

### Chapter 1 Part 3



The next day, Reid and Elria headed towards the royal castle, taking a day off from the academy. Inside the magic vehicle, swaying with the light of the setting sun, Reid let out a deep sigh.

"That Alma... I can't believe she forgot after keeping the invitation..."

"Alma-sensei is quite scatterbrained indeed."

Elria nodded in agreement.

Alma had received the invitation when the treatment of Reid and Elria was being decided. Thinking that she could give it to them anytime at the academy, she had completely forgotten about it, seemingly at ease.

Then, in a rush, they went to the Caldwen's mansion, where Alicia, the head of the household, scolded them for not contacting her until the previous day. They busily made preparations, and that brought them to the present moment.

"Well, from what I heard, it was supposed to be a personal summon from the Princess, and we had plenty of time since it was in the evening. That's the only saving grace..."

"...But I'm not really fond of parties."

Saying that, Elria puffed up her cheeks.

"If it was a personal summon, I could have just worn my uniform."

"That's not possible. The other party is a member of the royal family."

Elria had been thoroughly dressed up at the Caldwen's mansion today, wearing a dark blue party dress with a pure white cape, her long silver hair neatly tied up. She gave off a slightly more mature impression than usual. However, due to the unfamiliar attire, Elria seems restless and unable to calm down.

"The dress is restrictive, and I can't move around without messing up my hair."

"What do you plan to do at the royal castle?"

"Nothing, but I always maintain a mindset prepared for battle."

"You had your hair done and made to look cute. It would be a waste to mess it up. Let's behave calmly today."

".....In that case, I'll behave."

Although Elria was still restless, perhaps her mood improved slightly when she received praise. She blushed faintly and nodded.

While exchanging wry smiles with Elria, the magic vehicle came to a stop in front of the castle gate. As the driver opened the door and they stepped outside, Reid raised his head.

"...I never thought the day would come when I would be here."

The royal castle, situated in the center of the royal capital, was towering and massive, to the point where one had to look up. It was a castle that symbolized the country called Vegalta, which has remained unchanged for a thousand years. The huge castle was built by carving into and cutting through a small hill.

From anywhere in the royal capital, it could be seen, serving as a symbol of the country for the people, and revealing glimpses of the relationship between the royal family and the people, as the royal family has continued to watch over them.

Reid never thought that he, who had once belonged to an enemy nation, would have the opportunity to set foot in this place that could be called Vegalta's sanctuary.

As Reid looked up at the sight of the royal castle—

"—We have been expecting you, Elria Caldwen-sama."

An elderly butler who had been waiting in front of the gate bowed respectfully toward Reid and Elria.

"And you must be Reid Frieden-sama, am I correct?"

"Yes. We have been invited by Her Royal Highness the Princess and have come here."

"Thank you very much for your courtesy. I am Selvas, the head butler, serving as the personal attendant to Her Royal Highness the Princess. Please remember that from now on."

Once again, Reid slightly bowed in response to Selvas's bow. Peeking out from behind Reid's back, Elria also bowed with only her face showing.

"I am glad to see that Elria-sama has not changed."

".....Mm."

"...I apologize. She tends to be shy around people."

"Yes, I am aware. Elria-sama has been acquainted with Her Royal Highness since childhood and would always hide behind Alicia-sama whenever she visited."

Selvas chuckled amicably, but one can easily imagine how many times Alicia, Elria's mother, felt a chill down her spine seeing her unchanged attitude even towards the royal family, her superiors. Moreover, there was something different about her behavior, unlike her usual shyness.

While tightly holding onto Reid's sleeve and hiding behind his back, she remained the same, but for some reason, she seemed unusually wary, constantly looking around.

"...Selvas, where is she?"

"Please rest assured. Her Royal Highness is waiting inside the castle."

".....Really?"

"Yes. I used my magic to personally keep her bound."

Although Selvas maintained a courteous demeanor and bowed his head, Reid felt like he heard some strange words. However, upon hearing those words, Elria let out a sigh of relief and stood next to Reid.

"...Mm, if it's Selvas's magic, I can rest easy."

"That is an unworthy compliment. I am extremely honored to receive praise for my magic from Elria-sama, who is known as the reincarnation of the Sage and possesses remarkable abilities."

said Selvas with a cheerful smile, then led the two of them toward the castle gate.

"I will guide you inside the castle. The preparations to welcome both of you have already been completed——"

Just as Selvas spoke those words, the castle gate opened with a resounding sound—

Right next to Reid, something golden passed by.

A moment later, a loud crash was heard from behind.

".....Huh?"

Reid instinctively turned around and found Elria once again hiding behind him as a shield. Moreover, she had a pale expression and was trembling uncontrollably.

"Hey, what's wrong, Elria?"

"Reid...! Let's run away right now...!!"

"What? Run away from what?"

Perplexed by Elria's desperate plea, Reid tilted his head in confusion. However, Selvas rubbed his chin in a troubled manner and narrowed his eyes.

"Hmm... It seems that Her Royal Highness has managed to escape in five minutes and thirty-five seconds this time. That's a new record."

"Um... What do you mean by 'escape'?"

"Of course, it refers to Her Royal Highness the Princess."

Immediately after Selvas gave his matter-of-fact answer, a figure emerged from the shadows behind them. Her platinum blonde hair shone brilliantly in the evening sun. Her eyebrows, elegantly arched, gave her a lively impression, while her light blue eyes resembled the blue sky.

"—Finally! You've arrived, Elria!!"

The girl shouted, placing her hand on her hip.

In this country, there is no one who does not know her appearance and name.

The Kingdom of 'Vegalta', named after its reclamation efforts in cultivating virgin land, was established. It grew into a powerful nation through prosperous trade utilizing abundant resources, eventually rivaling the Altein Empire, which occupied over half of the continent. The royal family has continued to rule the country for several generations.

That is why they are allowed to bear the name of the one and only royal family.

The beloved daughter of the current king, who is a part of that great lineage.

*The First Princess of the Vegalta Magic Kingdom—Christia von Vegalta.*

"I can't believe it! Even though I have graduated from the academy and are finally free, you never come no matter how many times I call for you!"

While saying that, Princess Christia walked towards them with a pout, clearly angry.

"I really—wanted to see you so muchhhh!!"

Suddenly accelerating her movements, Princess Christia embraced Elria tightly. She then rubbed her cheek against Elria's, wearing a blissful expression.

"Mmm! This smooth skin! This silky hair! I feel like I'm replenishing three years' worth of Elria essence that I couldn't get during my confinement at the academy all at once!"

"Chris... Please stop ingesting mysterious essences from me every time..."

While Princess Christia had a delighted expression, Elria accepted the cheek rubbing with a resigned look on her face. As Reid stood dumbfounded, Selvas lowered his head apologetically.

"I apologize for this unsightly scene. When Princess Christia is in the presence of Elria-sama, she tends to lose herself a little."

"...Well, from what I gather, it seems like they haven't seen each other in a while."

"Yes. She has adored Elria-sama like a younger sister since childhood, and the king strictly ordered me not to allow her to return home until she graduated from the academy, precisely because she loves Elria-sama so much."

Seeing the princess happily frolicking and giggling, one could easily imagine the kind of relationship the two had built since childhood. While observing the two, the Princess turned her sharp gaze toward Reid.

"So, you're Reid Frieden, huh!?"

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Princess. I recently visited the Caldwen—"

"Skip the formalities, it's too bothersome!"

".....My apologies. I am Reid Frieden."

"And if you're Elria's fiancé, I permit you to call me Chris, too! So, I'll address you without honorifics as well!!"

"Thank you for your consideration, Princess Chris."

"Excellent! Now we can skip the bothersome formalities!"

Princess Chris nodded satisfactorily. Reid had assumed that, being a princess, she would have a reserved and modest image, but she seemed to have a bold personality, much like Alicia.

Just as Reid was thinking that, Princess Chris firmly pointed her finger at him.

"I don't acknowledge you completely yet, Reid Frieden!!"

".....What do you mean by that?"

"Because if I don't acknowledge the engagement, Elria will dislike me, you know!?"

"I see. So 'that' is doubting my abilities, is that correct?"

Reid preemptively responded, and Chris was slightly surprised before composing her expression.

"Yes. It's hard for me to believe that you possess abilities comparable to Elria's, even though you cannot use magic."

Her words likely stemmed from her perspective as someone who had witnessed Elria's growth since childhood, rather than just her position as a member of Vegalta's royal family.

"The testimonies from Alicia, the head of the Caldwen family, as well as your direct confrontation with Galleon, and your bare-handed interception of the magic from Alma Kanos, a special rank mage. Furthermore, the recent incident where you made an entire designated danger zone disappear without using magic... It's impossible to believe that you achieved all that without magic!"

"To be frank, my honest reaction would be, '*What nonsense are you talking about?*'."

"Oh, so you're aware of it?"

"And is it safe to assume that you called us here to assess my abilities?"

"...Hmm, you seem strangely accustomed to this situation."

"I wouldn't say I'm accustomed, but I have mentally prepared myself for it, as I anticipate it happening more frequently in the future. After all, it's an ambiguous power, and those who are knowledgeable about magic are often the most skeptical."

There are undoubtedly many people, including Princess Chris, who would not be convinced until they see with their own eyes, despite hearing rumors or reports.

Until now, the discussions had been limited to within the academy, but news of the recent incident had spread to the royal family and the Mage's Association.

In addition to the doubts about Reid, there may also be individuals who consider his abilities as yet unseen magic, triggering their intellectual curiosity and a desire to witness it firsthand.

"Even though my limited knowledge may not suffice, if we have exceptional mages like Elria and the brilliant mages that Vegalta boasts, it is possible that they can unravel this power. Therefore, I thought that by showcasing my abilities, I could be of assistance in furthering the development of magic techniques."

"I see... You are more capable than I had anticipated."

"Yes, isn't he amazing?"

Looking pleased that Reid had been praised, Elria nodded repeatedly. It seemed that she had regained some vitality, which was a relief. However, with Elria in her arms, Princess Chris laughed triumphantly.

"But... my lack of acknowledgement is not only about your abilities."

"In that case... is it about my origin?"

"No. While it is unprecedented for a branch of the royal family like the Caldrens to marry a commoner, those matters can be resolved by achieving evaluations that overshadow one's origin. In fact, many people are paying attention to your abilities."

Then, Princess Chris continued——

"What I am going to test is—**your 'love' for Elria!!**"

She boldly declared it, despite feeling a little embarrassed.