

SUPREME MAGUS

Chapter 8 Unrelenting Practice

In the following weeks, Lith's days consisted of a strict routine.

During the day, when he was all wrapped up, he would only focus on practicing the breathing technique and learning as much as he could about his family and their language.

At night he would practice magic until exhaustion made him fall asleep. Then as soon as he woke up, he would start again until Elina would get up for the day.

More than once he tried taking a break, but it would never last long. Living as a baby was not easy, on the contrary, was very stressful.

He could not speak, even the words he had already understood to not scare his family. He could not move, he could do nothing but watch, sleep, eat and relieve his bowels.

He was not used to be so helpless and dependant on someone else for every little thing. Too much free time would bring him to the verge of insanity.

So, he would practice and practice, trying to adjust to his new reality without overthinking about how absurd and irrational was his situation.

As Lith's powers increased, so did his control, and after a few weeks he felt confident enough to try earth magic and water magic.

He would always be careful, never conjuring more than a few droplets of water or manipulating a handful of dirt. He discovered that it was possible to make the elements float in mid-air, changing their shape and size by continuously spending mana.

After that, he shifted his night training on focus and control rather than power. His mana was very limited and he much preferred doing few elaborate tricks perfectly rather than a lot of stuff at the risk of blowing his cover.

No matter how common magic was, Lith doubted that a baby practicing it would be any less than shocking, or even terrifying.

Lith was afraid of being abandoned by his family, or even worse killed.

He was once again scared of death, since now he had too much to lose. What were the odds to find another world where magic existed, to be born as a baby in a loving family?

Zero, none, nada, squat.

He had to play his cards well, and play them as close to the vest as possible. Before revealing even a hint of his talent, he needed to know what the standards of that world were.

How much talent was considered good, how much divided being considered a genius from being labeled as a monster?

His mind was constantly filled with worries and only training would alleviate his anxiety.

After three months, he had become good enough at silent magic to try fire magic on the fireplace.

The fire was already lit, and when everyone was busy talking and eating during breakfast, he tried making the flames dance at will. It ended up in failure, since the flames were too strong and the distance too big for his mana to have any effect.

Yet he kept trying, since he could still sense the flow of magic going from himself to the fireplace, hence making it a good training to expand his mana sense and range.

The only downside of all that training was that Lith would get hungry faster. Luckily, he was not Elina's first glutton and she had no shortage of milk.

Another month passed, and Elina started weaning him.

This event was meaningful for two reasons. The first was Lith noticing that food wasn't abundant in his household, so even if he still had not a rich vocabulary, he could still read his parents' worried expressions every time he needed to be fed.

Despite still being a cold-hearted, cynical misanthrope at his core, Lith could not help but feel guilty about it.

They loved him like a child, while he would consider them nothing more than hosts, like a parasite. The only exceptions were Elina and Eliza, his big sister, the only one that along with his mother would take care of him.

With their constant love, affection and care had managed to crack his emotional defensive wall. The more time he spent with them, the more he would consider them part of his real family, not just people that he was leading by the nose.

So, he started limiting his training to not exceed the amount of food they could afford.

Even that required quite a few tries to find the right amount, since too little would cause even more worry than too much.

The second reason were world changing discoveries.

Being forced to stop training magic as much as possible, Lith now had free time that he used to dedicate that time by practicing the breathing technique, that he christened "Accumulation".

That way, his inner energy, that he had long dubbed as "mana core", grew faster to the point of hitting a bottleneck.

Apparently, his body wasn't big or strong enough or both, to hold and indefinite amount of mana. Lith never noticed before because his baby body was rapidly growing, and he had only so much time to expand the mana core.

So, without realizing it, his body and mana core had developed together.

But now the balance had been broken, and practicing Accumulation would make every fiber of his body ache, so he was forced to stop.

Luckily he was still well fed and developing fast, so despite not being able doing any physical exercise, the bottlenecks would not last long.

The second discovery was the result of him being forced not to practice magic or use Accumulation.

While studying his bottleneck status, he found out that it was possible to modify the breathing technique by removing the breath holding step. That

way, the world energy would just flow in and out his body, energizing him like a good night sleep.

Lith named this new technique "Invigoration."

After several tries, he discovered that the world's mana could allow him to stay awake for several days, but not indefinitely.

Each time he would use Invigoration, the energizing effect would last less and less, and only sleeping would reset its effectiveness.

But the most important discovery, as almost always happens, was made by chance.

After adjusting his food intake, Lith's greatest enemy had become the hunger. Not the slight appetite that can be fixed by a candy bar or the hankering after a busy morning.

It was the kind of hunger that never goes away, always lurking, even right after a meal. Even though Lith was not starving, it was something that he had never experienced.

Even among all the misfortunes of his first life, food had never been an issue. He had always been able to eat to his heart content, even allowing himself to be picky about food.

But now he was so hungry that he ate until the last bite, and if his body had allowed him to, he would not hesitate licking the plate clean.

In the good days, when the portions were larger, it was like white noise, annoying but easily ignored. But during the bad days, either because the rations were smaller or because he had lost himself in the practice of magic consuming too much mana, it would become a thorn in his head. He would be so hungry to have a headache all day long, often feeling light headed and incapable of focusing. Food would be the only thing he would think or dream about.

Of course, he was not the only hungry one in the family. Aside from Elina, only his siblings Orpal and Eliza would be tasked to feed him.

And while Eliza had a big heart and strived to be like her mother, Orpal was angrier and hungrier by the day. He would often daydream about the days when he and his twin were the only children in the house.

Now not only he had to fight each day for his parents' attention, but also for the food, clothes and so on.

Once he had a room only for himself, then he had to share it with Trion. It was just a matter of time before Lith would come to take away what little personal space he still had.

Orpal could not understand why a family as poor as his own would keep making kids.

It was winter, so there was not much work to do. Hence there weren't many occasions to restock their food supplies, and they had to last until spring.

It was the toughest time of the year for all the farmers' families, since the food was meant not only for men but also for the animals.

Orpal was sick of seeing Lith gobbling all the food, to the point of dubbing him "Leech".

So, whenever it was his turn to feed the little vermin, he would take some spoonful for himself. But Lith was not easily bullied.

As soon as he noticed the spoon was not aimed to him, he would start to cry madly, and Elina would run to his side, foiling Orpal's plan.

Lith never cried, unless he needed to be fed or changed, and that made their parents both really happy and paranoid about him. Since he would never cry wolf, they took every wail very seriously.

That day was a really bad day for Lith, starving because of his growth spurt, and was Orpal's turn to take care of him.

Both their parents were out, one of the cows seemed to suffer from frostbite.

So Orpal took the plate full of creamy soup for the baby, and gulped down a full spoonful.

Lith immediately started to cry, but there was no one to hear him.

"Cry all you want, *Leech*." Lith was now able to understand most of the common words, included Orpal's mockery. "Today is just you and I. No mom in a shining armour to come to your rescue." After saying that he gulped down another one.

Lith felt like he was going crazy. Once again, he was helpless, his so called magic useless in time of need. What could he possibly do, aside from blowing his cover?

Ventilate him? Wet him? Using fire was too dangerous, a single meal was not worthy burning down a house.

Lith's hunger was eating him, and his rage went above and beyond what he would have ever thought possible.

"You fu**er!" He yelled inwardly. "Feeling so tough robbing a child?"

Then he saw the third spoonful, making a good half of his meal gone, moving toward Orpal's smug face.

Lith's anger reached a new peak, his hatred burning like a fire.

"You are not my brother!" He yelled inwardly. "You are nothing but a filthy thief, trash!" And then, more than clicking, he felt something breaking inside like a dam that could not hold the raging waters anymore.

"I HOPE YOU CHOKE ON THAT SPOON, YOU SH*T!" Lith waved his arm against Orpal in a final struggle, and then it happened.

Lith felt the mana going out to his body, reaching the spoon already in Orpal's mouth, and pushing it down, hard.

Orpal started to choke, and after removing the spoon from his throat he started puking.

Lith was so astonished to almost forget about both his rage and hunger.

He had discovered something wonderful, a power that no one else in his family seemed to have.

Lith had discovered spirit magic!

