

Chapter 1 Part 5



After successfully surviving the entertainment prepared by Princess Chris, Reid and Elria descended to the venue and exchanged greetings with the people attending the party.

"Elria-sama, congratulations on your engagement."

"Mm... Thank you."

While responding to the words of congratulations, Elria hid behind Reid's back as usual. However, she seemed to be more or less acquainted with the people working in the castle, as she was thirty percent more outgoing than usual and without any signs of nervousness.

Those who came to greet her seemed to understand Elria's disposition, so they tried to keep their greetings brief and considerate. However... there was one thing that everyone mentioned when they saw the current Elria.



"Elria-sama has become much more spirited compared to before."

".....Is that so?"

"Yes. Even when Her Royal Highness Princess Chris did something reckless like today, Elria-sama used to remain calm, but today you showed various expressions."

The middle-aged woman spoke with a gentle smile.

"And I heard you mention the names of other people. Are they your classmates?"

"Yes. I've become friends with an interesting girl named Millis and a magic equipment engineer named Wiesel."

"Oh my, I'm glad you've made such wonderful friends."

"Thank you. Both of them are really nice."

Elria nodded slightly while forming a slight smile in response to the smiling woman.

"We should thank Reid-sama for this."

".....Me?"

"Yes. When Elria was a little girl, she didn't interact with anyone other than Princess Chris, and it's thanks to Reid-sama's influence that she now shows various expressions like this."

"No... Elria was already loved by many people. My influence is insignificant compared to the fact that she started to pay attention to those around her."

"Oh my, there's no need to be so modest towards us. Just by observing the harmonious relationship between you two had shown us earlier, everyone can see that it's thanks to Reid-sama."

Upon hearing those words, Reid gave a wry smile, and the woman let out modest laughter.

"Well then... I hope that both of you will be filled with happiness on the path ahead."

While still smiling, the woman bowed her head and quietly retreated from Reid and Elria.

Once the people coming to greet them had stopped, Reid let out a sigh.

"At first, I thought we were being dragged into something strange, but... I didn't expect to be appreciated to this extent."

"Yeah. I'm very happy that Reid is praised by everyone."

"And I also learned that everyone was so worried about you."

".....That was unexpected, too."

In addition to words of congratulations, almost everyone recounted Elria's shy episodes in her childhood years and how they had been concerned about it, expressing their gratitude to Reid for bringing about a change.

In social gatherings, Elria had always hidden behind Alicia, only going outside if forced by Princess Chris, getting startled and falling down just from someone her age calling out to her, running away when a soldier approached her, hiding under the bed when a maid entered the room to help her change clothes, and so on.

Even with her exceptional talent, seeing such aspects of Elria on a daily basis, it was understandable that everyone would be concerned.

"If I think about it, you've grown quite a bit..."

"Yeah. Now I can walk around the academy properly on my own."

"That's right. It's impressive that you can walk properly now..."

Elria was slightly proud of herself, but it was unfortunate that she lacked any credibility as she still clung to Reid's sleeve.

While directing a wry smile at Elria, Princess Chris approached them.

"Both of you, well done."

"We truly appreciate the good opportunity you gave us today. Thank you very much."

"...To think that you would call it a good opportunity even after being tricked into participating unexpectedly, you truly are a good-natured person."

Princess Chris wore a look of disbelief, but quickly changed her expression.

"That said... I understand that you are serious about Elria. And it's clear that Elria trusts you, too."

With that, Princess Chris smiled as if she had let go of something.

"I'm sure I can entrust Elria to you."

She conveyed her words as someone who had watched over Elria as her friend for a long time.

"As a member of the Vegalta royal family, I will be occupied with the responsibilities of uniting the country. I can't just keep chasing after Elria's figure as I have done in the past."

Then, after placing her hand on Reid's shoulder, she handed Reid a magic device with a large lens.

".....What is this?"

"It's a projection magic device."

"I can see that by looking at it."

"With this, you can capture Elria's appearance at the academy and send it all the way to the royal castle."

"I'm sorry, but I can't use my own magic power, or the magic device will break."

"Oh? So, it's not just magic equipment, but magic devices, too?"

"As for the magic devices, I have Elria pour in her magic power, so maybe she can do the same for this projection magic device——"

"I absolutely refuse."

"Mmmph... I was going to ask you to capture Elria's appearance for me..."

Seeing Elria vigorously shaking her head, Princess Chris tossed the projection magic device toward Selvas with a look of regret.

"In that case, it's fine to report on Elria's well-being orally when you come to the royal castle regularly. With the *Elria-love* I have cultivated, I can fill in the gaps with my imagination."

The wording itself made one question whether it was fitting for a princess to say as such, but it was clear what Princess Chris's intention was.

"So, is it basically a means for me to go to the royal castle personally?"

"You're quite perceptive. As someone of commoner origin, there is a possibility of receiving disapproval by other families if you were to go alone, and it wouldn't be feasible to have a member of the Caldwen family accompany you every time, right?"

Even though Reid had joined the Caldwen family as Elria's fiancé, his own position remained weak. Since the Caldwen family had the tradition of a female head, outsiders would unlikely treat him on equal terms as the head, even if he was a spouse. However, the situation would change if he were in the position of— *'Princess's friend'*.

If he entered and exited the royal castle regularly, it would make it known that not only Elria but also Reid had a close relationship with the Princess. That way, even in the social circles attended by the upper echelons of society, they could eliminate those who overtly disparage Reid.

"And in my case, it is well-known that I *'love Elria too much'*, so inviting you to the castle wouldn't raise unnecessary suspicions."

"It seems to be quite well-known to other families if it has reached that point..."

"That just shows how deep my love for Elria is!!"

Proudly proclaiming that, Princess Chris hugged Elria tightly. Again, Elria wore a resigned look, but she didn't seem to dislike it.

"Well, originally, I didn't plan to take care of you both so extensively, but... I was asked to lend a hand to you two."

"...Asked to lend a hand?"

"Yes. Introducing the two of you to that person is one of the purposes of today."

After saying that, Princess Chris led Reid and Elria toward the balcony.

The sky was already dyed with ultramarine color, with stars twinkling and the moon hanging in the sky. However, there was no one on the terrace. The only thing visible from there were the lights of the people living in the royal capital below. But— —Reid had already guessed.

Elria, even towards her own mother Alicia, would cast a fearful gaze, showing a sensitive reaction to others in her childhood. But from what he had heard from others, Princess Chris was the only one who had spent time with Elria during her childhood.

The reason for that was not hard to imagine. Perhaps... Elria sensed the magic power and presence of someone she was familiar with. That was why Elria was able to trust Princess Chris so quickly.

And when they visited the royal castle, Princess Chris embraced Elria using magic. It was a magic that Reid had seen once before on the battlefield.

It was a power that could not only affect oneself but also interfere with the very principle of the world, stepping into the conceptual realm that could not be touched or manipulated, a power truly befitting the name 'Magic'.

As far as Reid could remember, there was only one person who used that magic.

The person who, as an apprentice of the 'Sage', studied magic by Elria's side, faithfully inherited the teachings even after the death of her master, and propagated magic technology to the present day, laying the foundation of magic supremacy a thousand years later—

"—You looked like you were enjoying yourself, Hero of Altein."



The manner of speech was clearly different from that of Princess Chris. That was why Reid responded in the same way as a thousand years ago.

"You don't have to make such a scary face——Little Tiana."

A person who, despite being a member of the royal family, went to the battlefield as an apprentice of the 'Sage', possessing the magic skills she learned from her master and the unique magic inherited from her lineage. Subsequently, she relinquished her right to the throne and took up the family name of the great sage 'Caldwen', establishing the foundation of the present world.

That person was——*Tiana von Vegalta*.

"It seems you were quite handsome when you were young. When we fought, you looked like a huge, withered old tree, so seeing you like this, I can't believe you're the same person."

"Is that so? I was surprised to see the little girl who used to lose to the old man and cried every time, show up here."

"...You're still an irritating man."

Tiana glared at Reid with half-closed eyes and then let out a sigh in the form of Princess Chris.

"Anyway, I didn't use Chris as a means to have a casual chat with you."

"Aren't you reincarnated?"

"Well. From your perspective, I have sent my consciousness through my own magic from the world of the past——about a thousand years ago, and I'm using Chris's body as a vessel for this conversation."

The magic that Tiana was using, Reid called it 'Time Leap'.

It is a magic that transfers one's physical body to another realm called 'time'. Only Tiana could move within this 'time', and others could not interfere with it.

And since it was a concept of 'time' itself, the passage of time, which should be irreversible, did not exist, allowing for infinite thinking time by simply transferring one's consciousness.

The latter part was still speculation on Reid's part, but there were moments when it seemed she could see the future, leading him to be half-convinced. He had vivid memories of how troublesome it was to deal with her.

"I see. To enter 'time', you need to transform the physical body itself using magic and consume magic power according to the amount of movement, but if it's just the consciousness, the consumption can be minimized."

"...It's a complex feeling to see you talking so elaborately about magic."

"Thanks to being reincarnated, I was able to learn magic. And it's quite relieving to finally understand the reason why you would often collapse from '*high fuel consumption*'."

"Please stop calling it 'high fuel consumption'!!!"

Tiana glared at Reid with a threatening look, as if something had struck a nerve.

Tiana's 'Time Leap' was difficult for Reid to deal with. Within the 'time', moving the physical body consumed an excessive amount of magic power. She could only move for about ten seconds, and with each use, her magic power would be depleted, resulting in sluggish movements. If she used it five times, she would collapse.

There were times when she would confront Reid but collapse due to a lack of magic power. Reid witnessed Elria administering magic power recovery potions to Tiana to revitalize her. It was after witnessing this that Reid started teasing her, calling her a 'high fuel consumption girl who gulps down magic power'. However, from the way he observed her just now, he seemed a little concerned about her.

"But even if it's just the consciousness, is it really okay to transfer it a thousand years into the future?"

"Normally, even transferring just the consciousness would consume an enormous amount of magic power, and I would collapse from the exhaustion of magic power while moving within the 'time'."

However, Tiana's expression clouded slightly.

"I'm able to transfer my consciousness because there was a 'hole' that led to this world."

".....A 'hole'?"

"Yes. Thanks to that, I was able to skip the long journey of a thousand years. Not only can I transfer my consciousness to this world for a short time, but with Chris's body, whose magic power wavelength is close to mine, I can also borrow her physical body and move."

"...Could it be that we were the cause of that 'hole'?"

"That's a possibility. The details of the reincarnation magic are unknown, but... considering that both Elria-sama and you were reincarnated in the same era, it's possible that the 'hole' had some influence or that the destination of the reincarnation was designated for a thousand years later."

Two people who lived a thousand years ago reunite in the world a thousand years later. In a sense, it could be considered a coincidence, but there was one thing that was certain.

"In other words—there are others besides you who can move within 'time'?"

That 'hole' had likely existed even before Reid and Elria were reincarnated. If the reason for both of them being reincarnated in the same era were due to the 'hole', it would mean that the 'hole' had already existed before the activation of the reincarnation magic. Alternatively, a third party might have intentionally created the 'hole'.

Either way, it meant that they were reincarnated due to the intentions of a third party.

"At the very least, considering that travel was possible within the 'time' through the existing 'hole'... it means that someone, whether through reincarnation or time leaps, had existed a thousand years ago as well."

"Is it possible for you to create a 'hole' like that?"

"No, I cannot. The 'time' realm is highly complex, and while I can enter it using magic, interfering with the realm itself and leaping to desired times should be impossible."

Tiana asserted so.

Even the supposed impossibility is made possible by a third party. Then—a thousand years ago, they performed a time leap and carried out the reincarnation of Reid and Elria. However, the purpose behind it is unknown. If they can perform such extraordinary feats, there should have been no need to reincarnate Reid and Elria.

"Elria, if you've come up with anything as well—"

As his thoughts were in a deadlock, he turned his gaze to Elria, who was by his side, hoping to seek her help—but there, Elria was tilting her head with a puzzled expression.

"Is Chris... actually Tiana...?"

Vaguely murmuring only that much, Elria's eyes were spinning around. Above her head, many question marks seemed to be floating, as if saying, "???"

Seeing Elria in such a state, Reid looked at Tiana with a puzzled expression.

"...Hey, Little Tiana, haven't you told Elria about this?"

"Um, no... I can only come here for about ten minutes, and since I don't know who is involved, I've only explained the bare minimum to Chris. Also, as Elria-sama mentioned, I've been investigating whether Reid Frieden has also been reincarnated..."

Tiana explains while her gaze wanders, but there is something off about her demeanor.

Observing her behavior, Elria, who is convinced that it was Tiana herself, narrows her eyes quietly.

"Could it be that every time Chris hugged me, it was actually..."

"P-Please wait a minute! Most of the time, it really is Chris herself!! I occasionally asked her to switch with me to enjoy the company of a younger and adorable Elria-sama or to confirm how comforting you feel in my arms, that's all!!"

"And when we had sleepovers, I remember Chris dressing me up in various outfits."

"That's also not what it seems! I just recommended outfits that would suit Elria-sama to Chris, and later, I would see the pictures taken with the projection magic device...!!"

"And even Chris's manner of speech...?"

"That's really irrelevant!!"

Tiana becomes visibly flustered and starts confessing one thing after another.

Reid was once an enemy a thousand years ago, so he does not know much about their relationship. However, he can say this with confidence. Chris and Tiana not only had close lineage and magic power, but also shared the same feelings for Elria.

"Tiana, you're in for a lecture."

"Sure, I'm happy to!!"

".....Don't be happy about getting a lecture."

"But it's only natural to be happy about it!"

With a smile on her face, Tiana responds.

"Because... I can talk to Elria-sama again..."

Tears overflow from her eyes, streaming down her pale cheeks.

In the world where Tiana existed, Elria had already passed away. They are never able to speak to each other again.

"After the passing of Elria-sama... driven by the sense of loss, I was yearning to catch even a glimpse of your figure and searched for a way to leap into the past using my magic."

With that desperate desire to seek traces of Elria, Tiana managed to discover the existence of the 'hole'. And in the world of 'time', she found the 'hole' and encountered a young girl.

"Seeing a child who resembled Elria-sama... I decided to follow in the footsteps of the Sage, in order to realize that future. I joined forces with the remnants of the Altein Army, which had crumbled after losing its Hero, and together, we destroyed the Altein Empire. Now, I am striving to spread the magic technology created by Elria-sama."

Undoubtedly, this was partly due to her trust in her master.

By believing in the great 'Sage', even if it was through a transcendent method like 'reincarnation', it might be possible that she is living in the future.

Believing in that possibility, Tiana exerted herself to realize the world where her beloved master is alive.

"I really wanted to talk to you right away...! Like in the time when Elria-sama was alive ten years ago, I wanted you to call my name and smile at me...!!"

Surely, Tiana would have wanted to speak and confirm things immediately. However, upon learning that someone far surpassing her own skills had been performing 'Time Leap' and suspecting that Elria's death and reincarnation were intentional, she hid her true identity and remained concealed until she could confirm that Reid had also been reincarnated. Nevertheless, she continued to watch over her beloved master through Chris.

"That's why——"

"I know."

With just a short response, Elria hugs the sobbing Tiana.

"Thank you for working so hard for my sake—Tiana."

In a gesture of appreciation for her apprentice's devoted efforts for her master, Elria gently strokes her head.

"Tiana, you've worked really hard."

"Yes... Yes...!"

"If it has been ten years since my death, you must have grown into a wonderful young lady by now."

"I've already surpassed Elria-sama's height..."

"In that case, I'm sure you've become a very beautiful woman."

"Yes... I can't help but feel disappointed that I can't show it to Elria-sama..."

As they hold each other, they exchange trivial words to fill the time they lost. And then... with red and swollen eyes, Tiana slowly pulls away.

"I'm sorry... but it's time for me to return there."

"Alright. When can we meet again?"

"If I gulp down a lot of magic power recovery potions, I'll be fine even tomorrow..."

"That's surprisingly fast."

"However, I need to borrow Chris's body to have a conversation... So, I'll ask her about her schedule first, and then we can have a proper meeting to decide on the date..."

"You can even do that?"

"Yes... Perhaps because our magic power wavelengths are similar, conversing doesn't consume much magic power."

Perhaps feeling calm after Elria stroked her head, Tiana sniffs softly.

Ideally, Reid would have liked to end the conversation between master and apprentice there. However— he has something that he needs to ask Tiana.

"Tiana, before you go back, let me ask you one thing."

The information that was originally thought to be lost and given up on, Tiana would be able to answer that.

"Why— —did Elria lose her life?"

In response to Reid's question, Tiana wiped her eyes and looked up. However... her expression was indescribably complex.

"I can't give a clear answer to that."

"...What do you mean?"

"I can tell you the cause of Elria-sama's death, but I don't know how it happened or whether it was the act of a third party."

Tiana prefaced her answer and then talked about Elria's death.

"Elria-sama was found in her laboratory, which she also used as her private room. It was heavily guarded with soldiers and various magic devices, as it housed confidential information such as magic research materials and techniques. However... there were no signs of a struggle inside the room, and there was no indication that any research results had been stolen. Elria-sama was lying in the center of the room as if she were sleeping."

Recalling the scene from that time, Tiana's words falter for a moment— —

"And— —Elria-sama had completely lost all her magic power when she passed away."

That was the truth about Elria's death, as revealed by Tiana.