

## **Chapter 370 - Gramps Kistrin's True Identity**

Quiche was pulling on my arm, but suddenly she let her eyes wander, muttering, "Ah, Mum, Lash..."

"You stopped being able to see them?"

"Yeah...in the blink of time."

I can still see both of them, though. The light bordering their ethereal bodies has become weak. It looks like Gramps Kistrin's power has run out.

Both smile in my direction as if telling me that it's fine already, and then bow their heads.

At that moment I heard Daon-san yelling. He's hurling orders at the other ancient wolfmen just like a commander. Having heard his words, the wolfmen quickly carry the loot they've gathered into the village in perfect order.

Higlia had approached me for a kiss, but now she's looking at Daon-san.

"Daon, I'll do it as well. Ryokline, you too."

"Yes, Princess."

Higlia also starts to shoulder materials to carry them into the village. Watching the wolfmen's actions, Quiche reveals a stiffly stern expression. She's gone back from her womanly expression to that of the village's chief and commander-in-chief.

She lets go of my arm, turns on her heels, and stares at the wolfmen.

"You have my thanks for carrying the materials for us on top of having helped with the dismantling. I have an item box, but it wouldn't have been enough with this amount."

"It's only natural. After all, you've given me your permission to live here, Quiche."

"Princess..." Ryokline mutters with a sad face.

"Ryokline, are you telling me to return to that prison?"

"..."

Higlia shifts her eyes from Ryokline to Daon-san. He silently nods, and bows while placing a hand on the ancient wolfman mark on his chest.

Seeing him do that...Higlia puts up a serious expression for a change, and then says to Daon-san, "...I know. But, please allow me to live as a woman for a little while longer."

"...I'm going to continue our conversation, okay?" Quiche asks after having been interrupted earlier.

"Yeah, sorry." Higlia apologizes to Quiche.

Following that, the other wolfmen also bow their heads in a similar manner.

"No, even if all of you bow your heads at me...please raise them..."

"Very well." Higlia nods at Quiche.

And then she raises a hand, and instructs the wolfmen. Seeing her hand sign, the wolfmen speedily resume their transport of the materials.

"You sure have splendidly trained soldiers at your disposal...so, just as we talked earlier, it's going to take the shape of an alliance, but...the difficulty level for doing trade is extremely high. And I don't have any time to look for high-ranking adventurers who have enough sympathy with ancient wolfmen to handle the trading. It'd be simple if I did it myself, but I can't leave this place..."

Towards the end of her words, Quiche looks at me with an expression telling me that she feels sorry for relying on me once more.

"Gotcha. I also got a promise to keep. But, heading over to Higlia's homeland has to wait. I've got things I need to do in this village, too."

When I answer like that, I hear Higlia rejoicing happily.

"Thanks." Quiche bows at me.

While putting a smile on my lips, I comment, "Don't mind it. You always get so formal about weird things. That part of you hasn't changed at all."

"Although you're my friend, I keep relying on you all the time, so..." Quiche mutters.

And then, as she stared many times back and forth between my eyes and lips...it created an atmosphere as if she wanted to kiss me.

Higlia groans unhappily.

At that point, Kisara lands while riding her witch spear.

"Shuuya-sama — I have seen Divine Beast Rollo-sama and her companions enjoying hunting in the western forest."

"Haha, how typical of Rollo. She might come back later while carrying a mouse-like monster in her muzzle."

"Yes, like the regmogg-shaped subspecies I defeated."

"Come to think of it, I didn't watch when you defeated it."

It's because I've put my highest priority on keeping Quiche safe during that battle. Though Quiche has raised her combat abilities to such an extent that it was unnecessary.

After nodding at my reply, Kisara engulfs her entire body in mana.

"...Given that I used <Throw> on Damo'Anun's magic spear after the Demon of Verses Style, I stabbed its demonic pressure points with Twin Spear Hand, and then defeated it with a palm strike in addition to sucking its mana——"

While explaining...Kisara bends her right and left arm at the elbow, still straddling the witch spear, and extends both hands in front of her chest. It resembles the 『Soufuukanji』 stance of Tai Chi Chuan. [efn\_note]You simultaneously punch both sides of an opponent's head, shaking the brain while at the same time rupturing the eardrums through wind pressure[/efn\_note]

...Awesome. It's a movement fitting this plaza as it's scheduled to become a training ground.

Kisara moves her left and right hand in alternation as if loosely drawing semi circles in the air, and then suddenly thrust her right palm up diagonally. Then, while pulling back that palm, she swiftly thrusts out the left palm diagonally in front of her in exchange, displaying a unique palm heel technique that lets mana waves fly out of her palms.

"A <Magic Combat Style> that adds unarmed hand-to-hand combat, huh?"

"——You could call it hand-to-hand combat, but it's the foundation of the Heavenly Witches' accumulated experience that stems from <Witch Hand's Lung Meridian>."

I don't get it, but is it a sub skill of <Magic Combat Style> existing within the Heavenly Witch Style? Master Achilles had also mentioned that combat occupations that include skill names change depending on the individual. It's not just spear master, no, it might be basic taijutsu exactly because of spear master.

Kisara's movements still go on. At the end of a complex series of movements, the grimoire dangling at her waist begins to glow. Shining lights travel through each of the engravings on its front cover. The pattern created looks as if the grimoire itself has changed its appearance. It feels like the painting of countless people races fighting against a monster transforms depending on the angle you look at it...

A Black Ring hasn't been printed onto the grimoire's front cover, but...is the scene possibly taking place somewhere in the Great Goldix Desert?

At that point, Kisara stops moving altogether, remaining in something like a yoga pose where she delicately manipulates her mana.

It looks like I can use her movements as reference for my <Spear Kumite>.

"...Wow, someday I want to learn that as well."

It's not like I'm going to copy Kisara, but it naturally draws me into performing a Palm Hold Fist to show my respect. Hearing my words, Kisara smiles with a gentle expression, and then moves

vertically across the witch spear between her legs, causing squeaking sounds as her crotch and thighs slide across it.

"—Ahn, I'm happy to hear that," she says with a seductive voice, making her spear rotate smoothly while holding onto it with one hand.

Then she swings the spear left and right with a speed that causes wind gusts, and finally stabs its spearhead into the ground after standing it up parallel to her own leg. After letting go of the spear, she returns my salutation with a Palm Hold Fist of her own.

"—Of course I shall instruct you."

Her forelocks sway in the wind. Those locks sporadically hide her blue eyes, but I feel a certain going beyond that from her expression. She's really adorable. It wakes the urge in me to fuck her once more.

"...Please take care of me at that time."

"Certainly!" Kisara leaves her spear behind, snuggling up close to me.

Even though I'm getting charmed by her allure, I'll endure for now.

"Kisara, I'm sorry, but I need to talk with the gramps who's the main figure of the ghosts."

After I tell her off, I remove my hand which I had put around her back, and take some distance from her.

"Of course—"

Kisara is smart enough to pull back right away, and after grabbing her witch spear, she flies up into the air.

Now then...

I look up to Gramps Kistrin. There's something I've remembered about this old guy. The name Kistrin has been mentioned in the ancient document 『Ygir's Song』 which Bon had fished out. I believe him to be the same guy that has been mentioned in that document.

And my surroundings can't hear my conversation with the ghosts and that gramps as it's carried out telepathically. Making sure to capitalize on my own mental power, I direct a telepathic feeling to that gramps.

『The name Kistrin-san has been mentioned in an ancient documents called Ygir's Song. Do you know anything about it?』

『...I see. My name during the era of the elves...』

Gramps Kistrin reveals an indescribable expression. It looks like sadness and joy are coexisting on his face.

『By the way, I wonder what you might be, Kistrin-san. A ghost, a light spirit, Light God Lulodis's messenger, or maybe a messenger of the gods in the divine domain?』

『Neither am I a spirit nor a god. The power of Light God Lulodis-sama is contained within me so far as it goes, but...basically I'm a cluster of magic elements and mental power as well as an ancient spirit body that used to be a saint. Well, you could also say that I'm a hermit who possessed abnormal spiritual power』

Since he'd look like Helme if he was a normal spirit, his explanation doesn't sound like a lie.

『When you were alive...』

『As you can see, I was a human while alive. I was born as slave, around the time of the Great Befaritz Empire's First Period』

In China, the First Period lasts 12 years, doesn't it? As in Jupiter making one full round across the firmament. Going further, there are also some stories speaking of long First Periods lasting 4902 years.

『...I'm sorry, but the First Period...』

『It's commonly called the Golden Age of Great Emperor Emmental. Emperor Emmental is a historically extraordinary elven hero who founded the Great Empire after crossing the Mahaheim Mountain Range. For us he's a mass murderer』

Well, Gramps Kistrin was a human, so it makes sense. But it's weird for a human like him to be called a saint by the elves.

『Was a human like you an existence that was idolized by elven ghosts during the golden age of the elves back then?』

『Yes, by birth I possessed the Holy Cross's Spirit of the Dead Eyes which are proof of a saint. They allow me to draw the power of souls, and they also possess a tiny amount of divining power. While being a slave, I had power at my disposal』

『I remember the ancient document mention something along those lines as well』

『Using that power of divination, I predicted the three resurrections of Ancient Noble Ygir. While being a human slave, I acted together with a part of elves which included Ygir...for this reason the later elven historians might have been interested in my existence. However, I thought that the existence of a human saint would have been erased from elven history, so I'm surprised that such ancient documents were left behind』

『A fishing-loving dwarf acquaintance caught a glass bottle containing that document in the Heim River』

『It looks like peculiar researchers identical to Ygir also existed among later generations of elves. Though the elf, who researched that document and filled it in a bottle, threw that bottle into the

ocean or river in the end』

『You might be right. That elven country, the Great Befaritz Empire, collapsed several hundred years ago. However, it looks like traces of it are still remaining nowadays』

The Terramay Kingdom lies hidden within the woodlands located south of the Goldiba village. That kingdom might also house descendants of the ancient elves who have shaped the fate of the Great Befaritz Empire.

『In the end you can only see the big collapse. The war for independence Ygir and I strove for...ultimately was no more than a tiny, tiny, local uprising』

Many descriptions about Ygir's many, great exploits were recorded in the ancient document though. Let's ask him about the name of the city that had been recorded in the documents too.

『How about the name of Academic City Ernst?』

『Ernst. A famous name of a magic city and academic city. I recall having used a scroll with great efficiency that had been produced by "Circle of Ernst." It's an exclusive magic research organization, and the scrolls containing their secret arts are extremely valuable. In my final moments...』

Towards the end of his remark, Gramps Kistrin reveals a pained expression while looking down at his lower body. The Circle of Ernst has been recorded in the Standard Encyclopedia of Magic. I think it was the work of the Sage and Ernst University Professor Pabramanti. Kazane also mentioned something about an Eight Sage Pentagon.

『...It seems like it currently still carries the name Ernst』

『I see, I wonder what kind of development it has seen over all this time...』

Gramps Kistrin interrupts his speech at that point, and gazes at the ghosts.

『...So, Shuuya-dono, are you going to accept our request?』

『To be honest, I don't know when I'll have time for it, but if you don't mind waiting, I'd like to undertake it』

At that moment, the abnormal eyeballs with their expanded cross-shaped irises transform. At the same time, the golden and blue fog begins to undulate.

He might have activated some kind of skill.

『...Souls, you have heard the hero's words, haven't you?』

『Yeeaaahh——』

『Saint! Hero!』

The ghosts kick up a fuss.

『Also, singing any further...』

Once I ask them to stop...the ghosts begin to glow as if aligning themselves with the light of the morning sun. Probably because I've accepted their request, the ghost singing that puts any orchestra to shame stops. In exchange, the ghosts begin to move.

While shouting their praise for me, they make their lower bodies sink into the golden and blue fog drifting below them.

...How mysterious.

Looking from the side at it, it's almost as if the ghosts are repeatedly getting on and off elevators. Some ghosts are floating around without blending with the fog. But the majority has its lower bodies assimilated with the fog.

The fog moves further downwards like a flying carpet. A golden path that overlaps with the golden path continuing to the small knoll gleams up even further. The ghosts' lower bodies fuse with the fog carpet.

While shouting 『Hero!』, 『Saint!』, 『Shuuya-dono!』, and 『Follow our path——』, their figures disappear as if melting into the golden path.

And then Gramps Kistrin also tells me, 『Following the golden path, you'll arrive at the holy ground! I leave the rest to you! Shuuya-dono——』.

Indigo blue blood expands from his enlarged eyeballs to the radiated light. That blood compresses the surrounding space by gathering in one spot. In the next instant, it swallows up Gramps Kistrin's illusion, who vanishes after the cluster turns into a dot. Eventually the small dot vanishes as well, but replacing it, a single piece of paper glows in the air without falling due to inertia. It's encased in a transparent, water-membrane-like magic barrier that's blended with a bloody red color.

Is that piece of paper a note?

Just as I ponder about this, the piece of paper is carried over to me. The membrane around the paper disappears, allowing the paper to flutter down on my palm like a feather.

Something like a map is drawn on the paper, and it also has some characters written on it. I try to read the characters. It's certainly not a letter...

『...The word has spread. I hadn't expected for the poison that's gnawing at my body to be so potent. The last unit of Solomon's unusual beast Dominator, who had been entrusted to him by Funbuki of Tenisha, was destroyed Rolga's subordinate Redolm. As Prophet Kistrin I took over the subjugation of Rolga from the clan that shares a bond with Ygir, but...I guess this is how far I go. My regeneration cannot keep up anymore...pain and the letters are...r-regret. At this rate I won't be able to face Ygir...I entrust the power of the Goddess of Love...the remaining power of the scroll...onto this piece of paper.....』

It's not going to go up in flames or something after I've finished reading it, will it? I guess those were the final moments of the earlier gramps illusion. Though he didn't really try to talk much about himself. Is Kistrin's final resting spot marked down on this map?

"...How mysterious. The voices disappear, a faint gleam from the ground...and a piece of paper in your hand, Your Excellency." Helme mutters next to me.

Puyuyu has begun to poke its wand's tip against the sheet of water spray released from Helme's feet.

"Spirit-sama, a light from the ground, you say? I can't see anything but the piece of paper and the circulation of magic elements. And my Mum and sister have disappeared as well..." Quiche comments after having finished her talk with Higlia.

Higlia herself is talking with Ryokline and some of the wolfmen who've stopped carrying the materials.

"I can see spirits of light. It's probably related to His Excellency and the ghosts."

"The flow of magic elements is only continuing to the hill...that's the path towards the sanctuary. The hole's destination leads to the underground world as the path continues towards the sanctuary, huh...?"

"Yep, it's connected with the underground."

Helme, Kisara, and Quiche put up grim expressions while staring at the hole that's at the top of the hill. I leave the three since I'm curious about the conversation between Higlia and Ryokline. I'll join in as well...

But before that, I put the piece of paper away into my pocket, and then I extend <Chain> towards the Wave Gourd. The chain instantly coils itself around the gourd's metal fixture after flying through the air like a bullet. I reel that chain back in towards the <Chain Factor> on my wrist, resulting in the Wave Gourd returning to me in no time.

I caught the gourd in my palm. It's heavy, but while also using a part of the chain coiled around the metal fixture, I release <Chain> from the other wrist as well, creating a chain transport belt. And after shouldering the gourd that combined with the belt while rotating, I head over to Higlia.

Squealing at the top of its lung, Puyuyu rushes over while moving its small limbs for dear life and climbs atop the Wave Gourd.

"Puyu, puyuu——" Puyuyu squeals while sniffing my hair.

I walk up to Higlia.

"Yes, going by the smell, it seems that the Valmask family has used an orc queen egg..."

"For the orcs to have been used by an orc queen egg, even if only some of the tribes...so that's why the orcs became so aggressive about starting conflicts, huh?"

"Yes. It's not just our turf either. The battles with the underground orc empire seems to have increased in intensity as well."

"A civil war among the orcs, eh?"

"But, it looks like the smell of the orc queen egg vanished alongside the smell of the vampires."

"There was no egg smell, but we broke into the facilities the band of vampires turned into their stronghold, you know? It was just being destroyed by Death Butterfly people, but...Shuuya fought them too."

Higlia explains with a smile before looking at me.

"O-Oh my god, Death Butterfly people...no wonder the smell was cut off."

"It's as Higlia says. I fought against the Death Butterfly people. However, only against one of the two women, okay?"

Ryokline, who has thin fur even among the ancient wolfmen, nods at my comment.

"I just watched it all..." Higlia admits as if being apologetic about it towards me.

"Don't mind it. Those Death Butterfly women even gave Hoffmann a run for his money."

"You're right. But, fights all over the place..."

"Hero-sama——"

Daon-san has come back as well. The wolfmen line up behind him.

I've heard from their conversation that it's an ancient wolfman unit consisting of battle soldiers, a class above regular soldiers, but they seem to be quite remarkable.

"As ordered, we've finished transporting almost all materials inside the building close to the round statue in what seems to be the center of the village."

"Got it. But, the battle is already over. You don't need to report back to me. Please talk with Higlia and Quiche from now on."

"Roger."

Once Daon-san bows, the wolfmen behind him do the same. The sight of their long tails all moving about at once is funny.

At that point, Kisara, Helme, and Quiche draw close to us. And the part of ghosts that had remained on the plaza is continuing to vanish, but...Quiche's sister Lash-san has stayed behind, and is following me around.

Once I meet her eyes, she smiles at me, and she places a finger on her lips, slowly moving her

mouth and forming, 『I - want - to - kiss - as - well』.

...A kiss with a ghost, huh? I feel like that's quite a hurdle to tackle.

Afterwards I walked towards the building, where the children had taken shelter, while talking with everyone about various topics including the Death Butterfly people and Hoffmann.

As we get close to the stone monument in the middle of the village,

"Ooh~, it's Emissary-sama! Oh? The Burning Knights, who've always been shouting "Your Excellency, Your Excellencyyy," are gone!" Catiza changes her hair into an exclamation mark.

She greets me while making her body float in the air by having her black nails stabbed into the ground. As she looks like a spider who floats in the air, it's eerie.

However, the children are happily laughing while pointing fingers at her. Arry and Taack are among them, too.

"Ca-chan, those black nails are awesome!"

"——Zeme and Ado are gone~"

While the children are frolicking around, Muu stands still all by herself. Her eyes are following Moga.

"Shuuya, we protected everyone properly. Or rather, the enemy didn't actually come here."

"I, am, Nemus."

Nemus approaches me while lumbering whereas Moga briskly pitter-patters over with his small legs. However, the ancient wolfmen are wary.

"More strange beings."

"Don't ease your vigilance!"

While each wolfman speaks up, they quickly react by extending their claws and getting ready for combat. Daon-san also extends his claws into the size of longswords, and glares.

In addition to the weird antics of a girl with darkish skin, a steel tree giant has shown up. I can totally understand their feelings...

I think they've already encountered them when carrying the materials into the village, but it looks like they're still wary of them.

At that moment, Higlia steps up and acts like a princess. She persuades all of her brethren to calm down. It clearly drives home that she's the princess of the ancient wolfmen.

But, the Rollo Squad still hasn't come back from the western forest...

And just as I think that...

"Nnn——"

...Rollo shows up while purring throatily.

My partner jumps while showing off her belly, and lands on the monument once more. She looks up to Rotalz who's drifting through the sky.

Lash-san's eyes sparkle. With movements like a genie who has appeared from a lamp, she approaches Rollo while floating through the air, and then she extends her transparent index finger towards Rollo's nostril.

Can Rollo see the approaching finger? She unleashes a cat punch against Lash-san. While swinging her paw, she almost falls off the monument.

Thereupon Alray and Hueremy appear next to the monument. Unable to turn around the monument foundation's corners, they slide on their hindlegs, just to have the prey in their mouths get caught on their limbs. Both fall over, but as typical for cats, they immediately get up again.

The children get all excited about their maneuvers, and surround the two tigers.