

## Chapter 2 Part 2



After spending a leisurely morning together, they arrived at the classroom with plenty of time to spare than usual, where they found Millis and Wiesel were already chatting with each other.

Upon noticing the presence of Reid and Elria, the two widened their eyes in surprise.

"Elria-sama is... looking so fresh in the morning...!?"

"And not only are her eyes wide open, but her steps are steady, too...!?"

"...I don't always show up in a lethargic state every day."

Elria retorted with a hint of dissatisfaction.

This conversation had become a regular part of their daily academy lives.

"I had milk tea brewed by Reid today, so I've been wide awake since morning."

"Reid-san brewed... tea...!?"

"Are you surprised just because I brewed tea?"

"But brewing tea is difficult, you know? If you try to do it with the same feeling as brewing barley tea or roasted tea leaves that you commonly see in the countryside, you'll mess it up!"

"I see. Is that from your own experience?"

"Yes... I got all excited after coming to the royal capital and impulsively bought a tea that I'd never seen in the countryside. I tried to brew it casually as usual, but ended up with a bitter and astringent liquid...!!"

"Well, I also failed at first, but I had seen how to brew it in my previous life..."

"Ugh... I forgot that Reid-san is an irregular countryman with a seemingly upper-class previous life as a hero...!!"

Perhaps because his attempt to sympathize with the story of failure had backfired, Millis dropped her shoulders in frustration. She really is full of energy, even in the morning.

Ignoring Millis, they took their seats, and Wiesel adjusted his glasses before asking,

"So, Reid, how was the summons from the royal family?"

"I got involved with Her Royal Highness the Princess, attended a party in the castle, received thanks from various people for Elria's sake, and made some progress regarding our situation."

"...It seems a lot has happened in the two days you were off."

"Well, the former just made it easier for me to move as a Caldwen, and the latter just increased the unknowns."

"I see. I also looked into the history of magic equipment and magic tools, but... there has been no significant progress. All I found out was that 'the country called Altein has disappeared'."

Furrowing his brows, Wiesel turned to Elria.

"Lady Elria, what were your thoughts that led to the creation of magic equipment?"

"Mm... At first, I was inspired by Altein's technology. Although Altein's territory was fundamentally lacking in magic power and had no sorcery culture, they excelled in crafting weapons and machinery."

As Elria spoke, she glanced briefly at Reid.

After listening to Elria's choice of words, Reid let out a small sigh and then—

"—In short, Altein was a country that excelled in warfare and slaughter."

Reid did not hold back his candid impressions because it was the country where he had lived.

At the time, Altein was a large empire that held more than half of the continent. However... all that was built up through plunder, slaughter, and war.

"Altein was a country with generally low magic power in the land. The climate was unstable, and the land was poor, making it difficult to produce crops. That's why—they resorted to plundering other regions for resources."

Magic power is believed to be produced through blood circulation, and—it also exists in the land where humans dwell.

The 'World' produces magic power through various means, such as rivers flowing through the land, underground water veins, ocean currents created by seamounts and trenches, the pulsating lava flows inside volcanoes, and wind currents created by steep mountains. The 'World' functions properly due to the presence of this magic power.

However, in the land of Altein, the natural production of magic power was scarce. Not only was the production of magic power limited, but randomly produced magic power would interfere with each other and vanish, resulting in many lands experiencing degradation and extreme climate changes.

Thus, the lack of magic power hindered the cultural development of 'Sorcery', which was a serious disadvantage. 'Sorcery' involves using the magic power produced by the 'World' and that within humans to cause specific phenomena under certain conditions. With sorcery, it should have been possible to improve the problems with their land and climate to some extent.

Despite that—Altein became entrenched in a shortsighted approach of plundering. They attacked neighboring countries in search of food and fertile lands, engaged in plunder through war, and when those resources were depleted, they would attack other countries again to sustain themselves. It was a country without a future.

"War drives various technological advancements—by thinking of weapons that can efficiently kill the enemy, creating new technologies and machinery to build those weapons, discovering new laws and phenomena in the process, and applying them to other technologies and weapons."

The same could be said for 'Magic'. To defend against the threat of Altein, the people of Vegalta began using the 'Magic' of the Sage to counter Altein and further developed magic technology.

"Well, since they lacked magic power, they compensated with abundant mineral resources. They also repurposed the technologies and machinery they developed through killing people to create 'machines' that don't rely on magic power."

"Machines that don't rely on magic power, you say...? What exactly are they?"

"I'm not an expert, so I don't know the details, but... it's a technology that utilizes forces produced by heat, water flow, or interactions between objects, I think?"

"I see... I'm personally interested in that technology, so please tell me all about it next time."

Wiesel's eyes changed color for a moment, but he suppressed his passion as an engineer and redirected the topic of the conversation.

"However, hearing your explanation makes sense. It felt strange that magic equipment was credited to the 'Sage' without any existing prototypes before them."

Saying that, Wiesel took out his own magic equipment.

"Just as people look at birds and think, '*I want to fly in the sky*', technological development takes inspiration from existing prototypes and evolves from there. Nothing is born out of complete nothingness. Just as magic originated from the concept of sorcery, the mechanisms used in magic tools and magic equipment must have had their prototypes."

"I see. So, you can also notice discrepancies from that perspective."

"Mm... I think it's a very good point."

Reid is genuinely impressed, and Elria makes a small circle with her hand.

"But... did you even notice issues with the magic power in the land back then, Reid? Without the sorcery culture, understanding the concept of magic power would be difficult, I believe..."

"Well, I knew there were technologies like that, and I had seen them several times on the front lines. But by the time I realized that magic power was related to the land and climate issues, I was already an old man, and I died a few years later, so there was no opportunity to utilize that knowledge."

From Reid's perspective, the country of Altein had only a narrow and bleak future. Even if they plundered food and fertile lands from neighboring countries, those resources would not reach the majority of its people. Most of it would be consumed by the rich of the country or sent to the battlefield as provisions, leaving the situation unresolved.

Even if Vegalta had not destroyed Altein, many people would have died from hunger and poverty, and the country would have eventually declined and perished.

That was why Reid established an investigative team to solve fundamental problems like land and climate, and had them study the differences between his own country and other countries. At that time, many people mocked him as an "upstart hero wasting money on unnecessary things", but now, the resolution of the land's magic power issue proves that Reid was right. The lands that were once part of Altein have seen remarkable improvements compared to the past.

"If that had been understood more than a thousand years ago... Altein might still be thriving today without incurring resentment from various places."

Reid murmured, imagining the state of his lost homeland.

Hunger and poverty rob people of their peace of mind, which Reid, who grew up in Altein, understands all too well.

And so, pushed into a desperate situation, Altein relied on the means of war and plunder, ultimately making enemies of many countries and people.

"Well, setting aside the talk about Altein and me, did you find out anything else?"

"Yeah... there's the draft of the magic equipment that I've been thinking about for a while that could work for Reid——"

Just as those words were spoken, Wiesel turned his face as if he had noticed something. Following his lead, Reid and Elria also turned their gaze in the same direction and found Millis with a spaced-out expression, seemingly absent-mindedly listening to the conversation.

"Don't worry. I have other expectations for Millis."

"But I haven't said anything yet!?"

"Having Millis around just makes me feel better."

"My existence value has been equated with that of an ornament...!?"

Perhaps because of feeling ambiguous about the reason for her existence, Millis shook her hands anxiously. However, she suddenly lifted her head as if she had thought of something.

"W-While it's important to investigate the past, we also have our duty as students to focus on what's right in front of us!!"

"Oh, right. We received an explanation about this month's 'Conditional Examination' when you two were on your days off——"

"Wiesel-san, please let me explain that part...!"

"...Since Lady Millis will handle the explanation, please listen to her."

Overwhelmed by Millis's desperate demeanor, Wiesel prompted with a slight nod. It seems she really wanted to be of use as well.

"Um... for the 'Conditional Examination' this time, Philia-sensei mentioned that it would be similar to the practice for next month's 'Comprehensive Examination'."

At the magic academy, evaluation is conducted through two examinations.

One is the 'Conditional Examination' that evaluates individuals, and the other is the 'Comprehensive Examination', which is conducted with other magic academies in various regions.

For the 'Conditional Examination', the academy sets up situations and conditions related to dealing with magical beasts. On the other hand, the 'Comprehensive Examination' has a slightly different nature.

"The 'Comprehensive Examination' does not focus on the handling of magical beasts. Instead, it assesses interpersonal combat skills such as coordination, command, and judgment needed to fulfill the duties of a true mage."

"So, it's a battle between academy students?"

"Yes, exactly. We were told that there will be a total of four 'Comprehensive Examinations', and it seems that the results will affect the academy's influence and budget for the next academic year. Also, for academy students, it's said to be quite an intense battle as it relates to their future as mages!"

"Great job with the explanation, Millis."

"Hehe! With this, I've been promoted to an ornament that can explain!!"

Elria, as if praising Millis, gently stroked her head after she finished explaining fluently.

"The classroom lectures in the morning are as usual, but the combat training in the afternoon will be conducted jointly with other classes until the examinations are over."

"Oh, so we'll be with students from other classes. We usually only see them in the dining hall or dormitory, and there are limited opportunities for conversation, so I'm looking forward to it."

At Vegalta Magic Academy, students are assigned to one of four classes upon enrollment. In the first year, they take an examination to assess their current abilities as mages. A secondary placement will occur from the second year onwards, focusing on classes and training that

address their weaknesses. They will be eligible for graduation if they are deemed capable enough to act as mages.

And because the classrooms for the first-year students are assigned to each of the four towers surrounding the academy, there are no opportunities to interact with peers from other classes during lessons. This measure is taken due to differences in teaching methods among the magic instructors and to keep tactics used in the comprehensive examination confidential.

Although they may see each other in places like the dining hall or dormitory, they tend to stick to their own class groups, and even the dormitories are grouped by class, so there's virtually no interaction.

"...Well, the academy probably wants the students to get used to interpersonal combat."

There was an artificial intrusion that occurred during the last examination. If it was a planned act by criminals, especially considering the deployment of robust security measures and personnel, it could be considered a crime committed by a large organization.

Facing people requires resolve. Because when they understand that their magic has the potential to kill another person, they hesitate to direct their powers toward other people, even in situations where they themselves are in danger.

That is why they likely intend to familiarize students with interpersonal combat beforehand.

Just as Reid was contemplating this, Millis let out a small "Ah!".

"Speaking of which... the comprehensive examination will be conducted in teams, and for this conditional examination, we have to form a team of five people..."

"So, we're one person short then?"

"...No, the fifth member has already been decided."

Saying this, Millis let out a deep sigh for some reason.

As Reid was about to inquire with suspicion about the reason, a voice interrupted—

"—Hey there! What a refreshing morning, everyone!"

Reid heard a familiar voice and reflexively turned his head.

There stood—Faregh, approaching them with a radiant smile and cheerful demeanor.

"Oh, it's you, Kid Faregh. It's unusual for you to come here."

"K-Kid—!?! W-Well... the training for the comprehensive examination is starting, so it's only natural, right?"

With a twitching cheek, Faregh sat down on a nearby seat.

Seeing this, Reid grasped the entire situation.

"Starting today—let's do our best as a team!"

With a refreshing smile that was almost infuriating, Faregh declared.