

## Chapter 2 Part 3



The Vegalta Royal Magic Academy occupies an expansive piece of land.

Surrounded by high walls resembling a fortress city, the academy's grounds extend to encompass mountains, valleys, wilderness, seashores, wetlands, forests, abandoned mines, and deserted towns.

The academy has acquired lands that were previously designated as dangerous and repurposed them for training. All of these precautions are taken to prevent the spread of damage caused by magic to the surrounding areas.

While academy students have a certain level of magic skill when they enter the academy, it cannot be guaranteed that there won't be any outbursts or mishaps. In some cases, trial experiments with new magic may also be conducted.

Hence, basic or simple combat training is carried out using the magic tools created by Elise, a renowned expert in spatial magic and the academy's headmistress. Large-scale magic combat training makes use of the extensive lands owned by the academy. Naturally, magic tools are required for transporting to these training grounds.

The magic academy itself is located on the outskirts of the royal capital, and its training grounds are situated in rural areas with no villages or towns nearby. Therefore, when transporting to the training grounds, a teleportation tool that only academy members can operate is utilized.

However, there is a lingering concern: Reid's tendency to damage the teleportation tool itself—

"—Hey, Elria."

"Yes?"

"I've thought about this every time, but do you really need to cling to me like this?"

"Yes."

With her arms wrapped around Reid's torso, Elria nodded as if it were a matter of course.

Since all transportation to the training grounds had to be entrusted to Elria, they had to teleport together in this manner every time.

"Holding onto you like this reduces the consumption of magic power."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Teleportation magic involves manipulating and displacing space, so when the designated range is smaller, it requires less magic power and fewer coordinate calculations, making it easier."

While clinging to Reid, Elria nodded.

Previously, she teleported an entire cave, which was probably because she had to cover a larger area since Millis and others were inside.

"Well, I've grown accustomed to seeing these two traveling around like this."

"Yeah, it's scary that not only us but the entire class is getting used to it."

Wiesel and Millis repeatedly nodded as if it were a familiar sight. However—today, there was one more reaction.

"Seriously... It's incredibly inconvenient not to be able to use magic. Without Caldwen, he wouldn't even be able to use magic tools, let alone teleport. I could never endure that."

Faregh crossed his arms, wearing an exasperated expression, but then his expression changed as if he had remembered something.

"I-I mean to say that it's inevitable if you're born without the ability to use it!"

"It's already bothersome, so just be yourself..."

There is a reason Faregh is on the same team as them and has such a peculiar attitude.

First of all, two of his followers took a leave of absence due to the incident last time. Although his followers, Valk and Lucas, weren't fatally injured, their treatment and recovery took time, so they did not participate in this conditional examination. As a result, the team's composition changed irregularly for this conditional examination, but apparently, nobody invited him.

Faregh himself seemed to have assumed that someone would approach him due to his skills, but in the meantime, the teams were decided by others. He rushed to ask other teams but was

turned down, perhaps due to his daily attitude or the fear associated with his family name, Welminan. Thus, he ended up completely isolated.

Since everyone else had already formed their teams, Alma decided to include Faregh on their team, especially with Elria from the distinguished Caldwen family. The reason for that lies in the content of the conditional examination given to Elria.

"You should get along with Elria more than me. She is your lecturer from today onwards."

"...I'll do my best to teach."

While hiding behind Reid, Elria slightly pokes her head out and bows.

Elria was assigned a role akin to assisting her teammates in surpassing the evaluation criteria.

Her abilities as a mage have already been recognized by the academy as sufficient, and it is almost certain that she will be formally recognized as a mage after spending the required year at the academy. That's why the academy has reorganized with the goal of nurturing Elria as a special rank mage.

One aspect of this is 'Teaching'.

This involves not only imparting knowledge of magic theory but also practical techniques, tactics, magic combat, maneuvering in actual battles, and enhancing the abilities of others through training.

It requires not just producing actual results but also the ability to understand others' magic, propose tactics and improvements based on one's understanding of magic, and accurately assess others' abilities while providing realistic solutions. Alma mentioned that the intention is to scrutinize one's ability in actual battles.

By the way, in Alma's case, it was noted that Philia, who worked alongside her as a mage, was recognized for her achievements.

In Elria's case, it seems that the academy's intention is to determine whether she possesses the qualifications of a special rank mage rather than focusing solely on the success or failure of the examination.

"Hehe... Elria-sama's teaching methods are strict, you know? It's worth watching whether a snobby young master can endure them."

"Hah...! Unlike you commoners, I'm sure I can handle it easily."

"Alright, I heard that! If you start complaining halfway through, I'll label you as a whiny snobby brat, lower than commoners!!"

"If I endure it, I'll call you a country bumpkin, lower than peasants!!"

"That's too bad! My family loves sheep and cattle; we're herders!!"

"...Am I going to take the examination sandwiched between these two?"

"...And I have to teach in the midst of that?"

Watching the two squabbling, Wiesel and Elria appeared oddly fatigued. It seems there are various difficulties. And there was one more person—

"—Haaaaa....."

Near Reid, Alma sighed deeply.

While sitting with her knees hugged, she dug the ground with her battle axe.

"It was supposed to be a fun mock battle with His Excellency....."

"The headmistress also told us to be prepared in case of emergencies, and since other classes are also participating this time, unexpected situations are likely to occur..."

In response to Alma, who was slumping in disappointment, Philia patted her shoulder with a wry smile.

This time, the conditions given to Reid were no different from those for other students.

Currently, special rank mages are scattered across various places by royal decree, so those who are available after completing their missions will oversee Reid's examination. However, since the decision was made hastily and no one was available, and there was also a discussion about Elria's request in *"Let's split it in half"*, it will be a normal examination this time.

With that said, Alma had previously applied for a mock battle under the pretext of assessing Reid's abilities and uncovering his true character, as he was the subject of surveillance. However, it seems her request was denied, likely due to her reckless actions in the past.

"Haa... I suppose I'll just watch Philia's battle then..."

".....Eh, me?"

"Ever since you started working at the academy, you've been focused on research and haven't participated in actual battles. Since I recommended you, I'd like to see your current abilities. Why don't you engage in a mock battle with a suitable student?"

"N-No... I'm a teacher, and my primary duty is to supervise. Unlike Alma-chan, my magic isn't suited for battle— — **Ouch!?**"

"Don't call me '*Alma-chan*'. If you're spineless, we can have a mock battle until morning."

"Ugh... The memories of getting beaten up during my student days...!!"

Without giving her a choice, Alma drags Philia away. Although Alma had the authority to move freely, it was a rather pitiable treatment.

As the two leave, Reid turns to the others.

"Well then, shall we get started, too?"

The other teams are already discussing their plans, exchanging information by actually demonstrating their magic.

"Speaking of which, has Elria-sama been restricted again?"

"Yes... Alma-sensei said I can only use magic up to the third tier."

Elria sadly furrows her brows.

The actual restriction came from Elise, but since she fought toe-to-toe against a special rank mage using nothing but fifth tier magic through 'Weighted Multiplication Deployment', further restrictions were already decided for the next examination.

"But Elria, you'll be fine even with more restrictions, right?"

"Yes."

"That immediate answer is so like you."

"But casting magic using 'Weighted Multiplication Deployment' from the third tier takes time, so the usable magic and frequency of use are limited. I think it's a good adjustment because

there are many other considerations, such as maintaining the magic without dissipating it by sacrificing magic power consumption."

Saying so, Elria nods excitedly.

It may seem like an unreasonable limitation for those aspiring to become mages, but for Elria, it appears to be a thrilling challenge. However, upon hearing this, Wiesel furrows his brow and strokes his chin.

"With only up to the third tier, huh...? It seems we'll be at a disadvantage against other academy students."

"I know, right... I believe that if you've made it into the magic academy, you should have the ability to use at least fourth tier magic."

In general, everyday life magic and magic tools are classified up to the second tier. From the third tier onward, it's considered "magic with lethal potential", typically handled by mages.

Within that, third tier magic is a level that can be used by ordinary people for specific purposes, like pest control. From a mage's perspective, it's considered magic with minimal power for "neutralizing the target".

Even with 'Weighted Multiplication Deployment', the situation won't change significantly with just Elria alone against fellow students. They will need to think of a way to deal with it. Hence, Elria's role will become more challenging, especially when considering the future.

"There's a possibility that even Elria-sama's examinations might change, similar to Reid-san's situation. So, considering what lies ahead, it would be best for us to clarify our roles now..."

"That's right. Even if the two were to take the examinations on their own, showcasing their abilities clearly might lead to more opportunities to be recruited by other teams."

With the exception of special rank mages, most mages operate in units or teams. With that in mind, it's important for mages to clarify their strengths and roles when operating. However, there are certainly those who do not understand that.

"Haa... I feel sorry for the commoners. If they had a family name as prominent as Welminan and could wield magic of the eighth tier as I do now, they wouldn't need to worry."

"But Faregh-san, you're so isolated that no team will take you in anymore, right?"

"Stop that... those words hurt...!!"

Faregh, who was being haughty, was immediately brought down by Millis's comment.

Setting aside his reputation and personality, Faregh was born into a distinguished family and has displayed substantial ability since childhood. That is probably why he holds a position that makes it hard for others to approach him.

"Then, why don't we let Kid Faregh lead the team? If we add the three of us here with the resting Valk and Lucas, we'll have five, right?"

"I see, so you're suggesting I should be the leader!"

"Yeah, that's what I'm saying."

".....Eh?"

When Reid affirmed, Faregh's eyes widened.

"...Wait, am I really doing it?"

"That's what I said. You're the leader."

"So... does that mean everyone will absolutely obey me?"

"No, we won't simply obey you."

"Why not!?"

"A leader's role isn't to force others to follow but to 'make decisions'. During the last examination, you showed the ability to decide to 'escape' when the Armament Dragon attacked, making the right choice even under pressure and saving two injured people. Your judgment stands out."

When Reid honestly praised him, Faregh seemed taken aback.

"Additionally, a leader must accurately assess the capabilities of the team members to plan operations or tactics and give instructions while fighting. If this responsibility falls to Kid Faregh, our combat effectiveness will be significantly reduced. So, Wiesel is better suited to issue commands during battle."

"...So, in other words, Lord Welminan makes decisions on starting battles or retreating, and I, who stay in the rear, give instructions and judgments during battle, right?"

"I-In that case, what am I supposed to do?"

"What do you want to do?"

"Obviously, I want to mow down others with my magic!"

"Then go for it."

"You're not just saying this randomly, are you!?"

"Being able to use eighth tier magic means you're strong, and strong individuals tend to draw attention. If you act as a skirmisher, it will be easier for us to maneuver."

When Reid explained his intentions, Elria also nodded in agreement.

"Yes, that could work. I was considering placing Millis at the front, but I think it's also important to consider her wishes."

"...Eh, why me?"

"Because Millis is skilled in protection and barrier magic, so I thought you could hold your own."

"Um, what should I do after holding up the defense?"

"Until others can deal with it, endure concentrated enemy fire with determination not to die."

"Congratulations, Faregh-san, you are the leader."

"Don't touch my shoulder with that beaming smile...!!!"

Having escaped the role of a shield, Millis was smiling with her hand on Faregh's shoulder. Elria had also devised a good tactic, but Millis had no desire to be left alone on the frontlines to take a beating.

However, Elria then frowned slightly.

"It might be challenging for Faregh to serve as the vanguard."

"Is that so?"

"Because those who can use powerful magic usually have little experience in the vanguard."



"...I see, I understand what you mean."

This was something that Galleon, Elria's father, had mentioned before.

In modern magic combat, the primary focus is on medium and long-range attacks. However, if the vanguard is trained for close-quarters combat, the chances of engaging in interpersonal combat increase significantly. This is because, unlike fighting magical beasts, humans can use 'magic'.

Even if one were to use a wide-range, high-powered magic over a large area, it could be blocked by barrier or protection magic. Using such large-scale magic would also deplete a significant amount of magic power.

This is why, in interpersonal combat, it becomes necessary to limit the range of magic to conserve magic power and prioritize speed to prevent the opponent from mounting a defense.

However... someone like Faregh, who inherently possesses a substantial amount of magic power, can forcibly break through the barrier or protection magic, disregarding the high consumption rate of magic power. In other words, he can overpower his opponents by relying on his vast magic power reserves.

Since he can handle magic from the eighth tier, it's likely that he underwent combat training with the assumption of using high-powered magic from medium to long range, rather than being in the vanguard.

That means— —

"He's physically the weakest trashy kid among us."

"Yes, in close-quarters combat, he's just a weakling who lacks physical strength."

"Have I done anything to deserve such harsh words from you guys...!?"

Faregh fell to his knees, overwhelmed by their ruthless remarks.

But not only Faregh; very few mages are suited for the vanguard role.

After all, mages primarily fight magical beasts, not other humans, so even first-class mages likely have little experience in close-quarters combat.

In that case— —let's give them a chance to gain experience in close-quarters combat.

"So, Elria, I'll take care of Kid Faregh, okay?"

"Yes, I think Reid is more qualified."

"And, Wiesel, can you lend me some magic equipment that I can break?"

"...Reid, do you know how much it costs to make magic equipment?"

"I don't mean to break it, but if I put my strength and magic power into it, it might break. I just need a shape, preferably something of reasonable length, like a sword."

"In that case... there was a prototype that didn't turn out as planned."

After rummaging through the bag at his waist, Wiesel unfolded the magic equipment he had taken out.

It was a simple longsword-shaped magic equipment.

"When my magic power runs out, the built-in resistances and enhancements will be removed. It'll become just a lump of iron shaped like a sword after five minutes, so be careful."

"Got it. I'll be careful not to break it."

After receiving the magic equipment, Reid swung the sword in a familiar motion.

It looked like a sword, but it felt more like a wooden training sword, which seemed like it would break easily if Reid applied even a little force.

After making sure everything was alright, he placed his hand on Faregh's shoulder.

"Let's begin, Kid."

"...Begin what? What do you plan to do?"

"It's settled, isn't it? I'll be the one to train you."

"Train me...? You can't even use magic. What are you going to teach me?"

"I may not be able to use magic, but I can still teach you how to fight in a similar way."

Saying that, Reid pointed his sword at Faregh.

"How about a mock battle? If you can land one blow on me, you win. As for me... let's see, I'll attack in about a minute, so you can attack me freely until then."

"...Giving yourself a handicap? You must be quite confident."

"I don't feel like losing, at least. If you win, I'll offer you some sort of reward within my means."

"...I see. That sounds interesting, so I'll play along."

He drew a short sword-shaped magic equipment and faced off against Reid.

"If I win— —you will never call me 'Kid' again!!"

Immediately after, countless blistering and scorching-hot fireballs formed around Faregh.

"Don't think that you can extinguish them as easily as before!!"

With that, a swarm of fireballs flew towards Reid. Even if he dodged left or right, completely defending against them would be difficult. That's why Reid looked straight at them, lowered his stance, and leaped toward the fireballs.

"What— —!?"

The astonishment was not because Reid was coming at him head-on.

While maintaining a low position that almost slid across the ground, Reid twisted his body in mid-air, slipping through the narrow gap between the fireballs and the ground.

As the fireballs passed by him, Reid effortlessly regained his balance by grabbing the ground with one hand.

"Whoa, that's hot. Surrounding me wasn't a bad idea, but you need to seal those gaps with other magic."

It would certainly have been an effective move against a mage.

By surrounding them with fireballs, it forces them to defend themselves with protection magic and restricts their movements. This allows the use of a high-powered magic attack that could penetrate their protection. However, it won't be enough.

"Come on, there's still time, so keep attacking."

Smiling cheerfully, Reid leisurely approached Faregh.

Seeing such a relaxed expression, Faregh gritted his teeth and tightly gripped his short sword.

"Then... how about this!?"

He unsheathed his short sword and aimed it at Reid.

At that very moment, as he thrust the short sword forward, flames burst forth, seemingly extending the blade's reach. A fire spear was shot in a straight line, intent on piercing Reid.

It was a meticulously executed strike, propelled with precise speed.

"However——a fast strike like this is linear and easy to dodge."

Reid avoided the fire spear by slightly tilting his head.

"But you know that, too. That's why you use the magic equipment to make me aware of it, to lure me into dodging that strike, and then——"

As he spoke, Reid suddenly leaned his body. Right after, the tip of the fire spear looming behind Reid was cut in half.

"——Using that extended flame, your objective was to stab me from my blind spot."

Behind Reid, flames loom large like a whip.

Even if the initial fire spear is dodged, this two-stage attack method allows Faregh to exploit the opponent's blind spot by manipulating flames at hand.

Such surprise attacks are crucial in interpersonal combat.

"The idea itself is not bad, but it doesn't align well with your magic. Because the flame is bright and conspicuous, one would feel discomfort when the fire spear is dodged and the magic is not dispelled. Moreover, the crackling sound as the flame passes diminishes the effectiveness of a surprise attack."

Speaking thus, Reid slowly approaches Faregh with an unceasing smile, as if eagerly awaiting the next move.

"Damn it... **DAMN IT!!**"

Unable to stop Reid's advance, frustration appeared on Faregh's face.

**"I WAS... I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE STRONGER THAN ANYONE ELSE!!"**

Shouting so, Faregh stabs his short sword into the ground.

**"DON'T... UNDERESTIMATE MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!"**

A scream that resembles more of a roar echoes through the air.

In response to it, a crimson pillar of flames erupts from the ground, ascending to the heavens. The rising pillar of flames takes the shape of spinning threads.

Within that mass of flames, a human figure materializes— a body constituted of blazing crimson flames, adorned with black-colored gauntlets on both arms.

Then, the gigantic figure manifests two fire swords while looking down at Reid.

"Stop him— —<<**Flame Soldier of Destruction**>>!!"

At Faregh's command, the fire giant swings its fire swords at Reid.

It's a high-level magic, reaching the eighth tier, a strike that would likely engulf an ordinary mage in flames. However, it was a strike Reid could easily defend against.

If his strike can blow away Elria's tenth tier magic and shatter Alma's <<**Undead Brigade**>>, then it can even obliterate the fire giant.

Even so, Reid faces the fire giant head-on.

"I'm not underestimating you."

He placed the magic equipment on his waist and extended his right arm, focusing on the fire swords. The huge fire swords were then sent high into the sky with a palm strike from Reid. With that single strike, he knocked away the giant's hand and sent the fire swords flying.

"It's just that— —I do think it's a shame."

With fluid motion, he pulled the magic equipment from his waist and slashed upward at the giant's arm from below, severing it and painting the sky in crimson red.

"Such things, if known, could be handled without consequences."

These are the skills that, in Reid's time, would have been trained from childhood, such as knocking away the opponent's sword by striking the hilt or wrist when it's raised.

With the rise of the technology known as magic, the focus has shifted from interpersonal combat to combat against magical beasts. Knowledge, skills, and experience in close-quarters combat have been downplayed in modern times.

Even if one can wield powerful magic, without proper knowledge, mages themselves cannot effectively engage in close-quarters combat against someone who excels in it.

Therefore— —

"— — Well, a minute has passed."

Facing Faregh, who had exhausted his magic power and was kneeling, Reid pointed his sword at him.

Behind him lay the brutally shattered black armor and the formless mass of flames on the ground.

"How... can you smile like that?"

With his head down, Faregh muttered powerlessly.

"I was supposed to be strong... I had the confidence to silence those who compared me to Caldwen's daughter by showing my strength...!"

However, that confidence had been shattered all too easily.

"And yet... my legs froze, and I couldn't move. Instead of protecting the two, I could only watch them get wounded and flee in disgrace...!"

Thus, Faregh became more keenly aware of his own powerlessness than anyone else. And yet again, he had been defeated by Reid, who hadn't even been serious. However— —

"— — That's why you volunteered to join us, didn't you?"

Reid's question surprised Faregh.

No matter how problematic his personality and reputation were, it seemed unthinkable that no one would be swayed by the great name and power of 'Welminan'.

Faregh himself could have used his family name to join a team forcibly. Even so, he had chosen to join Reid's team of his own volition.

"Even though it was an unforeseen accident, Valk and Lucas are absent from this conditional examination and must face the next comprehensive examination in an imperfect state. That's why you wanted to learn something from Elria and me, to become strong enough to lead those two, right?"

"How...?"

"It's because you're a good-natured person who would think of protecting and escaping with them, rather than abandoning them. Someone like that would likely feel a strong sense of responsibility and think about doing something for their sake, wouldn't they?"

Reid said it with a smile.

From the beginning, he had noticed Faregh's intentions. He understood that it was an act for the sake of others, not selfishness. That was why he thought the role of 'Leader' would be fitting for Faregh.

"Besides, from what I've seen, your sense and thinking don't seem to be bad. With this, if I teach you a little, you can think and develop on your own."

In a familiar motion, Reid wielded his sword— —

"— —If it's you, I believe I can teach you my 'swordsmanship'."

Reid declared it with a confident smile.