

D. Extraction 111

Chapter 111 New Spell

It was unfortunate that Spirit Extraction requires a ceremony and an offering would be needed.

It means that she will have to use some money in order to interrogate them.

However, her budget can only allow her to do a Spirit Interrogation for two more people.

'It's a pity that we've already spent our budget on our new equipment. If we know that this will happen, we wouldn't be in this tight situation.' Ashe could only sigh inwardly as she started an isolated interrogation.

Unlike that Headmaster with a special Ring Artifact that can capture a Spirit, Ashe's squad doesn't have the means to obtain a similar Artifact.

In the end, she can only try the normal method of interrogation that was taught to her more than six years ago.

Soon, cries of pain resounded throughout the facility but none of this can be heard above ground.

Vale was unaware that someone is searching for a strange pocketwatch but nonetheless, he was still not feeling good about the recent events within the Academy.

Everything that has happened seemed suspicious and he felt that there is something more about it.

Anyway, the days in the Academy continued as it is... It took him three days to create the Spell Model of the Darkness Manipulation Spell as he officially gained his third active Dark Spell.

Of course, it was only delayed up to that date since he has to acquire the requirements to do the Spell Recording. They were the Darkness Pill, which is optional but he still purchased them, and the Magic Circle that he used.

Apparently, the Magic Circle that is free to use in the Ceremony Hall of the Academy is different from the Animus Haven Hall that Master Heinz made him use.

For this reason, he decided not to use it in case he had a strange reaction. In the end, he had to purchase a few things to create a Magic Circle of his own.

'Alright... let me see my attributes for now.' Vale thought as he triggered his system.

He wanted to see the changes in it. He was also curious to see how much energy he would need in order to increase the level of his new spell.

[Name: Kyle Marshall]

[Attributes: Strength 20.85, Agility 15.57, Intelligence 50.12, Vitality 10.05]

[Dark Arts: Spell Dispersion Lv4, Ghost Hand Lv7, Incorruptible Body Lv5, Darkness Manipulation Lv1]

[Available Energy: 470]

'Let's increase its level...'

Vale thought as he selected the Darkness Manipulation Spell to trigger a notification.

[Consume 10 energy points to improve Darkness Manipulation?]

A notification immediately popped out.

"Hmm? Only ten points?" Vale muttered after seeing the number of energy points he needed to advance the level of his Dark Spell.

'Well... This should be good enough...'

As he thinks about it, this number seems to be alright. After all, this is only the first of the academy-exclusive Dark Spells that he must learn.

There are still other spells that he must learn and those spells would certainly have higher requirements.

'I guess I can't increase its level yet since the professor might have to check it...' Vale thought as he wasn't in a hurry since he was only staying in the Academy.

Increasing it to Intermediate Realm or even just late-stage Elementary Realm would be too suspicious. He has to control his urges on this unless he needed it in a hurry.

Anyway, Vale didn't immediately reveal that he had finished recording the Darkness Manipulation Spell Model in his third Spell Light.

He waited for at least another week before announcing it since there are no benefits to revealing it too early. He would just get more gazes filled with envy or some sort of admiration that he doesn't really need.

Nevertheless, even if he delayed the announcement, he was still the first one to have it in his class.

It was the 29th of May, 894 when he informed his classmates that he already completed his Spell Recording.

"Vale... You're amazing... How did you do it? Can I use the Magic Circle you used to aid your Spell Recording?" Chad asked half-jokingly.

There is only one magic circle that helps them do the Spell Recording. So there shouldn't be a difference between the Magic Circle he was using and Vale was using.

However, his friends were truly impressed as Lisa also asked Vale for help.

Hearing this, Aubrey decided to join their group.

"Alright... Let's do it on Sunday afternoon. We should be able to rent one of the Training Halls and I'll assist you with it." Vale answered.

He has nothing to do on that day so he might as well help his classmates.

This way, he will also learn how they could fail from Spell Recording. He believed that it was actually quite easy so it was confusing him...

'No... I shouldn't think like that. It's probably a benefit brought by the Incorruptible Body... Unlike them, I have a higher compatibility with Darkness Arcane Path thanks to this special physique.'

"Training Hall? Are we not going to the Ceremony Hall to use the Magic Circle there?" Lisa asked.

Vale suddenly froze as he did rent a room in the Training Hall to make his own magic circle. He didn't use the free Magic Circle in the Ceremony Hall at all.

"Ahem... You're right... Let's use the Ceremony Hall." Vale answered while scratching his head.

Chad and Blair didn't think too much of it after hearing him correct himself.

But Lisa and Aubrey noticed something off with how he replied just now.

For some reason, they felt that Vale was really thinking of going to the Training Hall to help them complete their Spell Model.

It was very odd since there shouldn't be anything in that place except having a stronger concentration of the Darkness Energy.

'Wait... A stronger Darkness Energy? Perhaps there's no need to use Darkness Pill if we use that place instead? Will it be a lot easier if we rent a room there?' Lisa suddenly had an idea.

It was the same for Aubrey as the two looked at each other with a hint of excitement in their eyes. It was as if they were starting to understand Vale's mysteriousness!

Chapter 112 Experience

Vale was unaware of their thoughts but even if knows what was in their minds, it wouldn't really matter.

As soon as the Darkness Path Class started, Vale informed Professor Lucius about his accomplishment giving the latter a bit of surprise.

Some of his classmates who didn't hear his conversation with Lisa and the others, looked at him with wide eyes.

"You succeeded? That's good to hear... Although the curse has already weakened a lot, there's no saying whether it could reappear once more. Alright, show me your Darkness Manipulation. For those who wanted to properly sense it, enter your Phantasm State as well. Your normal eyes may not work efficiently in this case."

"Yes, Professor!" The class answered as they indeed wanted to see how the Darkness Manipulation works for a beginner like Vale.

Previously, Professor Lucius showed them how the Darkness Manipulation works but his spell was already at an Intermediate Realm spell in the middle stage. It was too high level so they can't properly assess its power.

At this time, Vale also stood up and spoke in his mind.

'Enter...'

With this word as a trigger, he immediately entered his Phantasm State almost without delay.

Without any hesitation, he shifted his focus to the Spell Model representing the Darkness Manipulation Spell.

Then, he raised his left hand and showed his palm to everyone...

In a few moments, the room started getting darker as Vale accumulated the Darkness Energy in his surroundings...

By triggering this spell, he can also use the Dark Energy that he had gathered in his body but if he did this, he had to replenish it by gathering this type of energy through the help of another magic circle, potion, or pills.

For this reason, he decided to use the accumulating Dark Energy in the surroundings.

"Can you put out the lights using this spell?" Professor Lucius pointed at the ceiling and asked after seeing that Vale has decent control over his new spell.

Within the classroom, two chandeliers are lighting up the place and it will require quite a bit of skill to put them out without enough practice.

Vale was also unsure how he would do that since he never tried it before. At most, he thought of using this Spell to increase his defense against Dark Spell or at least make his target vulnerable to Dark Spells...

This is the most basic usage of Darkness Manipulation based on his previous classes.

Anyway, now that Professor Lucius gave an instruction, Vale decided to follow.

He controlled the gathered Dark Energy as he lifted his hands motioning the energy to gather at the two chandeliers.

Like a cloud of eerie shadows, the gathered energy started moving to the chandeliers very slowly.

'Not good...'

As Vale was controlling the energy, he can tell that his Spell Light isn't stable at all. Before it reaches the chandeliers, he would lose control of the Dark Energy and it would scatter everywhere.

He wasn't sure if the sudden collapse of energy would cause trouble for his classmates so he gritted his teeth and made a decision.

He immediately brought out his attributes panel and triggered the system to advance his mastery of the Darkness Manipulation Spell!

[Consume 10 energy points to improve Darkness Manipulation?]

'Yes!' Vale answered in his mind.

As soon as he did this, his Available Energy Points were deducted by 10 points. He now only has 460 Energy Points.

It may seem a huge number but since his expense grows exponentially, he knows that this number is too little for him.

In the meantime, Vale's action of increasing the level of his mastery didn't go unnoticed by the expert's eyes.

"W-what?" Professor Lucius suddenly stopped his hand that was about to cast a Spell.

'That's odd... I'm sure that Vale was about to fail... How come it suddenly became firm.' Lucius was confused as he looked at Vale curiously.

There were a couple of reasons he could think of. First, Vale was simply hiding his level of mastery and had no other choice but to show all he got after realizing that he can't put out the light.

The other reason is that Vale just gained enlightenment after trying his best to put out the light!

Poof... Poof...

After the Dark Energy gathered around the chandeliers, the lights were naturally put out leaving only a bit of light for them that was coming from the windows of the classroom.

Just the presence of thick Dark Energy is enough to put an imbalance in the surrounding air causing the flame to be extinguished. Vale didn't have to command it to target the lights at all.

"Well done, Vale." Professor Lucius said as he hinted for him to cancel the manipulation spell. As for Vale's secrets, he decided not to pry on it since it wasn't against the rules.

"Thank you, Professor." Vale answered as he removed his control over the gathered energy.

As he did this, the gathered darkness disappeared and the lights in the chandelier naturally came back.

'So that chandelier is a mystical item?' Vale mused as he sat back on his chair.

"I don't have any more rewards I can give you as the first student to record the Spell Model... However, you will receive good grades because of it." Professor Lucius reminded as he was worried that Vale was expecting another reward like what happened with the Evil Creature.

Vale understood this well so he thanked the professor once more.

After this small event, Professor Lucius started his class again... He thought them about his experience in recording the Spell Model and even had Vale share his experience as well.

This way, he was hoping that the class would have their Darkness Manipulation Spell recorded in their spell lights before the end of the month.

He also reminded his students about the monthly assessment that will happen on Thursday, the 31st of May.

Everyone was already aware of it. After all, tomorrow, they will have a monthly assessment in four of their subjects, the Oardic and Soineti, Intermediate Arithmetic, Fundamentals of the Magic Zone, and Physical and Health Education.

At this moment, Vale's classmates couldn't help but recall his arrogance, or maybe confidence, to perfect the Arithmetic class and get a chance to take the Class Advancement Exam!

Chapter 113 Challenge

After the class, everyone immediately returned to their dormitory to start reviewing what they'd studied over the past few weeks...

Even the Student Clubs they joined were aware of their incoming monthly assessment so they weren't required to attend their activities. However, this also made them realize that only first-year to third-year students have these kinds of monthly assessments.

Well, this is probably because most of their studies are purely theoretical.

They learned that only when they reached their fourth year will they be graded based on their performance in the branch specialization.

Vale also reviewed his notes as he realized that aside from the Basic Usage of Mystical Artifacts class, he has confidence in passing all of them.

The class under Professor Shirley Harrison was just too much. In the past few classes, she revealed how ruthless she was as she swiftly taught them over 400 Mystical Artifacts.

Even with his heightened intelligence, he can't easily differentiate these artifacts without enough time and familiarization.

She was unlike Professor Stella Harwin who was kind enough to only teach 20 new Oardic words every class and would slowly explain each of their uses so they can safely make their own ritual someday.

'Wait... Are we going to make a complete ritual as an assessment instead?' Vale suddenly had a thought. Although the Oardic and Soineti class is essentially a language class, this is still Dark Arts Academy. He wouldn't be surprised if the assessment is an application of the language they learned!

With this in mind, Vale restarted his review of this subject... He was afraid that Professor Stella would think of combining her class into one Assessment!

Performing a specific ritual is certainly a good combination to test what they've learned in Elementary Spirit Law and Oardic and Soineti classes.

After studying his notes for over 3 hours, Vale felt tired and decided not to over-study.

He went outside to get some fresh air and wandered around the academy...

Soon, he noticed that there were quite a lot of students who were looking at him. He felt this very clearly so he was a bit uncomfortable.

'I'm not that popular, am I? Why do you keep looking at me?' Vale complained in his mind as he started looking around.

Soon, he noticed that the ones who were looking at him were all senior students!

As he was trying to get some fresh air, he actually wandered around the buildings of the higher years...

'Ugh... I guess I should leave... Wait—'

Vale suddenly stopped in front of a building not too far from him.

He realized that this building was actually the Armory of the Academy or what they like to call the Treasure Vault.

'If that's the case, this is where that vicious curse started...' Vale mused as he couldn't help but be curious about this place.

At this moment, he heard some footsteps that were approaching him.

"Hey, freshman... Do you know where you are right now?"

An annoying hoarse voice suddenly spoke behind Vale.

Vale sighed at this rude question as he looked around to confirm the place he was in.

"I'm in the East Pavilion Garden, Senior." Vale answered showing how he was aware of this place.

He then looked back and saw a student with six stars on his coat... It means that he's a sixth-year student...

Furthermore, Vale felt a bit disgusted after seeing his face. Half of his face was incredibly aged—No, it might be better to say that it was rotten.

Vale realized that the Variants he had seen before seemed much more acceptable than this Spellcaster! He felt that something was wrong with this student since he had also seen his seniors in the Battle Arena Committee. These seniors have a decent or normal human appearance.

It means that even if they are in the Dark Arts academy, they don't have to look evil or have some unusual trait on their bodies...

'Is it because of a failed experiment?' Vale mused as he looked into his senior's eyes. His left eye seems normal but his right eye seemed rotten Vale can tell that it can still see.

"Are you being sarcastic? I'm telling you that this isn't your place. Return to your building..." The man angrily said as he realized that this freshman was too brave.

Normally, freshmen students would already get scared just by hearing his voice. After seeing his face and his academic year, they should be thinking of getting out of his line of sight as quickly as possible.

"Senior, we're not prohibited to come here. Are we?"

Instead of being intimidated, Vale replied with a hint of annoyance. The guy in front of him is obviously just looking for trouble.

Anyway, he knows that he's right so he wasn't afraid of facing him. As a matter of fact, Vale already finished spreading his Magic Zone and confirmed that a couple of academy guards are observing their confrontation.

It was quite surprising for Vale but he guess that this person was a troublemaker and has already been marked by the guards.

Furthermore, he realized that there seems to be a familiar aura around the Armory building.

"Ha! I reserved this place as my recreational area... You're not supposed to step on my place—Ahh, now that I have a clear look on your face... I think I've seen you before. Are you that guy who killed his fellow classmate? Or was it in another First Year Class?"

The man with a half-rotten face suddenly realized that he was looking at another promising student of the Vermont Academy...

Vale felt even more disgusted after seeing his face of realization, admiration, and excitement...

"Kahaha! You should fight me too... No, it's too unfair... What about this, I heard that you didn't get the Moontomb's Spell Scroll... I'll give you three of my Spell Scrolls if you win against one of my summoned undead!"

The man spoke with excitement and it was heard by all the sixth-year students in the surroundings.

This includes Nadine Sherris who was looking at Vale worriedly.

Chapter 114 Negotiation

"Not good... A first-year student is being targeted by Mad Larkin! Look outside..."

"Tsk... Is he causing trouble again? Does he think he can keep doing that because he has a backer here in the academy?"

"Err... Yes, I think he can do that because of his backer."

"That's not the point! Someone needs to stop him! The reputation of our batch is getting worse in the lower years because of him."

Nadine Sherris heard her classmates talk about Mad Larkin once again.

Larkin Nevil also known as Mad Larkin was one of the dual branch specialists.

It means that this man doesn't just practice Necromancy but also the Essential Corruption branch through a special privilege he had gotten from the previous Headmaster.

Not any student can select two branches at the same time after all. However, if one has enough achievement, the Academy can provide this special treatment with strict requirements.

Furthermore, these students would have some form of immunity in many of the Academy Rules. This may sound unfair but the Academy is still essentially searching for the best Dark Arts Practitioners. If they can bring out their potential with this, they wouldn't mind it even if they break some simple rules.

Nadine sighed as he also looked at the situation outside.

She has already acquainted with a few first-year students so she might know the person they were talking about.

"Ahh... Vale?"

Nadine froze as she looked at the familiar freshman student that has joined her club!

Then, he heard Mad Larkin's proposal as she realized what Mad Larkin was planning! He was definitely thinking of making Vale his summoned undead!

Vale might be weak for now but he has a great talent! Mad Larkin has always been researching how to obtain an undead with growth potential!

He felt that the Necromancy Branch was too unfortunate for having an undead that could not become stronger than its previous self.

'This is bad... I need Vale to decline this offer...'

Nadine wanted to immediately stand between the two but before he could do that, he noticed Vale looking behind him.

'There was no one there—Ahh, Headmaster Jean?!'

It was only after the Headmaster decided to reveal himself did she notice his presence. The others were also shocked by his sudden appearance.

They didn't know why the Headmaster has appeared but with his presence, Mad Larkin will surely stop intimidating Vale and quickly find a place to hide.

In the meantime, Nadine was surprised by another matter after seeing the Headmaster.

'How did Vale notice his presence before my senses could? Is that possible? Did the headmaster inform him beforehand?' Nadine frowned while her mind raced for an answer.

She has a Dark Spell that allows her to have a better understanding of her surroundings and she's confident about it once it's active.

This spell even works even without the activation of her Phantasm State although in a weaker state. Since Vale was able to surpass the senses of a sixth-year student like her, she realized that Vale has more secrets than she thought.

'It must be a mystical item since he should only have two basic Dark Spells.' Nadine concluded as she focused on the conversation outside.

"Vale Chambers, a first-year student from class 2, and... Larkin Nevil, a sixth-year student from class 1. What an odd combination... Are the two of you thinking of having a duel?" Headmaster Jean asked as he held his hands behind his back.

He looked at the two students with curiosity and displayed a strange smile on his face.

Larkin was also stunned at the sudden appearance of this new headmaster. He didn't look good after seeing him since his strongest backer was the previous Headmaster of the Academy. He believed that Vice Headmaster Jean did something underhanded to take the position he currently has.

Unfortunately, he can't prove anything and could only try and get out of this new headmaster's sight.

'Ugh... Whatever... I'm sure he heard everything already...' Larkin thought as he decided to continue his provocation. He can't waste the opportunity of getting a talented body for his future undead!

"Yes, Headmaster Jean! Please allow us to have a battle. I won't personally fight... I will only use one of my undead with about the same level as this first-year student. Right, I heard that he has 25 Spirit Strands... In that case, I will also select someone with 25 Spirit Strands when they're still alive." Larkin explained.

"Also, if he wins against my undead. I will give him three of my Spell Scrolls. They're three Undead Summoning Scrolls! Not only can you use it to copy a spell model but it can also be used to

summon three powerful Skeleton Warriors." Larkin immediately added as he looked at Vale with eagerness.

"Hmmm... I don't think that's enough. I'm sure that you wanted Vale's body if he loses. Three Spell Scrolls of summoning undead is a bit too cheap for his life. Don't you think so?" Headmaster Jean asked the latter part to Vale.

'Ah? You wanted me to accept this fight?' Vale raised his brows as he can't understand what this Headmaster was thinking.

'Does he have a plan for me to win? This time, I will be fighting an undead... I don't think he wanted to capture Larkin's spirit.' Vale thought for a moment before expressing his opinion about this matter.

"Ahem... I think that three Spell Scrolls would not be enough if that's the case. Is there something more valuable you can offer aside from that?" Vale asked.

"Tsk... Do you think your life is so valuable?! Why don't you—" Larkin wanted to say something more but the Headmaster looked at him harshly.

He immediately felt suffocated as he shut his mouth...

"I... I'm sorry. I think that is not enough... Cough. Cough..." Larkin felt lightheaded after being suffocated...

He swiftly tried to think of another form of compensation but he didn't really have many valuables with him. He always spends his money for the sake of research...

'Ah!'

Suddenly, his eyes lit up as he recalled something.

"I have contribution points. I still have 20 or maybe 23 of them... If you win, I'll give it all to you including the Spell Scrolls! If you still don't think it's enough, then tell me if you have something in your mind!"

Chapter 115 Slender

Everyone in the building who was listening to their conversation jolted in surprise.

"Twenty-three? Contributions Points?!"

"Ugh... How come he has so many? Is he not using it?"

"He's probably accumulating it. I think he was planning to get the rare Mystical Item for Necromancers worth 60 contribution points." One of Larkin's classmates suggested.

This seems to be accurate considering Larkin's behavior. He truly wanted to become one of the best Necromancers. This is not just by obtaining strong undead summons but by becoming an unordinary Necromancer that has mastered the Essential Corruption Branch!

If he acquired the Gold Spirit Crown or the mystical item worth 60 Contribution Points, Larkin would certainly get closer to his goal.

'Is he that confident?' Nadine muttered to herself as she knows that Larkin wouldn't think of wasting his Contribution Points.

There was no way he would give it to Vale unless he knows that he'll certainly win against Vale.

Of course, Nadine knows that an undead summoned by a sixth-year student majoring in Necromancy would not be so simple even if it's only an undead with 25-Spirit Strand.

If Larkin equipped it with enough mystical items, it would be extremely tough for Vale to win with his current set of spells.

As a first-year student, it's already amazing if he gets to learn one of the academy-exclusive Dark Spells in just a month or two.

Nadine couldn't think of a way how Vale can win this duel.

Nevertheless, Vale's reply astonished her.

"I accept your duel request. However, to be fair, you have to give me two months to prepare. You also have to tell me what Undead will I be fighting on the date of the duel." Vale answered. He won't accept any negotiation on this.

Although he was confident with his Spell Dispersion. He needs further study to confirm whether it works against an Undead who doesn't use Spells to begin with.

Furthermore, he can also avoid any form of challenges during this time and he can focus on learning things and getting stronger.

"Two months? Very well. I can accept that. I'll be using a Slender Zombie" Larkin replied with a hint of excitement in his eyes.

Soon, gasps can be heard in the surroundings as the students, who were aware of the strength of Slender Zombie, couldn't help but feel that it was too difficult for Vale!

"Ah! That's too unfair."

"That's cheating!"

"But Slender Zombies can be summoned by 8th-Year students, right? Is he already that Advanced?"

"This is too much. He's only fighting a First Year student..."

"Hey, Mad Larkin! You should use Plump Zombie or just a Skeleton Warrior... Heck! Even Skeleton Knight is better. Slender Zombie should be prohibited."

The seniors in the buildings near them started berating Larkin for challenging Vale using a Slender Zombie.

Vale, who doesn't know anything about Slender Zombie looked at the Headmaster to get his opinion.

Headmaster Jean noticed this as Vale heard his voice in his mind.

It was the same thing that had happened before.

"The Slender Zombie can be tricky to deal with... It's very fast. It's completely different from any type of undead. It also has a strong piercing ability... However, it has a weakness, it can't fight for too long or it will slow down and become vulnerable. If you have confidence in catching up in its

speed, then you can try. If you can't you have to consider bolstering your defense instead and make yourself a bait. Your advanced realm Ghost Hands can do the rest if you play with it correctly.'

Headmaster Jean explained patiently.

Since Vale can't use this telepathic ability, he can't reply to the Headmaster so the latter just spoke without waiting for his reply.

Vale can only slightly nod to inform the Headmaster that he understands and that he's confident about it.

"A Slender Zombie it is... You're not allowed to change it. If you ever decided to do so, our duel will be moved by another two months." Vale answered after thinking for a while.

Nadine and the others were shocked by Vale's bold response.

He actually dared to fight a sixth-year Student! Furthermore, it was Mad Larkin who can contend against the top 90 to 100 of the Elite Rankings!

Larkin may not have any ranking because he's not participating in this Elite Rankings competition, but everyone knows that he has the chance of getting a spot around 90 to 100.

"This guy!" Nadine wanted to scold him for answering too quickly. He should've informed Larkin that he'll think about it in the next three days or something!

He has to do some research at the very least!

"This guy is courting death..."

"No... I think that first year has some confidence in his eyes when he answered."

"We should watch this match..."

"There will be plenty of people. I wonder if the Academy will make it an official event and earn from selling entrance fees."

"Heh... It's not impossible. The Headmaster might add another event like duels from other year levels or even a performance show against an Evil Creature."

"Haha... That was done by the previous Headmaster to get extra income from his students. I doubt that the current Headmaster would be so stingy."

"Let's hope so..."

As the students around them were gossiping, Headmaster Jean also concluded the arrangement that the two students made.

"We'll see you both in the next two months. Your duel will be on Sunday... That's the 29th of July. Vale will fight against Larkin's Slender Zombie. If Vale wins, he gets three Undead Summoning Scrolls with visible Spell Models. All of Larkin's Contribution Points will also be transferred to Vale at that time. Because of this, Larkin can't use his Contribution Points for the next two months to ensure that he wouldn't use them up before the duel. Anyway, if Vale loses, his body will be handed over to Larkin as he requested." Headmaster Jean said as he looked at Vale.

"Before I conclude this... Vale, are you sure you aren't thinking of claiming his life if you win the match?" Headmaster Jean asked.

Chapter 116 Monthly Assessment (1)

Vale smiled at this and answered loudly for everyone to hear.

"No, Headmaster. People might think that I only know how to kill my fellow schoolmates if I did that. I'm hoping that sparing his life would change their mind for thinking that I only know how to end the life of my opponent."

Vale spoke magnanimously but Headmaster Jean can see Vale's ruthlessness hidden in his eyes.

The headmaster knows that Vale has other intentions but he decided not to pry too much about it.

Instead, Headmaster Jean laughed with delight.

"Hahaha! Indeed. As a fellow student of the Vermont Academy, you're not supposed to be enemies as these people can be the ones that will save your life once you're outside. Entering the academy isn't just to learn the Darkness Path but to learn that the peak of this path can't be attained by working alone."

Headmaster Jean said as he looked at Larkin Nevil.

"Very well. Since both of you have agreed to these conditions, I hereby announce that your duel on the 29th of July is now official. I will have Arena Master Noah take care of this matter."

As soon as he said this, Headmaster Jean disappeared like a cloud of smoke in front of everybody.

In the meantime, Vale was confused about the way the Headmaster called the President of the Battle Arena Committee...

'Arena Master?'

This is the first time he had heard this title.

He noted this in his mind and thought of asking Secretary Nadine about it when he had the time.

'Ahhh... She's here.' Vale muttered inwardly as he saw Nadine looking at him worriedly. She was with many other students but her attractive face was easily noticeable within the crowd.

Anyway, she probably felt that his match against Larkin would be impossible to win even after 2 months of preparation.

It was quite understandable so he only smiled at her as he decided to leave first.

He can ask her later after the monthly assessment.

Soon, the news about Vale causing trouble with the sixth-year students spread throughout the whole of the Academy... except to the students who were busy preparing for the assessment.

It seems that Jody's senior club member is among the crowd when Vale "provoked" Larkin by staying in the latter's reserved garden.

"This... Isn't this a bit too much?" Vale was dumbfounded as soon as he got a copy of the Academy Newspaper the next morning.

Although it wasn't in the headline, a huge portion of the paper was still dedicated to his battle two months later.

Furthermore, he was even painted as the provoker!

Perhaps, they don't want to offend Larkin Nevil since he has some sort of backer but Vale couldn't help but feel aggrieved about this matter.

He wanted to complain somewhere but he didn't know where. He can already tell that the Academy Publication Committee would just find an excuse since he's only a first-year student without a strong family background.

"Vale... You're really famous nowadays... Look, this headline about the Academy's lifted curse is nothing compared to your provocation against a sixth-year student! You're awesome!" Zeno spoke in excitement as soon as he finished reading the article.

The copy of the paper was just outside their dormitory so they were the first ones to receive this news. This seems to be a privilege for students staying at the Seven Pillars Garden.

"Are you being sarcastic, Zeno? Our friend here is in trouble... There's nothing to admire about that. Vale, if you need help, just let us know." Harith added as they all walked to the hallway leading to their classrooms.

"Thank you... I'm focusing on this monthly assessment for now... If I need some help with my preparations, you'll be the first one to know." Vale said as he can tell that Harith is being sincere about it.

As soon as Vale entered his classroom, he expected his friends to ask about the matter with Larkin but surprisingly, none of them seem to know about it...

Well, except Leonore and Neil who seem to be looking at him with interest. These two probably heard about yesterday's event but decided not to talk about it.

As for the rest, they were all concerned about the assessment so they don't have time to read the special issue of the Publication.

'Wait... Jody should be aware of it too...' Vale mused as he glanced at Jody's seat.

However, it seems that she wasn't aware of it since she just looked at Vale without any reaction.

After Vale found his seat, Professor Stella Harwin arrived with two Student Assistants that they had never seen before.

These two assistants were bringing two boxes filled with unknown materials.

Then, Professor Stella surprised everyone with the type of tests she had planned.

She announced that there's only one assessment for the language class and the elementary spirit law class!

'I knew it...'

Vale was stunned as this is also an idea that he had thought of. He didn't expect that she'll be that lazy to combine the tests of two classes.

"Alright... We studied a total of 180 Oardic words in our language class while we tackled the Fundamentals of Human and Foreign Spirits in the other subject. Our assessment is simple, summon a friendly foreign spirit. However, you can only use Oardic words that I've taught you all in my class."

"Ahh? Professor, isn't this a bit easy?" Neil was the first to react and he believes that this assessment wasn't challenging at all.

Some of his classmates looked at him with confusion since they felt that it was just enough for an assessment.

However, Professor Harwin didn't seem angry after hearing that her choice of assessment was easy. Instead, she smiled at the student and replied.

"Would you like to go first?"

"Of course... However, what if my classmates just copied my ritual to summon a spirit, wouldn't that be unfair?" Neil asked as he looked at his classmates.

Professor Harwin seem to expect this question as she pulled something out from one of the boxes brought by her assistants.

Chapter 117 Monthly Assessment (2)

"That's easy... Just hold this stone while performing the ritual. You should've learned of this in your class with Professor Shirley... It's called Oardic Prayer Stone and as you can guess, it can only activate if you're using Oardic in your chant. You don't have to use your voice and simply speak in your mind to complete the ritual... I've also prepared a few things in the other box to help you with your ritual." Professor Stella explained as she showed a gray stone that seems to be an unpolished silver in front of the class.

She prepared 30 of them so everyone can try and summon one all at the same time.

On the other hand, Vale was actually feeling worried.

If one of his classmates summoned a dangerous spirit because of inexperience, mistake, or deliberate action, they might find themselves in a precarious situation.

He felt that Professor Stella was taking this test too lightly.

Luckily, Vale's concern was resolved by the student assistants.

"These two assistants I've brought are seventh-year students of Rituals Branch. They're Stacy Hunter and Cliff Enright. With their presence, all the Spirit that you've summoned will be under their special Dark Spell. They're the ones who will judge whether what you've summoned is a friendly foreign spirit or not..."

Vale finally accepted this explanation.

He may not know what Dark Spell they'll use but since they were both studying under the Rituals Branch, then it can be said that they're "experts" in this matter.

Soon, Neil was called out to start his attempt.

Although the Prayer Stones were handed to everyone in the class, they didn't make any attempts and watched Neil's performance.

Neil stood proud as he felt that this is his chance to gain more fame. Perhaps, he can tell Jody to write it in the next publication.

He stepped in front of the class and turned to the boxes that the assistants had brought.

παῖδα---nova| com There were plenty of materials here which they also studied in the Elementary Spirit Law class. These items were meant to be used in rituals that had a strong attraction to various types of Spirits.

Neil found some praying oils, paper talismans, incense, candles, prayer beads, and other items that can be used to perform a Spirit Summoning Ritual.

After some thought, he decided to light incense sticks instead. He then took three incense sticks, a matchbox, and a small pot of sand that was included in the box.

He then returned to his seat to start his ritual on his table.

Without any hesitation, Neil lit up the incense sticks...

As soon as he saw the calming smoke coming out of it, he held his Prayer Stone and closed his eyes...

He started praying under everyone's watchful eyes.

Vale looked curiously at Neil's performance.

He was curious about what kind of living spirit will Neil summon. After all, this isn't just a simple spirit. It is a Foreign Spirit!

It means that this spirit isn't from humans like them but from the Spirit World! Any living spirit that originates in that place is relatively strong once summoned.

None of them are considered weak by their standards...

Whooshh~

Suddenly, the room's temperature started going down as Neil's eyes turned to the smoke coming out of the incense sticks. It feels as if Neil had succeeded to summon a spirit...

Everyone entered their Phantasm State to ensure that they didn't miss anything.

Although they should be able to see the Spirit with their eyes in this matter, entering the Phantasm State would allow them to have a better assessment of the situation.

Unfortunately, after waiting for over a minute the temperature started returning to normal and nothing happened.

Neil was speechless as he can't believe that he just failed! No, he should've succeeded, he was sure that the gates of the Spirit World were opened. There should've been a Spirit that came out of it!

'Did someone stop my summoned spirit from coming out?' Neil frowned as he thought of this idea.

He glanced at the two Student Assistants if they were the perpetrator.

Stacy wryly smiled at him and answered while leaning on the wall close to the door.

"You seem confused about what happened. I won't comment a lot about this or point out your mistakes since this is part of your assessment. All I can say is that you terribly failed. You can try once more after assessing yourself. We don't have unlimited materials here."

Cliff also found this opportunity to warn the others.

"Stacy is right... We don't have unlimited materials. However, this should be enough for you to do 5 or 6 attempts each. We're hoping that you'll think carefully about your mistakes every time you failed. This is not a race. Everyone only needed to pass and you should all have the ability to pass since you're just applying what you've learned."

'That's easy for you to say...' Neil retorted in his mind as he pinched the incense sticks to stop the smoke from coming out.

On the other hand, Vale was also thinking about Neil's mistake.

He seem to have really summoned the Spirit World's gate since the temperature suddenly turned low for a few moments. Unfortunately, it failed because of unknown reasons.

'If he made a mistake in his prayer, the gate of the Spirit World wouldn't react at all... Is there something missing?' Vale mused.

As Professor Stella allowed the class the take any materials they needed from the boxes, Vale remained seated and started formulating his Oardic Ritual Prayer first.

After 10 minutes of preparation, Vale noticed that his classmates have started their ritual on their tables. Some of them were already scratching their heads as they realized that it wasn't as easy as they thought.

'I hope my theory is right...' Vale prayed in his mind as he looked at the two boxes brought by Professor Harwin.

He was the only one left who hadn't taken any ritual materials yet but there are still plenty of things here.

He found a bottle containing bone powder. Its origin wasn't indicated but Vale knows that it's from a human bone.

He didn't take anything else and returned to his seat.

All of this happened under Professor Stella Harwin's curious gaze.

Chapter 118 Vale's Summon

Stella had noticed Vale's actions from the very beginning.

She saw how he calmly prepared his Ritual Prayer for the first ten minutes. During that time, she saw him revising his prayer multiple times before he felt satisfied.

Then, from the five bottles of bone powder she had prepared, only Vale took one.

In her class in Elementary Spirit Law, she taught them that using bone powder easily attracts evil spirits especially if it's human bone powder.

If it's an animal's bone powder, the chances of attracting evil spirits might be lower but there's a higher chance that you'll summon a spirit with low intelligence... It means that assessing it whether it's friendly or not will be tougher.

If a stupid spirit was summoned, it can be extremely scared and start causing trouble resulting in some accidents. If it's timid, it's even more difficult to say whether it would pass as "friendly". It would depend on the summoner's ability to pacify the spirit and make them friendly.

With this in mind, all the students decided to stay away from this item... except for Vale Chambers.

'Those bone powders weren't meant to be used in this assessment... unless he knows something that I've never taught them yet. Wait... is he thinking of getting a chance to take a Class Advancement Exam in my two subjects?'

Stella's eyes widened as she recalled the rumors about the Arithmetic Class.

She knows that Vale wanted to advance his class as quickly as possible. It was already a rumor in the faculty room.

According to Professor Russel Ravine, Vale was quite arrogant for thinking he could skip this subject.

Stella didn't bring it up to Vale since she felt that he had just been tutored in Arithmetic by the Chambers Clan so he has some confidence. It wasn't that surprising that he was planning to skip that class.

However, Vale's unusual actions in this assessment seem like he's also planning to do it in her class! Stella glared at him as she felt that Vale was being confident.

In the meantime, Vale suddenly felt a chill as he thought that someone managed to call upon the presence of the Spirit World's gate.

However, it doesn't seem to be the case after observing the surroundings once more.

Vale can only shake his head to clear his mind.

As his classmates started chanting their prayers, he remained in his seat as he drew the magic circle engraved in the Animus Haven Hall within his mind.

After recalling the strange magic circle, Vale removed the cap of the bone powder bottle.

He took a deep breath before he started pouring it on his table to form the magic circle.

While his classmates are using incense sticks, candles, mirrors, and various items to summon a foreign spirit, Vale was the only one who thought of using a magic circle.

'As expected... He has experienced summoning a foreign spirit before. However, why did the Chambers Family teach him these things so early?' Stella commented in her mind after seeing how Vale looked so composed.

The knowledge of Magic Circles can be extremely dangerous if the person who had learned it doesn't have a solid foundation in Arcane Studies.

In the past few weeks, she didn't teach them how to use Magic Circles to summon a spirit. As a matter of fact, a fundamental study of Magic Circles would be on be tackled in their second year and would go in-depth in the third year.

If Vale really knows how to use magic circles this early, it means that the Chambers Family had truly invested a lot in this young man with a special purpose.

As for what it was, she doesn't have a clue.

Soon, Vale finished completing his Magic Circle. It was a mini version of the Animus Haven Hall's magic circle...

After he placed the empty bottle to the side, Vale held the Oardic Prayer Stone and started praying in his heart.

"Glorius Gates of the Spirit World. Hallowed Maker of the Soul Society. The Nameless Guardian of the Harbingers. I, a devout follower of the Eternal Darkness, wish to open the gates of the World of Spirits... I wish to call for a living spirit residing in your world that wants to befriend me..."

Vale said these words in Oardic.

The first part of the prayer is something that he had heard from Master Heinz first before Professor Stella Harwin taught it to them in the class.

Calling the gates of the Spirit World is a must since as they said, the gates itself has awareness. They must be respectful when calling it during their prayers

As for the Hallowed Maker and the Name Guardian, they were referring to the two powerful beings that are protecting the Spirit World itself.

Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that you always have to call these three special beings in every prayer pertaining to the Spirit World... It can either just be one of them since they all have control over the Spirit World...

The chances of getting a reply from your prayer would actually be higher if you decided to call for all three of them at the same time.

"..."

Vale waited for a minute but he didn't get a response...

Stella, who was watching him all this time also noticed that Vale seem to have failed in his first attempt.

Nevertheless, she can't see any disappointment in Vale's eyes.

As a matter of fact, Vale seems to be patiently waiting even after two minutes...

Vale should've realized that he had failed according to what she taught them last week.

'I guess he's really stubborn... That can also be a good thing. If he gets out of this hurdle, I'm sure he'll be—'

Stella's thoughts suddenly paused as she felt something around Vale.

Stacy and Cliff also looked at Vale's direction as the spell that is protecting the whole classroom suddenly reacted...

"Y-you..." Cliff was speechless as he realized something.

Stacy, on the other hand, was already rushing to scold Vale.

"Hey! Are you using a forbidden ritual?! You're not allowed to do that... Ahhh!"

Stacy suddenly stepped back as a spirit shrouded in darkness suddenly pounced on her!

Professor was also alarmed as soon as she noticed what Vale had just summoned.

"Dark Spirit!"

Chapter 119 Dark Spirit

Thump!

A reverberating sound suddenly stopped all the students from praying using their Oardic Prayer Stones.

"Aack!"

"W-what was that?"

"I was almost there... Who interrupted?"

"Tsk... I almost pissed my pants."

The class started complaining after being interrupted.

Professor Stella Harwin simply clapped her hands to create a sound attack enough to disrupt everyone from what they were doing...

Stella ignored the students and looked at her assistants.

"Calm down. Stacy, Cliff... Both of you should step back." Stella warned the two as she also informed everyone else who might get scared of the Dark Spirit.

All the students in the class were truly shocked and disgruntled by the professor's sudden action. This includes Vale who was still stunned by the reply of the mysterious beings from the Spirit World...

He may not have heard their voices but their reply was obvious. They had sent a spirit to him just like that!

He thought that he would have to do four or five attempts to get a proper prayer.

pαndα---novel,com 'It was really effective... Those things that Professor Harwin taught us can't be considered at all if I use that strange Magic Circle... I wonder what Master Heinz was thinking for placing it there. It's definitely not a normal Magic Circle.

At this time, the bone powder on his table has already disappeared not leaving any marks at all.

As for the Dark Spirit, Vale can tell that it had already formed a rare connection in his soul and he could feel that it was agitated by Professor Harwin's sound wave attack.

It was a normal reaction since Professor Harwin is an expert on the Darkness Arcane Path. The Dark Energy around her is thicker and stronger compared to the Dark Spirit that Vale had summoned.

Vale wasn't sure how to communicate with it but he still tried as he treated the spirit similar to his Extraction System...

'Professor Harwin called it Dark Spirit... However, I haven't read anything about it in the books in the library.' Vale thought as he hesitated for a moment before he speak to the spirit in his mind.

'Calm down... Don't attack anyone... If you really want to befriend me, you can't harm anyone here.'

Luckily, even though he didn't receive a reply, he can tell that the Dark Spirit started calming down as it hid behind him... No, to be exact, the spirit went to his shadow!

'What is this thing?' Vale was stunned once more at the behavior of the Dark Spirit.

However, a sudden thought flashed in his mind...

Before Master Heinz left with Baroness Florence Chambers, he had left him a book. This book has a title that made him hide it with a fake cover and it was always hidden in his stack of clothes.

The book titled 'The Forbidden Practice of the Unlighted', contained a detailed description of practices that were banned by the Association of the Harmonius Arcane Paths.

This includes practices that can enslave a person's nine generations of family. Vale also read about the curse that can heavily affect not just humans but the land, air, or even water. There were also chilling summoning practices that open the gates of the world of demons.

Furthermore, Vale also vaguely read about a practice that extends human life by consuming tons of human flesh, infants to be exact.

There were many horrifying practices listed in the book and Vale could barely read them since the book contains mysterious powers that make it difficult for him to properly read unless he spends his Dark Energy.

Nevertheless, he can vaguely recall the Dark Spirits written in the book... He didn't think too much of it before since he thought that he wouldn't encounter such a thing.

Professor Harwin's words finally made him recall the content of the book regarding these Dark Spirits.

'Dark Spirits... Dark Spirits... If I'm not mistaken, they were indeed beings living in the Spirit World... However, in the book I've read, they're considered to be the protectors or soldiers of the Soul Society. They're the first ones to attack the people that had offended the Spirit World!'

Vale suddenly froze as he looked at Professor Harwin who was also observing him carefully.

"Vale, is there something wrong with the Spirit you summoned?" She asked.

Vale didn't immediately answer as he carefully chose his words.

"If you think that a spirit hiding in my shadow is considered "something wrong", then yes."

"Well... It's good that you can still reply like a human. You're not possessed. However, I said that you should summon a friendly spirit, didn't I?"

"Of course. Here, I'll tell the Dark Spirit to come out." Vale said as this is where everyone can tell whether he passed the monthly assessment or not...

"Go ahead... I'm waiting. Stacy and Cliff, don't use those spells you're preparing. Although Dark Spirits are considered harmful, you have to remember that we don't know many things about them. Perhaps, a lack of understanding about them is the reason why we consider them harmful or dangerous spirits."

With that said, Stacy and Cliff took a deep breath and relaxed their posture. However, they remained vigilant in case something went wrong.

"Yes, Professor. We'll only watch him."

"You can continue now, Vale. We won't act unless the Professor tells us to do so."

Cliff and Stacy answered.

Vale nodded at this as he also noticed their attacking stance a while ago.

Now that they've relaxed themselves a bit, Vale started communicating with the Dark Spirit hiding in his shadow.

Soon, a dark mist came out of Vale's shadow and remained hovering around him.

No one can tell its appearance since it was deliberately hiding itself.

It was quite frustrating for Stella not to see the Dark Spirit's appearance but there was nothing she could do about it.

"Professor, did I pass the test?" Vale asked.

"Not yet... However, I can assess that it has good behavior. Let me ask you instead. How do you consider this summoned spirit as friendly?" Professor Stella asked.

Vale didn't hesitate and simply answered.

"It seems kind and it doesn't make me uncomfortable in its presence... I can also feel that it respects me. We somehow formed a connection after I successfully summoned it."

As Vale said this, he looked at the Dark Spirit beside him who had suddenly decided to show its face!

Chapter 120 Strange Spirit

Vale was expecting a horrifying appearance behind the darkness covering the Dark Spirit... He thought that it was a monster that could scare away children and adults after seeing it.

However, Vale was stunned to see a beautiful female spirit! Those models in many foreign magazines he read can't even hold a candle!

Just a few seconds ago, he thought of peeking through the darkness to see its appearance... Then, as if it could hear his thoughts, the Dark Spirit actually allowed him to see her!

"Beautiful..." Vale muttered as he knows how to appreciate one. His voice was soft but Professor Stella Harwin didn't miss it.

"You... Are you being beguiled by the Dark Spirit? What beautiful are you saying? It's clearly not showing itself. It's hidden in that cloud of dark mist..." Stella frowned as she pulled out an item in her coat's inner pocket.

It's a golden handbell and obviously a mystical artifact. Vale wasn't sure what it does but he can guess that it was an artifact that can break beguilement or perhaps, even illusions.

Vale raised his hands signaling to the professor to stop for a moment.

"Professor, I'm not being beguiled... The Dark Spirit just showed its face briefly to me after I requested it. You can say that she's a bit shy since she can't show it under everyone's scrutiny... Besides, I'm sure you can tell that the Dark Spirit wasn't planning of harming anyone. Right, I think that can be considered a friendly spirit already... The spirit is inactive. It certainly heard my request and granted it instantly... If it's not considered friendly, then I can't tell anymore what would you like me to do."

At this time, he also heard his classmates agreeing. Thankfully, he has someone who can support him although it probably wasn't needed.

"That's true... Forming a communication is already a sign of it being friendly and can't be considered hostile. We may not see its face but I believe Vale is telling the truth." Chad Bulmung supported Vale's claim. Although he hadn't summoned a spirit yet, he felt that he had gained some inspiration after watching Vale.

He doesn't feel any form of envy at all since he already knows that Vale was special.

It was the same for others.

Perhaps, if they were asked who has the chance of summoning a Spirit faster, then all of them would consider Vale if they put aside their pride.

"Congratulations on passing, Vale. Was it just one attempt?" Aubrey added before Professor Harwin can even announce the result.

"That's right..." Vale nodded and thanked his classmates.

In the end, Professor Harwin investigated the Dark Spirit with the two assistants she brought. It didn't take that long before the three of them confirmed that there wasn't any hostility from the summoned Dark Spirit.

They still can't see the face of the Spirit but it's enough.

"Very well... Congratulation in passing, Vale Chambers... However, I would like to talk to you outside regarding the method of your ritual. Is that alright?" Professor Harwin asked.

Vale didn't mind this as he answered.

"Of course." Vale stood up at this time and it seem to have signaled the Dark Spirit to hide back to his shadow.

"Are you not going to cancel your summon? You can already return the Dark Spirit to the Spirit World... It should be consuming your Dark Energy as it stays here." Stella reminded.

This is something that she had taught in her class as well.

However, the strength of the summoned spirit should be relative to the summoner. This is the reason why Professor Harwin isn't too worried about the summoned spirit even if they are hostile.

At most, these spirits would be harder to deal with since they don't have physical bodies. They can only be attacked by specific Dark Spells which she certainly has including the two assistants.

Vale jolted at her sudden reminder since she was right... He was supposed to feel the draining energy in his body but now that he observes his body, he realizes that something is different!

'This... I can't feel my energy draining at all. Is it because it's hiding in my shadow? Something is really strange with this spirit...'

Vale was confused as he had no idea why it wasn't draining his energy.

As soon as the two were in the corridor outside the classroom, Vale decided to ask the Professor about this.

Stella looked at Vale doubtfully as she entered her Phantasm State to confirm what he just said. In this state, she would be able to vaguely see the flow of Vale's energy, especially if they were standing close to each other...

After a few seconds, her eyes widened as she realized that he was saying the truth...

"What? How is this possible? It's not draining your energy... Wait-I might've made a mistake. Even if you have plenty of Dark Energy in your body, you should still feel it if you concentrate. Can you try to wait for a while in case the drain is just too slow?"

Stella recalled that Vale has a very high Spirit compared to the others, it might be the reason why the Dark Spirit wasn't draining much of his energy.

Unfortunately, Vale had the same answer after observing it for another five minutes. It wasn't making any sense since Stella didn't teach them anything about this.

"Why am I not getting drained? Did I really summon you?" Vale muttered to himself but to his surprise, he somehow heard the Dark Spirit's thoughts...

"Professor, the Dark Spirit just mentioned that it's not using my energy to stay here... It mentioned something weird." Vale said after listening to the voice in his head.

"What did it say to you?"

"The Dark Spirit mentioned that the path opened from the inside and not from the outside so it was able to stay here as much as it likes... Do you know what it means?" Vale asked.

After hearing this, Professor Stella Harwin can only sigh as she finally understood what was happening.

"No wonder... no wonder... It was granted freedom after you called for it in your ritual. You did well, Vale... You did well."

