

Chapter 14 - A New Friend

"I can only apologize for myself and my father having been unable to make up our minds until now."

Alfred-sama, father, Cardinal Hohenheim, and I have a secret audience with His Majesty, but the king only apologizes to us for his own failure to deal with this situation. Holding the audience in secret was probably Cardinal Hohenheim's consideration to avoid the fact of His Majesty apologizing to an unaffiliated magician and his retainers not becoming public knowledge.

"These expenses are...?"

"Magic potions and equipment for Klimt-kun prepared by Candy-dono. We'd have lost without these."

"Got it. I'll definitely pay this alongside the reward in a week."

"I hope you'll keep your promise."

"Obviously I'm going to pay, geeze."

Cardinal Hohenheim leaves us with a disappointed look.

After leaving the palace, Alfred-sama and I walk through the city, but dawn should break anytime soon.

"You did well."

"I only followed your instructions, Alfred-sama."

If I had tried to do this by myself, I'd have died, without a doubt.

"Even if I had partied up with someone else and if that person had followed the same instructions I gave you, we'd have died. Ah, right!"

"Is something wrong?"

"No. You and I are comrades who defeated Dattol Stein together. And now that I think about it, we aren't that far apart in age either. So let's change the way we address each other. Alfred-sama doesn't really sit well with me."

"Alfred-dono then?"

"That's too formal. I'll call you Klimt from now on, so you should call me Alfred, Klimt."

"But...Alfred-sama, you're currently the highest evaluated young magician. Moreover you're so great that an elementary magician like me can't even hold a candle to you."

"That's strange. Differences in social standing don't exist between magicians. I'm no noble either. Rather, you could even argue that my way of speaking to you, who's a young nobleman, sounds quite arrogant."

"I have left my home, so I would like you to not concern yourself with my lineage."

"Isn't it fine then? Come on, go ahead."

"I understand...Alfred."

"That's how it's supposed to be. It's great for you to make up your mind. You have the talent to become a great magician. And it's also nice how you're not really very aristocratic despite being a noble."

"Are you actually praising me, Alfred?"

"It's the highest praise I can give. I think it's okay for you to be proud of it."

"Which reminds me, you've been awfully harsh towards Cardinal Hohenheim."

"People like him are necessary, but I don't feel like getting involved with him if possible."

"I can fully agree with that."

I'm sure people, who aren't involved with the depths of the kingdom's politics, are much happier. It's great that I'm the second son.

"It looks like Bruno-dono's funeral is going to be held today. I'll attend it as well, so let's go together."

"Thanks."

"He was your best friend, after all. I'm sure I'd have become good friends with him as well, if only I had the chance to bond with him."

"Bruno would be delighted if he could hear this. Let us go then."

Alfred and I head to Bruno's home in order to attend his funeral.



Bruno, I've taken revenge for you, but I've still lost an irreplaceable friend with your death. However, on that occasion I gained a new friend in Alfred. You probably think that I'm an

inconsiderate guy, don't you? No, you weren't a man to think something like that. I'm sure you'd be delighted that I was able to make a new friend.

Moreover, I don't know what kind of magician I'm going to become and how long it's going to take, but I'll always report to you in heaven, so look forward to it.

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"Oh! You made it out alive!"

"What a cheeky lie. As if you don't know of our success."

"Sorry, sorry. There were some guys watching me, so I appreciate your effort. Since they quickly scurried away for some reason, I knew that something must have happened to their master, Duke Bürger."

"He'll be treated as having died from sickness several days later."

"Even though he was scum, it sure gotta be nice to be treated kindly just because you're a Duke."

"You're kidding. Be honest, not once did you ever feel envious of nobles, Teach."

"I can say the same back at you, Al."

After succeeding in Dattol Stein's assassination, and attending Bruno-dono's funeral together with Klimt, I visited the usual bar since I wasn't feeling sleep for some reason. There I found my master and teacher, Burkhart, sitting at the counter, and thus used the opportunity to roughly tell him about tonight's events.

Once we finish our conversation, the elderly barmaster comes back to the counter. This place is quite convenient since you can talk here about stuff not meant for other people's ears. The barmaster is known for his tight lips and his exquisite timing to always disappear whenever such topics come up.

"How did you feel about having done it with the two of you?"

"It's just as I've expected. He'll grow even further."

"Makes sense. Back then, he was the brat who drew your attention."

Klimt isn't just any normal elementary magician. Even though it's true that he can currently only pour his mana into his fists and punch with those, his power is way too strong, no matter how you look at it. Just as I had suspected, he drew out all the mana within the 『Simple High-Capacity Magic Crystal』, which was filled with more mana than I possess, clad his fist with it, and broke through Dattol Stein's mana defense.

When Klimt's fist blew away Dattol Stein's arms and penetrated his chest, he died with disbelief written on his face. In other words, Klimt's latent maximum mana capacity should be tremendously huge.

However, if you look at the current growth rate of Klimt's mana, he appears to be the typical late-bloomer.

"If you have so high expectations of him, you could just have him match his capacity with yours."

"On the contrary, if I did that, it might result in something that's not good for him."

He's just like a huge tree. He keeps growing little by little, over a long time. If his aggregate mana increases too much all of a sudden, it'll very likely have a negative backlash.

"If you had forcibly increased his mana before the battle against Dattol Stein...oops, that way of thinking is Cardinal Hohenheim all over again."

Many magicians suffer from having their mana increased all of a sudden by a capacity matching because they can't handle it. In the end, a magician must raise their abilities by their own hands to some extent.

"Besides, if I had matched capacities with him in that situation, it might have resulted in him still not hitting his limit."

"You gotta be kidding. But, I'll watch from a distance whether your prediction comes true, Al. I'm bad with overly passionate guys like the second son of the Armstrong House."

Afterwards, I quickly became sleepy when drinking with my teacher. I guess I'll go to bed early today. I've got a designated request waiting for me tomorrow, too.

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"I have nothing to do."

It's been three days since Bruno's funeral. I was told by Candy-dono to take a rest for a week.

『Anyone is going to feel spent after using all their strength against such a super strong enemy. You'd be liable to get injured after doing a mistake you would never do under normal circumstances, or die in the worst case. I'm sorry, Ron-chan, but we must compensate the combat power we lost through Bruno-chan's death, so you're going to be on vacation as you're still a rookie』

After being told so by Candy-dono, I've been resting at home. Since I've received a considerably big reward for assassinating Dattol Stein, I'll be alright even without working for a while. I've been

killing my time by reading Bruno's old books about magic, which I received from his parents and his older brother.

Come to think of it, I wonder what's going on with Liese-jou who used to come here regularly. Her brother has died all of a sudden, and it's not like I can talk about the truth behind his death.

Cardinal Hohenheim skillfully excused it as an accident during a monster subjugation, but when I saw Liese-jou struggling hard to not cry over her brother's death, I was assailed by a strong pang of guilt. I want to tell her the truth, but if I do that, I'll put Bruno's family in danger.

Although it's inevitable, keeping it a secret doesn't really agree with me.

"Liese-jou likely will not visit this place anymore."

She came to clean this house because she wanted to take care of her beloved brother. I doubt that she'll come here for my sake alone. She's unmarried, and moreover, very beautiful. There's no way that she'd visit a place where just one man lives by himself.

As I ponder about all that, the doorbell suddenly rings.

When I go out to check who it might be, I find Liese-jou standing there with shopping bags in her hands.

"Liese-dono?"

"Have you been eating properly, Klimt-san?"

"More or less."

"Yeah, yeah, I'm sure you've simply eaten out, buying grilled skewers and other silly stuff like that."

"I cannot cook, so it is fine for me to eat out if I eat while properly taking nutrition into account."

"Have you really been taking that into account?"

No, I haven't. If it comes to Liese-jou, she can easily see through my neglect of a proper, healthy diet.

"Things like that are the true charm of living by yourself."

"That depends on how often you do it. I'll prepare dinner right away."

Liese-jou enters my home, and starts to cook in the kitchen. I watch her.

"Liese-dono."

"I've heard from Candy-san. About the truth of my brother's death."

So Candy-dono told her about it!?

"I asked him because I was bothered by it. I won't tell anyone besides you, Klimt-san."

"I am sorry."

Duke Bürger, who committed such crimes, was royalty, but for Liese-jou, he must register as just another noble. And, I'm a noble as well. As a noble, I...

"You don't seem like a noble at all, you know?"

"Liese-dono?"

"I mean, even though there was no need for you to do something like that, you accepted a dangerous job against a strong adversary while having little chance of success. Even though it might have angered your family."

Certainly, at first father praised me, but later on he scolded me harshly, saying 『You're a member of the Earl Armstrong House. Don't make us worry!』.

"But, I was happy."

"Happy?"

"When I heard about my brother's death, I was very sad. Even now, I still feel sad. But, Klimt-san, you dispelled my brother's regret by risking your life to get revenge for your close friend. It made me happy that you consider my brother to be such a close friend that you'd go this far for him." Liese-dono explains to me while crying. "Ah, I'll get dinner ready right away. It's bad if you don't eat your veggies properly. Also, since I feel uncomfortable with you always calling me Liese-dono and similar, please call me Liese from now on, okay?"

With those words, Liese turns her back on me and resumes cooking.

"Liese-do...Liese."

"Yes?"

"Since I've got too much time on my hands anyway, do you want to go out with me tomorrow?"

"Gladly!"

Seeing Liese's smile, I felt like I'd be finally able to move on into a new life.

