

I used to live on a farm not far from E-Rantel. Life wasn't bad. We could eat our fill for a few seasons, the winters were tolerable, and the area had a low number of monsters thanks to the adventurers from the town.

It was a good place to live, until... until a mob came screaming. A group of goblins had taken over their village and turned it into a den for themselves.

When I heard that, I tried to escape with my family, to go as far away as we could, because an old cleric had told us that when they attacked, they were all led by giant ogres the size of two houses.

My father, for his part, scorned my idea. He believed that if we left, he would lose the right to farm these lands, lent to him by the feudal lord. My brothers didn't want to follow me either, so I left alone, under my father's threat that if I left these lands, I would never be able to return.

My decision was the wisest, although my parents and siblings were very lucky.

A group of men, adventurers, arrived in E-Rantel and exterminated all the demi-humans and their leader, recapturing the village.

The village was saved, and my parents kept their land. But I could no longer return. I had despised my father's order and was now far from home.

And to make matters worse, when I arrived in E-Rantel, I was not allowed to enter because I couldn't pay the entrance fee.

It was on that same afternoon that I thought my life was over that a group of adventurers returned from a mission arrived, and it was at that moment that one of them approached me and asked,

"Hey, are you the son who ran away from home?"

Only with that could I understand everything. This man had saved my family.

Who, because of them, could never return.

I screamed at them, screamed at them with all my might, and spat out every bit of hatred I had in my body. With all my strength, I told them they might as well die the next time they went out.

However, they all just walked off, ignoring me. They were too tired from the trip to bother with an angry child, all except one.

Just when I felt my throat could take no more, he asked me again.

"Are you done? Okay... Do you know how to read?"

Yes, I knew. At home, there was a storybook that my mother always read to my siblings and me every night, and I liked it so much that I asked her to teach me how to read too.

Just when I expected an insult, he simply grabbed his suitcase and took out the most important object in my life.

A small leather book.

"Listen to me carefully, I'm not going to repeat myself. You're going to go to the capital, you're going to the Mages' Guild where you're going to look for a guy named Alvean and tell him that Konrat sent you. You're not going to deviate for anything, and while you're doing so, you're not going to stop reading this book until you finish it, until you understand it and until you memorize it, okay?"

I was completely stunned. I didn't know what to say or what he wanted, but all I could understand was that he would give me something. As soon as I nodded, he

gave me the book, along with a bag of dried meat and enough money to enter the capital.

So, after sleeping under a tree, I embarked on my journey to the capital, alone on foot.

Sometimes the rain froze me to the bone. Other times, the sun burned me mercilessly. I only stopped to stay near a town to rest and read the book.

Imagine my surprise when I read it. It wasn't a diary or a history, no, it was about magic.

The first time I opened it, I read it all night. Half of it dealt with the theory of mana, or how it is attracted and formed, and the other half was a list of various spells.

For a whole week, I continued on my way, walking during the day and reading the book at night, until one day a merchant heading to the Capital met me on the road and offered to take me.

And after 10 days of leaving E-Rantel, I could see the great capital appearing between the mountains: the castle of Ro-lente.

Finally, the good man dropped me off in front of the great Mages' Guild. I was finally able to ask for Alvean.

"So, why do you want to talk to Master Balluk?" asked the receptionist, who, after seeing me with pity, looked at me curiously.

"I, ah... Konrad sent me."

After saying that, the pity didn't disappear, and he just left the desk and asked me to follow him. I followed him timidly as he walked through each of the hallways as if

it were his home until we reached two large wooden doors. After knocking, he let himself in.

"Ker, are you done shopping?"

I heard from outside, and upon entering, I found a room completely filled with various piles of books, scrolls, and various pieces of paper on top of several pieces of dusty furniture. But just behind a table on the right was a man in a robe leaning over a map.

"I'm Sam, Master. I think Konrad's boy has arrived," said the receptionist, seemingly unfazed by the mess around him.

The man turned around, and that's when I saw what he looked like. He had a gray beard and, from the looks of it, he was old, even older than my father.

The man took just a step toward me to get a better look, only to look me straight in the eyes.

"So, where are you from?"

"M-me, E-Rantel."

"Good, and where is the book?"

As his gaze grew more severe, I pulled out the book as quickly as I could and handed it to him with both hands. He gently took it and began to read.

"Sam, please wait outside." He ordered in a calm tone. The man bowed his head quickly and left without saying anything else.

The man in front of me was unlike anyone I'd ever met. While my father was intimidating and yelled at us every time he ordered us to do something, this man remained calm, yet I could feel him conveying something else...

Something like... knowledge.

He closed the book with one hand as he walked toward a closet.

"Have you read the book?" He opened both doors to grab something I couldn't see.

"Y-yes, I did on the whole trip-" I didn't even finish when he pushed something toward me. I blinked at it for a few seconds. It was a staff, part of the book's theories.

"I want you to teach me what you learned. Cast a spell on the wall."

I stared at the man in bewilderment as his face only grew more stern.

"Do I have to yell it at you or throw you out of here? If you want my help, cast a spell you know from that book." – somehow I couldn't understand his voice, it was louder for not shouting.

I tried to concentrate as much as I could while quickly pointing the staff to the side with my feet together. According to theory, if you were just starting, you should keep your hand near the tip of the staff to make a spell work. I kept remembering which name from the book.

Quick, quick!

"M-magic Aruw!" – I did it...

But... nothing happened, I didn't do it right... I could only open my eyes in embarrassment. I gathered all the courage I had left and looked at the man beside me.

"What are you doing here?" – his eyes hardened, filled with impatience.

I looked at him fearfully and asked.

"What?"

"We're not a homeless shelter. You could stay at E-Rantel with the money Konrad gave you. You could go to a farm, or you could look for work. So give me the answer. What. Are. You. Doing. Here?"

No... I don't know...

My knees shook, and I fell. I couldn't stop the sobs from escaping, even though I covered my mouth with my hand.

Perhaps it was inappropriate for a person to act like this, but what could I do? It was the first time I'd been so far from home, the first time I didn't have my parents. I'd been afraid this whole time. I just followed everything they told me because... because...

"I don't know how to do anything... I don't know what to do... I lost my life because I ran away out of fear... and in the end, it was worthless... I just kept going, but I don't know what to do now." I simply collapsed.

I kept feeling like my life was ending, but then I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was the Master.

"...It's Okay, let it out."

I only felt my tears return as he gently patted my shoulder.

After a while, he helped me up, and then he looked straight at me again.

“...I'm a fool.”

My heart sank, unable to contain the truth, but he pushed me forward as he did so.

“A fool doesn't admit his mistakes because he thinks he's perfect. A fool wouldn't know how to read because he wouldn't think he needed to.” His tone was wiser and more confident. “A fool would spend all the money they were given and get lost on the way to the capital.”

He continued to look straight at me, helping me up while I could somehow feel him giving me a little more courage.

“But most of all, a fool wouldn't get up because he's come too far to give up.” He raised his staff this time to give it to me.

“If you want to cast a spell, you must keep your hands in the center of the staff and spread your feet apart. So, now, try again.”

I stared at him before finally nodding and looking ahead. He was right. I had to do it. I'd come too far, walked long distances, and endured much more. I took in all the air in my lungs and screamed!

“[Magic Arrow]!”

A glowing circle formed in front of me and...!

...just a few...

...

...

...Eat me earth...

“HAHA! You did it!”

“Huh?” I turned to look at him to check if he wasn’t senile.

“Well, what did you expect? You don’t learn magic from scratch. The truth is, it takes everyone almost a year to cast it properly for the first time.” He kept his eyes closed with his hands at his sides.

“But... launching an attempt at one in two weeks... I won’t take that away from you.” A respectful smile spread across his face.

“From now on, you will be my student and assistant. You will help me with whatever I need or ask of you, but I will also teach you the path to becoming a Magic Caster.”

“R-Really?!, I-I... Why?”

"Because you came here after Konrad told you to, and that means you also know how to obey.

I couldn't believe it. I felt like I was dreaming. Now I was an apprentice. Now I had... I had a place to be.

"But you better be obedient and not cause disasters, do you understand?" His voice became stern again.

"Y-yes, M-master." I bowed as low as I could, brown, handing over the staff, my voice still wavering but now filled with joy.

"Good." He took the staff to carry it to the table, but paused before turning around. "And what is your name?"

Oh, yes, during all this time I never introduced myself.

"My name is Crellan."

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That same night, the Master asked for a place to stay, and they gave me a dusty room and a somewhat worn robe, which they told me would be my uniform. It was there that they explained that in exchange for my work as an assistant, they would allow me to stay until I could afford a house to live in.

So the seasons passed. In the mornings, I would tidy up the Master's workshop or help him with his research and take notes, and in the afternoons, he would teach me how magical theories worked or help me practice casting spells. Not only did he teach me how to read and write better, but if I wanted to improve and become a Magic Caster, I had to not only recite spells, but also understand them from my point of view. The Master... well, he wasn't like any other adult I'd ever met.

He wasn't like my father, who made me help him with everything, or my mother, who took care of me. He didn't care much if I knew how to plow or ride a horse; he said anyone could learn those things. What he wanted was for me to learn to think and understand that knowledge is power, which was what Konrad had given me.

I asked Master Alvean who he was, and he told me that, before me, he was his last apprentice, that he was talented, studious, and focused on everything related to magic. Even after becoming an adventurer, they continued to correspond.

As I grew older, I improved more and more in both my studies and my skills until finally, after turning 16, I managed to cast a second-level spell. The pride I felt that day couldn't compare to the joy of my master congratulating me, telling me that I was now part of the Mages Guild.

Shortly after, a letter from Konrad arrived congratulating me, along with a bottle of wine from the Empire to celebrate. I'm a little ashamed to say we finished that bottle a little too quickly, so much so that the master kept rambling on about how he wished he could have him right in front of us so we could continue celebrating.

When I asked him why he'd become an adventurer, his face took on a tired expression, and he told me it had to do with the Guild's situation.

"Because there's no more money."

Well, it wasn't exactly like that...

For decades, one of the Mages' Guild's missions was to spread knowledge about magic, but as the years passed, Magic Casters had begun to decline in Re-Estize. Over time, in the absence of any significant events in which their value could be demonstrated, they began to be underestimated and neglected. It was because of this that several of the Six Great Noble families also began to cut off our income from the crown.

But the situation worsened with the appearance of the previously little-known Marquis Satoru, who, by trading in magical items at prices too low to compete, was on the verge of bankruptcy. That is, until he made the grand deal with the Guild, allowing us to receive various weapons, scrolls, and other items for us to enchant, in exchange for double what they were earning before.

But it was during this period of fear that the end was approaching that Konrad decided that instead of standing by and watching everything slowly disappear, he would use everything he learned to help others as an adventurer.

Knowing all this... I felt moved and guilty at the same time...

Happy that he had given me all this and guilty for having insulted him for not thanking him yet.

"Ahhh... that's probably why he wanted to help you... he's a good man." I could only nod, trying not to cry.

That same night, I wrote a letter apologizing for my stupidity, telling him about my accomplishments here, and thanking him for helping me. I had been truly worried after the Master told me he had an accident not long ago during an errand in the great forest of Tob.

But it wasn't long after his reply arrived.

"You better be rude. If you want to be grateful, then keep living."

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An alarm sounded in my pocket. I had just finished packing the barrel full of weapons I had enchanted today. For now, I took a moment to breathe and dispel my tiredness as I turned off the alarm that reminded me that my workday wasn't over and headed to the old man's workshop.

Honestly, when Alvean had told him that as a member of the Guild he should do his part, I would have told him he'd be better off deserting, but the truth is, I was happy with my whole life. A month ago, I finally managed to buy my own home, and I could feel in my bones that I was close to reaching the third level. With all that, I could only imagine myself continuing to grow and look for ways to improve. Although having come this far, I wondered, what was the point?

I pushed those thoughts aside as I opened the workshop door, lifting a scroll with the seal of Marquis Satoru.

"Old man, they just brought us the reports on the batches of scrolls of... the... last..." - It was when I entered that I found myself confronted by a new person whom I didn't even recognize for half a minute.

I couldn't take my eyes off her. She wasn't like the golden princess from the songs; she was the most beautiful young woman I had ever met, with hair as brown as the freshest oaks and purple eyes that matched beautifully with the beautiful dress she was wearing.

"Crellan, what did you say about knocking on the door? Excuse me, Your Majesty," Alvean scolded me, then bowed her head, causing me embarrassment.

Wait... YOUR MAJESTY?!

"Excuse me, Princess!" I bowed without even thinking for a second if I had made a mistake with the title.

"D-don't worry, we're not in public right now, you haven't done anything wrong."

Ahhh... thank goodness.

"Thank you very much, princess... hm... Alysanne!" – I did remember the names, but I really didn't know what was happening to me.

"I should actually deliver the apologies," he said graciously before turning to the master and bowing his head slightly.

"Under the law of my ancestor, Rampossa I, every guild recognized by the nation is entitled to a minimum amount of funding from the Crown. This is not a favor, but a legal duty that we have neglected for over a year. This failure is not only unfair, but it tarnishes the credibility of the throne itself, and for that, I must, in the name of the Crown, apologize."

"We accept the apologies for that, Your Majesty, but if so, I still wonder why you had to come personally instead of sending the proper letter?" At times like these, I wished the old man would be more subtle, but well, I suppose there was too much of a rush for now.

The princess bowed to hand over a stack of papers she had been carrying all this time and give them to the Master. After a moment, the old man looked up in surprise.

"Is this...?"

"The necessary authorizations to found the first Magical Academy of the Re-Estize Kingdom..." Now I couldn't believe it.

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The grand opening had been a huge success. Members from all over Re-Estize had arrived to be part of the first generation. And all of this after such a demonstration by Marquis Satoru's apprentices. I truly couldn't believe they had already learned so much at such a young age. To tell the truth, I was a little saddened by all of this. Those more talented than one will always exist, and I wish I could be as talented as those...

But for now, I dispelled those thoughts from yesterday. Today was the beginning of another day. After finishing sealing several second-level scrolls, I arrived at the Master's office.

"Hey, old man," I entered, realizing he hadn't knocked on the door again. "...there have been some complaints about some members who couldn't get into the first group of..." My words softened when I saw the Master's blank stare, but soon after, he looked at me with strange eyes, but even if I had recognized them, I wouldn't have guessed what he was about to say.

"Princess Alysanne has been murdered."

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I can't... I can't believe she's standing there, so still... the princess wasn't like that. She was always on the move, always talking about plans or numbers. And now... nothing.

Why does it hurt so much if we weren't even... not even close? Were we friends? Or acquaintances? Maybe more, maybe less... I don't know. I liked being with her, I liked the way she looked at me when we talked in the Guild. It wasn't like the looks from others, laden with titles and hierarchies. She listened to us, she listened to me.

It's stupid, isn't it? I shouldn't have even thought about it... She had a commitment to a man far greater than I'll ever be. And I knew it. And yet... I can't help but think that maybe... maybe I would have liked to know her better.

But there are no words. Just this emptiness... and that damned wooden box hiding her from all of us.

"Crellan." I looked to my side to see the Master and met his sympathetic gaze.

"Right now isn't the right time to break down. You can feel it, but wait to vent in private."

I could only nod. I didn't even remember when we'd arrived at the castle cemetery. They slowly lowered the grave into that black pit in front of a beautifully carved headstone bearing the name, Alysanne Valleon Igana Ryle Vaiself.

That was all that remained, just a name, the name of a young woman as the only proof that she was alive. As I read it, I still couldn't understand why.

Why was I so sad?

Why, I'd only met her once?

Why is it that...?

Yes... now I understand. She helped us, during all this time when many others had done nothing for the guild. She was one of the few who offered us the opportunity to continue growing. She wasn't like my father, who had ignored and abandoned me.

She was like Marquis Satoru, like Master Alvean... like Konrad.

She had helped us, and what have we done in return?

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In the last few weeks, I haven't slept too well. The blacksmiths kept bringing us weapons, the Crown had issued quests to increase monster hunting in the Adventurers' Guild, and all of this was news that reached the entire Kingdom.

The one who provoked the princess's death was the Priestess of the Holy Kingdom. She had sent someone to kill the princess through the corrupted temples in the capital.

Ever since I found out, I hadn't stopped enchanting scroll after scroll with the best spells I had until I was completely drained of mana. Day after day, I gave it my all, but it wasn't enough. It wasn't enough for me.

"That's enough for today, Crellan. You must rest," the old man at my side told me, but I didn't pay much attention.

With each scroll the Guild created, it only evened the odds in the upcoming war. Even as powerful as Re-Estize had become, it was still facing a Kingdom that had stood its ground against hordes of demihumans for decades and remained strong.

That's why I had to do something more, something I would probably regret, but I still had to try.

“Old man... there's something I want to ask you...”

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The sun was beginning to rise over the horizon, but it hadn't even touched the castle yet. All I could do was wonder if this would work out or if I'd be called a fool. I couldn't think any more as I looked out the window at the view when I heard the voices growing louder on the street, around here in a stable near the Capital's exit.

I stood up in front of the door, took a deep breath to calm my emotions, and walked outside, finding a crowd of 300 Magic Casters who turned to look at me.

I tried to appear indifferent to the gesture and took a deep breath as I whispered [Greater Voice] and began to speak.

"Listen to me, everyone." I began walking while looking around.

"Today... today we don't just rise up to show everyone who underestimated us... what we are capable of... today we come here for one of the few people who decided to help our cause..." I finally managed to climb onto the nearest carriage and continued speaking, "Today each of us will march to help pave the way to reach the person responsible for his death!... **TODAY WE ARE HEADING UP TO FIGHT FOR JUSTICE!**"

"YEESSSSS!" Everyone shouted in unison as they began loading their belongings into the wagons and other carriages. I was about to settle in when I saw Master Alvean at the edge of the crowd.

I got out of the carriage to approach him. He stared at me for a moment until a mirthless half-smile appeared on his face.

"A fool wouldn't know how to convince a crowd to follow him." I lowered my gaze, expecting a lecture or a scolding.

But instead, he caught me in a quick hug, so much so that I was perplexed... I hadn't expected it.

"Come back alive, Crellan." Sadness mingled with his tone, but it still sounded too serious.

"I will... Grandfather." I said, fearing the worst, but he didn't pull away or deny it.

Finally, I ended the hug and headed to the front of the caravan, trying not to close my eyes as the sunrise dazzled me. I don't know if I'll ever return, but I want to think about being able to return from the Holy war beyond that horizon.

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AH, I was finally able to finish it, I'm sorry if there are any mistakes in the translation, English is not my native language, and I'm also very sorry about the date I submitted it, but I've had very little free time lately and a couple of unfortunate things happened, but oh well, I hope you enjoyed it and that the ending wasn't too weak, see you later.