

## Chapter 3 Part 1

### Chapter 3 - The Incident Where They Quickly Became Affectionate as Soon as I Used the Authority of the Emperor of the Thunder God

And finally, tomorrow is the start of our training camp—

"Hey, you mangy cur. Once you return from the training camp, your home will be over there. From now on, you'll have your meals outside, too."

During dinner that day, Merlin suddenly said that to Anastasia.

"Um, er... What is... this?"

Prompted by Merlin, both Anastasia and I looked toward the courtyard. There, we could see a newly constructed doghouse in the courtyard visible from the dining room window.

"Merlin? What is the meaning of this?"

Then, Merlin looked up at the ceiling and said,

"Ephthal-sama? I stayed quiet until now, but I have actually been watching. The arrangements for the doghouse construction are complete and I thought it's time to clarify various things."

"Watching? What?"

"To my surprise, after the incident with the Seiryu (*Azure Dragon*), this mangy cur... k-k-kissed... Ephthal-sama's... li-lips...!!"

Ah, Merlin witnessed Anastasia kiss me by surprise. Well, it seems she caught me in a rather embarrassing scene.

"Ephthal-sama!? What on earth is that about? I demand an explanation!"

"Well, it's more of an irresistible force or something..."

Merlin dropped her shoulders in exasperation and glared sharply at Anastasia.

"In any case, the mangy cur will stay in the doghouse. She will have her meals outside, too."

"No, isn't that a bit harsh?"

"It's to protect Ephthal-sama's chastity. This is an absolutely necessary measure."

"Well, even if you call it chastity..."

Feeling helpless, Merlin continued speaking in rapid succession.

"On top of being a beautiful young boy, Ephthal-sama is among the strongest of humanity. Please consider the value of your virginity before giving it away to that mangy cur."

"Merlin, I don't understand what you're talking about."

The value of my virginity, huh...? Well, in this life, I am indeed a virgin.

"I absolutely won't allow Ephthal-sama's virginity to be taken by that mangy cur."

"Let's say, hypothetically, Anastasia and I did have that kind of relationship. Wouldn't that be my own free will?"

"I won't allow that! The Emperor of the Thunder God's virginity is at stake, you know!? There are suitable partners for you! In that case, in that case, I will be—"

"What are you trying to say?"

Merlin fell silent. Then, after a moment's pause, she took a deep breath and said,

"I will be your first night partner!"

Without hesitation, I struck Merlin's head with a punch.

"Don't say stupid things, Merlin. I'll get angry."

"But, Ephthal-sama... the first night partner of the Emperor of the Thunder God should have magic prowess."

"I don't think magic prowess is necessary at all..."

"A-Anyway, I cannot agree with a young boy and girl of your age living under the same roof."

"Well, I understand that sharing the same room would be problematic, but can't we at least have neighboring rooms, like now? Isn't it a bit too strict?"

"No, it's not allowed."

It was firmly rejected.

"Well then, I'll sleep on the second floor and Anastasia can stay on the first floor. How about that?"

"No, it's not allowed."

Once again, it was firmly rejected.

"At least we can have meals together, right?"

"Absolutely not. I am also a headmistress and an educator. I cannot allow unhealthy relationships between a boy and a girl."

"Ah... I see..."

I was overruled. Well, she never listens once she decides something. Come to think of it, when I got sick before; she forced me to quit smoking...

"By the way, what do you mean by having Anastasia eat outside?"

"I will have her eat this outside."

Merlin snapped her fingers, and a maid came over and placed a plate on the table.

"Pet food!?"

"This is sufficient for the mangy cur."

No, no, no, no... Merlin is really angry about this.

"But why suddenly hold a grudge over something from the past...?"

"I mentioned earlier that I stayed quiet to handle various matters after the doghouse was set up. And now—remembering it makes me angry! That's the state of affairs!"

Well, I cannot deny that getting angry after remembering something is a phenomenon in itself. But getting angry over a mere kiss...? In the first place, there should not even be a reason for Merlin to be angry about it, right?

At that moment, Merlin took out something suspicious from her pocket.

"What's this?"

"It's cat ears."

"C-C-Cat ears?"

"Yes, exactly. Cat ears. They suit the mangy cur."

"Even if that's the case, shouldn't it be dog ears instead!?"

"At any rate—"

Saying that, Merlin put the cat ears on Anastasia.

"Now, you mangy cur! With this, you are completely a dog! Bark for us right now!"

Confused, Anastasia looked at me. Then, her cheeks turned red, and she embarrassedly tilted her head—



**"...W-W-W... WOOF!"**

I could not help but find it a bit cute. However, I can interpret that gaze as a plea for help.

I nodded firmly and said to Anastasia,

"Anastasia, this treatment is truly unfair. I'll talk to Merlin about it later, but you should also stand up to her. Don't be afraid just because it's Merlin. I'm on your side this time."

In response to my words, Anastasia asked me anxiously,

"Can I really stand up to her?"

"Yeah, do it."

"Can I really, really stand up to her?"

"Yeah. Well... it might be better to intimidate her."

"I-I-Intimidate her!?"

"Yeah, Merlin may be superior, but this is going too far. If you let her belittle you, it will continue like this forever."

"But, but, I..."

"I told you to stand up for yourself when you don't like something, right?"

"...I'll do my best. I'll try to stand up to Merlin-sama."

She has a tendency to be timid and hesitant. So, I thought I would be strict with her and let her stand up for herself.

"That's right, that's the spirit! Go for it, Anastasia!"

However, despite that, Anastasia still seemed afraid of Merlin and had a timid and anxious expression.

"Intimidation... And now I have cat ears... No, now I'm a beast... In that case, the only way to intimidate as a beast is... this!"

She seemed to be pumping herself up, but... what is Anastasia talking about? What does it mean to intimidate as a beast?

At that moment, she took a deep breath and, still trembling with fear—said in a small voice that sounded like a mosquito's buzz,

**"...G-G-GRRR!"**

Merlin and I were momentarily speechless and nearly stumbled on the spot.

Anastasia, with a rather confident expression, said to me,

"I did my best!"

"W-W... Well, I can see the effort you put in."

And at that moment, Merlin glared at Anastasia and clicked her tongue.

Why does Merlin keep picking on Anastasia like this?

Come to think of it, Merlin was always rebellious towards my old wife... Maybe she's not comfortable around the same gender? As I was feeling uncertain, Anastasia said with a half-smile.

"Merlin-sama, I've finally stood up for myself. So, am I still being treated like a slave?"

"No, you're being treated like a criminal."

A criminal, huh...? As I pulled back slightly, Anastasia glared at Merlin.

"I am a human. Ephthal-sama told me before... that I don't have to tolerate it anymore. And to stand up for myself... when I don't like something. So, from now on, I intend to express my opinions properly."

"Oh? So you dare to defy me, little girl?"

"No matter who you are, this treatment is too harsh... Merlin-sama!"

"Very well. Let me engrave it in your body—the hierarchy within this household!"

"I will at least... retaliate!"

And then, the two of them disappeared into the underground training facility.

Taking advantage of that opportunity, I asked the maids to serve Anastasia the same meal as us within the mansion when Merlin was not around. And since the doghouse seemed too pitiful, I arranged for a small house with about six tatami mats in size to be built.

Certainly, Anastasia is the kind of person who might unexpectedly come in for a kiss, so it is not certain that nothing would happen if we were living under the same roof. Perhaps for Merlin, this incident is an expression of her intention to guide Anastasia strictly as her junior disciple. That is why Merlin is deliberately being strict.

Yes, that was probably it. Yeah, let's go with that.

—It seemed troublesome to delve deeper into it, so let's just leave it at that.

Late at night on that day—

Merlin, who came to my bedroom, had an unusually serious expression.

"Mm? It doesn't seem like you're here for some silly jokes like during dinner."

I let Merlin into the room and used magic to heat up a teapot. As I was about to prepare two cups, Merlin hurriedly said, "*I'll do it myself*", and started preparing it herself.

After drinking the hot tea and taking a break, Merlin broached the topic.

"Um... Why do you support that little girl so much?"

"You mean Anastasia? Or Maria?"

"Maria... yes. Ephthal-sama seems to be influenced by that little girl."

I tilted my head and chuckled.

"Well, if you ask why I support her, the simple answer is that I've decided to do so. And besides, don't you already know the reason, Merlin?"

Merlin lowered her gaze into the teacup, hiding her eyelashes.



"Because of... My Lady?"

"Both of them are elves from the same forest, and they resemble each other so much. Don't you think it's impossible to ignore her?"

"Well, probably, they are distantly related."

"Yeah, this is also some kind of fate. If possible, I want to assist her in what she does."

Merlin then briefly bit her lip, furrowing her brows—but soon, a gentle smile appeared on her face.

"Ephthal-sama has always been fond of My Lady. Hehe, if the current Magic Society knew that the legendary founder of the Four Emperors was under My Lady's thumb, it would cause quite a stir."

"Haha, you're still harsh when it comes to Bridget, Merlin."

After laughing together for a while, Merlin suddenly put on a serious expression.

"But even with that as the reason... there was no need to accompany her on the training camp, right? Ephthal-sama aims to become the strongest in this life, so taking detours like this..."

"Yeah," I nodded.

"Of course, besides Maria, there is another reason to accompany her on the training camp."

"And what would that reason be?"

"The Emperor of the Fire God's existence is a threat. Even I from that era couldn't match him, and there may also be an issue with my magic aptitude, remember? As it is now, even if I were to refine my magic, the peak would still be the same as I once was."

"Yes, that's true."

"However, I gained the power of swordsmanship in this life. So, I want to hone that and acquire the power to oppose the Emperor of the Fire God as a magic swordsman. That's why I looked into the Emperor of the Thunder God's Festival, and I found out that the winning team becomes the representative of the academy itself."

"I see," Merlin nodded.

"So, the idea is to win the Emperor of the Thunder God's Festival and participate in the inter-academy competition held at the headquarters of the Magic Society...?"

"And at the same time, the influential figures of the Magic Society would gather there, right?"

"Rather than that, it has something to do with the commendations, so the schedule of the Magic Society takes precedence. Various magic events, including the inter-academy competition, are organized accordingly. Well... the purpose is to gather outstanding young talents and have influential figures provide encouragement and stimulation."

"I thought so. As for me, I also want to see the current state of the Four Emperors, and above all else—"

"Is it about the Emperor of the Sword God?"

"Yes, I want to somehow make connections with the Emperor of the Sword God and ask for mentorship. I heard that he lives a hermit-like life, right? It seems impossible even for you to arrange a meeting, so that's the most difficult part. That's why Maria and I have aligned interests."

"But those two are still just first-year students. I acknowledge that they are exceptionally talented, but... the finals of the Emperor of the Thunder God's Festival is a five-on-five team battle. It won't work with only Ephthal-sama's power, you know?"

"If it's an elimination match, I can defeat everyone by myself and it'll be over. Well... even if we have insufficient members and receive a forfeit. With two losses, if the remaining three members win, we can still claim victory. That's why I decided to train those two until the finals."

"I see, I understand. —However," Merlin chuckled.

"Why would Ephthal-sama forsake the life of Maria, to whom you supported so much? You are aware of the elves, divine beasts, and sacrifices, right?"

"I'm aware. However, there is a reason there that must not be distorted."

"A reason?"

"Yeah, that's right—"

—It became a slightly long story.

It was a story from the time of the Adventurer's Guild days.

Before I met Merlin, before the battle to subjugate the Demon King, it was a story from over four hundred years ago, a time that feels like a fairy tale. It was the time when I met my wife, Bridget, and fell in love... It was about the insignificant past mistakes from that period.

After telling the whole story, Merlin fell silent.

"That's...?"

"Yeah, that's why I can't act now."

And, well—With that, the next day marked the start of Anastasia's and my life in the training camp.