

D. Extraction 101

Chapter 101 Duel (2)

Vale has indeed brought the amulet with him since he believes that this guy would also bring his own Mystical Artifacts.

After all, he still came from a prestigious clan.

He even has the money to splurge by offering the Spell Scroll to him if he won this duel. With this in mind, Vale believes that Wilfred also has some mystical artifacts that could protect his life.

Of course, there was no way Vale would simply agree to his demand.

"If I remove Protector Amulet, shouldn't you also remove one of your Mystical Artifacts?" Vale said as he pulled out the wooden amulet from his inner pocket.

He didn't have to use his Phantasm State to tell that Wilfred was also carrying some Mystical Artifacts.

"Hmph! Very well."

Wilfred sneered as he removed his necklace and threw it beside his friend outside the dueling platform.

Vale didn't know what kind of Mystical Artifact was that but he can tell that it possess a certain level of spiritual energy stored in it.

He then looked behind him to find someone who can hold the amulet for him. He first saw Leonore at the side. However, if he threw it to Leonore to keep it safe for a while, the misunderstanding would just go deeper and he wouldn't be able to explain himself no matter what he do.

In the end, he shifted his gaze and found Chad's group...

However, as he was about to toss it to Chad, Vale hesitated...

'If I gave this to Leonore, Wilfred will probably become angry. If I can make him act on impulse because of this, it might be worth the shot.' Vale mused.

Although he's confident in winning against this person, it wouldn't hurt if he tries to be more careful and add a layer of tactics... psychological warfare!

With this in mind, Vale signaled to Leonore to catch the Protector Amulet that he received from Professor Charlotte.

This action obviously attracted everyone's attention.

After all, the amulet that he was carrying wasn't just handed over to some random classmates but it was Leonore Roland who should be involved in the love triangle they were imagining!

'Why did this guy—' Leonore was also surprised as she caught the heavy amulet that Vale had suddenly tossed.

As she was trying to think of Vale's purpose in doing this, the people around him already started a heated discussion.

"Ahh! Isn't this a confirmation?!"

"Indeed... So it was like that. It was Wilfred who was trying to break them apart."

"I heard that Vale is only from a poor noble family... Maybe it's because of that reason—"

"Yes... He probably thought that Vale didn't deserve Leonore Roland."

"This... What a tragic story... Although he's the one Leonore truly loves, he still has to fight the young master of the Moontomb Family."

"..."

Vale felt that the reaction of the students was too much but seeing Wilfred's red face like it was about to explode, he knows that his plan was effective.

As long as Wilfred acts rashly, he could enact his plan and kill this person as the Headmaster instructed.

'It's not like you'll really die... Your soul will be collected by Headmaster and you still have a chance to live... but maybe as a ghost or evil spirit.' Vale thought as he looked at Grover, the referee of this match and his senior in the club.

Grover then looked at the two sides before speaking with a loud voice.

"Since this is your first duel, I will explain a few things. As you know, there are some rules in this duel. Although a few of them are essentially decided by both sides, you still have to adhere to the Academy Rules. One of the most important things is that you can't enter your Phantasm State before the battle begins!"

"We understand." Vale and Wilfred answered at the same time.

"Good... Since you know that, you simply have to remember that I will be intervening if I found any form of cheating during this match which will result in your disqualification. If you admit defeat or surrender to your opponent, you will lose this duel. Lastly, if your life is in danger, I will do my best to save you. However, we are all Dark Arts Practitioners and all of our Dark Spell can be ruthless at times... If I can't save you in time, you can only blame yourself for choosing an opponent you can't handle."

As Grover said this, he confirmed that there are no changes in the reaction of both Vale and Wilfred. They were obviously aware of this rule already.

Grover then looked at the Corner Judges and confirmed that they were all ready.

Since Wilfred has brought many supporters who are also in the higher years, thanks to his influence as a young master of the Moontomb Clan, Grover has to rely on these Corner Judges to ensure that they won't secretly intervene in this match.

After taking a deep breath, Grover entered his Phantasm State and confirmed that no one has entered their own Phantasm State as of yet.

"If you are both ready... You can now... begin!"

As soon as Grover said this, the two instantly entered the special state as they released their Dark Spells almost at the same time.

Vale has summoned three Ghost Hands...

They were already in the Advanced Realm and even in Grover's case, this is the first time he had seen a Ghost Hand that reached this level.

'So it looks like this... It's unfortunate he didn't learn the Spectral Hands or Spirit Hands but learned this support-type Dark Spell instead... What a pity.' Grover commented in his mind as he knows that Ghost Hands weren't really meant for battle.

If Vale has an Advanced Realm Spectral Hands instead, perhaps, Wilfred wouldn't think of dueling against Vale.

On the other hand, Wilfred only has a late-stage Elementary Realm Spectral Hand but with the combination of his Fear Stream, this Spectral Hand would deal a massive blow on Vale if it landed on him first!

Chapter 102 Duel (3)

Thanks to the seniors of the Battle Arena Committee, Vale learned plenty of things about the Fear Stream and Spectral Hands.

After all, these students were the ones always officiating the duels in the arena and had seen plenty of battles.

According to them, the Spectral Hand mostly relies upon its speed to suppress or even kill its targets.

Furthermore, depending on the caster, this Spectral Hand can be extremely hot which could burn a person, or extremely cold which can freeze the target.

Of course, it can only be done if the caster's mastery of the spell is already at a higher level...

As soon as Vale saw Wilfred's lone Spectral Hand, he can already tell that it was using a burning aura that may scorch him if it gets closer.

Furthermore, it was followed by a wave of energy and Vale guessed that it was the Fear Stream that could make him an idiot if he was hit.

'We're separated by about 15 meters... He didn't even bother moving forward. So it was a lie when Zeno mentioned that he should only have about 9 meters?' Vale thought for a moment before erasing this idea.

Instead of that, he felt that Wilfred was using another Artifact that increases his Magic Zone!

Although he has no idea what type of Mystical Artifact it was, he believes that Wilfred is capable to procure this type of mystical item with his family supporting him in the background.

Thump!

Vale jumped sideways as he controlled the two Ghost Hands to stop the Spectral Hand.

A blast of energy exploded as Vale detonated the two Ghost Hands as soon as they caught Wilfred's Spectral Hands!

The last Ghost Hand directly went to Wilfred's spot who should be defenseless at this moment.

"What a decisive move! You can even detonate your Ghost Hands! As expected of the Advanced Realm! Your control is on another level!" Wilfred spoke as if he has everything under his control.

He actually praised Vale instead of feeling dismayed!

Nevertheless, Vale can tell that Wilfred is only acting tough!

The last Ghost Hand arrived and was about to grab Wilfred's head. Unfortunately, Vale was "caught" by the Fear Stream and the Ghost Hand suddenly turned illusory to the point that it was dissipating.

"Haha! Do you think my Fear Stream can be blocked by mere defensive spells or even our Academy's uniform? You even think of running away... What a fool!" Wilfred was so excited after seeing Vale get hit by the Fear Stream.

Normally, their Academy's uniform can block the lowest level of dark spells and provide a bit of resistance to many types of spells outside their Arcane Path.

With this knowledge, Wilfred knows that Vale would wear his uniform to weaken the effect of his Fear Stream...

However, with the Mystical Ring Artifact he had worn on his finger, the effect of his Fear Stream would be unimaginable for a 13 or 14-year-old kid!

Wilfred doesn't even care about the Ghost Hand that was aimed at him!

After all, he still has another Artifact that can easily cancel the Ghost Hand.

What he was really afraid of is that Vale could summon another defensive spell that could stop his Fear Stream! Luckily, Vale wasn't prepared enough!

Seeing that Vale was successfully hit by the Fear Stream, Wilfred resummoned his Spectral Hand. As long as the Spell Light in his body is still filled with Darkness Energy, he can easily summon another Spectral Hand to do his bidding...

As soon as his Spectral Hand reached Vale's position, he suddenly realized that the Ghost Hand which was supposedly dissipating because of the effect of Fear Stream, suddenly became vivid in front of him as it blocked his vision!

"Hmph! Your tricks won't work on me... I still have—"

As Wilfred believed that his other Mystical Artifact would defend his body, he realized that the Ghost Hand managed to grab his head without any form of resistance!

Thud!

'What's going on?'

Wilfred couldn't understand how the dissipating Ghost Hand that shouldn't possess any more threat suddenly turn active again and was even able to grab his head!

He also couldn't believe that his other Artifact did not activate to protect himself! Something is not right!

He had tested it before the duel began so he was sure that it could stop Vale's Dark Spell!

'Not good... Wilfred's defenseless.' Grover realized that Vale's control over his Ghost Hands was already on the expert level.

He was also tricked by the dissipating Ghost Hand just now!

As he was about to stop the battle and use his Dark Spell to freeze the Ghost Hand, Wilfred suddenly collapsed to the ground as the Ghost Hand dissipated for good. At the same time, Vale also knelt on the floor as he confirmed that Wilfred was killed just like that.

Furthermore, the Ring Artifact that the Headmaster gave him almost lit up so he had no choice but to cover his hands by kneeling on the floor.

The spectators may not recognize it but he didn't want to take a chance.

In Grover's periphery vision, he only noticed that Vale was also hit by Wilfred's Spectral Hand... This Hand was able to dodge the resummoned Ghost Hands and struck Vale in his stomach.

He simply thought that Vale was injured.

Thud. Thud. Thud.

The three Corner Judges immediately went to check Wilfred's condition. His sudden collapse was incredibly suspicious.

The Ghost Hand didn't even put enough pressure to press on his head!

However, for some reason, Wilfred's body collapsed like it was a puppet whose strings have been cut.

"T-this... Wilfred is not breathing!"

"Give him the Life Pill!"

"Not good... It may not be enough. I'll get the Darkness Soul Potion."

As soon as they heard the Corner Judges' panicked voices, the spectators of the duel felt a chill on their bodies...

Vale seems to have killed the young master of the Moontomb Family!

'This is bad...' Leonore already stood up as she looked at Vale filled with worry.

She can't even think of celebrating his win since Vale had just offended a powerful family of the Dark Arts Faction!

Chapter 103 Result

"Unbelievable... The Chambers kid killed someone from the Moontomb. Is he not afraid of death?"

"Even if he's not... He still has families outside the Academy. What is he thinking?"

"It's an accident. I'm sure that the Moontomb Family will not take revenge on him. The battle was fair and square."

"That's right... There's no one to blame. If you really want to find someone to blame, you should blame Academy for allowing such a dangerous duel."

"Ha! As if they would care if it's fair and square."

The spectators who knows the Moontomb Family reacted differently. However, one thing is certain, Vale Chambers is going to be marked by this powerful family.

His future in the Academy may not be as bright as before as they decided not to get close to him until they learned what the Moontomb Family plans for him.

"Is he dead?"

On the stage, an eight-year student who is also a member of the Rankers Club asked coldly to the three Corner Judges and some officials of the Battle Arena Committee on the platform.

He isn't too far from them so the officials heard his voice clearly.

They have already used almost everything in their means to try and save Wilfred. Unfortunately, they can only give up and proclaim his death.

"Yes." Nadine solemnly answered as he looked at the person who had asked.

It was the Vice-President of the Rankers Club and also Ranked 30 in the Elite Rankings of the Academy beating many ninth-year and tenth-year students.

He is Cornelio Moontomb and Wilfred's cousin.

Nadine looked at the man cautiously in case he would try to suddenly attack Vale to exact vengeance.

Luckily, this man seem to be capable of controlling his emotion as he simply stared at the "weakened" Vale who was still kneeling on the platform.

Cornelio then shifted his gaze back to Nadine and spoke calmly.

"Don't worry. I'm not going to deal with him right now. Regarding the Spell Scroll that Wilfred promised, tell Vale that he can't acquire that since it's our family's property. Wilfred doesn't have the right to give it to him."

Nadine didn't think too much of it as she could understand why the Moontomb wouldn't want to give that Spell Scroll.

She nodded and answered. "I will tell him about it."

"Mhmm... In case he still wanted the Spell Scroll, I will first ask our family to gain approval and we will be issuing another duel. At that time, we'll give him more rewards if he still managed to win."

With that said, Cornelio looked at Wilfred's corpse before shaking his head.

As soon as he left, Nadine finally relaxed as she looked at Vale worriedly.

'As expected, they won't let this go so easily...' Nadine sighed as she felt that the student she recruited was really quite special.

Now that Vale had offended the Moontomb Family, it would be difficult for him to stay in the academy unless he also has a strong backer.

"Let's check on Vale's condition... Don't think too much about the Moontomb family. I'm sure he can do something about it." Chad spoke after seeing that Vale was already taken away by the officials. They seem to be bringing him to a doctor.

Chad also noticed that Aubrey, Blair, and the others were still shocked at the sudden death of the Moontomb's young master so he had to remind them of what they should be doing now.

"Right... Let's meet him first." Aubrey replied in agreement as they immediately followed Vale to the infirmary.

She may not be expecting Wilfred's death, but she still knows that Vale would win this duel. They should still congratulate him for his victory.

As for the effect of this victory, that can wait until after their celebration...

Their group swiftly left the arena as they saw Wilfred's classmates and friends mourning his untimely death.

As they were walking, they heard a few seniors whispering about Wilfred's condition.

"I saw the Assistant of the Gold Necromancer just now. It seems that Wilfred still has a chance to live. However, it's no longer as a human being."

"Ugh... That's true. They just need to request the help of that prestigious Necromancer in the Academy."

"Yes... Even if they don't like that method of the Necromancer. The Rituals Branch can also do something about his Spirit. Who knows, Wilfred might like it living as a Spirit instead of an undead."

"Let's just wait and see what will happen."

Aubrey and Chad looked at each other after hearing this... None of them spoke but they certainly took note of what they said.

They were planning to let Vale know about this.

As soon as they arrived at the infirmary, they were surprised to see the Headmaster coming out of Vale's room!

"..."

Their group was stunned since none of them expected to see this mysterious and powerful Headmaster of the Academy!

Headmaster Jean, on the other hand, smiled at them as he carefully hides the Ring Artifact in his hands.

"Your friend is already waiting for you. You can come inside." The Headmaster said with a gentle tone.

"Y-yes, Headmaster. Thank you." Aubrey slightly bowed as she was uncomfortable staring at the vague feature of this man.

"Ahem... Is he not in good condition, Headmaster Jean? Is it alright to visit him now?" Chad asked cautiously.

He felt that since the Headmaster even went to check Vale's condition, then Vale must've been in a bad condition that needed his immediate attention.

"He's alright now..." Headmaster Jean replied before he dissipated like a cloud of smoke leaving the group of students stunned.

After a few moments, Chad whispered...

"That looks cool... I wonder what spell was that?"

"That's probably a movement spell. We'll learn it in our third year or fourth year." Aubrey answered.

Lisa, who was silent up until now, also looked interested in that movement spell. Since she doesn't have any Spell Models yet, she was always looking out for a decent one.

Chapter 104 Infirmary

Vale sighed after seeing the Headmaster leave.

Just now, Headmaster Jean showed him Wilfred's spirit inside the ring... The spirit seems to be sleeping and unaware that its body was already gone.

It looks quite pitiful but knowing that this guy doesn't deserve to live, Vale didn't ask what the Headmaster was about to do with him.

Headmaster Jean has already informed him before that the Moontomb Family was actively using poor people or beggars in some large cities to conduct inhumane experiments.

According to the Headmaster, killing Wilfred today may save plenty of innocent lives in the future.

Vale has many questions about this but he was already too tired to ask more questions.

'It's a pity he took back the ring...' Vale sighed as he felt that it was really a good item.

The ring was actually considered a cheat item but because the Referees and the Corner Judges were only students, they weren't able to notice anything wrong about it.

What Vale likes about it is that it has a very direct requirement to take the soul of its target.

The target must no longer possess a functioning brain to store its Spirit!

That was why during his duel, his Ghost Hand didn't attack Wilfred's external body. Instead, the Ghost Hand bypassed Wilfred's skin, flesh, and skull to destroy his brain!

This is Vale's strongest possible assassination technique with the combination of his Spell Dispersion.

If he doesn't have the Spell Dispersion activated beforehand, there was no way Wilfred would be so helpless.

'However, why was the ring so energy-consuming? I was almost drained after using it once. That was so dangerous...' Vale could only complain in his mind.

Knock... Knock...

Vale looked at the door and gave the permission to come in.

Soon, he found his classmates who were worried about his condition.

"Hey! You really surprised all of us..." Aubrey spoke excitedly as she saw Vale looking fine on his bed.

"Indeed... I didn't know that your Defensive Spell would work so well. I think that you didn't even get hurt from the Fear Stream and Spectral Hands." Chad added in agreement.

He was still unsure about Vale's second Spell Model but it's definitely a rare defensive-type spell. If not, Chad couldn't imagine how Vale could defend against the Fear Stream and Spectral Hands so easily.

"I was lucky... It's a good thing that Wilfred decided to stay still. If he kept moving, my Ghost Hand and my other spell may not work well." Vale answered as he tried to hint to them that his spell isn't that invincible.

"That was still so satisfying... Should I just learn the Ghost Hand as well? I hope that you can show me some tricks to quickly master it." Lisa joined in the conversation as she's already considering the Ghost Hand as a must-have ability!

After she managed to enter the Phantasm State, she actually noticed that she has four spell lights. Each light represents a space to place her Spell Model.

Currently, she's allowed to learn any two Dark Spells she can record. The Ghost Hand is certainly a part of it.

"Ohh... That's good. What about your second spell, do you already have one in mind?" Aubrey asked curiously. It seems that she has a suggestion to make.

"Err... I'm thinking of learning the Active Curse Break. Its requirement is having an 8 Spirit Strand so I'm allowed to learn it." Lisa answered after some hesitation.

Everyone was quite surprised after hearing this. Even Vale, who was leaning on the headboard of the bed, looked at Lisa with interest.

"Why did you choose it?" Vale asked.

"Are you going to be a specialized Spellcaster? Anti-Curse Specialist?" Aubrey asked while looking at Lisa with furrowed brows. She couldn't understand why Lisa would take an interest in this type of almost useless spell.

Although Active Curse Break is a good spell to break curses, there are still Mystical Artifacts that can do the same thing. Although these artifacts are rare, they can still be purchased if you have enough money.

Lisa immediately shook her head after hearing Aubrey's question.

"I'm not planning to be a specialist. I just need to earn some money. Breaking Curses can earn me quite a lot of money outside the Academy. So even if I get expelled or for some reason, I can no longer stay in the academy, I can still earn some money."

"..."

The group was speechless about this reason. They didn't expect that Lisa was actually troubled by money.

Seeing their deadpan expression, Lisa tried to explain.

"Ahem... Did you know that most businessmen, store owners, or even politicians suffer from various curses every now and then? If I'm not mistaken, their competitors would hire rouge Dark Arts Practitioners to curse them. That's not easy to block since not all of them have a connection with the black market where Mystical Artifacts are sold. In those cases, they were seeking help from some other practitioners that can help them break those curses. Most of them would come from Holy Arts Faction but getting their help through official channels is extremely hard..."

Furthermore---

Lisa shut her mouth after realizing that she seems trying a little too hard to explain herself.

"Ugh... Anyway, it's for my security. Financial security."

She finally said hinting that she didn't want to talk about it.

"We understand. Active Curse Break isn't too bad as well. In case we're cursed, we'll come for your help and we'll pay you accordingly." Chad immediately replied as he plans to help Lisa earn some money.

Vale then looked at Chad suspiciously.

'He's not thinking of getting himself cursed so he can ask Lisa to break it for him, right? Even if you like her, isn't that a bit too much?' Vale thought.

At this moment, there was a sudden knock on the door interrupting their conversation...

This time, Leonore's group has arrived. She had brought Vale's amulet and was also worried about his condition.

Soon, they were all chatting happily in Vale's room as they planned to celebrate later at dinner.

However, after Chad reminded Vale about Cornelio's statement, Vale couldn't help but sigh as he also felt troubled about this.

Nadine already mentioned this to him but in the end, he can only rely on the Headmaster since he's the one who instructed him to kill Wilfred.

Chapter 105 Second Week

On the next day, Vale felt so uncomfortable since his action of killing a fellow student attracted plenty of notoriety.

Most of the students he passed by were looking at him warily, a few of them were looking at him with hostile gazes, and some of them looks at him with pity. In the meantime, his close friends didn't change at all and treated him the same way as before.

"Vale... It's a pity that you didn't get the spell scroll. Don't worry, I heard that Senior Cornelio will arrange another duel for you. He said that if you win this time, you'll get not only the Spell Scroll but another treasure of similar level... or maybe even higher."

Neil said as he saw Vale entering the classroom.

No one knows for sure whether he was sincere about this or was actually making fun of him.

This prompted Aubrey to react as she felt infuriated about this result.

"That cheater... He should've given that Spell Scroll already. Vale obviously won and he deserves to get it. Why did the Arena Committee not take charge of the bet?" Aubrey spoke roughly.

Vale helplessly smiled as he explained the rules set by the Academy. As a member of the Battle Arena Committee, he needed to learn these rules so he had studied them in the last couple of days.

"Since the duel between the two of us is not an event set up by the Academy, they're not allowed to take care of the "prize" or bet before the fight. It is settled between the two parties after the duel."

"That's stupid..." Aubrey commented.

"Y-yeah... We should've asked a third party to handle the reward before the duel." Vale answered helplessly.

He's the one who was the most disappointed about this result. After all, the reward that he got from the Headmaster was simply an additional favor!

Previously, the Headmaster informed him that he has one favor he can use to get an opportunity from him.

He didn't use it yet so now that he completed a task given by the Headmaster, the latter simply added one more favor instead of giving him tangible benefits.

It may sound awesome but currently, he doesn't really know how to use this opportunity.

He can only think that these two chances will help him greatly in the future.

Vale then shifted his gaze to Neil.

"Do you want us to have a duel instead? As long as you can give me a decent reward, I may not wait for Cornelio and we can do it later."

Neil, who was still sneering just now, suddenly shut his mouth and didn't reply to Vale's provocation.

Soon, Professor Stella Harwin arrived to start the Oardic and Soineti Class.

"Before we start, I hope that everyone has already joined a club... The recruitment week was over and there were no longer any recruiters in the Assembly Hall."

"Yes, Professor. All of us have joined a club." Chad said as he already asked everyone about the clubs they'd joined.

"That's great. I need to record it so when I call your names you have to tell us the club you've joined."

With that said, Professor Harwin started calling their names.

Vale was also quite interested in the clubs his Classmates had joined so he listened attentively.

Blair Etton joined the Variant Research Club.

Leonore Roland joined the Fortune Telling Club.

Dalton Stranway joined the Music Club.

Neil Sommerhalder joined the Survivors Club.

Lisa Grayback joined the Library Committee.

Chad Bulmung joined the Spirit Crafters Club together with Warren Lawstein.

The others joined some normal clubs as well, like the Tea Appreciation Club, Cooking Club, and others.

Perhaps the most interesting club that his classmate joined was the Potion Research Club.

Alvin Vendel who only has 5 Spirit Strands actually passed the necessary requirements to join this special club.

Even Professor Harwin looked at Alvin deeply after recording the club he was able to join.

"Very well... I won't be asking you why did you choose the club you've joined but I'm telling you that whatever club it is, there is definitely an opportunity to learn something new in these clubs so I hope that you take them seriously."

As she said this, she looked at Dalton Stranway who had joined the Music Club. Although this club looks simple and only for the purpose of entertainment, she knew very well that the things that can be learned within this club could be very useful to Dark Arts Practitioners who are thinking of specializing in Rituals and Ceremony.

After this small event, the class continued as they started learning how to read Oardic bit by bit...

Right now, Vale can already tell that Professor Stella Harwin wanted to teach them 20 new Oardic words every class. The number may seem low but these words can be extremely crucial during many rituals or prayers. If a single mistake was made, it could have a negative impact on their physical and spiritual body.

Time quickly passed and all the classes for the day were finally over.

Vale and his group of friends went to lunch together before they separated and went to visit the club they'd decided to join.

Today, Vale would know if there is another student that was recruited aside from him.

As soon as he arrived at the clubroom, he realized that there are over a dozen of people inside.

This is the first time he had seen this place to be filled with many people.

"Good afternoon, Seniors." Vale greeted as soon as he calmed his mind.

"Vale! It's good to see you. Now, all the first years are here." Nadine said as she looked at Vale and the two other students who had also arrived just a couple of minutes earlier than Vale.

They both have black hair and deep-brown eyes making them look really familiar to Vale but he wasn't sure where he had seen their faces.

'Are they twins?' Vale couldn't help but comment in his mind after seeing the two first-year students.

Both of them looked attractive. The male one was handsome and had some air of superiority around him while the dimpled-face female looked innocent and fresh.

Seeing that Vale was observing them, the two decided to introduce themselves.

"I'm Priscilla Hoffman."

"Philip Hoffman. Nice meeting you, Vale..."

Chapter 106 Club Meeting

'Hoffman?' Vale repeated in his mind.

He only knows one Hoffman and that is the creepy Headmaster who took his shadow without permission!

Looking at the confusion on his face, Priscilla chuckled as she immediately explained. "We're related to the headmaster but it's not what you think."

This confused Vale even more but since they just met each other, he can't simply interrogate the two about their relationship with the Headmaster.

"I understand... I just thought that he had a daughter... and a son." Vale said as he gently nodded to Philip.

"Alright, that's it for the introduction. The next scheduled use for the arena would be on this weekend. The three of you will work together in the Third Arena and it would be our Club President himself who will be managing this important duel so it's a great opportunity for all of you."

Nadine said as she gestured to the man who was seated at the center of the round table.

Vale's eyes lit up after hearing this. He actually didn't know the Club President and he only knows that he's currently a 10th-year student according to Nadine.

As for the Vice-President, Nadine previously mentioned him. He was Elmer Vermont and an 8th-Year student in the Academy. Elmer should be the one managing most of the matters in the club since the President would be graduating already.

The only time the President would get involved is during some important events that the club has to deal with.

'So he's the president...'

Vale then looked at the club president who seemed quite small... As a tenth-year student, he should be about 23 or 24 years old but his appearance was unusual.

His height was similar to him and furthermore, he doesn't look intimidating as he had expected.

He seemed more like a freshman student than Vale!

Vale initially thought that the club president would look tough and strong but he was extremely wrong.

"President Noah Featherstar. I've heard a lot of things about you. It's a great honor to finally meet you." Philip spoke as he immediately complimented that president.

"Oh? Have you heard something about me? I wonder what those rumors are..." The blond Club President spoke with interest.

"I heard that during your mission last academic year, you captured a dozen of Holy Arts Practitioners that were messing with the Dark Alchemy Branch in Remington. That was really impressive." Philip replied in excitement.

These words shocked Vale for a moment since this implies a few things.

The war between the Dark Arts Faction and the Holy Arts Faction seems to have only ended in papers but it's not in reality!

Although Vale already has these thoughts after seeing the attack in the dockyard last year, he still thought that it was only a special event that wouldn't be repeated anymore.

'If the war is still ongoing secretly, then it's definitely a high-level one considering the public seems to be unaware of it.' Vale sighed inwardly as he now believes that this academy must be the safest place right now.

The only probably is when he became a ninth-year or maybe even eighth-year student where he has to do an outside mission. He can only hope that the war between the two factions was already over at that time.

"Haha... So you've also heard about it... I was simply too strong for them. If you managed to pass the third year and had to choose a branch for your fourth year, I suggest that you guys choose the Essential Corruption Branch... This branch is the future of the Dark Arts. Not the Necromancy, Dark Alchemy, Dark Magic, and other branches..."

Nadine frowned at these words so she swiftly interrupted.

"Ahem... It will still depend on your skills and talent. I suggest that you take the recommendation made by your professor in your third year. They will make a proper assessment of you based on your performance over the past three years."

After saying this, Nadine led the conversation so they only talk about the matters regarding the club.

Since they were about to receive a fund from the Academy, they discussed how it will be spent to ensure that the three Battle Arenas weren't just properly maintained but also for them to be properly rewarded for their efforts.

During this time, Vale learned plenty of things about how the club is being run and how they have to coordinate with other clubs to ensure that the Arena would have a scheduled event every week.

After this discussion, Vale also heard the Club President recommend him as a Referee.

"Cough... Cough... Pres, I'm only a first-year student. I can't do that yet. I'll just be a petty officer for now."

"Petty officer? Haha... I like the sound of that... However, I heard that you have 25 Spirit Strands, right? Furthermore, I watched your battle against Wilfred. I think that you're really fitted as a referee, don't you think so?"

Vale froze as soon as he heard the President's words.

'My Spell Dispersion is indeed suited for that... However, how did the president learn about it?' Vale was stunned as he looked at the President carefully.

After a few moments, he erased that idea. Most likely, this person is only sounding him out.

In the meantime, Nadine was actually shocked after hearing the president's words.

"Ahhh... Wait, you have 25 Spirit Strands as a first-year? I thought you only have ten..."

Vale wryly smiled after hearing this.

"Secretary Nadine, I think that the Spirit Converging Crystal that you used to test me can only accommodate ten Spirit Strands... You just assumed that it's my limit as well." Vale reminded the dumb senior.

At this point, the other members suppressed their chuckles as they found it funny that Nadine didn't properly check Vale's Spirit Strands.

In the meantime, Priscilla turned to Vale with excitement.

Her eyes were showing admiration and eagerness as she looked at him.

"So you're the rumored 25-Strand student... You had a better score than Maya... I heard that she already wrote a letter to her family so she can receive the Spirit Amplification Potion. She probably didn't like how you exceeded her."

Chapter 107 Failure

"Ugh... I hope she won't think of me as an enemy." Vale replied as he knows that Maya is more dangerous than Wilfred.

After all, Maya seems to have a deep connection with the Order of the Evanescent Vessels. Furthermore, she wouldn't be the student representative if she was weak.

"Haha... There's no one thinking of causing trouble for you except those from the Moontomb Family. You're capable of ruthlessly killing your own schoolmate after all. Perhaps, aside from you, no one else in the First Year students had tried killing someone. There was no way they would mess on you." President Noah Featherstar said with a chuckle.

This time, Vale couldn't reply since what he said seemed to be true. Nevertheless, Vale still asked him about his relationship with Maya. They have the same surname after all.

Then, Noah's answer shocked Vale for a moment.

"She'll be my sister-in-law in the future... I'm courting her sister and I can already see my future with her... Soon..." Noah replied with a longing face.

Vale was stunned as he thought that they were relative already... He thought that Maya was his little sister or cousin!

'Is it just a coincidence that they have the same last name?' Vale thought but an idea popped up in his mind.

'Is it about the things I've read before in some books? Preservation of the bloodline or something?' Vale frowned at this thought but since this is an old-fashioned world with mysticism and such, he can't really comment about this kind of tradition.

Anyway, he still congratulated the president as it feels like the right thing to say at the moment.

Noah liked Vale's complimenting words as he even promised that he'll teach Vale plenty of things about the right way to become a Referee.

He also said that he, as a President of the Club, would be the Referee in case Cornelio arranged a duel for Vale!

"Really? Aren't you busy?" Nadine asked.

She decided to just forget her blunder about Vale's Spirit Strands matter. Next time, she swore that she'll bring a Spirit Converging Crystal with 30-Strand capacity.

"It's not that I can't a lot an hour of my time on such an important event. Since Vale is a member of our committee, it's normal to support him. If I'm the referee, that Cornelio won't be able to pull up any tricks." Noah replied with confidence.

Vale was obviously glad about this but also felt worried.

"Can I just decline this duel if I think it's too dangerous?" Vale asked seriously. If possible, he wanted to avoid battling against them right now since they will certainly aim for his life.

The Moontomb Family definitely has tricks up their sleeves that they could use against a 14-year-old student like him.

Before the others could answer, Philip already spoke and gave his opinion.

"It will be difficult, he will surely arrange something so you can't refuse the duel. I heard plenty of things about him and they're not good. If you can't find a stronger backer, it will be dangerous. However, as long as it's a fair and square battle, you should be just fine. Right, you should be able to learn the Primary Dark Spell at that time so you will have other means of fighting instead of just relying on your Ghost Hands..."

Vale furrowed his brows after hearing this.

'Primary Dark Spell?'

Grover realized that Vale is unaware of the Primary Dark Spell so he swiftly explained.

"It's one of the four Dark Spells that must be learned by the students of this Academy. The first one that you'll learn is called Darkness Manipulation. You should be able to learn within this month."

Vale's eyes lit up after hearing this.

"Ahhh... So that's the name of the spell." He knows about the required spells that all students must learn. It was discussed by Professor Lucius in their last class last week.

Grover nodded as he continued.

"That's right... Once you learned this, you have to practice it daily and reach its late-stage Elementary Realm as quickly as possible. That Spell will be very helpful for you..."

Grover then recalled something as he swiftly shifted the topic... "By the way, are you aware of what happened to Wilfred's body?"

Vale tilted his head as he was curious about the sudden question.

"I'm not aware..." He replied.

"It seems that something went wrong with the ritual made by the Gold Necromancer. I think he wasn't able to retrieve Wilfred's spirit for some odd reason."

Vale froze as he obviously knows that answer. The Gold Necromancer didn't fail at all. The problem is that Wilfred's spirit was already captured by the Ring Artifact that the Headmaster lent to him.

He didn't even bother thinking of extracting Wilfred's corpse at that time since he didn't want to get too suspicious.

What the expert witnesses only knows is that he damaged Wilfred's brain so he was killed... Regarding the missing spirit, he shouldn't be implicated in it. At the very least, this is what he hoped to happen so he didn't get in contact with Wilfred's body.

"That's a shame... I didn't know much about the Gold Necromancer, is he that great?" Vale asked curiously.

Grover nodded at this and explained with a hint of excitement.

"You will learn about him in your history class. His greatest feat was about 19 years ago... Just by himself, he protected the main branch of the Dark Sorcerer Refuge in Grimgarde Plains from the Illustrious Liquidators and Lore Hunters... He's so awesome!"

"That sounds awesome..." Vale nodded as he recalled that the Illustrious Liquidator was from the Mystic Arts Faction while Lore Hunter was from Elemental Arts Faction.

He knows that these organizations were composed of the elite members of the faction they belong to.

It means that dealing with them alone would be an incredibly difficult task.

"That's right... He's probably the strongest Necromancer in our Academy right now. So his failure attracted the Headmaster's attention and it was decided that the Headmaster himself will investigate... I hope that this won't cause trouble for you."

"..."

Chapter 108 Record

Contrary to their expectations, Vale heaved a sigh of relief after learning that the Headmaster would take care of this matter.

He wasn't worried at all due to obvious reasons.

'He'll take care of it for me... and for himself.' Vale thought as he thanked Grover for informing him about this news.

As expected, the headmaster had really planned it out carefully.

Now, with his intervention, all the evidence that could make Vale the culprit for the "missing" spirit would be gone.

Soon, the Club Meeting was completed after introducing all the present members to the new members. Then, as a celebration, they eat some snacks personally made by Nadine and Clara, the Treasurer of the Club... They also brought chamomile tea which seems to be the President's favorite tea.

Apparently, the tea was known for its calming effects and was frequently used as a sleep aid.

This made Vale realize that the President probably has a lot of things on his mind and needed this tea for that reason.

The President was the first one to leave followed by the Vice-President other members.

After a while, it was only Priscilla, Philip, Vale, and Nadine that were left in the clubroom. No one would clean this place except for them so they have to clean the clubroom themselves.

"These are the cleaning tools..." Nadine said with a smile as she opened a locker where all the tools are kept.

Priscilla frowned at this as she asked. "Can we use our Dark Spells to clean the place instead?"

Nadine looked at her with widened eyes and hurriedly asked in concern.

"Priscilla, did you learn a Dark Spell meant for cleaning? That's not good. We don't have many Spell Lights in our bodies. You have to choose carefully... You have to think about your future and the combination of your Spells if necessary. Why would you—"

"Ahem... Senior Nadine. It's not like that." Priscilla answered as she felt a bit embarrassed after Nadine pointed it out. It was as if she was planning to become a janitor with the way her senior speaks!

"Pfft—" Vale and Philip couldn't suppress their laughter as they imagined Priscilla's Spell Lights filled with Cleaning Spells.

Vale actually knows a couple of Dark Spell Models that were meant for such an odd task. It was normally used in Alchemy but even the Alchemist wouldn't learn such a spell themselves.

Priscilla glared at the two as she explained with exasperation.

"Hey... I'm talking about my Gloom Force. That's my first Spell Model. It's already late-stage Elementary Realm so I have decent control over it. I can weaken it to push out only the trash or dirt. Besides, Vale also has Ghost Hands to take care of things."

Nadine finally heaved a sigh of relief after hearing her explanation.

The Gloom Force is indeed a spell that can affect the surroundings. With Priscilla's current mastery, it should be possible to use it for cleaning.

Then, Vale's three Ghost Hands would also work really well.

"Very well, you can use your spell if you want. However, make sure not to break things inside the clubroom or you'll pay for it."

"Yes, Senior Nadine..." Priscilla and the other two answered in unison.

Before Nadine left, Philip recalled something and immediately asked.

"Senior, can we also have access to the recording crystals?"

"Hmm? You can't just access them freely. You have to make a formal request before you can view those recordings." Nadine said with a teasing smile.

Philip was obviously disappointed after hearing that he can't access those files even after joining the club.

However, Nadine's next words made him joyful once again...

"Well, if you were assigned someday to clean or remove the dust in those crystals. Then no one will know if you viewed them or not. Alright, I'm leaving now. Lock the clubroom after you're done cleaning."

The three answered with affirmation as Nadine closed the door to let them work by themselves.

Philip clenched his fist in excitement.

Priscilla also seemed happy after understanding the hint that Nadine left for them.

It was only Vale who was confused by all of this...

"Recording Crystals?" Vale asked.

He seemed to have read about it in the books of Mystical Artifacts but he didn't dwell on it too much.

"Yes... All important battles within the Academy's Arena are being recorded. Especially if it's a battle to determine the Elite Rankers in the Academy." Philip explained.

"That's right... So you can't ask for the recording of your battle against Wilfred since the Academy won't waste a recording crystal for that battle." Priscilla added.

Of course, Vale wasn't really going to ask for the recording of his match but it was still good to know that there's indeed no evidence that can be used against him.

"I'm not curious about that... Anyway, do you know when can we "clean" the archive?" Vale asked as he looked at the door on the left side of the clubroom beside the washroom.

He now knows what that door was. Inside that room is definitely the place where all the recording crystals are kept.

"Hmm... Look at this post in the bulletin board... The cleaning of the archive is done every month so we can check it at that time." Philip answered as he looked at the schedule posted by Nadine.

Seeing this, Vale couldn't help but feel excited as well. He will certainly learn more about Spellcasters if he watches these recordings.

This is a great opportunity that he didn't expect at all.

He thought that just having a chance to watch battles in the arena for free is already the greatest benefit he can get.

"So you're not aware of it and you still joined the club?" Priscilla curiously asked after seeing Vale's reaction.

Vale scratches his head as he answered with a nod.

The three of them then talked about various things while cleaning the clubroom. In the end, Priscilla didn't use her Dark Spell and just cleaned the room with the tools like Vale and Philip.

Chapter 109 Curse

Vale was easily acquainted with the two since they were both carefree and friendly... They weren't even bothered by him killing Wilfred in his duel.

It was quite a pleasant feeling for him and he was happy that these two were his clubmates.

"We're finally done!" Philip happily threw the cleaning tools back into the locker.

It took them less than half an hour although there are three of them working together since they were chatting about various topics.

During this time, Vale learned that these two were from Class 3 and both of them has 16 Spirit Strands. They were really surprised after Professor Stella Harwin announced to them that one of her students in Class 2 has 25 Spirit Strands exceeding even Maya Featherstar.

'So it was really Professor Harwin who spread that to everyone...' Vale wryly smiled. He can't really blame the proud Professor so he can only forget about it.

The three of them separated after cleaning the clubroom. Priscilla went to check the library while Philip returned to his dormitory... Unsurprisingly, he's also using the Seven Pillars Garden. He was in the fourth room to be exact while Vale is in the seventh.

As for Priscilla, she's actually in the third room...

Apparently, the first, second, and third rooms were used by female students while the fourth to seventh rooms were used by male students.

Anyway, as Vale was planning to return to his dormitory as well, he met Chad, Blair, Leonore, and Lisa. They were planning of having some tea together at the cafeteria so they invited him.

Their group was an odd combination in Vale's eyes.

He would normally see Leonore with her group of female friends... As for Lisa, she would always stick to Aubrey so it was quite rare not seeing them together.

Blair, on the other hand, just always sticks to anyone and was quite friendly to all... even to Neil.

"Aubrey is still in her club. As you know, she joined the Board Game Club..." Lisa reminded after noticing that Vale was looking for her.

"So it was like that... Leonore, how's the Fortune Telling Club?" Vale asked...

However, before Leonore can even answer, this question prompted a reaction from Chad Bulmung who always had unnecessary thoughts.

"Ahem... Should we leave the two of you so you can have a moment with each other? Or should we just stick around to make a cover for you so it won't get too obvious?"

Vale was momentarily confused by this reaction but Leonore immediately know what this guy was thinking.

"I keep telling you that it was all a misunderstanding... Even that amulet that was tossed to me was just Vale's acting if I'm not mistaken." Leonore spoke in exasperation.

"Alright... alright... I was just teasing you. Hehe." Chad immediately replied as he was afraid that Leonore would really be pissed off.

It's not every day that he could drink tea with his beautiful classmate after all.

After a while, they shifted the topic to the first-year student in Class 4 who seemed to have been affected by a strange disease...

Some said it was a curse since the student was coughing out black blood. It was really strange but luckily, after bringing her to the infirmary, she seem to be fine now.

"It's my first time hearing about it. However, can we not talk about it while drinking this tea?" Lisa immediately added.

They then talked about other things before leaving the cafeteria to finish their assignments in other subjects.

Vale also returned to his dormitory and didn't think too much about this disease at first. However, in the next few days, he keeps hearing about this strange disease that makes people cough out black

blood and weaken the person's immune system... Weakening of health also means weakening of Phantasm State... The duration of their state has lessened by almost half because of this!

The students who were affected were stressed even more after learning this.

This situation also spread throughout the whole Academy affecting not only first-year students but also second-year and third-year students.

This matter alarmed the Academy as about 30% of the students in the first, second, and third-year were affected in just four days!

On Thursday, May 17, 894, Professor Lucius Angelart thought them about the Darkness Manipulation...

"Everyone, because of the strange Curse that was spreading, we are advising you all to learn the Darkness Manipulation as quickly as possible. Normally, it would be fine to learn it within two or three months. However, it was recently discovered that with the help of Darkness Manipulation, you would have a lesser chance of being affected by the curse."

"Professor, why can't we find the culprit that is cursing us? That will solve the problem a lot easier, right?" Neil suddenly asked.

He couldn't understand how their prestigious academy which has plenty of Curse Spell Experts, would have difficulty finding the source of the problem.

This is the same question that the other students wanted to ask.

The incident happened so suddenly and many people were affected. The person who had caused this must've left some clues.

Professor Lucius shook his head at this question and firmly answered.

"If it's possible, we could've done that already. Unfortunately, the cause of this incident was a Mystical Artifact that was already destroyed... To be exact, its destruction was the cause of the spreading curse..."

This sudden revelation stunned the students...

"Ah? There's a Mystical Artifact that can still affect people even after destruction?"

"What mystical artifact is that?"

"Professor, are you telling us that there is no Spells, Rituals, or Ceremony, that can cleanse the Academy from the mess created by the Mystical Artifact?"

Leonore asked with a hint of doubt. Her friend, Carmen, was affected by this curse so she felt quite infuriated by the caster of this Curse Spell. Now that she learned that it was the result of an Artifact's destruction, she felt even more annoyed.

She believes that the matter of the curse spreading throughout the Academy could've been avoided if the Professors or the experts acted immediately instead of ignoring the matter.

Chapter 110 Truth

Professor Lucius can understand Leonore's reaction. However, this matter isn't as simple as that.

He looked at everyone with calm eyes before he answered.

"The Mystical Artifact that was destroyed was a rare Ancient Sword. This sword was spilled with the blood of numerous Evil Creatures, Wandering Spirits, Arcane Arts Practitioners, and even regular humans... The curse that has been spread wasn't visible or tangible to anyone... The curse has culminated inside the affected person's body for at least three days before it showed any reaction."

"Three days?" Neil and the others repeated in a soft voice.

"Yes... Those who passed through the sixth building near the stable were the ones that were first affected. That building is where the Treasure Vault is located and where the Ancient Sword was destroyed."

Professor Lucius paused for a moment before he continued.

"The place has already been sealed but there is still some remnant energy that has spread out throughout the Academy... The easiest way to defend against this weak curse is to learn the Darkness Manipulation... With this Spell, you will have a higher chance of detecting the energy that will result in a curse..."

The students then accepted this explanation since they really don't have any other choice.

In the meantime, inside the Headmaster's Room, a couple of dark-robed individuals wearing white masks on their faces were talking to Headmaster Jean.

One of them has a huge build with a spear on his back and the other appears to be a female with only a rapier hanging on her waist.

"We've captured two more spies today. A total of thirteen spies have been caught over the past seven days. They clearly don't care about the Treaty of Keslore anymore." The huge masked individual said with obvious hostility showing in his eyes.

It was the same for the female one behind him.

Headmaster Jean didn't seem surprised with the news as he replied.

"I don't think that's odd. They never cared about the Treaty. They were just waiting for the right opportunity until they replenished their forces. Anyway, aside from the broken sword, are there any other broken artifacts or missing ones? What are they searching for, did they spill it out already?"

He asked calmly as he tapped his desk...

"We extracted one of their spirits and learned that they were looking for a pocketwatch... We still can't tell whether this is a diversion so we can't trust this information yet."

"Pocketwatch?" Headmaster Jean repeated.

There are many Mystical Items in the form of Pocketwatch. However, none of them have impressive capabilities.

Their Treasure Vault should have a few of them but he doubts that they have incredible mystical abilities imbued in them.

This is also why the masked man was skeptical about this information even if they were from the spirit of the captured spies.

Perhaps, the people who sent them just gave this random information as a diversion.

Well, this is also the tactic of their special forces to feed the enemies wrong information so they were thinking that the enemy could've done that as well.

"I'll check the vault once more and inspect all those pocketwatches. For now, continue your interrogation with all the spies in case you find more information. Also, tell all the informants outside to find any news about this pocketwatch as well. Any information about a strange pocketwatch would suffice." Headmaster Jean instructed.

"We understand..."

With that said, the two robed individuals disappeared from the room only leaving a few traces of black smoke in their previous position.

As Headmaster Jean was left alone, he couldn't sigh dejectedly as this incident wouldn't look good on him. As a new Headmaster, he actually allowed a group of spies to infiltrate the Academy and even caused some trouble for the students.

This will certainly alarm the higher-ups of the Dark Arts Faction and he would have to explain the situation to them later on.

Just thinking about it makes his head hurt.

"We should at least know what are they searching for. If it's really a pocketwatch, we need to know what it does to garner so much attention." Headmaster Jean muttered to himself as he stood up to check the treasure vault.

Although he has been there already, he hadn't checked the pocketwatches that were kept in that room. He has to ensure that none of them possess some sort of hidden effects that the files have failed to record.

"Ashe, I'll notify the informants outside to search for any news regarding a special pocketwatch. You go ahead and continue with your interrogation with the spies."

The dark-robed man who was previously in Headmaster's Room spoke to his companion. His name is Cleo and Captain of the Sixth Squad of the Order of the Evanescent Vessels.

They were still in the academy but they are already in the underground facility. The place was barely lit up by lamps placed on the walls of the facility.

"I understand, Captain. However, should we continue with our method of interrogation?" Ashe asked before Cleo could leave.

"Correct... Their lives don't matter anyway... If possible, offer them to the departments who needed some corpses. They don't deserve a cremation."

"Yes, Captain."

With that said, Cleo finally left like a cloud of smoke leaving Ashe alone in the underground facility of the academy.

She looked at the silent tunnel for a brief moment before turning her gaze to the wooden door next to her.

Her gentle eyes when talking to her captain suddenly changed and it was now filled with hostility.

She opened the wooden door and looked at the damp room that has poor ventilation.

The smell was not good but she can easily ignore it with a bit of energy manipulation around her.

"Alright... I won't be as lenient as my captain... If you don't spill everything you know, you'll just suffer horribly before your death."

As she spoke, she looked at the infiltrators who had dared to cause trouble not only in their treasure vault but also in the students within the Academy.

Three of them are no longer breathing but the other ten should still be alive.