

SUPREME MAGUS

Chapter 10 Growing pains

The following years weren't easy on Lith.

He was finally allowed to do a lot of questions, filling most of the holes in his vocabulary and starting to finally learn about his family and the new world.

He learnt that they were living in the village of Lutia, that was part of the county of Lustria, which in turn was part of the Griffon Kingdom.

His parents knew about the neighbouring countries by name, but that was it. They knew nothing about the life outside the village, nor they cared about it.

In their eyes the king was some sort of mythical beast, they put all their faith and worries in Count Lutia. Not only he administered justice and taxes in the county, he would also always take part in Lutia's spring festival as the guest of honour.

His parents never mentioned to their children anything about magic, wars or history. They only told them tales that could be easily dismissed as bedtime stories even in this new world.

All of their stories were filled with beautiful princesses, valiant heroes and villainous tyrants.

Lith was truly dissatisfied by such little information. He wanted to know what was the planet's name, what was the stage of scientific development it had developed.

He wanted to learn about the history of magic, the lore, the legends, anything that could give him at least a clue about what to expect from life.

But it was clear they knew little more than gossip, so he could not make questions he was not even supposed to think about.

At least his family tree was much easier to fully understand. Elina and Raaz had married very early, even by village standards, barely sixteen.

Raaz, being an only child, had inherited his father's farm, where they were currently living. Elina got pregnant shortly after the marriage, giving birth to the twins Eliza and Orpal.

Then she got pregnant again every two years. That meant that Raaz and Elina were currently 25 years old, Eliza and Orpal 8 years old, Trion 6 years old, Tista 4 years old and finally Lith 2 years old.

In fact, most of the information were leached from his siblings' questions, Lith was mostly limited to a "What's this? Why is that?" kind of question.

Spending more and more time with the rest of the family, he also discovered why despite his father owned such a nice farm, with its own barn and henhouse, had so much problems putting food on the table.

Tista was born with a congenital condition that prevented her from doing any physical exertion and made her also prone to illness.

Fast pacing was enough to leave her out of breath. She would cough from time to time, and when things were about to turn for the worse, the cough would become violent.

At that point one of her parents would have to run to the village to let Nana visit and heal her. But she could not really cure her, only alleviate the symptoms and return her to her natural state.

And while a check-up wasn't expensive, the treatment was. Also, even if Raaz did go picking her up and then brought Nana back home, it would still cost an extra.

Doing a round trip meant her losing business, so she required compensation.

It was the constant need for the healer to put such a strain on their budget.

Lith felt very sorry for her. Despite not having spent much time with Tista, she was precious for both Elina and Eliza, and that was more than enough to make her precious for him too.

He felt helpless, cursing his inability to ever practice light and darkness magic. Light magic required a patient, and until he had gained a solid grasp of how it worked and what was this world's human anatomy, he would not dare putting anyone's health at risk.

Darkness magic was another story. Lith had only seen it once, no one in his family used it. And even in that one occasion, he had clearly felt the destructive power it held.

He was also biased against it, since on Earth dark magic would always be associated with evil practices and undeads, so he had no desire to dabble with something potentially horrifying.

Lith could only live on, hoping to eventually get some training in magic, while enduring the madness that he was getting used to call family life.

He had to be lively, but not too much. He had to be curious, but not too much. He had to run around but never get out of the door.

His parents were never satisfied. If he tried to sit in corner meditating, they would worry because he was too quiet or too lazy. If he tried to move around or help them, he would be scolded for getting in the way.

They refused to teach him chore magic (that was the name of the lesser spells they used on their daily life), and prohibited him to learn them.

Lith could not go outside without being accompanied by someone, could not get near to the fireplace, could not make too many questions.

Everything was basically prohibited until he "grew up".

More than once Lith wanted to scream "I may be biologically young, but I am actually the oldest in here, dammit!" but all he could do was suck it up and obey.

His feud with Orpal never resolved, and he could clearly feel Trion's hostility on his brother's behalf. Clearly Orpal was for Trion what Eliza was for Lith, his role model.

Unlike Orpal, Trion would not completely ignore him, even when their parents were absent. But Lith could clearly see that every time his brother helped him, it was just to be polite. There was no kindness between them.

Lith quickly started ignoring him in return. "I have already spent half of my old life being worried about dysfunctional family members. Been there, done that. So thank you, but no thank you. If you want to be a jerk, be my guest. I don't give a damn about you." These were his thoughts about the matter, so he let things fester.

Once he became three years old, he could not take it anymore. The boredom caused by the cold winter months where he was basically stuck at home 24/7, aggravated by the constant hunger was about to drive him insane.

It was a stormy afternoon, and the family was gathered around the fireplace. Elina was teaching her daughters how to sew. Raaz was teaching Orpal how to carve wood, while Trion and Lith were only allowed to watch. They were still too little to handle any sharp object, even sewing was off limits.

Lith had already asked, baffling his father and flattering her mother. "You are too little, and your hands are still too clumsy." She replied.

And Elina was right, Lith's body felt even clumsier than his old one, before he started practicing martial arts. Just the thought of all the lost muscle memory was enough to make him cry.

So, he patiently waited that Raaz finished instructing Orpal, and then Lith mustered all his courage and asked him to teach him how to read, write and count.

Raaz was flabbergasted. "You are too young! Usually kids wait until they are six years old to go to school and learn. Don't you think is boring?" That was the philosophy every man in his lineage had always uphold.

"Boring? What could possibly be more boring than sit here doing nothing? Like yesterday and the day before. And probably tomorrow too! Please daddy, try me! I beg you, please, please, please!"

Raaz didn't know how to say no. Lith had never asked him anything before.

"Even when he is clearly still hungry, if he notices there is no more food, he never asks for more." He thought "Unlike Orpal. I don't know if is Lith that is too good, or I am just spoiling Orpal too much."

He really wanted a way out, but Elina was already staring at him. Her hands never stopped sewing, her mouth explaining the girls what they were doing wrong, but her eyes were clearly set on him.

"Dammit, what can I say? Learning does not even require dangerous tools... That's it! The tools! I'm such a moron sometimes."

Raaz looked in Lith's puppy eyes, his heart squeezed as in a vice, but he still replied: "I'm sorry son, we have nothing you could possibly write on. So, I can't teach you."

Lith had considered things through before asking, so he had already a solution at hand. He picked the biggest tray they had, and filled it with the ashes collected in a bucket beside the fireplace.

"Now we do! We can write as much as we want!" Raaz was amazed by Lith's ingenuity, and so was Elina. He was about to object again when he noticed that the stare had turned into a frown. Her hands were moving too fast, and that meant trouble for him.

There was a storm outside, he could not run away from the one that was brewing inside. So with a deep sigh, he gave up.

"From what do you want to start?" Raaz could only hope that Lith would get bored fast and let him return to his leisure.

"Count!" Lith promptly replied. So Raaz sit on the floor beside him and started drawing lines in the ash. Lith was ecstatic.

The numbers they used had a different shape from the Arabic numerals, but aside from that they were identical in use, even the calculation methods were the same.

So, he kept the new numbers in the upper row to learn their shape, and then started doing the multiplication tables. He could actually do such simple math in his head, but he needed to engrave the new numbers in both his mind and body.

Once he finished, Lith started taking requests from his audience, and when Orpal sarcastically asked "How much is 124 times 11?" he quickly replied with flat "1364" leaving them all speechless.

Elina could not help herself standing up and lifting Lith up in a big hug.

"My little genius! I'm so proud of you!" In less than one hour he had mastered what it would take others a full year to do. Eliza and Tista soon joined her in the embrace, congratulating their little brother, while the male side of the family was still flabbergasted.

In rural areas they learned how to count only to not get ripped off when they sold or bought merchandise. So, they remembered only addition and subtraction, letting the useless multiplications and divisions fade away in their minds.

Reading and writing required more time, but it was equally simple. Lith already knew most of the words and how to spell them. He only needed to learn the alphabet and memorize it, to be able to read and write.

Once again his family was stunned, and the only one not rejoicing with them was Orpal, left alone with his envy and scorn.