

D. Extraction 311

Chapter 311 Return

The girls soon agreed to pay Vale 1,500 zen each for the job. It may not be that much, but it's because they weren't earning huge money working for the Order in the first place.

They were also tight on their budget.

At the very least, they agreed to help Vale if he needed them, like when he asked Ashe to run for an errand.

This works well for Vale since he might ask them for corpses later on.

Soon, Vale completed his task as he extracted a total of four Spell Models from the girls.

They were Dead Heart Spell, Ghost Hand Spell, Active Curse Break, and Dusk Imprisonment.

All of them are Tier 1 Dark Spells. As for the Energy Points, he got 40 for each of them, giving him a total of 160 Energy Points in today's session.

'Mhmm... My Ghost Hand's level didn't go up after I extracted the Spell Model... I guess the level is already too high. Maybe I need a few more Ghost Hand Spell Models?' Vale pondered as he checked his Attribute Panel.

[Name: Kyle Marshall]

[Attributes: Strength 69.35, Agility 68.25, Intelligence 100, Vitality 67.80]

[Dark Arts: Spell Dispersion Lv7, Ghost Hand Lv7, Incorruptible Body Lv8, Darkness Manipulation Lv7, Spirit Vision Lv4, Light Absorption Lv6, Create Shadow Soldier Lv7, Cursed Breath Lv4, Moonlight Curse Lv6, Darkness Coil Lv0, Spectral Hands Lv1, Corrupted Chains Lv0, Dead Heart Lv0, Active Curse Break Lv0, Dusk Imprisonment Lv0]

[Holy Arts: Divine Sense Lv7, Blessed Healing Lv4]

[Celestial Arts: Call of the Divine Lightning Lv4, Shadow Mutilation Lv6]

[Summoning Art: Grimoire Attraction Lv6]

[Transformation Art: Human Shapeshift Lv7, Beast Shapeshift Lv0, Voice Manipulation Lv0]

[Martial Art: Meridian Access Lv7]

[Mystic Arts: Arcane Armor Lv1, Soul Bind Lv2]

[Neutral Ability: Extrasensory Perception Spell Lv7, Traceless Shift Lv7, Lightspeed Lv7]

[Available Energy: 2017]

[Available Divinity: 2797.80]

He could only guess that after advancing the Spells to Level 7 of the Advanced Realm, he would need several more similar Spell Models before he could level them up. If that was not the case, perhaps he actually needs to extract a Spell Model with the same Mastery Realm or even above his current Realm.

'Well, I guess that Ghost Hand Spell Model I extracted isn't even at the peak of Intermediate Realm.' Vale thought as he closed the panel and looked at the girls.

They were all tired except for Ashe, who had simply watched everything. At this time, she was taking care of her friends, who could not leave the couch because they all felt weak.

"Guys... I think you need a long rest. Should I call your partners to take you away?" Ashe asked the four with a chuckle.

She felt quite happy that Vale had done what he had promised her. Vale may not have realized it but his success today would certainly attract plenty of people. It doesn't matter whether they are from the Dark Arts Faction or not. Vale would be able to service all of them if he wanted.

Of course, she wouldn't spread this information unless Vale wanted him to do so. After all, she wasn't sure if Vale was taking adverse effects whenever he completed one job. Doing so many Spell Model Removal might cause permanent injury or damage to his body. She wouldn't want that to happen.

"I-I'm still fine. I just need a few minutes of rest. In any case, I'm actually curious if Vale can extract one more Spell Model in me." Daisy, the one who gave up her Active Curse Break, said in a weak voice.

The Active Curse Break that she had thrown away was actually a great Spell since it wasn't just meant to break the curse of the Dark Arts Faction. The Mystic Arts Faction also had some curses in their Arcane Path. The Summoners could also do the same if they have Summoned Beings that could use Curses.

Furthermore, there are numerous Mystical Items out there that could actually curse the Arcanists who tried using them!

It was a really useful Spell, so Vale was so excited when he extracted it a moment ago.

Daisy reasoned out that all the members of her squad have Active Curse Break, so she could just rely on them if she needed to break a curse.

In addition to that, she had already recorded another spell that could protect her against Curses or Hexes. It is called the Passive Curse Break, which could passively protect her. It may be selfish, unlike the Active Curse Break that could be used on others, but she certainly had a point.

"Senior Daisy, I apologize. I can't do it again on the same person. The success rate of removing another Spell Model would be less than 50%, so it's better if we don't push our luck." Vale replied with an apologetic tone.

He could do nothing about this since it seems to be a problem related to the system itself. He had tried with others, and most of the time, he couldn't even extract two Spell Models in a single extraction. He felt that he was only lucky that one time when he got two complete Spell Models.

"I see... It's okay. Can we also call our friends for help? They were still on a mission outside, so it may happen in the next two or three months." Daisy added as the others also looked at Vale with inquisitive eyes.

They were undoubtedly excited to tell their friends about the successful removal of their old and useless Spell Models.

"Of course. You can tell them about it. Just let me know in advance about their number so I can make enough preparations. However, please make sure that this knowledge is only within the Order." Vale replied after some thought.

"Sure! Thank you, Vale..." The girls agreed immediately.

The preparation Vale mentioned was actually quite complicated.

He would consider removing some of his unused Spell Models at that time! After all, with the three new Spells he got today, he also used three Spell Lights!

It means that he was only left with 1 Spell Light today!

As Vale was thinking of leaving for now, the attendant that Ashe had ordered to get all he needed finally arrived. The man was carrying a box where he stored everything.

It was quite amazing that he managed to fit all of them inside.

After Vale confirmed everything was there, Vale finally left to bring them to Professor Evans.

Chapter 312 A Trick?!

Vale headed straight to Professor Evans' office. He couldn't wait to receive the books and start learning the secrets of the Soul Bonding Method.

To be honest, this method seemed really precious, and he felt that he was taking advantage of the Professor's kindness. Her request was too insignificant compared to the value of the knowledge he would get to learn.

'Wait... Is she really being kind?' Vale thought as he was nearing the Professor's office. He suddenly felt that the request she made had a hidden trick.

Perhaps this was some sort of a prank? What if once I arrived with all these things, she would just laugh at me and tell me how foolish I was to believe her?

'This...'

He couldn't help but wonder if there was something he missed.

He stopped in front of the office's door and pondered momentarily. However, he couldn't find any issues with the requested items.

'Whatever... I might be overthinking things.' Vale thought, hoping Professor Evans would appreciate his effort and reward him with her teachings.

He knocked on the door and waited for her response.

"Come in." A cold voice said from inside.

Vale opened the door and entered the office. He saw Professor Evans sitting behind her desk, reading a book. She looked up and saw him with a huge box in his arms.

"Ah, you're back," she said. "Did you get everything I wanted?"

Vale nodded and placed the box on the floor. He then took out the list and handed it to her. At this time, he was still nervous, unsure whether the Professor would stay true to her words.

This is the Dark Arts Academy after all. It wouldn't be that surprising to find eccentric professors here.

"Yes, Professor Evans," he said. "I got everything on the list."

Professor Evans took the list and scanned it quickly. She noticed checkmarks beside each listed item showing how Vale checked them one by one. She nodded at this and smiled slightly.

"Let me see what you got." She muttered.

She then got up from her desk and walked towards the box. She took out the items individually and sifted through them before she felt satisfied with their quality and quantity.

In the meantime, Vale just watched the Professor silently as she took out the eggs, bacon, bread, honey, milk, coffee beans, tea leaves, bananas, strawberries, cake, candles, thread, scissors, needle, thimble, crossword puzzles, cards, perfume, scarf, and earrings. She arranged them neatly on a table near the window.

After finishing, Professor Evans snapped her fingers and a couple of Tier 1 Variants appeared beside her!

This shocked Vale a lot as he didn't even notice their presence until he saw them!

He wanted to ask how she did that, but the Professor commanded the Variants.

"Take these items to the laboratory. Don't damage them. Handle them with care."

After saying that, she shifted her attention to Vale and spoke kindly.

"You have done me a great favor. I don't want to go out of my office these days... Your arrival was perfect."

She walked back to her desk and sat down.

"Now, let's talk about your reward," she said.

Vale felt a surge of excitement. He hoped that Professor Evans wouldn't just give him books but also teach him about the Soul Bonding Method now.

He walked towards her desk and bowed slightly.

"Thank you, Professor Evans. I am ready to learn from you." Vale immediately said.

Professor Evans chuckled as her eyes glinted.

"Good. I've readied the books you need to study."

Professor Evans said as she reached for a drawer and pulled out a stack of books. She placed them on the desk and showed them to Vale.

They contain the basics of the Soul Bonding Method. They are rare and valuable, so you must treat them with care and respect."

She pointed at each book and explained a little bit about them. Vale listened attentively as he knew that this was important.

To his surprise, some of them contained topics that were written in the book of The Forbidden Practice of the Unlighted!

The Soul's Secrets: A Guide to Understanding Your Soul's Structure and Function

The Soul's Language: A Guide to Communicating with Your Soul's Voice

The Soul's Harmony: A Guide to Creating Balance and Peace Between Your Soul and Your Magic

The Soul's Partner: A Guide to Finding and Bonding with Your Soul's Mate

The Soul's Sacrifice: A Guide to Merging Your Soul with the Essence of the Artifacts and People's Soul

Vale looked at the books with awe and curiosity. He felt that he was about to do something that should be forbidden, so he couldn't help but look at the Professor warily.

"Can I check them now, Professor?" Vale asked.

"Not so fast," she said. "There is one more thing you need to know."

She looked at him seriously.

"These books are not enough to learn the Soul Bonding Method. You can only understand it." She paused for a moment to look at Vale's reaction before she continued.

"In the end, this is similar to other Dark Arts. The Soul Bonding Method is not something that you can learn from books alone. It is something that you have to experience for yourself."

Vale nodded at this since that was the same when he was learning Spells. He had to experience how to record or use spells since books could only do so much.

"How can I experience it, Professor?" Vale asked eagerly.

Professor Evans gently smiled as she leaned closer to him and whispered in his ear.

"It is something that you have to do with me."

Vale was confused by Professor Evans' words. He did not understand what she meant by doing the Soul Bonding Method with her. Well, he must be thinking too deeply, so he asked once more.

"Professor Evans, what do you mean by that?" He asked, baffled.

Professor Evans smiled and touched his cheek gently.

"I mean exactly what I said, Vale." She said softly.

"The Soul Bonding Method is not just a technique. It is a ritual. A ritual that involves two essence or souls merging into one. A ritual that requires a partner."

She moved closer to him and wrapped her arms around his neck. Vale was unable to move.

"And you, Vale, are my partner." The Professor whispered, and there seemed to be a force that penetrated Vale through his ears...

Then, she kissed him passionately on the lips.

'Wu--'

Vale felt a jolt of electricity run through his body. He felt his mind go blank, and his will fade away.

What was even more chilling was that he felt his soul being drawn to hers as if by a magnet.

Chapter 313 Trance

'This...' Vale's mind went blank as he did not resist the Professor's advances.

No, he did not know how to resist! It seemed that he had forgotten how to do it.

Instead, he kissed her back and surrendered himself to her.

He did not know what would happen next or what the consequences would be. He didn't even care if he was making a mistake by doing this.

He only knew that he was about to enter a Dark Path that might lead him to glory or ruin. He concluded this as he felt his soul drawn to the Professor.

"Umph..."

Vale and Professor Evans kissed for a long time, oblivious to everything else.

They felt their souls resonate as if they were made for each other. They felt a surge of emotion and passion, as well as a sense of understanding and trust.

They broke the kiss and looked into each other's eyes. It was a marvelous sight. They saw their own reflections, as well as something more. They saw their partner's soul, their true self!

It was a weird sensation, and Vale felt confused... However, as the Professor hugged him, Vale's mind went "clear" as he smiled and hugged the Professor.

"Vale, you are amazing." Professor Evans said with a sincere voice. Her eyes remained on Vale's face as if she was trying to etch Vale's face in her mind.

"You have a beautiful soul, full of light and power. You are the perfect partner for me. I'm so foolish to only realize it now..." She added with a hint of ecstatic voice.

"Professor Evans, you are wonderful." Vale said in a trance. "You have a brilliant soul, full of wisdom and grace. You are the perfect partner for me."

His words reverberated throughout the whole room. If someone else were in the room, they would realize that Vale seemed to be chanting a ritual without his knowledge!

After Vale completed those words, the Professor smiled even more brightly as her eyes started changing colors. It was slowly turning black, but Vale didn't care about this at all.

They kissed again and moved towards the couch. They lay down together, cuddling and caressing each other.

Professor Evans guided Vale as they whispered sweet words and secrets to each other.

They felt their souls grow closer and closer. There was only one step left before they became one.

They felt a wave of ecstasy wash over them as they began the real Soul Bonding Ritual.

Whoosh~

But something unexpected happened before they could complete the ritual!

A dark shadow emerged from Vale's body, taking the form of a beautiful lady with black hair and red eyes. She was Yvaine, the Dark Spirit that had been hiding inside Vale's shadow!

"Disgusting..." Yvaine said in a chilling voice jolting the Professor awake.

Yvaine had been watching the whole scene with anger and emotion she couldn't understand.

Although she initially planned to be an observer till the end, she somehow did not like Professor Evans or what she was doing to Vale.

She heard that the Professor was about to teach Vale the Soul Bonding Method, but she did not trust the Professor's motives or methods.

She did not want her to take Vale away from her.

Yvaine paused in shock as she reached this thought... 'I don't want her to take Vale from me?'

She didn't realize that she had such thoughts until now.

Nevertheless, since she already came out, she decided to intervene and stop the Soul Bonding Ritual.

She pushed the Professor away and reached out her hand to touch Vale's forehead. She sent a jolt of dark energy into his mind, breaking his trance and waking him up.

The Professor couldn't even stop her as Yvaine's presence was just too much! Furthermore, she was in a middle of a ritual. She was in a state where she couldn't easily access her Spell Models!

She fell on the couch and could only watch Vale waking from his trance.

Vale opened his eyes and saw Yvaine's face above him. He felt a sharp pain in his head and confusion in his heart.

His eyes lit up as he realized what happened.

"W-what have I done..."

He looked around and saw Professor Evans looking at him pitifully.

"P-professor..." Vale muttered as he felt a surge of fear and guilt. He felt fear because of how he failed to resist the Professor. This shows how strong she was if he was caught unprepared! She was certainly dangerous!

It doesn't matter if he has a Spell Dispersion if it wasn't fast enough to dispel the Professor's Spell!

On the other hand, he also felt guilt since he realized that he somehow enjoyed what they'd done deep inside! He somehow liked that fleeting moment even though he shouldn't!

Hu~

After he collected his thoughts, he looked at the Professor sternly. This time, he had already activated his defensive Spells to ensure that he won't be tricked again.

He did not like what Professor Evans had done to him or what he had done to her. He did not like the fact that he had been forced into this or that he had enjoyed it.

He jumped up from the couch and grabbed the books he needed. He wrapped them in a cloth and carried it with him.

He looked at Yvaine and nodded gratefully.

"Thank you, Yvaine. You saved me." He said softly.

Yvaine smiled and hugged him... or that was what he thought. She simply went past him and returned to his shadow.

As he thought that he would be ignored again, he heard Yvaine's voice with a rare warm tone!

"You're welcome, Vale."

This made Vale smile for a bit as he felt that Yvaine seemed shy to reply in front of him. He may be delusional, but he couldn't help but consider it.

Then, he looked at Professor Evans with contempt before he left the office without looking back.

He did not know what would happen next.

He did not know the consequences of turning her down but he wasn't afraid of facing it.

Chapter 314 Study

Vale hurriedly left the Professor's office. He wasn't sure where to go as he considered confronting Professor Murton and asking him whether it was all his plan.

However, Professor Murton had already warned him about Professor Evans, so he couldn't entirely blame the old Professor if something went wrong. It was also his mistake to trust a suspicious female Professor within this Academy of Dark Arts.

Nevertheless, he could also try reporting this to the Headmaster, but it feels like he would just make a big deal out of it, considering how he had also obtained the important books she prepared. Furthermore, Professor Evans may reason that she was simply trying to help him familiarize with the Soul Bonding Method.

After all, he was the one who asked her to teach him!

Vale sighed as he recalled what had happened between him and the Professor.

He could still feel her warmth and hear everything she whispered in his ears... It was a strange feeling.

"Hey... Vale, why are you smiling like that? It's creepy." Suddenly, a familiar gentle voice interrupted Vale's thoughts.

Vale jolted as he looked at Maya, who was oddly in this building.

"Creepy? What are you saying?" Vale asked as he would not accept that his smile just now was creepy. At most, it should be called a sheepish smile.

"Whatever... You're smiling alone, so of course, it's creepy. Even if you could talk to spirits or special beings that normal people couldn't see, you should still control your expressions and act like they do not exist if you're in a public space. You should know about that by now." Maya said as she looked at Vale curiously.

His clothes were messy and...

'Was that—' Maya's mind went blank as she noticed Vale's lips and neck.

"That's not important... I'm leaving now." Vale replied as he shook his head.

Realizing that Vale was about to leave, she immediately recalled why she was looking for him.

"Ahh... Master Sherah wanted to meet you. Visit her laboratory when you have time."

Vale raised his eyebrows, confused by the sudden request.

"Is it about being a Potion Tester again? Did she post a mission?" He asked.

Maya shook her head at this. "No, it seems to be about Senior Cressida. I'm not sure. Just talk to Master if you want to know more."

"Cressida?" Vale repeated as he recalled his travel experience with her. "Alright... I'll visit her in her laboratory..."

He lied. He doesn't have plans to visit that old Professor. Since Cressida was weird, her Master must also be weird, so it was better not to interact with them for now.

Luckily, Maya felt satisfied with his answer and just left after giving Vale a weird look.

Vale then went back to his room and locked the door.

He quickly washed himself as he felt that his body had sweated quite a lot from a while ago.

After that, he checked the Divine Sword and his Pocketwatch to confirm that the seal was still there.

Then, he opened the books he got from the Professor and started to read them.

'I should be able to finish this in a day or two.' Vale mused.

It didn't take that long before he was fascinated by the contents of the book, which explained the theory and practice of the Soul Bonding Method in detail.

The books said that the Soul Bonding Method could create a bond between one's soul and another soul or essence, usually the essence of a magic artifact. Just like what Professor Murton said, the bond was stronger and more stable than a seal, as it allowed for a mutual exchange of energy and information between the 'partners.'

The bond could protect the partners from external interference or internal conflict, as it could create harmony between their souls. It means that if he did this bond with the Divine Sword, there wouldn't be any other Arcanist that could control it aside from him.

The books also said that the Soul Bonding Method could not be learned from books alone. This was similar to what Professor Evans mentioned.

It was something that had to be experienced with a willing partner.

The partner could be another Arcanist, a spirit, or an artifact.

The books gave some examples of successful Soul Bonding cases, such as:

A Dark Spellcaster who bonded with his staff, enhancing his spellcasting abilities and modifying a bit of his spells.

A Knight who bonded with an elephant, gaining its strength or power and becoming its rider.

A Runecaster who bonded with a sword, making it his loyal and powerful weapon and companion.

The books also gave some examples of failed Soul Bonding cases, such as:

A Necromancer who bonded with a cursed ring, losing his free will and becoming its slave.

A Shaman who bonded with a demon, corrupting his soul and turning him into a monster.

An Aura Master who bonded with a mirror, trapping his soul inside it and losing his body.

The books warned that the Soul Bonding Method was not without risks and challenges.

It required a high level of compatibility between the partners, as well as a high level of concentration and control over one's Arcane Energy.

If one fails to create a bond, one might end up damaging one's soul, the partner's soul, or both.

The books also warned that the Soul Bonding Method was not without consequences and responsibilities.

It would not be easy to undo once it created a link between the partners.

There could also be other side effects that would depend on the Arcanist's partner.

The books advised that the Soul Bonding Method should not be taken lightly or casually. It should only be done by those ready and willing to commit themselves to their partners, for better or worse.

"For better or worse? Isn't this a bit too much? I just want to control the Divine Sword." Vale muttered with a helpless smile on his face.

Anyway, he read the books carefully and diligently until he fell asleep on his bed.

Chapter 315 Different

It took Vale three more days before he decided to try the Soul Bonding Method with the Divine Sword or what he would like to call the Lightning Sword.

After reading all the books he got, he concluded that his bond with Lotus, Yvaine, and his system was already an experience in itself.

It means that perhaps, he no longer needs the hands-on experience that Professor Evans wanted to happen between them before he tries it on his mystical item.

After his class, he immediately went to the Training Hall and rented a room. He brought several things with him, including the wrapped Lightning Sword.

He chose this place since it already has a Formation Circle that isolates and protects the room from any outside interference.

He took out his Sword and unwrapped it.

He placed it in the middle of the room and looked at its gorgeous design. Its silver blade and black hilt have intricate marks and a faint glow.

Even without using his Spirit Vision, he could feel its power while holding it.

He touched its blade gently and felt a surge of energy from it as if it was alive.

'Well... It's probably the lightning energy I'm feeling...' Vale thought.

He then closed his eyes and entered his Phantasm State. He tried to connect his spiritual energy to the Sword, creating a bridge between them.

This technique was not new to him... This was quite similar to how he does his Focused Extraction. He would first connect to the Spirit of the person he was targeting before he begins his Extraction if he wanted to extract their Intelligence Attributes.

However, this time, he wasn't going to extract Intelligence Points but to Connect with it!

As he felt the Spirit of the Lightning Sword, he opened his eyes, and this time, he focused on his Soul.

The Soul was a complicated 'thing' on his body that he didn't know how to utilize.

However, thanks to the books he read, he knew a few things about the Soul and Spirit.

The Spirit was considered the breath of life. It was described as if it was a flame of life that was in all living beings, including plants and animals. It was also the food of Evil Creatures!

On the other hand, the Soul was considered to be a man's inner nature. With regards to the dead bodies, the book even mentioned that the Soul was actually the one turning into a ghost by Evil Spirits, if the corpse was left untreated.

'This is harder than I thought...' Vale silently thought as he attempted to connect with the Sword.

He wanted to communicate with the Sword's Essence or Soul, creating a link between them.

After some time, he spoke softly to the Sword. He wasn't expecting an answer, but he wanted to familiarize himself with it until he got a response.

"Hello... I'm Vale Chambers. I know that you have an Essence. You may not have sentience, but I know you can respond to your wielder..."

He waited for some time, but there was no reaction whatsoever

"Can you hear me?" he asked. "Can you understand me?"

Vale started talking to it while he connected to its essence. He continued doing this a few more times before he stopped.

He didn't feel too disappointed after being ignored since he knew he wasn't wasting time forming a bond with it.

"Well... That's a failed attempt." Vale muttered as he decided to do the Soul Resonance Test. After reading the books, he had been preparing for this over the past three days.

The books said that before attempting the Soul Bonding Method, one had to find out if one's partner or target was compatible.

To learn whether it was compatible with him, he had to do the Soul Resonance Test. But he decided to skip this process a while ago since doing this test would cost 3,000 zen.

However, now that he had failed with his first attempt, he had no other choice but to do it.

This is the only way of measuring their compatibility.

The Soul Resonance Test was easy to perform. One only had to use a Resonance Crystal that cost 3,000 zen each.

The resonance could be measured by counting the strands that would appear in the crystal. It could be rated on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

He needed to get at least five strands to confirm their compatibility.

Vale held the crystal tightly and pressed it on the Lightning Sword.

"Begin..." Vale muttered as he hoped to get a high resonance with the Sword.

After five minutes had passed, he realized that there was no reaction on the crystal!

'Did I get a crystal with a factory defect or something?' Vale frowned, but he recalled that it was tested before it was given to him. So the crystal shouldn't be broken.

However, since he did not see any strands appearing, hear any sound, or feel any reaction, he wondered what he was doing wrong.

'Did I miss something?'

He looked at the books again, and after some time, he realized that he had skipped a small detail.

The books said that before attempting the Soul Resonance Test, one had to prepare oneself and one's partner... It sounded simple, but it actually meant that he had to cleanse his body and mind, as well as the Mystical Item's condition.

The books even gave exaggerated examples of how to prepare oneself and one's partner, such as taking a bath or a shower, using water infused with herbs or crystals; meditating or praying, using candles or incense; and chanting or singing, using words or melodies.

'What the...' Vale sighed as he understood why he skipped this part while reading the book for the first time. It feels too superstitious and unreliable.

Unfortunately, even if he wanted to do it, he did not have much time or resources to do this now.

He also had other classes as a Second-Year Student in the Academy. The classes like Magic Circle Fundamentals, Ethical Spellcasting, Introductory Alchemy, Intermediate Spirit Law, and others have provided some assignments that he needed to work on, so it was tough to study the Soul Bonding Method on top of that.

He had to balance his schedule and budget and hide his activities from others. He did not want anyone to know what he was doing, especially Professor Evans.

It took him another week before he managed to find some spare time to buy the requirements he needed, like the herbs, crystals, candles, incense, and better materials for a formation circle.

This time, he used them to prepare himself and his Sword in his room instead of the Training Hall.

He tried the Soul Resonance Test again and again, but he still failed. He saw no improvement in his results.

However, as he was losing hope, he felt a surge of energy from the Sword, as if it was alive.

'What happened?' Vale was shocked as he realized that the Lightning Sword was doing something different for the first time.

Then, he realized that Yvaine was already beside him, looking at him pitifully.

"Your Soul is different... You still have a faint connection to the Spirit World, so it won't work. Let me help you." Yvaine said while looking at him like he was a miserable man.

"Y-you..."

Chapter 316 Lightning

"You waited till now before saying it to me?" Vale said, but he immediately shook his head.

"No, it was my fault for not asking you..." He was a bit lost as he didn't expect that this Dark Spirit could solve his problem just like that. He had been studying the Soul Bonding Method diligently, so he couldn't help but feel disappointed in himself after realizing that it was all for naught.

Yvaine just stared at him as she seemed unwilling to explain further.

"Please help me, Yvaine." Vale requested. He still knew that he had to be polite whenever he asked for help.

"Mhmm... This will be quite different from the method you're trying to do with the Sword... I would have to integrate with the Sword and control it to form a bond with you." She replied.

"W-wait... That's not good. Will you be included in the Soul Bond? Isn't that a bad thing for you? You can no longer return to the Spirit World once that happens, right?" Vale asked. He didn't want Yvaine to be trapped with him forever.

To be honest, once he became a bit stronger, he was planning to free her so she could do whatever she wanted. He could even help her return to the Spirit World if she wanted.

It was to apologize to Lotus, who had 'passed away' because of his failure to protect her.

"Don't think too much... I won't be included with your Soul Bond. The Sword you have here is special, so it won't respond through your normal method. The problem is that you have a unique connection to the Spirit World. I eliminated it briefly, so the Sword responded for a moment. However, it won't last that long, so I have to enter the Sword."

"Got it! Let's do it!" Vale said, although he was still a bit confused.

Anyway, he knows that he really had a faint connection with the Spirit World, which was slowly disappearing according to the Messenger he had seen before.

Perhaps, the Lightning Sword didn't want to be bonded with a "Spirit," so it wasn't reacting to his attempts.

Soon, Yvaine forcefully ceased control of the Lightning Sword. Vale could easily tell the changes since the faint blue glow had now turned into a dark aura.

Without waiting for Yvaine's signal, Vale immediately began with the Soul Resonance Test.

Vale pressed the Resonance Crystal, and indeed, it immediately showed a result!

He got a 9 strand within the crystal! This wasn't just his resonance with the Sword but also with Yvaine...

After confirming the compatibility, he continued with the real Soul Bonding Process.

He detected the Essence of the Sword or Yvaine within the Sword and created a link connecting him and the Sword.

From here, everything went smoothly as the sword started feeling Vale's presence.

Before the ritual was completed, the weakened Dark Spirit swiftly came out of the Sword, escaping the faith of being bound to Vale.

Unbeknownst to Vale, a strange phenomenon occurred as he bonded with the Lightning Sword.

A loud thunderclap echoed across the sky, followed by a bright flash of lightning.

The sky turned dark as if a storm was brewing. The students and professors of the Arcane Academy looked up and saw the phenomenon with awe and fear.

Chad and Aubrey, who were about to leave the Physical Training Field, saw the lightning strike...

"Wow, did you see that? That was amazing!" Aubrey's eyes lit up as soon as she saw the sudden lightning.

"Yeah, I saw it. But I don't think it was amazing. That was scary... Let's go in!" Chad replied as he didn't like the rumbling noise that followed the lightning.

"Aren't you curious? Is that a natural phenomenon? A sign from the gods? A prank from some mischievous Arcanist?"

Chad shook his head... "I don't know. Maybe it was a magic ritual. Ahh... Someone might be summoning a Lich! Was it the Gold Necromancer?"

"Hmph... The Gold Necromancer was already too old. He didn't even act when we were under attack by the Secret Organization. Furthermore, all the necromancers in this generation are too weak. The most they could summon, aside from Skeleton Warriors, are Phantom Knights! Phantom Knights! Can you imagine that?! None of them could summon a Death Knight, much less a Lich!" Aubrey said angrily as she seemed so disappointed with the Necromancers of today.

Chad felt that it was quite funny, but he tried not to laugh. "I guess so..."

"Interesting. Maybe this has something to do with the Order's Alchemy Division. I heard that they were staying here to conduct an experiment. Maybe they're making a top-grade potion." Suddenly, another student joined in their conversation. It was Leonore Roland, their classmate.

Chad and Aubrey heard her clearly as they nodded gently.

Their second-year class had recently learned in their Alchemy Class that creating a top-grade potion could create certain phenomena that could affect the surroundings.

Maybe this was actually the one mentioned by their Professor.

Similar conversations around the Academy had occurred as they looked above.

None of them knew whether this was a natural occurrence or triggered by something else.

There was only one person inside the Academy who had a strange feeling about what was happening.

Snap...

Headmaster Jean snapped his fingers as he summoned Vale's shadow in his collection.

'Another lightning... I don't think this is just a coincidence. Is the Masked Devil here?' He mused while observing Vale's ripped shadow.

It was moving strangely, like it was being stimulated by something, so he couldn't help but feel suspicious.

He immediately tried looking for Vale using the shadow's guidance, but to his surprise, he could only roughly sense Vale's location and not feel his presence at all.

He couldn't even use his Telepathy to connect to him!

'Is he inside a strong formation circle?' Headmaster Jean thought.

As he considered visiting Vale in his room, everything suddenly turned normal. Vale's shadow moved calmly, and he could now sense his presence again or use his Telepathy of him if he wanted to.

'Strange...'

Chapter 317 Detected

The Thunder Emperor was sitting in his tent, studying a map of the Eastern Region of the Milton Kingdom.

In his maps, several marks indicated the strongholds of the Dark Arts Faction and other organizations unaffiliated to the faction but were hiding Arcanists who practice the Dark Arts.

He had been hired by the three cardinals of the Church of the Three Paragons to find and retrieve the Divine Sword, a legendary artifact stolen from the Church by a mysterious thief, the Masked Devil.

This Arcanist was a huge mystery for him. He knew that a powerful Arcanist like the Masked Devil had left some traces somewhere. There was no way that an Arcanist of his caliber would just suddenly appear out of nowhere.

He must be an old and rich Dark Spellcaster within the country.

"I'm not getting any progress. What's going on? Am I missing something?" He muttered while looking at the map carefully.

The Thunder Emperor was a notorious mountain bandit who had earned his name and fame by using his powerful lightning magic to raid and plunder villages and caravans. Of course, this was true a few years ago when he was still starting to spread his name, but he was no longer doing the same job as before.

He was now accepting missions that those so-called righteous organizations wouldn't dare to take. His earnings with these types of jobs were several more times than when he was still plundering caravans.

"Sir, I think finding this person would be difficult. He was using a mask when he destroyed the castle. No one knows his face, age, or even his gender. Perhaps he was only copying a male voice to throw us off. By now, he could've changed his face... No, just removing his Mask would make us

helpless. If he was desperate to hide, he might even destroy the Mask to ensure it won't be traced back to him again."

The Thunder Emperor's assistant said while checking various wanted posters on his table. They have collected these posters over the past ten years, and there were thousands of them already.

They were hoping that the Masked Devil would match in one of them.

The Thunder Emperor frowned after hearing his subordinate.

He had been tracking the thief for weeks, following his trail of clues and rumors. He only learned that the heavenly lightning also appeared in the slums of Melthorn City aside from the Murton Castle.

This clue was a dead end. The assistant might be correct...

As he was thinking of slapping the mouth of his assistant for being so annoying, his mystic staff started vibrating.

Weng... Weng...

The Thunder Emperor's eyes lit up as soon as he saw this. He immediately held the staff tightly and closed his eyes...

Boom!

Suddenly he witnessed a scene that the staff was trying to show him.

A loud thunderclap echoed across the sky, followed by a bright flash of lightning.

The Thunder Emperor looked at the phenomenon with shock and excitement...

'Where is this place?' He silently thought as he quickly observed the surroundings where the lightning strike occurred. It lasted for a brief second as his vision disappeared and the staff returned to normal.

As soon as he opened his eyes, he immediately took his pen and a blank paper before drawing what he had just seen.

He felt a sudden surge of intuition. He realized that it had something to do with the Divine Sword. He realized that someone might've triggered the real power of the Divine Sword!

He felt a sudden surge of anger.

"That Divine Sword is mine!"

Soon, he finished drawing and showed it to his subordinate...

"Hey! Can you recognize this place?" He asked.

The assistant jolted by the sudden question, but he quickly looked at the drawing.

After a few moments, he made a guess."

"A fortress? No, it looks more like a noble's castle. The size is too big... Perhaps it's owned by a duke? I'm not sure... However, that castle's design seemed new compared to the old ones we've seen in the south."

"Call the others! I want to know where this place is as quickly as possible."

"Y-yes..."

The assistant wanted to say more. He felt this would be too difficult since the kingdom had many huge castles. Most of them are owned by large Arcanist Organizations, followed by the Nobles. It would be too difficult.

However, to his surprise, one of their members had actually realized where this place was!

"It's Vermont Academy! I've seen it before when I was still a porter. I've seen it from afar, but I can't be wrong. I've seen someone commanding a group of zombies in that place! There was no way I'd forget it."

The Thunder Emperor smiled brightly. He didn't doubt his subordinate's words since everything would actually make sense!

The Masked Devil uses Dark Arts, and Vermont is the Academy of Dark Arts! Even an idiot could guess that the Masked Devil had taken refuge in the Academy after escaping from the Sherman, the Elite Bounty Hunter!

'Perhaps he's a Professor there? He's a public figure that can't be recognized as a criminal... Using a Mask would make sense.' The Thunder Emperor silently thought.

Without any more hesitation, he gave a series of orders to his subordinate as they couldn't let the thief escape again.

He grabbed his staff and stood up. He wore a mask that resembled a hawk's beak, hiding his face and his identity. His eyes glowed with blue light, matching his hair.

Bzzt... Bzzt...

His staff emitted sparks, showing his power and his excitement.

He decided to act quickly and decisively...

'Hmph... I wonder how the Academy will protect you from me...' The Thunder Emperor smirked as he thought of his plan.

This time, he imagined himself storming into the Academy to find the Masked Devil!

However, before he could leave, he recalled that there might be someone who could help him familiarize himself with the Academy.

"That old fool should still be alive... I'm sure he wanted to take revenge. This is perfect."

Chapter 318 Safe

The Thunder Emperor decided to meet up with an old acquaintance. Someone who might be able to help him with his mission.

Of course, this person had a grudge against the Academy and its current Headmaster, so he knew that he would be successful in recruiting him.

"That old man isn't that strong, but he still knows a lot about the Academy..."

The Thunder Emperor muttered as he decided to meet up with Charles Blackwood, the previous Headmaster of the Vermont Academy.

Many people may have thought that he died after fighting against the Masked Devil. But he knows he had survived through a strange Dark Arts.

He got this information by simply bribing the servants of the Coulston Family.

Soon, the Thunder Emperor left his tent and rode his horse toward an abandoned cabin in the woods. He used the lightning pulse magic of his staff to signal his arrival. He didn't want to surprise the old man that much after all.

'He's indeed here...' He silently thought after his Magic Zone felt the presence of the old man.

As he reached the cabin, he dismounted from his horse and knocked on the door.

The door opened slowly, revealing a man in his sixties with gray hair and beard. He wore a black cloak and hood, hiding most of his face and body. He held a poorly made cane in his hand, supporting his limp.

This old man looked even weaker and older than before.

'I guess that Masked Devil had really done him good. But... What's this smell? Is he in the middle of concocting potions?' He commented in his mind.

Charles also looked at the Thunder Emperor with recognition and resentment.

"Why are you here, Mountain Bandit?" Charles asked coldly.

The Thunder Emperor ignored the smell as he removed his mask and showed his face. He grinned and bowed mockingly.

"Hello, Headmaster," he said sarcastically. "It's been a long time."

Calling him 'Headmaster' when he was about to ask for a favor may be wrong, but he knew what he was doing.

As expected, Charles just grunted after hearing how the man addressed him. He didn't shut the door and continued staring at the Mountain Bandit.

"I need your help..." Thunder Emperor said as he explained his reason for coming here. He started explaining how the three Cardinals hired him to retrieve the Divine Sword and how he got the clue that it could be in the Vermont Academy.

Charles hesitated at first since he was still relatively weak after the Masked Devil sucked his vitality and destroyed his Spell Models. He hadn't fully recovered yet.

However, he also couldn't think of a better time to get revenge since he was already in bad condition, and he could tell that his ailment was worsening.

In the end, Charles decided to join the Mountain Bandit in his mission as long as he could act independently. He wouldn't take any orders from Mountain Bandit and would prioritize his own goal.

The Thunder Emperor agreed with this as he only needed information from this old man after all.

Charles then asked to wait for him for about two more hours as he was indeed making a special drug that could help him recover his strength, even for a brief moment.

In the meantime, at the Vermont Academy, Vale realized that several Magic Zones had started spreading out and focusing on his location.

After reaching 100 Intelligence Points, his current Phantasm State had become so sensitive that he could tell the flow of energy within this Magic Zone.

'As expected, my Formation Circle didn't isolate the effects.' Vale thought, clueless about the strange phenomenon that had happened in the sky above the Academy.

He only guessed that they felt that unique pulse of energy that had happened after he connected with the sword.

'They're coming... ' Vale squinted his eyes as he felt the energy of three people rushing to get to his dormitory.

He looked at the Lightning Sword or the Stormbringer, according to the memories of the sword.

He looked at it for a moment and gave a command. In an instant, the sword buzzed and turned into a ray of light before entering his body.

'Incredible... I wonder why the Church of the Three Paragons wasted its full potential... Why didn't they try the Soul Bonding Method on this sword?' Vale thought as he couldn't help but feel curious about this. If this sword was actually Soul-Bound to others, there was no way it could've been stolen in the first place.

"They're here..." Vale muttered as he looked toward the door.

Knock... Knock.

Vale took a deep breath before he opened the door.

Professor Lucius, Professor Stella, and Captain Nova of the Order's Fifth Squad were outside.

Unsurprisingly, they questioned him about the strange phenomenon outside the Academy. Vale was unaware of it, so he denied any involvement.

The three of them didn't immediately believe his explanation as they had suspicions about him before coming here.

"Vale... Even if you're not involved in the lightning, do you have some clue about the person who can control such powerful lightning? We learned that Sherman, the Elite Bounty Hunter, hasn't given up his search for the Masked Devil yet. If he learned about this strange lightning, it wouldn't be surprising to see him lurking around the Academy in a few days or so." Captain Nova said after some time.

"I'm not involved, Captain Nova... I'm still quite tired, so if that's all, I like to get some rest." Vale said as he sent the three people away.

They inspected him several times using their Spells, but aside from sensing his strong Spiritual Energy, they didn't find anything wrong.

"You can go ahead and rest." Professor Lucius said as he coldly looked at Vale before turning his back.

Vale heaved a sigh of relief after seeing them walking away.

However, as soon as he closed the door, he heard the Headmaster's voice inside his head.

"I don't know what you're doing inside your room, but make sure not to cause trouble. Remember, you need to participate in the Twelve Academies Competition... You have to get your chance to participate with your own efforts, or I won't be returning your shadow even if you graduate."

Vale's eyes glinted as he heard the Headmaster's voice...

He didn't even bother to reply to the Headmaster as he stared at the Pocketwatch on his bed. He took it with him and kept it in his pocket, his thoughts unknown to anyone.

Chapter 319 Vessels

Another week had quickly passed after the strange phenomenon that had occurred in the skies above the Vermont Academy.

Captain Stein Nova, a dignified man in his forties, was assigned to protect the Vermont Academy, one of the kingdom's most prestigious institutions of Arcane Arts. As a leader of the fifth squad, he acted as a model for his squad members. He made sure not to miss his patrols every day.

He had been stationed here for only a few months, but he had grown fond of the place and its people.

He was planning his usual patrol around the academy grounds, checking for any signs of trouble or danger. There are many naughty students in this Academy, after all. Cases of misused Dark Spells, failed Rituals, and quarrels between students from different branches of Dark Arts could happen any time of the day.

He had a routine that he followed every morning, starting from the main gate and ending at the Headmaster's office. He enjoyed his job, as it gave him a sense of purpose and responsibility.

Seeing the growth of the students that will soon become the pillars of the Dark Arts Faction was something he enjoyed every day.

"Hmm? A failed ritual?" Captain Nova muttered as he felt a burst of energy. He wasn't sure where it came from, but his first guess was that it was from the 8th-Year students of the Dark Magic Branch.

But as he was about to leave his quarters, he heard a loud explosion outside.

He quickly grabbed his sword and ran to the window. He saw a huge fireball rising from the nearby forest, followed by a cloud of smoke and ash. He also saw several figures flying in the air, hurling fireballs and lightning bolts at each other.

He recognized them as Elementalists, a type of Arcanists who could control the natural forces of earth, air, fire, and water.

"The Academy is under attack?! Is it the secret organization again?! They're pushing their luck!" Captain Nova angrily said as he put on his mask and cloak, which bore the symbol of his Fifth Squad: a golden circle with a white star in the center.

He rushed out of his room and headed towards the main gate. He hoped that his squad was already there, ready to deal with the intruders.

In any case, there was no way these Elementalists could enter the Academy so easily. It is now fortified by the Fourth Division, and even his squad would probably need an hour to destroy it.

However, to his surprise, the Formation Nodes that were hidden on the walls of the Academy had been destroyed already!

A hole was made in the Barrier, and the gate was already open. He saw several guards lying on the ground, wounded or dead. He saw several Elementalists flying over the wall, laughing and taunting. He saw several lower-year students running away, screaming and panicking while the Professors and the higher-year students who happened to be near the gates protected them.

He felt angry and outraged. He drew his sword and activated his Dark Aura. He felt a surge of dark energy coursing through his body, enhancing his senses and abilities.

Then, he shouted with all his might...

"Descend!"

This word seemed simple... However, if it was said by a member of the Evanescent Vessel, it had a very powerful meaning.

As he shouted this, all the members of the Order heard this as well.

They recognized the voice of the man who shouted with all his might.

Even Captain Cleo and Vice Captain Ashe, who were rushing to the Academy, heard Captain Nova's voice.

Because of that, they realized that the situation in the Academy was serious. After all, calling for the Descent of the Order's Secret Existence, could affect the lifespan of the Vessels.

Soon, the 14 members of the Order inside the Academy shouted the same word.

"Descend!"

Suddenly, a suffocating pressure descended around the Academy.

The higher-year students and professors who were rushing to help, suddenly felt the pressure. It was bearable for them but certainly not for the Elementalists that were causing trouble at the gates of the Academy.

Lisa Grayback, who was managing the library, looked outside the window as soon as she heard the commotion. She didn't plan to leave this building since they were already informed that this was one of the safest places in the Academy as this place was guarding important books and documents of the Dark Arts Faction.

As she looked outside to see what was going on, she heard the battle cry of the Members of the Order of the Evanescent Vessels.

"Descend!"

It seemed to be a spell that triggered the descent of a mysterious being!

The whole Academy's temperature started dropping as Lisa saw one of the members of the Order start morphing outside!

It was such a terrifying but magical sight to behold!

"So it was like that... They're really Vessels for a Mysterious Being in another realm." A familiar voice muttered beside her.

Lisa looked at her side, only to see Vale standing close to her.

"V-Vale... Do you think that they can protect us?" Lisa worriedly asked.

Vale nodded without hesitation.

"It's fine... The enemies are too weak. They're just a diversion, similar to the tactics used by the Secret Organization... That won't work twice." Vale calmly said as if he could see what was happening within the entire Academy.

Vale seemed so reliable when he said this, so Lisa also calmed down as she prayed for everyone's safety.

In the meantime, Captain Stein Nova, who had first called upon the presence of a mysterious being, transformed into being closely similar to the Death Knights with high intelligence.

He charged toward the Elementalists, ready to fight them.

But before he could reach them, he heard another explosion from afar. He shifted his attention to the source of the explosion and saw another group of Arcanists attacking the nearby settlement or town. They were wielding various weapons and tools, emitting different colors and shapes.

He recognized them as Aura Masters... However, he didn't mind them. These Aura Masters are like cockroaches with strong vitality. Curse Experts are required to kill them quickly. The other squads should be able to deal with them even without his assistance.

Boom!

As soon as he killed one of the Elementalists who dared to attack one of the fleeing students... He saw the enemies retreating so hastily! They were using some Talismans to allow them to survive the Pressure brought by their Descent.

'So it's another diversion... It doesn't matter.'

"Chase after them! Do not capture them! Kill!" Captain Nova shouted with his deep and coarse voice.

He didn't mind whether the Elementalists were just a diversion.

He believed that whoever sneaked inside the Academy would be dead for sure!

Chapter 320 Found

Captain Nova heard another explosion from inside the Academy.

He was right! After his squad chased after the fleeing Elementalists outside the walls, another group took this chance to create a hole and enter the Academy.

Of course, he didn't stop his chase as someone would be waiting for them inside—someone who was even stronger than a Captain like him.

He quickly shifted his attention to the fleeing Elementalists while also wondering about the intention of their infiltration this time...

'Is it about that damn pocketwatch again? Or was it related to the lightning a few weeks ago?' He thought for a brief moment before recalling that the 'Descent' wouldn't last that long.

He had to hurry and kill all these Elementalists before their timer ran out.

In the meantime, while all of this was happening, Isaac Vermont was observing everything going on from the top of the Dark Soul Tower of the Academy.

He was watching the Elementalists and the Aura Masters outside the Academy, who seemed to be experts of destruction. They would destroy anything they pass through without caring whether they're valuable or not.

"This is interesting... They're not targeting the students or the professors. They're causing chaos as if that was their true goal." He muttered with interest.

He had been trying to find out the invader's identities and purpose for coming here. However, their actions really show that they were just distractions.

'They're too weak and unruly... I don't think they're from the Secret Organization... Are these hired mercenaries?' He guessed while observing the fluctuations of their energy. They weren't that impressive. If their 9th-year and 10th-year students have Mystical Artifacts with them, they would be more than enough to deal with these enemies.

Soon, he heard an explosion at the nearby laboratory and realized that someone had entered the Academy through a secret path...

'So it's him... He had truly gone mad this time...'

He recognized the intruder as Charles Blackwood, the previous Headmaster of the Academy.

Although they have made changes to their defensive structures, the secret path couldn't be easily removed. They could only block it with a Formation Circle, so it could no longer be used. However, it seemed that Charles had brought someone who could forcefully break this Formation.

"Sherman isn't here... I guess I should just watch for now..." He muttered as he ignored the presence of the previous Headmaster and his companion, who was wearing a weird mask and staff.

No, he wanted to ignore those two. However, he heard their conversation, which garnered his interest.

"Mountain Bandit, are you sure that your Staff will react on the Divine Sword?" Charles asked the man beside him. He felt even more exhausted after breaking through the secret path they used to enter.

They quickly arrived at the center of the Academy, but because of the traps that were placed in the secret path, they had certainly caught the attention of the Headmaster and other Professors inside the Academy.

They had to find the Masked Devil and steal the Divine Sword quickly.

"Yes, I'm sure. It's been reacting ever since we entered this place. It was faint, but it was reacting. The sword was hidden somewhere here." The Thunder Emperor replied as he moved in the direction where he could sense it.

"They're coming at us... You have to make sure that we're in the right direction."

"Of course. This staff was made from an object found together with the Divine Sword. To be specific, this is made from the Scabbard of the Divine Sword." The Thunder Emperor said.

"What did you say?"

It wasn't just Charles who was surprised by these words.

As a matter of fact, Headmaster Jean Hoffman, Isaac Vermont, and Vale Chambers were listening to their conversations as well.

Jean and Isaac looked at the staff with greed while Vale connected his mind to the Stormbringer to ask if it was true.

In the meantime, the two infiltrators already stopped in front of the library.

They didn't enter the place since they could feel a terrifying formation of art blocking their path.

"Only those with ripped shadow can safely enter this place... If you're sure it's inside, then we should give up..." Charles said as he looked behind them.

He could see Jean Hoffman appearing from the shadow of a nearby pillar. Jean was holding his black top hat with his left hand while his cane with his right hand.

The man was showing his unbothered smile as if he didn't mind their infiltration into this place...

"Hello, Charles... Hello, Mountain Bandit... Welcome to my academy." He greeted.

"Are you telling me that the Divine Sword was inside our library?" Jean continued as if they were friends.

The Thunder Emperor didn't even glance at him and just stared at the door of the library.

"It is inside... I'm sure of it. Are you the Masked Devil?" The Thunder Emperor asked.

Jean's eyes widened as soon as he heard the question... He blinked for a moment before laughing out loud.

"Hahaha! That was unexpected. No, I'm not the Masked Devil. I don't even have an idea about his identity. I can't remember any brave Dark Arts Practitioner who would dare offend the Church of the Three Paragons besides Sir Morgan Vermont." Headmaster Jean replied as Darkness suddenly shrouded the three of them.

"Charles, you're already too old. I heard that you didn't even last an hour against the Masked Devil." He said as he slowly approached the two.

"Kekeke... You're too arrogant, Jean. If you didn't have the help of three Master Arcanists, you would've failed to take my position. You're just alone now and there are two of us here." Charles said as he flicked his finger to swallow a black pill.

The pill immediately took effect, and an aura that wouldn't lose from the Descend Spell of the Vessels appeared.

The Darkness that the Headmaster was trying to use stopped a few meters away from the two.

"We're both in the Darkness Path, Jean... You're a lot easier to deal with than the Masked Devil." Charles said as his eyes turned completely black.

His gray hair and beard also started turning black while his skin became bronze...

"So it's indeed a forbidden pill..." Jean stopped moving as he shifted his attention to the Thunder Emperor. "Hey, Mountain Bandit, aren't you going to attack me?"

The Thunder Emperor smirked as he replied. "I'm the Thunder Emperor... and I don't need to act to deal with you. The old man is more than enough."

The Thunder Emperor said as he charged and slammed his staff at the door of the library...

Boom!