world!

Of course the children of poor nobles act differently, though.

"Anyway, let's talk about hunting. The capital's prep school has quite a few limitations in regard to that."

"Does it?"

"Well, the capital is a city after all."

If this place were to be out in the provinces, it'd have been no issue for everyone to hunt as they please as long as they didn't enter a monster domain until reaching adulthood. The countryside has lots of nature, and there are many places with plenty of game, while having only few people that hunt.

But, around the capital, places where you can hunt keep decreasing because the city proceeds to expand. Since the city has a big population, many citizens, and not just adventurers, make a living by hunting and gathering. If you add the prep school students, who aim to earn their living expenses by hunting, to this, it'd make the competition quite intense, Bruno explains to me.

"For this reason, it looks like students are only allowed to hunt twice a week."

"That's a harsh condition."

Since I want to refrain from using my savings as much as possible, I'd like to earn my living expenses for this year by myself.

"What are you going to do, Bruno?"

"Seeing how I don't have as much leeway as you do, Klimt, I'll pick up various part-time jobs by relying on my connections. Since some places also told me that they'd like me to refer people to them, I can introduce you as well, if you want."

"Oohh! As expected of my friend! Please, introduce me by all means!"

Now that I've finally left home, I want to experience many things! It had totally escaped me that I would be able to do jobs other than hunting.

"What kind of work is it?"

"Various kinds. Seeing how we can only go hunting twice a week, I think you can view it as covering for the rest with short term or day work all over the place."

"That sounds fun."

"Fun, huh...? Klimt, you sure have a positive outlook on everything."

"That's my only selling point!"

"Okay, let's immediately start working from tomorrow afternoon."

With this decision, I'd challenge earning money by working for the first time in my life.

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"Sir, I've brought him with me."

"Sorry for the trouble, Bruno. Ooohh! This guy looks like he's got some strength. Man, I'm glad that I've asked for your help, Bruno."

In the afternoon of the next day, Bruno and I head to the first workplace. It's a construction site where a building is being erected right now. The tanned, muscular foreman, who's managing the place by himself, seems to be Bruno's acquaintance.

"Bruno, you know him?"

"Well he's a mister living close to my home. He's also friends with my parents."

"I've known Bruno since he's been a little twerp. You need quite a bit of strength and stamina since it's this kind of work, but lad, you sure got a nice body build. Looks like I can expect quite a bit from you."

Physical work definitely plays into my cards, but leaving myself aside, is Bruno going to be alright? I'm worried about him since he isn't all that strong, and his stamina is average at best, too.

"Bruno, you're..."

"Don't worry. I've got this covered with magic..."

"Oo——ii! Bring this block up to the to——oop!"

"Well then, you lads are up."

The work at the construction site starts right away. I've heard that they're going to build a three-story building made out of stone. A scaffolding has been erected, and people pass the building stones, which are going to be used at the top, upwards, but setting me as someone with enough muscles aside, I'm still worried about the feeble Bruno.

"Here you go."

"Oohh! No matter how often I watch it, magic is quite handy."

"Even heavy stones take but an instant with Bruno's magic, yep."

"See, I'm going to be fine."

"Yeah..."

Come to think of it, I've completely forgotten what magic can do. Even weak magicians can freely transport heavy objects as long as they can use 『Telekinesis』.

Bruno lifts up a stone as heavy as himself up to a height of around ten meters with 『Telekinesis』, and skilfully puts it down on top, following the instructions of the guy up there.

"It's not off or anything?"

"No, you placed it down perfectly."

"Bruno, your control is awesome."

He's right. My precision in magic is unable to hold a candle to Bruno's. I guess I've worried over nothing here.

"Lad, you can't use magic like that?"

"I'm bad at this type of magic."

『Telekinesis』 belongs in the category of emission-based spells. Besides, even if I could use it, I'd quickly run out of mana anyway.

"Don't mind it. You've been born with such a nice body. So might as well make best use out of it."

"You're completely right!"

My merit is this trained, muscular body. I just need to work while capitalizing on it.

"Please bring a building stone over here, too."

"Sure thing!"

I quickly pick up a stone placed on a stash of stones at the edge of the construction site, and climb upwards while using the scaffolding. Stones that weigh only this much pose no problem for me, even without using magic!

Since my father and brother have repeatedly told me to not be negligent in training my body, this kind of work is also convenient for me.

"It's not heavy, lad? Usually a stone like this is carried by at least two people..."

"It's not that heavy. Where should I carry the next one?"

"Ah, sure...as long you're alright, it's all cool."

What's required of us young men is to do physical work like carrying heavy stuff around. Bruno used 『Telekinesis』, and I relied on my body. We worked until evening, resulting in me finishing my first job without a hitch.



"Wow, how neat of them to give us a bonus."

"In exchange, we've got to work for another three days over there."

"Isn't that fine? The students of the capital's prep school can't really earn much money through hunting. It means expanding a city too much has its own share of problems, too."

"Once we graduate from the prep school, we can move our base of operations to the outskirts, but..."

"Something like having to spend another year at school because you lack credits as a result of being forced to travel far would be even more pointless."

"That's certainly true. We've got no choice but to earn our expenses with short term jobs on the days where we can't hunt."

"Well, I've got plenty of connections, so no need to worry on that front."

"That's my friend Bruno for you!"

On the evening of the same day we are eating out in celebration of having received a higher wage than expected. Having said that, Bruno and I are poor fledglings of the prep school. We've chosen an old restaurant catering towards prep school students with cheap prices and big portions.

This place is also a restaurant Bruno has told me about. He's well connected and familiar with society to an astounding degree when compared to me. I can't believe that we are the same age at all. Having left home only recently, there's still a lot I must learn.

"Let's first have a toast. Of course, without alcohol."

That's inevitable seeing how we're still underage. In reality, many teenagers secretly drink alcohol, but this restaurant is often frequented by school staff, too. Given that it'd become troublesome if we were spotted drinking alcohol by teachers, we limit our toasting to fruit juice diluted with water for today. No need to get impatient since we're going to become adults in a year anyway.

""Cheers!""

After toasting we start on our large serving of stew, pieces of bread as big as our faces, and heaps of salad. It's not a menu that takes appearance into account like the dishes served back at my family's mansion, but the taste is fairly decent.

Above all, it's great that it's so cheap!

"Klimt, your work really stood out. Boss and everyone were really pleased with you, weren't they?"

"I want to get praised like you, if possible, though..."

Because Bruno could easily move heavy stuff with his 『Telekinesis』, he received raving reviews by the other construction workers. According to what I've heard, the construction seems to have fallen slightly behind schedule, but thanks to Bruno, they'll finish on time. The foreman and the others were very delighted.

"Everyone was grateful since you quickly carried stones around that would usually require several people. I mean, the other workers are quite advanced in age, after all..."

"I'm happy that things finished with me being of use, but still, I'd love to become able to use 『Telekinesis』 as well."

『Telekinesis』 is a emission-based spell that can be used easily even by magicians with a relatively low amount of mana. It's even described as the easiest spell among the emission-based ones. Seeing how I can't even use a spell like that, I'm definitely a dunce as a magician.

"Klimt, your mana is still growing, so you'll become capable of using it soon."

"It'd be great if you're right."

Certainly, my mana pool is still increasing. It's not unusual for some of my classmates to have already reached their growth limit, so I'm lucky when compared to them, I suppose.

But...

"At its current growth speed, it's questionable whether I'll be able to break through the elementary level even if my mana continues to increase until the age of 20."

If possible, I want to reach the intermediate level like Bruno.

"It's not said that it'll always continue at its current rate. You don't really need to worry about it so much, do you?"

"It's also possible that it'll increase slower than it is now, though. The growth might even stop tomorrow altogether."

"I'm sure it's going to be alright. Trust me." Bruno reassures me while tearing off a piece of bread and putting it into his mouth.

He appears to have a far more positive personality than I've thought. And, despite being slender, he

definitely eats well since he's a magician.

"In my eyes, it's you who I'm jealous of, Klimt. I'm putting quite a lot of effort into it, but my body doesn't want to build muscles at all. I wonder, what should I do to become as muscular as you?"

Bruno appears to be worried about his slender body and his height that's smaller than average. He touches my arm while looking envious.

"Is it the food? But then again, I eat plenty since I'm a magician. And yet my body remains thin."

"You've got no choice but to eat more and train your body."

My home, the Armstrong House, has been passing down methods on how to train your body as a family tradition, but in reality, those are used to not suffer an embarrassing defeat on the battlefield by forging the body to move well and react quickly.

It might be smarter of me to not mention that my body has become like this without me doing any particular training.

"I guess I might grow taller and improve my body build if I train for several years."

"I'm sure, you can."

In the end it means that even Bruno, who's talented as a magician, isn't completely worry-free either.

Today I've safely finished my first day of work. After wolfing down the bountiful meal, I went to sleep with a great feeling.



"Bruno, what kind of job are we going to do today?"

"Store tending at a bookshop. It'll also include cleaning, book sorting and similar things."

The work on the construction site has finished without a hitch after three days. Bruno and I were gushily thanked by the foreman and his men. It means we've perfectly fulfilled our role as helpers by quickly carrying the heavy rocks around with magic at a time when it looked like they'd be late with finishing the construction. Though I only used my muscle strength, and no magic.

Since Bruno would introduce me to the next workplace, we quickly headed over to the store in the afternoon after finishing our lessons at school. If I remember correctly, this area should be adjacent to the block with mansions of low-ranking nobles, even though it's a shopping street. When I ask Bruno about it, he tells me that his family lives in this neighborhood.

By the way, unlike me, he seems to be commuting to school from home to save on the living expenses.

"Is the next place also run by an acquaintance of yours?"

"Yes."

"Bruno, is your family running some kind of business?"

"My family runs a wholesale store for leather goods."

They apparently buy animal and monster hides from the adventurer's guild, and sell them to companies and workshops requiring those hides. Going by their location, it's obvious that Bruno's family is affluent, despite being commoners.

"Sounds like you're rich."

"My family is. Well, my big brother is going to succeed the store anyway. I don't need to pay any tuition as the prep school treats me as a scholarship student, but I have to earn my pocket money myself."

"It's the same for me."

"No, listen, I don't think there exist any noble youths that would expressly turn down an allowance. Oops, we're already here. It's this store."

The place we've arrived at is a fairly big book-selling store. It doesn't seem like the store is closed, but no customers are to be found. Only a shopkeeper-like, elderly man is intently staring at a certain book.

"Grandpa Zeno, are you looking at a new 『Romance』 book again?"

"Of course I am! If I don't check the content with my own eyes as the owner of this store, I won't know how much to stock, will I!?"

Certainly, the title of book he's reading, 『Other's Wives Taste like Honey』, is something you better don't read in front of other people.

"You've already stocked up on it, haven't you?"

"Ts, ts, ts, Bruno, you're still a little child. New books sell to some extent right after the first batch is delivered. But it depends on the book whether it's going to sell afterwards as well. If you don't decide the number of books to order additionally after making a good estimate, your store will go bankrupt because of all the dead stock."

"So, what's the story of that book?"

"It's about an affair between a man with wife and children, and a married woman. Which reminds me, since a similar work became a huge hit some time ago, the church has been bickering about it. The priest in question has been sleeping around with the wife of a certain noble. Far from censoring the book, it actually serves him right."

"Grandpa, you sure are hard on others..."

It doesn't happen often that priests have affairs with noble wives, but it does happen every now and then. Of course affairs between fellow nobles exist as well, though.

"Only an obstinate priest with a narrow view of the world because of an absolute belief in his doctrine, would consider something like censoring books. It means he can't differentiate between reality and fiction."

"Let's leave the criticism of the clergy at this, okay?"

Grandpa Zeno seems to often quarrel with the church when it comes to romance books with perverted content. I wouldn't feel like getting too involved with priests and their likes by choice.

"Isn't it an option to not stock up on the romantic book to avoid pointless quarreling?"

"As if! You think I'm going to make any profits if I don't stock romantic novels!?"

"Is that so?"

Reading books is for intelligent people like the upper class and clergy, and also many of the richer people - even among commoners. Since the customers have such qualities, romantic novels aren't really needed, are they?

"Humans, be it kings, royals, high-ranking nobles, or wealthy merchants, love such works unrelated to their social standing. Is it any different for you?"

It'd be a lie if I told him that I've got no interest at all, but I prefer real women over the ones in books.

"The real thing and fictional characters are completely different, but...whatever. Bruno, I'd like you to sort, clean and watch the store, but you sure brought a fairly tall helper along for that."

"He's going to be handy, right?"

"He does look like it, at least. We won't have many customers today anyway. So, once you've finished what I've asked of you, feel free to read the books in this store. If customers show up, take proper care of them."

"You're as vague in your work description as usual..."

"This shop earns the most income on vacation days. Keeping the store's goods in order has always been my job. After all, customers will buy the books they desire if I've got them stocked. Either way, I'm counting on you, Bruno. The big lad over there, you too." With these words, Grandpa Zeno leaves the store, leaving us two behind by ourselves.

"Grandpa Zeno said that he's going to stock up on books since many customers will show up on the upcoming vacation day."

Customers mostly turn up on their days off unless there are some special circumstances. I guess Grandpa Zeno has gone to stock up in preparation for that.

"I see. So, what am I supposed to do?"

"First, sorting and cleaning, I'd say."

Looking closely, the store is filled with many bookshelves. Since the upper shelves are rather dusty, wiping that dust away is a task that's suited for me.

Bruno cleans off the dust with an adjusted wind spell, and puts away the books which guests haven't returned to their proper place...and that wraps up this part of the job.

"I'm bored."

"This job is rather easy, suiting the low wage it pays. The work we've been asked to do was done after one hour. All that's left is to take care of customers if they visit, but if it's customers who leave the store after reading for a bit, you can't call that a job either."

"Right?"

Or rather, this store really has no customers during the weekdays. Even as we sorted and cleaned the place, not one customer showed up.

"Bruno, is there any meaning in having accepted this job?"

I feel like there exist jobs with better pay than this.

"It's fine as long as we get to read this." Without me noticing him picking it up, Bruno holds a thick book in his hand. Its title is 『Basics of Advanced Magic』. "This store has many books written by old magicians. They don't seem to sell overly well, though."

"Oh, so we get paid, and can read any book about magic for free, huh?"

"See? It's a good job, right?"

"The best!"

This store is heaven for me who wants to increase his mana to become capable of using emission-based spells. It has all kinds of old books related to magic.

"In short, that grandpa was no romantic novels expert."

"Even though he acts like that, Grandpa Zeno knows quite a bit about magic books, too. Since he won't be able to make a living on just magic books, he's also selling romantic novels, or rather...I think there's more of such books in the store? But then again, it doesn't look like he hates it either."

This bookstore might be one of the topmost stores in the Kingdom when it comes to books related to magic! Simultaneously, the same could be said about its assortment of romantic novels...

It's a weird place.

"In short, that grandpa is a romantic novels expert, too."

"I guess so. But look at it like this, he's stocking lots of romantic novels, but at the same time, he's also got books related to magic." Bruno picks out a book with the title 『Book of Overly Practical Magic』 from among a great pile of romantic novels.

"Let's take a look... The basics of the spells required to peek into the woman's bath without getting noticed, and their application."

"Magic that allows you to peep under the skirt of a woman as much as you like while pretending that it's actually the wind blowing, and ways to adjust its power, eh...? It's so retarded that it's refreshing in some way, but since we're men, it's interesting, right?"

"Indeed."

Maybe I'll also be able to learn emission-based magic if I strongly wish to flip over skirts. Still, since I'm someone hailing from the renowned Earl Armstrong family, I don't have any choice but to avoid putting it into practice.

"Either way, with the cleaning and sorting done, we can devote ourselves to reading the many books in this store. That's the advantage of this part time job."

"Got it."

In the case of a normal bookstore, you'd be frowned upon if you were to browse the books without buying them. Given that many of the books related to magic cost a lot, it's very welcome that I can read them for free.

"Okay, I think I'll also use the time to read some then." Bruno starts to enthusiastically read magic books which has apparently been his goal from the outset.

"I wonder which I should read...oh, a customer."

Although I've heard that customers rarely show up around lunchtime on a weekday, a customer has suddenly entered the...the store...

"It's a young lady."

"In this store? Is she a magician?"

"She doesn't look like it."

Her age is around 12 or 13 I think. She's wearing very cute clothes, and resembles Bruno quite a bit...causing me to look at him reflexively.

"Oh? Is that you, Liese? Do you have some business with this store...yeah, okay, that's very unlikely..."

"Brother, I've heard that you'd be tending Grandpa Zeno's store today, so I've brought you some refreshment. I baked cookies."

"I'm happy to hear that. Oh right, let me introduce you. The guy standing next to me is a classmate from prep school."

"I'm Klimt."

"Uwaaah, completely opposite of brother, you look like a fairly reliable man."

"While you might be my sister, could you not be so blunt about it?"

Certainly, there might be some women believing that Bruno isn't reliable as a man because of his frailty...though such women should be in the minority, seeing how he's such a handsome man.

"Mister, you're manly and attractive."

"You think so?"

So far I've been often told that I'm big by many women, but it's the first time for a woman to call me attractive.

"Klimt, this child is Lieselotte, my little sister. We're always calling her Liese, though."

"Klimt-san, thanks for taking care of my brother."

"It's I who gets taken care of by Bruno."

Still, she's a cute sister.

"Looking at you, Liese-jou, I'm reminded of my own little sister, Nina."

"What, so you had a sister as well. Come to think of it, there's no way for commoners like us to fully know the family structure of the Earl Armstrong House, I suppose."

"Oh, you're the son of a high-ranking noble, Klimt-san?"

"So far as it goes. You wouldn't really think so going by my appearance, and I'm not the successor either."

Besides, my birthplace doesn't matter in the world I'm going to experience from now on. It's not like the traps in historic ruins or monsters take such things into account.

"Klimt-san, you seem to be a good person, seeing how you don't act arrogantly despite being a noble."

"I won't do anything so meaningless."

Occasionally you will find such people at the prep school, but most of the time those people don't

have real abilities to speak of, despite aiming to become adventurers, and thus cling to their lineage. They're sad, weak folks.

"Please excuse me then." Liese-jou puts down the basket with her cookies, and goes back home.

"I wonder whether Nina is doing fine."

"Were you reminded of your sister back home after seeing Liese? What kind of person is your sister, Klimt?"

"She resembles me quite a lot!"

That's why she's my prided, little sister.

"...Umm, so you're saying she's a strong person? Anyway! Since it's a great opportunity, let's read after eating the cookies."

He's right. Bruno and I are working at this store aiming to read the books here. After enjoying some tea and the cookies made by Liese-jou, we immediately go back to reading books.

"『You mustn't! Even if the two of us aren't related by blood, such a relationship as big sister and little brother is...! The grip when Dustin grasped my shoulders was stronger than expected, making me fully realize that my cute brother had turned into a man』. Erm, yeah, okay."

"No, not that. Read books about magic."

"You're right about that, but father and brother said in the past that I'd need to know about such things as well."

"Well, it's not wrong to know a bit about such things...I guess those things are the same for commoners and nobles alike."

Father and brother have hidden those kinds of books away in the library, and have shown them to me every once in a while. But then again, mother-in-law and sister-in-law were fully aware of it, although both planned to hide those books from them.

"Anyway, read another book, okay?"

"Then...『Around fifty meters ahead were two cute girls with no people around them. I flipped their skirts with 『Squall』 while getting closer to them. One wore white laces, but the other one had violet panties which excited me. For sure I hadn't expected such a cute girl to wear such daring panties. Now then, the next target is...』."

"That's not it either!"

This is wrong as well, huh?

"It's talking about magic, though."

"That's simply a story about a lecher magician, completely unrelated to magic theory."

I guess this won't be much of a reference for magic even if I read it...

"Or rather, this is a book with an interesting backstory for which the church persecuted the publisher. It seems like a higher-up of the church got offended after children of low-ranking magicians imitated the book."

Certainly, this much should be easily copyable.

"So this book escaped the prosecution...?"

"Excuse me, please sell me this book."

There's a maniac who's been looking for this romantic novel which had most of its edition confiscated after getting prosecuted by the church. It looks like he's been searching the bookstore in the capital during the week. The finely-dressed, middle-aged man asks me how much he'd need to pay for that book about a skirt-flipping boy.

"How much does it cost?"

"10 cen..."

"It's 200 cent!"

"Ehh!? Klimt?"

"Anything wrong, Mr. Clerk? Here you go, 200 cent."

"Thanks for your purchase."

Leaving aside Bruno, the customer doesn't seem to consider 200 cent expensive. Since relatively many of those with a hobby to read have a good income, it's only natural.

"Klimt, don't you think that it's a rip-off to sell a book that costs 10 cent for 200 cent?"

"Seeing how their numbers are limited after the prosecution, it's only reasonable to raise the price of a product with rarity value."

It stands to reason to raise the price if the supply falls far behind the demands if there are other collectors of this work. Father and brother have also collected such books that were prohibited by the church.

"I see, I guess that's a very noble-like thinking..."

"Let's stop goofing around, and read books related to magic."

Until Grandpa Zeno returned, Bruno and I continued to read books...books related to magic.



"You might have sold it for 250 cent if you haggled a bit harder. You're still quite wet behind the ears as well."

We didn't get scolded for it, but Grandpa Zeno still told us that we might have sold that romantic novel for more money.



Doing business is quite complicated.