

## D. Extraction 421

### Chapter 421 Result

"Yes, it's already our win here. We're faster than Mortimer Academy by 10 minutes, so it's already guaranteed. Let's win all the way!" Rizza replied, her voice tinged with a mix of excitement and pride.

They had also beaten the Adeareth or the Rune Arts Academy by 7 minutes, so they felt that no one could defeat them anymore.

"I guess the fourth-year students of their Academy weren't as impressive as their sixth-year batch... The Psychic Arts and Dark Arts Academies would probably show the same result." Ceres muttered as she couldn't help but notice that the other Academies' fourth-year students weren't as impressive as their sixth-year counterparts.

Her senior classmates, who had gathered around, also nodded in agreement. "Well, the Psychic Arts and Dark Arts Academy have never had decent records in this contest..." one of them remarked with a hint of amusement.

"Kuku... Isn't it because we're bullying them before?"

"Sshhh... That's no longer allowed."

Ceres's curiosity piqued as she heard their conversation and couldn't resist asking. "You guys are bullying who?"

She leaned in closer, eager to uncover the secret conversations happening among her seniors.

The seniors exchanged hesitant glances. However, since the Princess was the one asking, it didn't take long before one of them decided to enlighten Ceres.

"Well, Princess Ceres, in previous competitions, it was common for the higher-ups to select a group of students, like those from the Elemental Arts Academy, to stay behind and intentionally hinder the Dark Arts students' progress. This was done to delay them and ensure they wouldn't achieve a high ranking."

Princess Ceres gently nodded after hearing this. Surprisingly, she didn't feel disappointed or outraged by this revelation.

"Well, they deserved that." She replied calmly, her voice reflecting a hint of understanding. "But that would be a pity for the Elemental Arts Academy."

Her senior nodded, acknowledging her sentiment. "It's true, but since only three academies will receive points or rewards in the end, there are bound to be groups that won't get any. In a way, they might as well contribute by hindering others."

Ceres nodded in agreement, appreciating the strategic approach. She didn't find anything wrong with this method.

Just as she was about to ask for more details, the stone door at the Labyrinth's exit suddenly began to vibrate, signaling the imminent emergence of a group.

The next students should be from Farrel Academy... These Mind Controllers would be a massive problem in the Clash of Champions, so Ceres immediately paid attention as she wanted to familiarize herself with them.

Excitement filled the air as everyone turned their attention towards the door, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the next group.

"Huh?"

However, as the group emerged from the Labyrinth's exit, everyone was stunned to see that their uniforms were different. They were unmistakably wearing the attire of the Dark Arts Academy.

Confusion filled the air, as everyone knew that the Psychic Arts Academy was supposed to be the next group to enter after the Transformation Arts Academy. The Dark Arts Academy should have been the final group to navigate the Labyrinth.

Had there been some last-minute changes that no one was aware of?

Whispers filled the crowd as they tried to make sense of the unexpected turn of events. "Aren't they from Vermont Academy?" One student spoke out loud, his voice laced with bewilderment.

"Indeed, what happened to Farrel Academy?" another pondered aloud. The confusion was evident on everyone's faces.

The Labyrinth Officials, too, were momentarily taken aback by the unexpected twist. However, they quickly consulted with the event Timers to confirm the situation and the timings on the other side.

The verdict came as a shock to everyone. The Vermont Academy had completed the Labyrinth in less than 10 minutes, surpassing the Farrel Academy, who had entered 15 minutes earlier.

"9 minutes and 40 seconds! The Vermont Academy has reached the end of the Labyrinth in less than 10 minutes! We have a winner!" The Labyrinth Official announced, his voice was filled with a mix of surprise and awe.

The crowd erupted in a chorus of gasps and murmurs, as this record-breaking time was unprecedented, even among the higher-year students.

They hesitated to applaud the Dark Practitioners, but as soon as one of them started clapping, the crowd just followed. There were no loud cheers for Vale's group at all.

Some supporters of the Holy Arts Academy, unwilling to accept the unexpected outcome, voiced their suspicions.

"Impossible... Is there some sort of mix-up?" One of them questioned, their voice tinged with doubt. "There must be a mistake..." another added, seeking an explanation for this unprecedented feat.

These words continued for a while as the officials had no choice but to conduct further investigation.

The Labyrinth Officials, experienced in handling such situations, immediately called upon the special officers who had been trailing behind each group.

Among them, Steven emerged from behind Vale's group, ready to shed light on the situation.

He confirmed that the Dark Arts Academy had indeed taken the fastest but most challenging path within the Labyrinth.

"I'm not allowed to disclose the details of what they did inside the Labyrinth, but I can tell you that the exit they chose was the most difficult one..." Steven revealed.

His words hung in the air, leaving a sense of mystery and intrigue. The crowd could only accept this explanation, albeit with lingering curiosity.

As the revelation sank in, Ceres squinted her eyes and looked at Vale, the leader of the Dark Arts Academy, with a cold gaze.

'Most difficult one? We've also chosen a difficult path... Just what kind of path they encountered. Tsk...'

As she thought of this, the stone door vibrated once again, and the students from Farrel Academy came out. She was no longer interested in this and decided to leave.

"Just take the award, Rizza. I need to get some rest." Ceres said as she turned her back to leave the resting area.

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In the meantime, a young girl with a striking mix of black and white hair sat in the audience seat, her eyes fixed on the unfolding event.

She couldn't help but smile after seeing the students of the Dark Arts Academy. She even exclaimed after hearing that they achieved a record-breaking time in the Labyrinth.

Beside her, a faint figure of a Dark Spirit perched quietly, sensing the girl's growing interest.

With a gentle nudge, the young girl turned to the Dark Spirit and whispered softly. "Lotus, do you want to meet him? He's the person I've been talking about all this time. I heard he also has a Dark Spirit..."

#### Chapter 422 Sensed

Lotus, an ethereal presence bound to the girl, showed a faint smile on her face.

'She must be glad to see another Dark Spirit...' Denise thought.

"Indeed, it would be fascinating to meet him..." Lotus answered.

Denise's eyes sparkled after hearing this. Without any hesitation, she scanned the bustling crowd, searching for any signs of Vale's group.

Soon, she chuckled mischievously as she swiftly left her seat in the audience to meet Vale.

"He will definitely be surprised to see me here. Hehehe..." Denise thought to herself, aware that her appearance had changed significantly. She knew that Kyle, who now has the name Vale, would probably still recognize her, but she was eager to see his reaction.

However, as Denise attempted to approach Vale, she was unexpectedly blocked by a few individuals from the Holy Arts Faction. It seemed that they had noticed she was a Dark Art Practitioner and were determined to prevent her from getting too close to the participants of the event.

"Stay right there..." one of the guards sternly commanded.

"You're not allowed to get closer to the Princess." another added, eyeing Denise suspiciously. "Especially a Dark Arcanist like you." a third person chimed in, their tone filled with disdain.

These three guards seemed to be observing her all this time. There was no way they just happened to block her path.

Denise felt frustration welling up within her, wanting to argue and explain herself.

However, she quickly realized that arguing would only delay her chances of meeting Vale. Suddenly, she spotted Vale's group preparing to leave the area.

They had already received the reward from the competition, and there was no point staying here.

Realizing the urgency of the situation, Denise made a split-second decision to back off and find an alternative way to meet Vale.

"Hey! Where are you going?" One of the guards shouted as she saw Denise escaping.

They began to follow her, suspicious of her intentions.

"So annoying..." Denise muttered under her breath, picking up her pace as she moved hastily through the crowd.

Denise contemplated using her Dark Arts to lose the pursuing guards, but she knew it would only escalate the situation. Just as she was about to lose hope, she remembered her faithful Dark Spirit, Lotus.

"Lotus!" Denise called out, her voice filled with urgency and determination. She knew she had to find a way to lose the guards.

"Don't kill them..."

She entrusted her Dark Spirit with the task of dealing with the guards while she sought an opportunity to meet Vale on her own terms. In any case, the Dark Spirit doesn't trigger any form of fluctuations like Dark Arcanists when using their abilities.

Their actions are challenging to detect, so she was sure that Lotus could deal with this matter silently.

As Lotus took action, Denise seized the moment and slipped away, carefully maneuvering through the crowd.

She knew that time was of the essence, and she had to find Vale before the guards caught up with her.

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In the meantime, Vale gazed at the rewards they had received for achieving first place. Along with the 200 points for the Academy Rankings, each of them was given a Peak-Grade Spirit Pearl.

The pearls had a mesmerizing mix of purple and green hues, and they shimmered with a captivating shine.

As Vale examined the reward, his expression remained distant, as if he wasn't entirely satisfied.

Crystal, noticing his demeanor, asked him curiously... "This should be awesome! This can help us add one Spirit Strand to our bodies as long as we have less than 40 Spirit Strands. This is a great item. Why do you look like that?"

Vale wryly smiled after hearing this.

He understood the value of the Peak-Grade Spirit Pearl to other Practitioners. The opportunity to add a Spirit Strand to their bodies without any negative effects was incredibly rare. It was a chance to increase their Spirit Strands, regardless of whether they had reached the limit of their innate potential or not.

Crystal's question was interrupted by Maya, who interjected, "What else could be the reason? This means Vale's Spirit Strands are already over forty..."

Maya's words surprised the others, causing even the senior student accompanying them to be taken aback. The realization that Vale possessed such a high number of Spirit Strands was surprising to everyone present.

"Is that true?!"

"Wait... How was that even possible?"

"Is the rumor true about you being a Half-Spirit true?"

"Indeed... That rumor wasn't as unbelievable as I thought."

Vale didn't want to make a big fuss about it, so he simply smiled at their reactions. However, amidst the conversation, he suddenly felt a familiar aura nearby. His instincts kicked in, alerting him to the presence of someone he probably knew.

"Senior," Vale addressed the senior student, "since we don't have any more competitions today, I'll be looking around. I'll return to the hotel once I'm finished."

"Wait! Where are you going? You can't do that... You have to move in group." The senior student said as he tried stopping Vale.

"This won't take long!" Vale said as he used his Lightspeed Spell to leave the place.

Maya and the others were quite surprised to see Vale being so urgent. He probably has some reason so they decided to cover for their friend.

"It's fine, Senior Gabbi... Vale probably saw a family member."

"Our next competition will be tomorrow afternoon, so we have plenty of time."

"I heard that the fifth-year's duel tournaments would start later today. Should we watch them first?"

Senior Gabbi could only sigh as he heard Maya and the others' words. In any case, he couldn't leave them to chase for Vale, so he decided to just go with the group and hope that Vale would return in time.

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'Is that a Dark Spirit?' Vale mused.

His curiosity had been piqued, and he felt compelled to investigate the source of the familiar aura...

'Yvaine... Are you feeling this?' Vale asked the Dark Spirit inside his Shadow.

"Yes... I can also feel the presence of the Abyss around us. Be careful..."

## Chapter 423 Reunion

Vale was a bit surprised after hearing Yvaine's words.

He had also heard the word Abyss from Lotus, and that place doesn't sound great. He had an impression that it was a place that could even cause trouble to the Spirit World, even though there were plenty of powerful entities living there.

According to Lotus, the Abyss should be a terrifying place where Dark Spirits like her had to stop from spreading throughout the Spirit World. It seems to be capable of invading the Spirit World, which was quite baffling to Vale.

He then maximized the limit of his Magic Zone to observe the surroundings before asking Yvaine once again.

'Abyss... Are you referring to the Demonic Beings? Are they here?' Vale asked in concern.

"Yes. However, I can't pinpoint their location... I only sensed their drifting essence." Yvaine answered in a serious voice.

"I guess it wasn't serious. I'm sure that those beings won't dare to come here." Vale said as he recalled that this place was basically heavily guarded not just by one faction but all twelve Arcane Factions within the kingdom.

Yvaine didn't reply anymore, so Vale continued searching for the familiar aura.

It didn't take long before he found a familiar young girl trying to escape from the guards.

"This girl... What did she do this time?" Vale muttered in a soft voice as he used his ESP spell to suppress any fluctuation of energy coming from his body before arriving beside the young girl.

"Denise, did you steal something from them?" Vale's voice sounded beside Denise, giving her a scare.

"Kyle! Ahh... Vale! I was looking for you. I thought you wouldn't recognize me with my hair and mature body." Denise exclaimed, a mixture of surprise and relief evident in her voice.

With a chuckle, Vale replied, "Heh~ You're only 14, right? I don't think your body has fully matured yet." He playfully took Denise's hands into his own, a genuine smile gracing his face.

He then reactivated his Lightspeed and carried her away.

"Ahh! What's this Spell, Vale?!" Denise asked in shock. They were moving so quickly!

"Hehe... You don't have a movement spell, right?" Vale answered with a soft laugh.

"Hmph... I'll also surprise you later...." Denise replied mysteriously as they chatted while moving away.

The wind rushed past them, carrying their voices and creating a sense of exhilaration and freedom.

After some time, they stopped in a secluded spot, and Vale gently set Denise down on her feet.

"Denise, it's truly wonderful to see you again... I didn't know you'd also be here... Wait, did you come here for me?" Vale suddenly asked.

Denise nodded at this as she replied.

"Yes... Master Heinz sent me here to give you a gift for entering the competition. He probably thought you wouldn't achieve much in the competition, so he wanted me to bring you the corpses of beautiful nobles from Ruri Kingdom."

"Ahhh? Wait, what? I have so many questions... Corpses of beautiful nobles? How could he even have that? Why did it come from the Ruri Kingdom? Also, why did he think I wouldn't achieve much?" Vale asked in one go as he was baffled by Denise's sudden words.

Denise seemed to have expected this reaction and chuckled.

"I can explain everything to you. However, do you really want us to talk in this dark alley?"

"Ahem... Let's go to a nearby shop then. I noticed a coffee shop in the corner a while ago." Vale replied as he took the lead.

"Right... About the corpses... Do you really like them? Should I just dispose of them? I'm keeping them in a small storage house, and I'm paying for it for three zen a week." Denise said, which made Vale hesitant to answer.

"W-well... Can I take a look at them? Master sent them, so it won't be appropriate to just dispose of them, right?" Vale replied after some thought.

Denise narrowed her eyes as she looked at Vale with a mix of disappointment and relief.

She was disappointed at his hobby, but she also felt relieved that he hadn't changed that much after entering the Academy. He was still the Kyle Marshall that she had befriended in that laboratory.

She had seen many people change their behaviors after entering the Vermont Academy in a few years, so she was still somewhat pleased by Vale's reaction.

"Alright... Let's have a coffee first since I won't be in the mood to eat once we go to that place." Denise replied as she was still not used to being around corpses, unlike Vale.

Although she may appear unbothered by it, she was merely putting up with it since she needed Heinz's help.

Soon, the two of them entered a coffee shop, where Denise explained the situation to Vale.

Vale learned that the corpses were actually bought by Heinz, not because he really wanted Vale to have them but because Heinz wanted to study the tattoo marks on their bodies that seemed to be capable of drawing power to another realm or perhaps entity.

It was the specialty of the Ruri Kingdom's nobles, and it doesn't seem to belong to any of the 12 Arcane Paths. The closest was the Rune Arts, but they were still different since the markings weren't anything close to the ones used by the Rune Arts.

After all, the Runes were languages of the ancient, while the ones in the bodies of the Nobles were more like drawings of the ancient.

This made Vale even more curious about the nobles. He couldn't wait to see what kind of attributes he could extract from them.

Then, Denise explained why Master Heinz had such a low expectation of him.

"He was feeling bad that he failed to give you the best potions he could make but was able to give it to Evelyn and the others... Ahh, you should've met them already, right?" Denise asked.

"Those kids... Yeah, I met them. They're quite prideful." Vale answered.

"Heh... Of course, they've beaten a few young Elementalists before they were allowed to enter the Academy by Sir Heinz... Anyway, he knows that you will reach the limit of your potential, so he wanted to at least give you those corpses."

Vale shook his head as it seemed that Heinz had underestimated him. Well, that wasn't surprising since the old man had no idea about his system.

As he thought of asking Denise about the storage room where she kept the corpses, he suddenly felt a very familiar presence getting close to him...

"Ahh... Lotus?" Vale asked in surprise.

Denise was also baffled as she looked at Vale in shock.

#### Chapter 424 Corpses

"Ahh... Lotus?" Vale asked in surprise, sensing a very familiar presence approaching.

Denise, too, was taken aback by Vale's recognition of Lotus.

Her eyes widened in shock as she looked at Vale, her thoughts racing to find an explanation.

"You know her?!" Denise exclaimed, her voice filled with astonishment. She couldn't understand how Vale could possibly know about Lotus.

Vale had a wry smile on his face in response to Denise's question. "Yes... It's been a while, Lotus... Do you still remember me?" he asked, addressing the invisible presence that only he and Denise could perceive...

At that moment, Lotus, the Dark Spirit, materialized within the confines of the coffee shop. She stood before Vale, her ethereal form exuding an air of mystery. No one else in the shop could see her, as her presence remained hidden from all except for the two.

"I have a vague recollection of your appearance..." Lotus replied, her voice carrying a hint of curiosity.

Vale sighed softly, realizing that Lotus's memory of him was not as strong as he had hoped.



He proceeded to explain to Denise the events that had transpired between him and Lotus before. He recounted how Lotus had been his Dark Spirit companion, but unfortunately, she had met her demise while protecting him.

"T-that happened?"

Denise listened in awe, shocked to learn that Lotus had been Vale's Dark Spirit companion in the past. She couldn't help but feel a sense of wonder at the mysterious workings of fate.

It seemed that Lotus hadn't truly perished but had returned to the Spirit World. After a long period of recovery, Lotus had found her way back to the mortal realm and had chosen to be summoned by Denise this time.

"What a coincidence! Ahh... No, perhaps we're really fated to each other?" Denise mumbled the last part as she couldn't help but look at Vale expectantly.

The reunion of Vale and Lotus was beyond anything she could have imagined.

"This could probably be a great story in a book! The Forbidden Love of Human and Spirit!" Denise exclaimed in excitement.

It appears that aside from practicing her Dark Alchemy, she also had plenty of time to read various novels.

As they sat in the cozy coffee shop, Vale, Denise, and Lotus spent a few minutes catching up and sharing brief stories of their respective journeys.

As expected, Lotus couldn't say much as she couldn't recall most of her memories yet.

Soon, Vale shifted the topic to the essence of the Abyss that Yvaine had detected a while ago.

At this time, Vale also summoned Yvaine, which made Denise really excited.

"Whoa~ Dark Spirits looks so cool..." Denise muttered as she realized that, indeed, all Dark Spirits had an unfathomable aura around them.

"Ahem... Lotus, did you notice the essence as well?" Denise asked. She had a vague idea of the Abyss since she read it in some ancient book written in Oardic. However, she only knew that it was another realm similar to the Spirit World, where Practitioners could normally sense if they performed some ritual.

As for the beings in the Abyss, she doesn't have information about them.

"Yes... It was faint, but it was definitely there for a while."

With this, Vale could confirm that Yvaine didn't just make a mistake a while ago.

"What do we do about it?" Vale asked. He certainly had no idea about what to do on this matter.

"Nothing... Ignore it. It's not a problem you can resolve. Just leave this place if something happens." Yvaine replied.

Lotus also nodded at this, as she didn't seem to like dealing with such a problem.

"Alright... Then let's go and visit the storage room..." Vale said eagerly, his excitement palpable. He stood up to pay for their drinks, ready to meet the corpses that his Master had gifted for him.

Although he didn't like to be labeled as a corpse lover, he couldn't refuse the free extractions either. Denise wryly smiled, amused by Vale's enthusiasm.

She followed him, leading the way to the storage room she had rented for the corpses. It didn't take long for them to arrive at their destination, and Denise unlocked the door, revealing a room filled with twelve beautifully preserved corpses of women in their twenties and thirties.

There was no decaying smell and they were all in perfect condition thanks to Heinz's unusual sealing method.

Vale's eyes widened in awe as he took in the sight before him. The bodies were adorned with intricate tribal tattoos, marking them as unique and distinct entities. It was a stark contrast to the Rune Arts that Vale was familiar with, and his curiosity was piqued.

'Master Heinz really had an amazing preservation technique. It's a pity I didn't learn it from him.' Vale silently thought.

Heinz didn't have a reason to use this Sealing or Preservation Technique in the laboratory since the Quince Furnace would be their immediate destination. It wasn't surprising that Vale wouldn't see Heinz using the technique.

"Awesome..." Vale commented, his voice filled with genuine excitement.

He approached one of the corpses, carefully examining the markings on its skin. The tribal tattoos held an air of mystery, and Vale couldn't help but marvel at their beauty.

Denise looked at Vale, her expression a mix of curiosity and confusion.

"Are you that excited?" she asked, unable to comprehend Vale's fascination with the corpses. She couldn't help but wonder if Vale intended to do something more to them.

Vale smiled and nodded at her. He understood that Denise might misunderstand his true intentions, but he couldn't reveal the existence of his Divine Extraction System to her.

Instead, he replied, "There's more to it than meets the eye. Corpses of Arcane Practitioners are more interesting than you thought..."

Denise just shrugged after hearing this since Vale sounded like Heinz...

'Crazy...'

Vale ignored her reaction.

Then, he placed his hand on one of the corpses... At that moment, a message flashed in his eyes from his Divine Extraction System.

[ Human corpse has been discovered. Would you like to extract it? ]

Chapter 425 Current Attributes

Vale didn't hesitate to agree to his system message.

[ Extraction successful. Energy +95 ]

[ Extraction successful. Fiend Essence ]

As soon as the Extraction was done, Vale's eyes widened as he realized that the tattoo marks on the corpse had also dissipated, exposing the beautiful corpse even more.

"Ahh..." Denise was similarly surprised as she noticed what had happened.

Indeed, Vale wasn't just fooling around when he was looking for the corpses.

"What was that, Vale?" Denise asked.

"I also wanted to know... These corpses are really high quality... Master Heinz must've bought them for an expensive price." Vale muttered as he realized the huge Energy Points he got from that one Extraction!

As for the Fiend Essence that he extracted, he doesn't have an idea about it, but it might be similar to the Imp Essence.

With enough Fiend Essence, perhaps he could also transform into a Noble of the Ruri Kingdom.

Vale chuckled at this thought as he continued extracting the others.

[ Extraction successful. Energy +90 ]

[ Extraction successful. Fiend Essence ]

[ Extraction successful. Energy +97 ]

[ Extraction successful. Fiend Essence ]

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[ Extraction successful. Energy +95 ]

[ Extraction successful. Fiend Essence ]

"They don't give other attributes, but they give a lot of Energy Points. So weird... I thought it was only one time, but all twelve of them had the same result. Just what kind of humans are you?' Vale thought as he wasn't sure what to feel about the result of this.

He gained almost 800 points just from this session's Extraction. It was quite impressive.

This time, Vale checked his current attributes.

[ Name: Kyle Marshall ]

[ Attributes: Strength 87.55, Agility 85.29, Intelligence 100, Vitality 82.75 ]

[ Dark Arts: Spell Dispersion Lv7, Ghost Hand Lv7, Incorruptible Body Lv9, Darkness Manipulation Lv7, Spirit Vision Lv6, Light Absorption Lv7, Create Shadow Soldier Lv7, Moonlight Curse Lv7, Spectral Hands Lv4, Corrupted Chains Lv7, Active Curse Break Lv4,? Dusk Imprisonment Lv4, Corpse Explosion Lv1, Feign Death Lv1, Locate Corpse Lv1, Shadow Gate Lv3 ]

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

[ Celestial Arts: Call of the Divine Lightning Lv7, Shadow Mutilation Lv7, Aurora's Embrace Lv3 ]

[ Summoning Art: Grimoire Attraction Lv6 ]

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

[ Martial Art: Meridian Access Lv7 ]

[ Mystic Arts: Arcane Armor Lv6, Soul Bind Lv2 ]

[ Neutral Ability: Extrasensory Perception Spell Lv7, Traceless Shift Lv7, Lightspeed Lv7, Levitation Lv0 ]

[ Available Energy: 11,105 ]

[ Divinity Points: 1649.3 ]

'I'm getting closer and closer to the limit. Will I become some sort of transcendent being after all of them reach 100 points?' Vale mused as he couldn't help but imagine what would happen once he reached the limit.

It was certainly one of the things that made him happy whenever he extracted people. It was unfortunate that he didn't get any attributes today, but he would gladly accept the Energy Points.

Vale then checked the amount he needed to upgrade the Incorruptible Body to Level 10 or the Perfect Realm.

[ Advancement Failed. You are missing 4,255 Points to complete the action. ]

'That was a lot... But I'm getting there.' Vale commented in his mind as he shifted his attention to the Levitation Spell. It was the Spell he got from the Evil Creature that was in the Labyrinth.

He wanted to try this now but had to hold back until he returned to his room or got into a secluded spot.

"Vale... You've been grinning for a while now. What did you do? Those tattoo marks on their bodies had all disappeared..." Denise asked curiously.

"Just think of it as something similar to what the Dark Spirit does to replenish their energy..." Vale said after some thought.

"What? Is it true?" Denise asked in surprise. She wasn't really thinking too much of it, but perhaps, Vale was indeed partly Spirit.

Vale could only nod at her question since it's better than her thinking that he loves touching corpses.

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After completing the extractions, Vale and Denise bid their farewells, knowing that they had to part ways for now. Denise couldn't shake off her concerns about the Abyss, and she didn't want to linger in this city any longer. She didn't want to put Lotus in harm's way by involving her in any potential danger that might arise. She just died protecting Vale, so Denise knew not to repeat the same mistake.

"Very well, then. Please send my regards to Master Heinz..." Vale said, his voice tinged with gratitude.

"Alright... If your juniors become too arrogant, just teach them a lesson..." Denise said with a mischievous glint in her eyes as she referred to Evelyn's group.

"Oh... Can I?" Vale asked, seeking Denise's permission to confront the arrogant juniors. Although he would do it without her approval, having Denise's side is better to lessen his guilt.

"Of course..." Denise replied with a knowing smile. With that, she turned and left the storage room, Lotus silently following her.

As Denise departed, Vale couldn't help but feel a sense of longing for his connection with Lotus. Using telepathy, he whispered... "Let's meet again, Lotus." Though Lotus didn't respond, Vale could sense her presence lingering, observing him from somewhere.

With a sigh, Vale hastily made his way back to the hotel where his senior and friends were anxiously awaiting his return. He probably made them worried after he just ran away.

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The next morning, as the sun began to rise, Vale and his group made their way to the Coliseum, where the Monster Hunter Competition would take place. Unlike the Arena, where the Spectacles of Talents were held, the Coliseum provided a grand stage for the students to showcase their skills in battling formidable monsters.

Of course, they weren't here to participate yet. Instead, they're here to watch their seniors.

As Vale entered the Coliseum, he could feel the excitement in the air.

The crowd was buzzing with anticipation, creating a lively and energetic atmosphere. The spectators filled the stands, eagerly awaiting the start of the competition.

Vale and his group soon found a spot among the audience, ready to witness the thrilling displays of skill and strategy that were about to unfold.

#### Chapter 426 Solo Event

Carlston Peterson, a dedicated sixth-year student at Vermont Academy, was excited as he prepared for the Monster Hunter event.

Today marked a significant moment for him as he would be competing against the best sixth-year students of the other Academies.

The event for the day was the Solo Hunting challenge, where one member from each team would face off against a formidable monster. To Carlston's surprise and delight, he was the chosen participant from his team.

Standing in the resting area for the participants, Carlston glanced out at the crowd that had gathered to witness the thrilling competition. The atmosphere was charged with excitement, and he couldn't help but feel a mix of nerves and determination. Among the sea of faces, he recognized many of his seniors and juniors from the Academy, eagerly waiting to see his performance.

'I thought I would not get nervous, but standing here today puts a lot of pressure.' Carlston silently thought, especially after seeing Vale's group.

After all, aside from the 4th-year batch, no one else had gotten any points for the Academy. Their overall ranking points were solely from Vale's batch.

'Can I even get the top three here?' Carlston sighed as he shifted his attention to the announcer.

The announcer's voice boomed through the arena...

"Let's begin! The first to take the stage and fight against the Savage Golems is Nellie from Lakrine, Academy of Summoning Arts!"

Carlston's focus shifted to Nellie, who was about to face the two imposing Savage Golems. The golems, towering figures made of stone and earth, emanated an aura of raw power. Their rocky exteriors were adorned with ancient symbols, hinting at their mystical origins.

Carlston and other participants already knew what they would face as organizers informed them about an hour ago. Nevertheless, even with an hour of preparation, they won't be able to come up with a foolproof plan to deal with two golems that have plenty of immunity.

'Let's see how he will deal with it.' Carlston mused.

With determination in his eyes, he saw Nellie open his Grimoire, a mysterious book that only Summoners could have, and summoned a Gale Wolf and Flash Knight.

The Gale Wolf, a majestic creature with shimmering fur and fierce blue eyes, exuded an air of agility and speed. The Flash Knight, on the other hand, was a knight-like entity surrounded by an ethereal aura, wielding a gleaming sword of light.

"Whoa~"

"Those are beautiful..."

"They're just decoration. Those summons are trash."

"I think they can still do it."

The audience murmured as they saw Nellie's summons.

The battle began as Nellie commanded his summoned allies to engage the Savage Golems.

The Gale Wolf darted around the golems, using its speed to evade their colossal fists, while the Flash Knight unleashed powerful sword strikes, aiming to weaken their stony defenses.

The clash between Nellie's summoned creatures and the Savage Golems was a spectacle to behold. The golems unleashed devastating blows with their stone fists, causing the ground to tremble with each impact.

Yet, Nellie's strategic commands and the prowess of his summoned allies proved to be a formidable force.

As the battle raged on, Carlston couldn't help but be captivated by the skill and determination displayed by Nellie. Each move was calculated and executed with precision, showcasing the bond between the Summoner and summoned creatures.

The crowd erupted in cheers and applause as Nellie's Gale Wolf and Flash Knight worked in perfect harmony, gradually wearing down the Savage Golems.

With a final coordinated strike, the Flash Knight shattered the stony exterior of one of the golems, rendering it motionless. The remaining golem, weakened and outnumbered, met a similar fate as the Gale Wolf lunged forward, delivering a decisive blow.

It was 12 minutes and 55 seconds.

The Summoner took almost 13 minutes to finish the battle.

The arena was filled with exhilaration and admiration as Nellie emerged victorious, the defeated golems dissipating into dust. However, Nellie himself wasn't satisfied, and the other judges and participants knew the reason why.

It took quite a long time for him to deal with slow-moving golems that don't even have special abilities aside from being hard.

As the cheers subsided, Carlston knew that it would finally be his turn...

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Soon, a group of people cleared out the stage and dispersed the Summoner's Aura, which could affect the performance of the next student.

Carlston took a deep breath as he waited for his name to be called, his eyes fixed on the two towering Savage Golems summoned by the officers of the event.

"I can't let the Fourth-Year students carry our Academy in the Overall Rankings... I need to show them that their seniors are also reliable!" Carlston said in his mind, his voice filled with determination and a strong sense of responsibility.

As soon as his name was called, Carlston stepped onto the stage, his gaze locked on the Savage Golems before him.

It didn't take that long before the signal to begin the battle sounded...

Undeterred by the noise of the audience, Carlston summoned his trusty allies: three Flesh Ghouls and five Storm Wraiths.

These were no ordinary summons. The Flesh Ghouls, bearing the marks of decay and wielding wicked claws, emanated an aura of death and decay.

The Storm Wraiths, ethereal and emanating a blue glow, glided through the air with an unsettling grace. Together, they formed a formidable force under Carlston's command.

That's right, he is a Necromancer in the Vermont Academy.

"Come!" Carlston shouted to the golem, although they probably didn't understand him.

With unwavering focus, he deftly evaded the golems' devastating attacks. He may have poor agility, but he has quick reflexes, allowing him to maneuver through the chaos with the help of his Darkness Manipulation.

Brandishing his Bone Spear, a weapon infused with necromantic energy, he also struck with precision and strength, aiming to exploit the weaknesses in the golems' stony defenses.

Well, he tried aiming for their joints.

The Flesh Ghouls tore into the golems' rocky skin while the Storm Wraiths unleashed bolts of dark energy, weakening their opponents.

The battle raged on, the clash of sturdy bone against stone echoing throughout the arena.

Carlston and his summoned allies fought with unwavering determination, their coordinated attacks chipping away at the golems' formidable exteriors. The Flesh Ghouls and Storm Wraiths fought alongside him, their combined efforts creating a symphony of darkness and death.

"So Necromancers can actually fight like this..."

"Indeed... It was a pity he couldn't summon a Death Knight... This would be over if he did that."

"He's only sixth-year... It's already impressive that he could summon Storm Wraiths."

"Mhmm... Indeed. No wonder he was selected in this Solo-Hunting."

The rogue Arcanists watching the event couldn't help but comment after seeing the Carlston's battle.

#### Chapter 427 Sword Technique

After more than 6 minutes of battle, Carlston summoned all his strength and unleashed a devastating blow with his Bone Spear.

This Bone Spear was one of the Branch-Exclusive Spells that he learned in the Necromancy Branch alongside Corpse Explosion and Corpse Animation.

At the moment, it had already reached the early stage of the Intermediate Realm!

Boom!

With a resounding crack, one of the Savage Golems stumbled under the force of the attack... Its left knee joint was crushed! It was almost reduced to a pile of rubble under its own weight.

Nevertheless, Carlston did a quick work on it by letting his remaining Ghoul tear it apart.

The remaining golem, now outnumbered and weakened, faced the relentless onslaught of the Flesh Ghouls and Storm Wraiths.

In a final coordinated assault, the combined forces of Carlston and his summoned allies overwhelmed the remaining golem.

With a thunderous crash, the second Savage Golem fell, defeated in less than 8 minutes.

The crowd erupted with thunderous applause and cheers, as they didn't care if Carlston was a Dark Practitioner at this moment. They enjoyed the exciting battle, and that was what they wanted to see...

Exhausted but elated, Carlston stood victorious... He could only hope that this was enough for him to reach at least the third place in the event to get a score for the Academy.



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"The students of the Vermont Academy were quite formidable this year." Kate Duffey muttered, her voice filled with a mix of admiration and competitive spirit.

She's a sixth-year student in the Knights Academy, and she couldn't help but feel that the Dark Arts Academy this year was different from what she heard from the seniors.

"Indeed... They even dominated the Fourth-Year's Labyrinth..." Geraldine replied, her tone tinged with a hint of helplessness.

"Haha... I heard about how they set a record in that Labyrinth... I guess you guys are unlucky..." Kate retorted playfully, a mischievous gleam in her eyes.

"Hmph... The same thing won't happen in the Tower Ascension and the Duel..." Geraldine responded confidently. After all, she wasn't really able to show her skills in the first two contests of their batch.

"That's the right attitude. Don't feel pressured..." Kate encouraged, offering a supportive smile.

Soon, the time came for Kate to step onto the stage, her name echoing through the coliseum.

With a deep breath, she focused her mind, ready to face the two Savage Golems.

Geraldine, filled with admiration for her senior, cheered loudly, silently praying that Kate would achieve an even faster record than Carlston.

Simultaneously, her gaze shifted to Vale's side, determination burning in her eyes as she resolved to surpass them in the upcoming competitions.

However, Vale seemed to have sensed her gaze as he looked at her with curious eyes...

'Ahh...!' Geraldine quickly shifted her gaze in reaction...

'Ugh... Why did I look away like I was guilty? I should've stared at him and waited for him to look away instead... Tsk...!' Geraldine thought in frustration.

In the end, she decided not to look at him anymore.

As the battle commenced, Kate's concentration sharpened, her eyes locked on the towering Savage Golems before her.

Drawing upon her mastery of enhancement spells, she swiftly cast a series of spells as she drew her sword.

'Eight minutes, huh... I need to finish this in less than 7 minutes to win!'

Knights like her could also use ranged Spells, but she still likes the old Enhancement Spells since they were a lot easier to augment in her battle style.

With a flash of light, Kate fortified herself, her body infused with an ethereal glow that enhanced her strength and resilience. Empowered by her spell, she dashed forward, her speed surpassing that of the golems.

As their massive fists swung toward her, Kate invoked a protective shield, deflecting the blows with ease.

Seizing the opportunity, Kate unleashed a powerful blast of energy from her sword, channeling her magical prowess into a devastating attack. The golems staggered under the force of the blast, their stony exteriors showing signs of wear.

Sensing their vulnerability, Kate swiftly followed up with a swift and precise slash, directing her enchanted blade toward the golems' weak points.

At this moment, Kate already used her Fortify, Dash, Shield, Blast, and Slash... A total of five spells.

Kate then released a strong fluctuation of energy as she continued her relentless assault, her spells and strikes harmonizing with her sword style, the Eight Wave Sword Technique.

With each successful spell and strike, the golems' defenses crumbled further, their once formidable presence diminishing.

'How long was it? Is it five minutes already? Tsk... I need to hurry!' Kate silently thought as she could see the golems started weakening.

As the battle continued, Kate summoned all her remaining energy, pouring it into one final, awe-inspiring strike...

It was the eighth strike of her Eight Wave Sword Technique! She even imbued it with her Blast Spell!

Boom!

With a blinding explosion, the golems shattered into a cascade of debris, defeated by Kate's sword skills.

The crowd erupted in thunderous applause, their cheers echoing throughout the coliseum...

\*\*\*

"Impressive... Was that sword technique all learned by the students of the Knights Academy?" Vale muttered after seeing the battle end.

He couldn't help but be captivated by the sword style that Kate had demonstrated.

Vale had honed his sword techniques and even mastered the Shadowblade Dance, a technique he had extracted from the Dark Soul Tower. In short, his expertise allowed him to discern the quality and effectiveness of various sword styles.

Observing Kate's fluid sword movements, Vale could tell that her technique was exceptional. It possessed effectiveness and precision that spoke of countless hours of training and dedication.

"Mhmm... I don't think so..." Maya replied, her voice tinged with contemplation.

"The Sword Technique she used was different from the other Knights I've seen. Perhaps they also have different branches like our Academy."

Vale nodded thoughtfully...

"That made sense..."

"Why? Do you want to learn their sword technique?" Maya teased.

"Haha... Vale, I know you have a sword, but you're a Spellcaster... To be exact, a Ritualist. I don't think that a sword would be appropriate in the long run." Crystal commented.

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## Chapter 428 The Winners

The competition pressed on, with one Academy after another showcasing their students' abilities. Following the Knights Academy's impressive display, it was now the turn of the Holy Arts Academy to take the stage.

To the surprise of Vale and the others, the student from the Holy Arts Academy didn't possess the typical spellcasting abilities they had seen before.

Instead, they exuded an aura reminiscent of a paladin or a holy knight they could see in the Church of the Fortune Goddess.

It also became evident that this student belonged to a distinct branch within the Holy Arts Academy, focusing on martial prowess and the augmentation of their abilities through the use of Holy Arts... This is quite similar to their Academy with several branches.

Anyway, with a weapon in hand, the student skillfully combined his combat skills with the power of the Holy Arts. His strikes carried some sort of sacred essence, imbued with righteousness and purity, as he confronted the Two Savage Golems.

It was a unique approach, blending martial prowess with the holy energy of their chosen path.

The Elemental Arts Academy followed suit, showcasing the mastery of the elements in their battle against the golems. The Mystic Arts Academy came next, displaying their enigmatic and mystical abilities. One by one, the various Academies took their turn, each offering their distinct styles and techniques to overcome the formidable adversaries.

As the competition progressed, they realized that Kate from the Knights Academy was still the quickest one to deal with the Savage Golems.

Then, the last Academy to face the Savage Golems was Farell, the Academy of Psychic Arts.

Vale's excitement peaked at the thought of witnessing the capabilities of psychics. How would they fare against golems, beings devoid of emotion and sentience?

'Can they even use Mind Techniques on a golem?' Vale mused.

He already encountered a Mind Controller before so Vale couldn't help but feel curious.

He wanted to carefully observe the extraordinary abilities possessed by psychics, who could delve into the depths of the mind and even manipulate unseen forces.

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"Vale... I think that the Psychic Arts will be the most difficult to deal with in the Clash of Champions... They can use Mental Energy to control their targets within their Magic Zone. Do you have anything to fight against Mind Corruption?" Luna curiously asked.

"Hah! Don't worry about him... Just remember the number of his Spirit Strands..." Maya interjected.

"Ahh... That's true... Vale doesn't need a complicated Spell. Having a double or even triple Spirit Strands should be more than enough." Luna nodded in agreement.

"Yes... However, I suggest that you don't use your Dark Spirit against them..." Philip added.

"Oh?" Although Vale doesn't have plans of using Yvaine since she was exhausted in the matter within the Labyrinth, he couldn't help but feel curious.

"Do you think my Dark Spirit can be controlled easily?" Vale asked as he shifted his attention to Philip.

"Hehe... It might be a different matter if the ones using the brainwashing technique were Shamans, Runecasters, or Dark Magicians. However, if it's the Mind Controllers, they have a special branch that deals with Spirit or Summoners. I've read before that even an Abyss Knight summoned by a Gold Necromancer can fall into their hands. Mind Controllers are different." Philip explained.

Vale wanted to ask more questions but they suddenly heard the signal to start the battle as they shifted their attention to the stage.

As the battle commenced, the student unleashed his Psychic Arts with glowing eyes...

Utilizing his Mental Energy, he tapped into the Golem's vision or core, channeling his abilities to disrupt and control the movements of the Golems.

With each calculated manipulation, the Golems found themselves momentarily immobilized or diverted from their intended path.

Even Vale could barely perceive what the student was doing while running around the Golems.

"So that's the Misdirection Spell..." Philip muttered as he recognized that trick that was being used by the student.

Just using this single Spell, the student started confusing the Golems and disrupting their attacks. The battlefield became a whirlwind of deception and misdirection, with the student skillfully outmaneuvering his opponents.

But the most awe-inspiring feat came when the student exerted his control over one of the Savage Golems. Through his unknown Psychic Arts, he managed to partially override the Golem's programming, directing its immense power towards its counterpart.

The clash between the two creatures shook the stage, unleashing a display of raw force and destruction.

It only took less than 4 minutes and the battle concluded, leaving everyone in awe of the student's incredible prowess.

"How is that possible?"

"I didn't know they could also control those creatures with no Sentience and just followed someone's orders..."

"It's not that simple... He took over the Golem's Core. You can't control a golem unless you have access to its core."

"Look at those Arcanists on the side of the stage. They all looked pale since the student had forcefully taken control of them. They must've suffered some backlash because of that."

The Arcanists who were also watching the event commented. They seemed to have encountered this same situation before as they analyzed what had happened.

Soon, the crowd erupted in thunderous applause, recognizing the exceptional talent displayed by the student from the Psychic Arts Academy.

They may be unsure about the Misdirection Spell and Forceful Control of the student but they know that something went wrong with the Golems like it had some defect. The defect was definitely done by the student and they didn't doubt it at all.

"Impressive... I guess I have to be careful about that ability, huh..." Vale muttered as he continued to listen to the awarding ceremony.

The first place was taken by the Psychic Arts Academy. Aside from the additional 200 points in the overall rankings, he received a Token that allows him to request a High-Grade Noble Rank Mystical Item.

The second and third places were taken by the Knights Academy and the Dark Arts Academy. They had also received the same Token but they were only for Low-Grade Noble Rank and High-Grade Mortal Rank Mystical Items respectively.

#### Chapter 429 Group Hunt ( 1 )

On this same day, various competitions commenced for different batches in the Academy. Vale and his group broadened their horizons as the numerous students in other Academies used their best set of Spells to win the competition they entered.

This way, even though that duel or the Clash of Champions hadn't started yet, Vale already had a rough idea about the things he should look out for.

"In the end, the Holy Arts, Psychic Arts, and Rune Arts Academies were the ones we should look out for..." Maya muttered as they headed back to their rooms.

"Indeed... Especially the new Rune that goes against the Dark Arts Practitioners. How troublesome... It's a huge problem if all of them can you that Rune." Philip commented.

Just like the news they read in the Academy Newspaper, the Rune Arts Faction had indeed created a new Rune that works perfectly well against Dark Spells.

It was certainly not in the same principle as the Holy Arts but it feels more like Mystic Arts Ability that could dismantle the Dark Energy used by their Dark Spells.

This was such a piece of troubling news for them...

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In the afternoon, the group hunt of the Monster Hunter event for the fourth-year batch would finally start.

In this group match, Vale wouldn't participate since he was selected for the Solo Hunt.

Instead, this would be a match for Philip, Crystal, and Maya.

Vale and Luna would be on the audience stand to cheer and support their classmates.

"Oh... You're not going to participate this time? Your name was Vale, right?" Suddenly, Vale heard a gentle voice behind him. It was from an unfamiliar young lady and she seemed amused at how she found him here.

Vale curiously looked behind and realized that it was the third princess, Ceres!



'She's talking to me like we know each other...!' Vale mused seeing how she comfortably addressed him.

"Yes." He answered.

"I see... We have the same strategy then... In tomorrow's Clash of Champions, I'll be taking the first place." Ceres added, confusing Vale for a moment.

He could understand why she mentioned that it was a strategy to not participate in today's Monster Hunt. After all, they need to hide their Spells at the moment, so the opponents or other students wouldn't easily come up with a strategy.

What Vale couldn't understand was the reason she was bragging that she would get the first place in tomorrow's duel.

"Good luck to you, Princess Ceres... However, the judges won't be able to help you at that time..." Vale replied with a teasing smile.

However, as soon as he saw the faces of the people around them, he immediately realized that what he just said was somehow telling her that she had cheated in other competitions to win.

Even Luna was stunned as she looked at Vale with wide eyes.

"Y-you..." Rizza, Ceres's groupmate wanted to berate Vale but Ceres held her hand to stop her.

"It's fine... If he's not satisfied with my win, I'll show it to him tomorrow." Ceres said with a cold smile on her face.

This time, Vale decided not to reply as he might really anger the people around them. Instead, he shifted his attention to the stage and forgot the people behind him.

He thought of just enjoying the Monster Hunter that was about to commence...

'Are they also sending Two Savage Golems or a different creature?' Vale mused.

However, as he thought that he would be able to peacefully watch the battle, he sensed the activation of the Divine Sense near him!

'Mhmm?' Vale suddenly realized why Ceres decided to get closer to him!

'I knew it... This girl wouldn't just randomly stay at the audience stand. She wanted to probe the students with the Divine Sense.' Vale silently thought as he sensed the activation of the Divine Sense behind him.

Since he has an Advanced Realm or higher mastery than her, she certainly couldn't tell that he could sense her Divine Sense.

Nevertheless, she had probably realized by now that she couldn't probe him with her Divine Sense and suspected him to possess an anti-inspection Mystical Item.

"Tsk..."

Vale heard Ceres click her tongue in frustration. As expected, she didn't get the result she wanted. She even tried putting her Divine Sense mark on him!

'This girl... She's going too far... She's already using a Spell against her opponent before the competition starts. She doesn't deserve to be a practitioner of Holy Arts...' He commented.

Vale shook his head as he decided to allow the mark to enter his body as he wanted to use it against her later on.

'You're even a Princess and you're using such an underhanded trick... Let's see what will happen later...' Vale silently thought as he decided to take advantage of the Divine Sense mark she left on his body.

He acted normal and didn't seem to have noticed the Divine Sense as he continued watching the event.

Anyway, the Princess also continued staying for a while even after her probing, and watched the group hunt of the Rune Arts Academy against a couple of Imps!

Yes, the organizers had actually arranged two Imps for each group to deal with...

It was quite unexpected, however, it's also understandable. Normal fourth-year students were still lacking in the number of Spell Lights they had...

On the other hand, the Imps may be quite tough to deal with but their strength was average and they only excelled in their special ability, illusions, or deception. It was a perfect opponent for their current batch.

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The young Runecasters, armed with their Runic Weapons, prepared to face the challenge ahead.

The three Runecasters, Felia, Marcus, and Elara, stood side by side, as they looked at the caged Imps across the stage...

Amelia wielded a runic staff, Marcus held a runic bow, and Elara carried a pair of runic daggers. Their weapons crackled with arcane energy, ready to be unleashed against the Imps.

Chapter 430 Group Hunt ( 2 )

Felia, the leader of the group, looked at her companions, determination gleaming in her eyes.

They were the first group to face the Imps so she noticed the nervousness of her members.

It was understandable as they were all being watched by hundreds of people and even their Headmasters. They felt quite pressured, especially after knowing that they only earned 150 points in the Overall Rankings at the moment. They are currently at the bottom of the Rankings...

Although only two days passed, a total of 12 contests of varying levels had been completed.

Only the students from the 7th-year batch were able to get some points for them.

"Stay focused, everyone. Don't think about the audience for now. We need to be prepared for their deceptions. Remember, our runic weapons are our strongest defense against their tricks."

Marcus nodded, gripping his runic bow tightly. "I agree, Felia. Let's make sure our attacks are filled with Runic Aura... We can't afford to fall for their illusions. If one shows signs of being drawn to their charm, don't hesitate to use the Alarm Rune."

Elara, known for her agility in the group, twirled her runic daggers in her hands. "I'll be ready to strike whenever an opportunity presents itself. Just give me that opening and I'll kill them."

The three exchanged glances as they readied themselves.

Soon, the signal was given and the battle commenced.

The Imps were freed in their cage and launched their savage attacks, accompanied by illusions that aimed to deceive the Runecasters.

The surroundings twirled with energy as the Runecasters focused their attention on breaking the illusions...

Felia brandished her runic staff, tracing intricate patterns in the air. The symbols glowed brightly, forming a protective shield around the group.

"Stay within the runic barrier! It will help us see through their illusions..." She reminded, her voice determined.

She had to remind them about this. Even though they were already aware of it, the Imps could affect their critical thinking and decision-making. Voicing out some of their moves could be helpful in the battle.

Marcus notched an arrow on his runic bow, his eyes scanning the battlefield. "Keep an eye out for any inconsistencies. Their illusions will have subtle flaws. That's our cue to strike..." he advised, his voice steady and focused.

Elara weaved through the chaos, her runic daggers poised for action. While she was moving around, she continued looking for an opportunity to strike the Imps.

As the Imps continued their onslaught of Illusions and Disguise within the smokescreen they created, the Runecasters remained vigilant.

They watched for any slight inconsistencies in the Imps' movements, their keen eyes trained to see beyond the illusions.

Of course, they weren't just watching as they were also throwing Spells and cutting through the illusions of beasts, humans, warriors, and even birds that were trying to distract them...

The Imps would also try to disguise themselves as a member of their group and try to get closer to them. However, the smokescreen wasn't enough to block vision and locate their real members. It was thanks to the special Runic Barrier they had prepared for this event.

Soon, Felia unleashed a powerful runic spell, causing the ground to tremble beneath the Imps.

The symbols she inscribed danced with energy, disrupting the Imps' attempts at deception.

"Expose their true forms!" She commanded, her voice resolute.

Whatever rune it was, it drained a lot of her energy as her face paled...

Nevertheless, this was an opportunity!

Marcus took aim, his runic arrows guided by his unwavering focus. With each shot, a well-placed arrow found its mark, piercing through the Imps' illusions and almost hitting the head of one of the Imps!

"Eeekk!"

The Imp was surely scared that it moved away from its previous position.

"Your tricks won't protect you forever!" He declared loudly. This was his way of ensuring that his mind wouldn't get affected by the Imps' deception.

After all, they were informed that their minds should remain unwavering according to their seniors.

Elara finally moved with the intention to kill. She wielded her runic daggers slashing through the air.

She anticipated the Imps' movements, her keen instincts guiding her attacks...

The battle reached its climax as the Runecasters coordinated their attacks, exploiting the Imps' vulnerabilities.

'Indeed, physical combat is the best against the Imps as long as you can break through their illusions... I guess the organizers are going easy with the fourth-year batch, huh...' Vale mused as he could already tell that the battle was about to end.

With each strike of their runic weapons, the illusions that were hastily made shattered, revealing the true Imps.

The Imps, caught off guard by the Runecasters' resilience, desperately tried to survive...

But the combined might of Felia, Marcus, and Elara proved too much. The runic powers of their weapons overwhelmed the Imps, leaving them defeated and vulnerable.

Eeeekkk!

With one last cry, the Imps dropped to the ground, lifeless...

The stage erupted with applause as the audience enjoyed the battle and felt happy at the death of the disgusting Imps...

The three Runecasters stood side by side, their chests heaving with exertion but their spirits soaring as they appreciated the audience cheering for them.

'So Runic Weapons were just some sort of Mystical Items with special or controlled abilities?' Vale mused as he recalled all the Runic Weapons that were used and the Runic Pistol he had seen outside.

Vale had to do his own research even though he already heard plenty of things from his seniors and the Professors.

After all, he doesn't know his first opponent for tomorrow's Clash of Champions.

'I guess Senior Anderson and the others are worrying too much... I don't think these kids already learned Spell Fusion in their respective Path.' Vale silently thought as he believed that no one could beat him in tomorrow's duel...

If they could beat him, it's probably because they were disguised as young students or they also had a system that's better than his Divine Extraction System...

As he was thinking of this, he soon heard Maya's group being called to take the stage...