

D. Extraction 521

Chapter 521 Surrounded

Lisa nodded at Chad's words. She was still worried, but she could do nothing right now since they had no idea where they were transported.

"You're right. Our priority is to stay safe and await assistance. Hopefully, we haven't been transported too far from our intended destination..." She murmured softly, her eyes scanning the dimly lit castle interior.

Thud... Thud...

As they contemplated their next steps, the silence was interrupted by the faint sound of footsteps approaching.

Instantly, Chad's instincts kicked in, and he activated his unique physique, drawing upon his innate abilities.

"Ghost King Body!" Chad invoked, his form enveloped in an ethereal aura as his supernatural powers surged within him.

This physique was something that he had achieved after years of training. Thankfully, the Academy had a huge amount of Dark Energy, so he was able to possess the Ghost King Body earlier than those who didn't enter the Dark Arts Academy.

Prepared for any potential threat, he positioned himself protectively in front of Lisa, ready to confront whoever approached them.

"Prepare your Corruption Spells, Lisa... I'm not going to be affected by it, so you can just go all out!" Chad reminded as he materialized a dark sword in his hand.

"Mhmm..." Lisa gently nodded as she maintained her Phantasm State.

The footsteps grew louder, echoing through the castle halls.

The atmosphere grew heaving as cold aura enveloped the castle's walls.

As the figure's silhouette drew nearer, Chad and Lisa stood their ground, their anticipation mounting as they prepared for the encounter.

Their heightened senses, honed through their Phantasm State, signaled that the approaching individual possessed immense strength.

'It would be a big problem if he's an enemy...' Lisa thought worriedly.

After a few moments, the figure finally spoke, his voice resonating with amusement.

"Those uniforms... I remember them. You two are students from that Dark Arts Academy, aren't you?" His words carried a hint of curiosity rather than hostility.

The two students didn't know why, but they felt relieved that they got recognized.

"Yes, Sir!" Chad responded, his voice filled with relief at the lack of hostility.

"We were transported here unexpectedly and have become separated from our group. We're in need of assistance to contact someone from the Dark Arts Faction and find our way back."

The man's expression softened, and a smile played at the corners of his lips. "Ah, the mysteries of transportation magic can be quite unpredictable, can't they?" He mused.

"Fear not, young ones. You have found yourself in the presence of Magnus, a practitioner of all Arcane Arts and a keeper of ancient knowledge."

Towering above them, Magnus stood at an impressive height, his figure cloaked in dark, billowing robes that seemed to absorb the surrounding light. His broad shoulders hinted at untold strength, and his form exuded an air of otherworldly power. His physique was like a warrior of ancient times.

'Practitioner of all Arcane Arts? Is he crazy?' Lisa commented in her mind as she heard the man's words. However, it was better not to provoke or question him this time, so she observed him cautiously for now.

Magnus' face was partially obscured by the shadow cast by his wide-brimmed hat and revealed only fragments of his features. His eyes, however, gleamed with an intense scarlet hue, their captivating gaze seemingly able to pierce through the veils of reality itself.

It was similar to the eyes of the Evil Creatures that Lisa had seen before!

At his side, a staff of ebony wood stood tall, adorned with intricate carvings and glowing symbols that seemed to pulse with an ethereal energy.

As he drew nearer, the air around him seemed to grow heavy with an unsettling aura, as if the very fabric of reality bent in deference to his presence.

'This guy is dangerous... He's definitely not human!' Lisa and Chad couldn't help but exchange glances as they reached the same conclusion.

They had to be careful!

"Magnus, sir? Can you help us get back to our Academy? No—I mean, can you tell us where we are?" Lisa asked. She certainly couldn't return to the Academy as it was being invaded by the Holy Arts Faction and its allies.

As for the destination of their teleportation, they weren't aware of it, so they weren't sure where to go at this time.

Magnus smiled at this question.

"Right... returning you to your Academy might prove challenging. It seems the place is engulfed in chaos and danger at the moment. However, fear not. You are simply in a neighboring kingdom. It's not too far. I can grant you the means to communicate with your Dark Arts Faction. All I ask in return is your service as my assistants for the next five years..." Magnus said, revealing his unsettling proposition.

A sinister gleam danced in his eyes, accompanied by a deep chuckle that resonated through the castle halls.

Lisa and Chad were shocked, realizing that Magnus was indeed insane!

Their instincts screamed at them to escape this unsettling situation immediately.

Without a moment's hesitation, they swiftly devised a plan to leave this place.

Spotting an open window, they seized the opportunity to make their escape. Lisa channeled her magical prowess and unleashed the spell "Light Absorption."

This Spell should temporarily disorient Magnus by the lack of light. Capitalizing on the distraction, Chad, with his Ghost King Body activated, used two formidable Spirit Attacks.

Thanks to his physique, these Spells were threefold stronger!

Boom! Boom!

The impact of their combined assault reverberated through the room as Magnus recoiled from the force.

Seizing the opportunity, Lisa and Chad swiftly leaped through the shattered window, crashing onto the ground outside. They wasted no time, activating their enhanced movement speed spells to propel themselves away from the castle, desperate to put distance between themselves and the deranged Magnus.

However, as they surveyed their surroundings, their hearts sank.

"This..."

They found themselves encircled by a multitude of mystical beings, ranging from small creatures to towering beasts of various kinds. The creatures had formed a formidable barrier around the castle, effectively trapping Lisa and Chad in their midst.

"Not bad, young Arcanists... If you're talented enough, it may not even take five years, so you don't have to be too afraid of me. Come and get inside. Your arrival is perfect timing... I'm doing a very delicate experiment and needed a few more hands." Magnus said as he peeked through the window, visibly unhurt by the two's surprise attacks.

In the midst of the unfolding events, under the moonlit sky above a vast prairie, a massive fleet of airships encircled a lone airship. It was none other than the vessel that Headmaster Jean used for his return to the Academy.

Surrounding the Vermont Academy's airship were a total of 30 combat airships, forming an intimidating blockade. While the Academy's airship was equipped to fend off bandits and monsters, it was ill-prepared to engage in a battle against such a formidable fleet.

Standing on the deck of the airship, Headmaster Jean gazed upon the encircling airships with a mix of contemplation and resignation.

"They're really not taking chances..." Jean silently thought as he sensed the presence of several powerful Arcanists of different Factions.

He couldn't help but chuckle softly at the audacity of the four Factions, who had evidently dispatched a force of 12 Guardians solely to deal with him.

Although he knew that death loomed ever closer, the headmaster remained remarkably composed, as if he had anticipated this turn of events.

The thought occurred to him that perhaps the attack on the Academy had been a diversion, with his own capture as the true objective.

However, he quickly dismissed this notion, realizing that the Academy itself was vulnerable with the absence of the First and Second Squads of Vessels, who had not yet returned from their missions. Without their formidable presence, the Academy would struggle to withstand the combined forces of the four Factions even if they just send 4 or 5 Guardians.

'I hope that Miss Faith can help them...' Headmaster Jean thought as he could only hope that the most powerful individual that was left in the Academy would be enough to hold off the other Guardians of the four Factions.

Anyway, he had no time to worry about the Academy for now.

Glancing back at the Vessels lined up behind him, Headmaster Jean understood that their summoned entities were not from the high-level Realms like the Giants Realm, Shadow Realms, or Dragon Realm.

Instead, they could only call upon beings from the Barbarian Realm, Undead Realm, and Specter Realm. Considering the overwhelming firepower amassed against them, Headmaster Jean knew that survival would be near impossible once the enemy decided to unleash their bombardment.

With a sigh of acceptance, the headmaster resigned himself to his fate, pushing aside any lingering doubts or random thoughts.

Turning his attention to the enemy, he couldn't help but address them directly, his voice laced with firm defiance.

"Hey... Are you seriously planning to break the treaty in this manner? Do you truly believe you can achieve your goals without incurring significant losses on your side?" Jean bravely said as shadows manifested on his side before forming into a black staff.

Chapter 522 Released

An eerie silence fell upon the prairie as Jean manifested a mysterious black staff that was surrounded by dark essence.

The moonlight seemed to dim, as if nature itself held its breath, anticipating the impending chaos.

Suddenly, the stillness was shattered by the deafening roar of engines as the thirty Combat Airships sprang into action.

'So they don't even plan to communicate with us, huh...' Jean took a heavy breath as he used his telepathy to give some instructions to his men.

With calculated precision, the fleet closed in on the lone airship, their cannons primed and ready.

Clank... Clank... Clank...

Soon, a symphony of war echoed through the night as the sky was filled with the blinding flashes of gunfire and the thunderous booms of explosions.

Boom!

The Vermont Academy's Airship, once a symbol of safe passage, was now thrust into a maelstrom of destruction.

Headmaster Jean stood resolute on the deck, his eyes fixed on the onslaught before him. The airship trembled under the relentless barrage, its sturdy hull straining against the force of the enemy's assault.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Three layers of defenses were immediately destroyed after a few seconds of bombardment.

The sky erupted in a dazzling display of fiery trails as the airship's defensive mechanisms fought valiantly to repel the incoming projectiles.

However, the overwhelming numbers and firepower of the enemy proved to be a daunting challenge. The airship's shields flickered and faltered, unable to withstand the relentless barrage.

Then, 10 Dark Magicians on the deck formed a circle and created a stronger defense... They summoned hundreds of Moon Specters and Fiery Ghosts to form a barrier!

Meanwhile, while doing so, Headmaster Jean wasn't doing anything... There was no way he would allow them to get killed without a fight!

Explosions rocked the Vessel, sending shockwaves through its core. The once majestic airship now resembled a wounded beast, its structure weakened and vulnerable.

"Cowards!"

"Come forward if you have the guts!"

"Face us in a duel! You vermins!"

"You guys will regret this!"

"A Dark Magician's retaliation will be ten times more cruel! Remember that!"

The Dark Magicians couldn't help but curse as they knew that this battle was too unfair. Although their summoned spirits could protect them for now, they were aware that it wouldn't last for a long time.

Nevertheless, amidst the chaos, Headmaster Jean remained steadfast. His eyes kept monitoring the surroundings as he assessed the dire situation.

He knew that survival seemed like an impossible feat, but he refused to succumb to despair. With a plan in his mind, he rallied the rest of the crew, urging them to fight on despite the overwhelming odds.

"Yes, Sir Jean! We will at least bring down half of them!"

"That's right! We will target those above us!"

The Vessels immediately did as they said as they activated their Spells!

However, this didn't stop the incoming attacks! The bombardment intensified...

Then, a hole was opened in the defense of the Specters and Ghosts! Soon, their airship's systems began to falter.

The engines sputtered, sending plumes of smoke into the air. The once steady ascent of the Vessel was now replaced with a perilous descent towards the unforgiving earth below.

Flames licked at the airship's hull, threatening to consume it in a fiery inferno.

In the face of impending doom, Headmaster Jean launched his strongest Spell! It was the Fusion Spell of two Tier 2 Dark Spells! Furthermore, this was cast using a Sovereign Rank Staff!

The power of this Spell could easily kill those who weren't prepared enough!

Blood Nova!

As Jean said these words, the people in the surrounding airships started feeling hot... Then, without them realizing what was going on, they heard an explosion!

It was not from a firearm but from their companions who had suddenly exploded!

"W-what?! Corpse Explosion reached us here?!"

"Impossible... It doesn't work on the living!"

"This must be one of the Forbidden Spells!"

"I knew it... This is---"

Boom!

The man who was about to speak suddenly exploded without any visible signs!

Some of them got delayed as they still exploded after failing to protect themselves while the Blood Nova Spell was still active.

The leaders of each Combat Airships knew that Jean had activated a strong killing Spell that could not be defended with Spirit Strands lower than his.

Boom! Boom!

Three Airships of the enemy collided with each other, and two Airships were suddenly headed to the ground!

Just like that, five Airships were destroyed!

Headmaster Jean smiled at the result of his attack as he felt the lives of many people disappearing from his Magic Zone.

But he knew that this wouldn't be enough to save them...

He could tell that another bombardment would surely kill them all if they stayed here.

"Everyone! Abandon the airship in my signal!"

With a voice that resonated with authority, Jean cast another spell that created a Dark Sphere that suddenly expanded and covered the entire airship...

Then, he commanded the crew to abandon the ship and seek refuge in the nearby prairie.

The members of the Vessel and the crew of the airship listened without hesitation. One by one, they leaped into the darkness, their survival hanging in the balance.

Headmaster Jean, the last to leave the airship, cast one final glance at the Vermont Academy's Airship that had been with them for the past 10 years.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The next bombardment of the enemies had arrived just in time.

The airship, battered and broken, continued its descent, hurtling towards the ground.

Soon, it crashed with a thunderous impact, sending shockwaves rippling through the prairie.

As the dust settled and the echoes of the bombardment faded, Headmaster Jean emerged from the wreckage, battered but alive.

He surveyed the scene, his heart heavy with the loss of the airship and some Dark Magicians who had failed to escape in time.

Yet, amidst the wreckage, a spark of desire flickered in his eyes. It was the desire for revenge.

The attack had not broken his spirit; it had only fueled his resolve to protect the Academy and seek justice for the assault unleashed upon them.

'Ahh... They're really set out to kill me...' Jean silently thought.

Using his black staff as support, Jean rose to his feet, his gaze fixed upon the unexpected arrival of a group of individuals who had encircled him.

There were only six of them, but their aura exuded immense power. Each one was a formidable Arcanist, determined to end his life.

However, Jean couldn't help but be bemused by the sight of their masked faces.

"Are you that afraid to face me? You are even wearing a mask to protect your identity from a dying man?" Jean couldn't help but ridicule them.

However, the masked figures remained unfazed.

They were just looking at Jean warily as if making sure that they wouldn't get suddenly cursed by the Dark Magician.

Then, one of them spoke with sigh.

"Jean... You have to blame yourself for your untimely death. You have the talent to practice the Holy Arts, but you chose to practice the Dark Arts. We warned you before..." It was a voice coming from an old lady.

Recognition flickered in Jean's eyes as he pieced together the identity of the old woman who addressed him.

Realizing the deep-rooted animosity that lay between them, Jean's voice dripped with disdain.

"So it was like that... You old people still can't accept how the Dark Arts were developing too fast. You can't accept that it's just another Arcane Path... Just for your selfish gains." Jean replied. Squinting his eyes, he locked his gaze on the old woman, his words dripping with scorn.

Yet, before the tension could escalate further, another masked figure interjected

"That's enough... Let's eliminate him. He's just gathering his remaining strength for his last attack."

"Of course... Kill him now... Destroy his body and make sure even his soul won't be able to escape..." The old lady spoke as the rest of the masked figures released their spells.

In a desperate bid to survive, Jean unleashed his own arsenal of Dark Spells with the help of his Black Staff, engaging in a fierce battle against the enemies.

However, he was already weakened.

In a final act of defiance, Jean managed to take down one of his masked foes with his Dark Soul's Chain of Death! It's a Spell that uses his own Soul to kill a target with a similar or lower number of Spirit Strands!

"Haha! You fool!" Jean said with a laugh as he felt satisfied killing a Guardian before his death.

Unfortunately, the toll on his own body proved insurmountable. The weight of his wounds and the sheer exhaustion overwhelmed him, and he soon succumbed to the inevitable embrace of death.

As Jean's life force faded, the masked figures stood in silence. Their victory was tinged with a somber realization. They had succeeded in their mission, but the cost had been great.

As they were about to burn Jean's corpse and destroy everything around him, including his weapon, a profound and unexpected phenomenon unfolded before the masked figures.

In a mesmerizing display, an immense number of ethereal shadows erupted from Jean's lifeless body, their presence casting an eerie atmosphere over the scene.

Chapter 523 Fusion

For a fleeting moment, the shadows that had escaped from Jean's body danced and swirled in a mesmerizing display, as if bidding farewell to their fallen master.

Yet, just as quickly as they had emerged, the shadows merged into the darkness, leaving no trace behind.

The masked figures were left bewildered, their minds struggling to comprehend the inexplicable spectacle that had unfolded before them.

A hushed silence enveloped the group as they exchanged uncertain glances.

"W-what was that?" One of them stammered, his voice barely audible amidst the lingering sense of astonishment.

To be honest, he was thinking that it was a curse that was released to attack them. He imagined that Jean had cast a spell that if he died, the people who killed him would be cursed or something.

It wasn't that surprising from Dark Magicians.

Of course, everyone else had the same thought, but none of them dared to suggest it as it would just cause unnecessary panic.

Furthermore, their Power Strands and Spirit Strands were incredibly high, so they had strong resistance against such attacks. If they were really hit by a curse, they should be aware of it.

"I'm not sure what it was, but since my Mystical Artifacts didn't respond, it doesn't seem to be a curse meant to attack us. Perhaps it was a message or signal sent to someone." The old lady said.

The question still hung in the air, unanswered and shrouded in mystery. However, they felt relieved that it wasn't a threatening attack.

They could only ponder the significance of the spectral shadows as they continued to eliminate everything in sight.

None of them dared to touch the Black Staff as they were sure that there was a high requirement to use such a Sovereign Rank Artifact.

If they touched it carelessly, they might regret it for life. Now that they survived a fight against a strong Dark Magician, there was no way they would get themselves killed for a

Soon, they destroyed everything in sight, including the remains of the Vermont Academy's Airship.

After two days, Eustace and Constance arrived at Kirkham City. It was the city at the kingdom's border leading to the Ruri Kingdom.

As soon as they arrived, the two separated as they had different purposes for coming here.

Eustace wanted to explore with his Spell Fusion, while Constance wanted to find Spell Models she could record in her Spell Lights. Both of these require plenty of time.

After all, Constance knew how the research of Spell Models had advanced so much over the past years. She couldn't just rely on her knowledge that could be considered as "Ancient Knowledge" already. As for money, she didn't have to worry about it at all, considering the wealth she had obtained inside the Mystic Soul Tower.

In the meantime, Eustace would also require some time to explore his Spell Fusion since he doesn't have unlimited energy. If his guess was right, he could only do this once a day.

Clank!

Eustace then closed the door of his hotel room.

He indulged himself by renting an extravagant hotel room, embracing the opportunity to splurge some of his hard-earned money.

The room he acquired boasted a spacious layout, though it lacked the protective enchantments of Formation Arts or Arcane Arts commonly found in places owned by renowned Arcanist organizations.

As Eustace settled into his luxurious surroundings, preparing to delve into a deep meditative state on his bed, Yvaine, his Dark Spirit, spoke up unexpectedly.

"Do you need me to protect you?" She inquired, her concern evident in her voice. It seemed that she already expected that he would do something dangerous whenever he meditated.

Eustace paused for a moment, appreciating Yvaine's offer, before responding.

"There's no need... But thank you for your concern, Yvaine. For now, remain inside the shadow unless there is an emergency."

The other reason he suggested this was because of Yvaine's natural aura. It was something that normal people wouldn't like after all.

"Understood..." Yvaine replied, her demeanor displaying unwavering loyalty. Eustace couldn't help but smile as he felt that Yvaine really trusted him.

With their understanding established, Eustace immersed himself in his "meditation," entering his Extraction Space and focusing on its Fuse Function.

As he activated this system's function, he delved deeper into a state of concentration, he also felt as if his spirit traversed into another dimension, where he could perceive the ethereal Spell Lights and the Essence contained within his Extraction Space.

[Select the targets for Fusion.]

A message materialized in his consciousness, presenting the opportunity to start the Fusion.

Eustace's lips curved into a knowing smile as he pondered his options.

"Mhmm... I suppose I shall start with a fusion involving the spells I am most familiar with..." He murmured, his gaze fixed on the selection before him.

Without hesitation, he chose the Ghost Hands, Spectral Hands, and Moonlight Curse, eager to witness the outcome of this Spell Fusion.

According to Thelma Cameron, the senior student who had informed him about the Spell Fusions, these three Spells could actually create a spell called Moonlight Specter.

According to her, the Moonlight Specter spell had the ability to summon a maximum of nine Specters, their numbers influenced by the mastery of the Fusion Spell. These ethereal beings possessed a curse-inflicting ability that reached its zenith under the enchanting glow of moonlight.

Furthermore, a mere touch from these Specters would plunge individuals into nightmarish visions, awakening their deepest fears and inducing overwhelming panic.

Whom~

As the fusion process commenced, Eustace's heart raced with anticipation.

"Please be successful..." He silently prayed.

Though he recognized the favorable odds of success, given that all three spells he fused were Advanced Realm, the magnitude of energy drained during the fusion process left him with a lingering sense of unease.

To Eustace's relief, the wait for the fusion's outcome proved short-lived.

Ding!

[Spell Fusion Successful]

[Ghost Hands, Spectral Hands, and Moonlight Curse Spell Models have merged into Moonlight Specter Spell Model]

[You have 5 seconds to undo the Fusion, which will cost 50 Divinity Points.]

[Do you wish to accept this Spell Model?]

5... 4... 3...

Chapter 524 Help

"Whew~"

A surge of exhilaration washed over Eustace as he absorbed the news.

The birth of the Moonlight Specter spell held promise and potential. An extraordinary combination of powers was now at his disposal.

With a new Spell in his arsenal, he eagerly awaited the opportunity to test the spell's capabilities and witness the manifestation of the specters he could summon.

'That has to wait...' Eustace sighed as he checked the Spell Models in his body.

Apparently, he had realized that all of them only had about 10% of their energy. All his Spell Lights are almost gray!

It means that he had actually spent a lot of his energy just for a single Spell Fusion! It was better to just rest for now or drink some potions to recover his energy.

However, drinking such potions could build some natural resistance in his body, so he would only drink them when necessary.

Needless to say, he decided to take a rest instead.

"I'll probably miss my Ghost Hand Spell..." Eustace mused as he lay on his bed. He also felt quite tired after traveling for quite some time, and he certainly deserved a long rest.

The next day, Eustace found himself waking up later than usual, with the clock already striking noon.

A pang of hunger gnawed at his stomach, prompting him to swiftly cleanse himself before descending to the hotel's dining area in search of sustenance.

'Anything is good...' Eustace thought as he entered the bustling dining area.

He didn't expect that the room would be filled with numerous guests. Fortunately, luck was on his side. Another customer had just left, and he managed to secure a vacant seat.

He promptly placed an order for his meal, opting for a cold chicken sandwich, a comforting cup of warm broth, and a chilled pudding.

With his food served, Eustace savored each bite, relishing the flavors that were included as part of his room payment.

The satisfying meal replenished his energy, preparing him for the day ahead.

As he finished his meal, Eustace went outside to find a place to practice his Spells.

However, his attention was caught by a newspaper displayed on the walkway of the flower shop.

Curiosity piqued, he picked it up and skimmed through the pages. His eyes widened as he stumbled upon a headline that made him sigh.

He had already expected this since he extracted Keith's memories, but seeing it in the newspaper still felt different. He could only hope that nothing happened to his friends.

The headline read: "Vermont Academy Attacked: Inhumane Experiments Unveiled."

Unable to resist delving deeper into the story, Eustace decided to put off his plans to find a place to practice his Spells. He decided to purchase the newspaper for a small fee of 8 noll.

The ink on the pages revealed a grim reality—a conflict had erupted between the Holy Arts Faction and the Dark Arts Faction at the Vermont Academy.

According to the news, the Holy Arts Faction had discovered that the Dark Arts Faction was conducting inhumane experiments, leading to a clash of ideologies that ultimately culminated in the destruction of the esteemed Vermont Academy.

The details were scarce, but the repercussions of this revelation were undoubtedly far-reaching.

Of course, he doesn't trust the news too much as it could just be easily controlled by other Factions to favor their side.

Nevertheless, Eustace's mind buzzed with concern as he continued reading the article...

Luckily, the article mentioned how they are now hunting the Dark Magicians and capturing the students who had escaped through a mysterious portal leading to an unknown place. This news basically confirmed that they had failed to kill the students of the Academy.

'Portal? That's probably just the Teleportation Circle that Heinz told me before.' Eustace muttered as he recalled how Heinz had introduced the Academy to him before.

Eustace heaved a sigh of relief as there was a high chance that they could meet again.

In the end, he decided to go ahead and continue on his plan for the day.

Meanwhile, in another street not too far from Eustace, a middle-aged man was weakly sitting in front of his small stall.

His name was Theodore. He was a middle-aged cobbler, and at this time, he could feel the ominous presence of a paranormal event that had infiltrated his life.

Night after night, he experienced a draining sensation, as if an unseen force was siphoning away his life force, leaving him weakened and unable to focus on his work.

It was already in the middle of the day, and he only repaired a single pair of shoes!

Ever since he purchased his small house, this mysterious phenomenon had cast a dark shadow over his daily existence.

'This can't continue like this... Am I really being abandoned by the Paragons?' Theodore thought to himself.

As a devout believer in the Three Paragons, Theodore couldn't seek assistance from the church priests of the Fortune Goddess, Divine Sorcerer, and Lord of Secrets.

Apparently, the Church of the Three Paragons in the city had been closed for a disheartening period of five months, leaving him without the divine intervention he desperately sought.

Left with limited options, Theodore reluctantly turned to the Kirkham Arcanist Guild, a renowned organization known for their mastery of the arcane arts.

With a glimmer of hope, he posted a mission, reaching out for their expertise and aid in resolving the inexplicable affliction that tormented him.

Days turned into an agonizing wait, filled with mounting frustration and despair as Theodore's plea for help went unanswered.

Unfortunately, the small reward he could offer seemed to deter potential assistance, and after three long days, no one had come forward to accept his mission and provide a resolution to his pressing problem.

'Do I really have to convert to get assistance?'

As Theodore sat there, observing the bustling city streets, a sense of helplessness settled upon him.

He felt like a small, insignificant figure in a vast and indifferent world.

Chapter 525 The Guild

As Eustace strolled through the bustling streets, his eyes caught sight of a group of individuals exiting a grand building.

At first glance, they appeared to be ordinary pedestrians, blending seamlessly with the crowd. However, Eustace's heightened perception, granted by his ESP Spell, allowed him to sense a subtle fluctuation of Arcane Energy emanating from them.

Intrigued, he blinked his eyes and entered his Phantasm State, a state where he could summon his Magic Zone and heighten his senses.

Within this ethereal realm of perception, Eustace unveiled the true nature of the large building.

It was not just any ordinary structure but a gathering place for Arcanists! He could sense practitioners of various Arcane Paths.

His Divine Sense allowed him to see the diverse range of Arcane Paths practiced by the Arcanists within. Yet, he couldn't help but notice the absence of three prominent paths - the Holy Arts Practitioners, the Dark Arts Practitioners, and the Psychic Arts Practitioners.

'Are they banned here or something?' Eustace thought.

Perplexed by the sight before him, Eustace couldn't resist his curiosity.

"What is this place?" He muttered to himself, his intrigue growing with each passing moment.

As soon as he confirmed that his Divine Sense was undetected, he made a decision.

Approaching the signboard, he discovered that the establishment was a rather peculiar tavern named The Shaggy Donkey Bar.

'What a weird name...'

With a momentary hesitation, Eustace retrieved his Grimoire, unsure of what to expect inside. However, he was driven by the desire to uncover the reason behind the gathering of Arcanists from various paths.

As he stepped inside, the bells tied to the door chimed, announcing his arrival.

With the exception of the waitresses, who briefly glanced in his direction, no one else seemed to pay him much attention.

Eustace could sense that they recognized him as an Arcanist, seemingly unperturbed by his age or appearance. He couldn't help but note the intriguing fact that even the waitresses were skilled Combat Arts Practitioners.

'Interesting...'

Finding himself guided to a vacant seat by one of the waitresses, Eustace took a moment to observe his surroundings.

He couldn't help but notice a corner where a lot of people gathered. It seemed that this tavern had other purposes.

Eustace then ordered according to the waitress's recommendation. They were local foods and drinks, so he wanted to try them out.

Since he was new here, he didn't mind indulging himself in the flavors of the local cuisine.

As he was silently waiting for his meal, he soon realized what this place was after hearing the conversations of other Arcanists.

This place was none other than the city's Arcanist Guild, a hub where practitioners from various paths converged, shared knowledge, and enjoyed the camaraderie of their kind.

However, the most important thing was that in this place, they could complete the tasks that were requested by other Arcanists or ordinary people with problems related to the Arcane World.

As Eustace sat there, absorbing the ambiance of the Guild, he couldn't help but feel a surge of excitement...

'Arcanist Guild... I wonder how this works.' Eustace thought to himself.

Since he had to gather information, he decided to just ask the waitress who served his food after giving her a tip.

After a few minutes of questioning, he learned a lot about this branch of the Arcanist Guild in the city.

Apparently, it was under the protection of the city mayor himself, who wanted a peaceful relationship with the Arcanists who were entering his city.

Furthermore, as the paranormal activities that were happening in the city got bigger and bigger, the mayor was hoping that the Arcanists would be able to help them resolve such a problem.

In short, it was a gathering place for Rogue Arcanists, including those who had decided to leave their own Factions to earn money and gather materials for their own research.

The only thing he had to do was to register and pay a small fee.

After his satisfying meal, Eustace wasted no time in seeking the assistance of the waitress to facilitate his registration as a member of the Arcanist Guild.

The process proved to be relatively straightforward. After he was brought to the Guild's attendant, he was required to provide his name and specify his chosen Arcane Path on piece of paper.

This registration would enable the Guild to approach him whenever missions aligned with his expertise surfaced.

'This might not be a good idea...' Eustace mused as he wrote Summoner on his paper.

A hint of frustration flickered across his face as he contemplated the limitations posed by this answer.

Obviously, he possessed knowledge and abilities that extended beyond a single Arcane Path, and this restriction posed a dilemma for him.

Yet, after a moment of reflection, a mischievous smile played upon his lips.

"Mhmm... This is actually a good idea." Eustace exclaimed inwardly.

He realized that this seemingly confining arrangement could actually work to his advantage. By registering as a practitioner of Summoning Arts, he could conveniently attribute any tasks related to other paths to his "summons," utilizing the flexibility of his abilities to tackle a variety of situations.

This way, he could cleverly navigate the Guild's mission assignments, relying on the excuse of his diverse summons to address different Arcane Paths as needed.

'I'm a genius...' Eustace excitedly thought.

He then completed his registration and paid the 200 zen fee.

Then, Eustace was handed a small token crafted from redwood, bearing the emblem of Kirkham City's Arcanist Guild. He carefully inspected the token, ensuring its authenticity and confirming that it served no additional purpose beyond providing durability and protection against damage.

Satisfied with its simple yet important function, he placed the token securely in his pocket.

"Sir Eustace Skye..." The guild attendant addressed him respectfully. "You may find the bulletin board located in the corner. There, you will discover a selection of tasks suitable for your consideration. Should you find a mission that aligns with your abilities and interests, kindly retrieve the corresponding paper and present it at the counter to officially accept the assignment. It is crucial to remember that failing to complete a mission within the specified deadline will result in penalties. Therefore, I advise you to choose a task that you are confident in completing, Sir."

Chapter 526 Guild Missions

The attendant spoke calmly. He had probably done this numerous times already, so Eustace just nodded appreciatively, acknowledging the attendant's guidance.

Then, he made his way towards the corner of the Guild's premises, where the bulletin board awaited him.

As Eustace perused the bulletin board, he couldn't help but notice the multitude of missions posted by fellow arcanists.

These tasks dominated the board, occupying over two-thirds of the available space. Each mission carried a unique flavor, reflecting the diverse paths and specialties of his fellow guild members.

He then read some of these missions out of curiosity.

Seeking an Elemental Expert:

Alchemist Sumiya is in search of an arcanist skilled in manipulating the elemental forces. The task involves aiding in the extraction and purification of rare elemental essences for the creation of potent potions. Generous compensation and access to exclusive alchemical knowledge will be provided.

Investigation of Enchanted Artifact:

Runcaster Johan seeks an arcanist capable of unraveling the mysteries surrounding a recently acquired enchanted artifact that has Mystic Law's attributes. The task involves deciphering complex enchantments and understanding the artifact's origin and potential dangers. Substantial rewards await those who can successfully navigate the arcane intricacies.

Guardian of the Mystical Cave:

The Order of the Faith Guardians requests the assistance of arcanists proficient in warding and protective spells. The mission entails safeguarding the mystical cave outside the city from malevolent entities attempting to breach the barriers. Courage, knowledge of defensive magic, and swift reflexes are essential for this critical task.

This mission stunned Eustace for a moment. He didn't expect that a mission from a Faction's Order was actually here as well.

'Are they lacking in personnel?' Eustace couldn't help but comment in his mind as he thought that these Factions would have plenty of members. The Order of the Faith Guardians was under the Knights Faction, after all.

They should have plenty of personnel, considering the Knights Path was second to the most selected Arcane Path.

However, after thinking about it, it also made sense that they would use other Arcanists, especially if the mission wasn't that challenging.

After all, it might be better to use their experts in another important task.

Eustace wryly smiled at this as he continued checking out other missions, hoping he could find something that would interest him.

Arcane Research Assistant:

Scholar Luther is seeking a capable arcanist to assist in a groundbreaking research project. The mission involves delving into ancient texts, deciphering cryptic symbols, and conducting experiments to unlock the secrets of a long-lost magical phenomenon. The opportunity to contribute to cutting-edge arcane knowledge awaits the chosen arcanist. A five-year disclosure agreement must be signed upon accepting this mission.

Eradication of Dark Necromancy:

The Church of Fortune Goddess is calling upon arcanists dedicated to the eradication of dark necromantic practices. The mission involves confronting a notorious necromancer and their followers, putting an end to their heinous rituals, and freeing the souls trapped in their grasp. The

reward includes the gratitude of the Church and access to divine blessings. In case of death, the Church will take care of the families you've left behind.

"This..."

Eustace was a bit stunned after seeing this last part. He already expected the war against the Dark Arts Faction, but he didn't expect the Church to be so heavily involved that they would even recruit here. Furthermore, he couldn't help but frown at the possibility of death in this mission.

'Who would take such a dangerous mission?' Eustace shook his head as he believed that anyone who would just become cannon fodder for the Orders.

Anyway, among the remaining section of the bulletin board, Eustace noticed a collection of missions submitted by ordinary individuals seeking assistance with paranormal activities or unexplained phenomena. These tasks reflected the concerns and needs of regular people caught in the web of the mystical world.

He found these things more interesting as he was curious about how ordinary people are dealing with these problems.

He then checked a few missions that were newly placed on the bulletin board.

Haunted House Investigation:

A family living in a century-old mansion seeks an arcanist to investigate and cleanse the property of malevolent spirits. The mission entails deciphering the house's troubled history, communicating with restless spirits, and restoring peace to the occupants. A modest reward and eternal gratitude are offered.

Lost Relic Recovery:

A historian from the local museum requires an arcanist's aid in recovering a stolen ancient artifact of great cultural significance. The mission involves tracing the relic's whereabouts. The successful retrieval of the relic will be rewarded with recognition and a generous monetary prize.

Creature Troubles:

A farmer is grappling with crop devastation caused by mysterious creatures. They seek an arcanist capable of identifying and repelling these pests, ensuring the livelihood of their farm. The mission requires knowledge of nature-based magic and the ability to protect crops from supernatural threats. The farmer offers a bountiful harvest as compensation.

Cursed Talisman:

A desperate individual beseeches an arcanist to break a curse that plagues them due to an ill-fated talisman. The mission involves deciphering the curse's origins, gathering the necessary components for a counter-spell, and performing the ritual to free the afflicted person from their torment. The reward includes a free breakfast in her tiny store daily and a heartfelt expression of gratitude.

Spiritual Guidance:

An individual seeks the counsel of an arcanist to gain insight into their recurring prophetic dreams. The mission involves delving into the dream realm, interpreting symbolic visions, and providing guidance based on arcane knowledge. The seeker promises a token of appreciation and the opportunity for a profound spiritual awakening.

'Oh~'

Eustace couldn't help but compare the missions given by the ordinary people and those fellow Arcanists. The missions given by Arcanists were quite dangerous and required expertise in specific Arcane Paths. On the other hand, the ones given by the ordinary could easily be accepted by most Arcanists in the 2nd or even just the 3rd Class.

As he continued checking the posted missions, he realized that many of them were related to haunted houses. Then, one particular mission caught his eye.

Chapter 527 The Mission

The mission that captured Eustace's attention happened to be another Haunted House Investigation but with an interesting twist.

The mission description highlighted that the victim had seemingly fallen victim to a malevolent spirit that had drained or extracted their life force.

The presence of this spirit suggested the possibility of a Whispering Wraith, a particularly formidable entity known for its ability to absorb human life force.

"A Whispering Wraith..." Eustace mused, his thoughts drifting back to his class.

He was recalling his studies on the subject. The Whispering Wraith indeed possessed the ability to consume life energy, making it a formidable opponent.

'This might be a good start...'

The allure of extracting the life force that the Wraith had stolen from its victim piqued his curiosity. He couldn't help but wonder if he could confront this entity and reclaim the life energy it had taken.

With no explicit restrictions on accepting the task, Eustace made up his mind and decided to take the mission paper.

However, as Eustace reached out to claim the paper, a voice from behind him interrupted his actions. Startled, he turned to find a gentleman clad in a trench coat and emanating the aroma of roasted chicken.

'Ugh... Why did I notice that? I'm probably getting hungry again.'

"Young man... That particular mission might prove to be quite challenging for a Summoner like yourself. Are you absolutely certain about accepting it?" The gentleman cautioned, his tone laced with concern.

Eustace offered a wry smile, surprised that his decision had garnered such attention. "Is there something I should be wary of with this mission?" He inquired, genuinely intrigued by the gentleman's remarks.

The well-dressed man leaned closer, his voice lowered. "It's not necessarily a problem, but considering you're newly registered, it may be wise to wait. Perhaps the reward will increase, or more information about the mission will come to light, especially once the man who made a request dies... Patience can be a valuable asset in these situations." He advised with a hint of 'wisdom' in his words.

Eustace pondered the gentleman's advice, considering the possibilities.

"Why the caution for a mere Whispering Wraith? Even a dozen of them shouldn't pose a significant challenge to a prepared Arcanist. Though, if there were truly a dozen, the person who posted the mission wouldn't have stood a chance... So this might be just a lone wraith." Eustace murmured, his confidence remaining steadfast.

The gentleman nodded, acknowledging the truth in Eustace's words. "You make a valid point. However, what if this mission is a trap set by a Necromancer on the run from the Holy Arts Faction? Surely, you've heard of the ongoing conflict between the two factions. It's crucial to exercise caution when accepting missions associated with Dark Arts in these times." The man said as if he knew more about the conflict between the two Factions.

Eustace's frown deepened as he considered the gentleman's words. The conflict between the Holy Arts Faction and the practitioners of Dark Arts was indeed a matter of great significance, and he could not afford to overlook the potential dangers lurking within the mission.

Though he was also a Dark Arts Practitioner, it doesn't mean that he wouldn't get attacked by other Dark Magicians.

"Thank you for your reminder, Sir... However, I will still accept this mission." Eustace replied as he took the piece of paper and proceeded to get the complete details of the mission from the Guild Attendant.

There, he learned the name of the person who had made a request. His name was Theodore, and the location of his house was at Locust Lane. It wasn't that far from the hotel where he was staying at.

After accepting the mission and receiving all the necessary details from the Guild Attendant, Eustace wasted no time in setting out to investigate the task at hand.

This would be his first encounter with a Whispering Wraith, so he was looking forward to this mission. He swiftly arrived at Locust Lane, easily identifying the house he needed to inspect after spreading his Magic Zone.

The lane itself bustled with various stalls. There are many shops like tailor shops, hatters, watchmakers and barbers.

Anyway, positioned in front of the targeted house was a cobbler's stall. A middle-aged man, whom Eustace suspected to be Theodore, stood there, his gaze lost and filled with worry. It was evident that he felt helpless, as no one had yet accepted his plea for assistance.

"Well, let's see..."

Eustace muttered to himself, before utilizing his Divine Sense to confirm the presence of any Dark Arts Practitioners or other Arcanists who might be involved with the Whispering Wraith.

"There's none... That gentleman was really overreacting on this.

Satisfied with his findings, he approached Theodore.

"Are you Sir Theodore? I am from the Arcanist Guild and have accepted your mission," Eustace declared, his voice carrying reassurance.

Theodore's eyes lit up with hope upon hearing Eustace's words.

His face brightened with relief as he immediately replied.

"Finally! My prayers have been answered! Sir, please purify my house!" He pleaded, his desperation was evident. He must have suffered a lot because of that wraith.

Eustace nodded, understanding the urgency of the situation.

"Of course, that is precisely why I am here. Please remain here while I inspect your house." He instructed, his gaze fixed on the haunted dwelling.

"Thank you! I will eagerly await good news!" Theodore expressed gratefully.

With those words, Eustace confidently stepped into the house.

However, Theodore couldn't help but worry after seeing that Eustace didn't seem to bring the ritual materials that could be used as a sacrifice to either speak with the spirit or send it away.

Nevertheless, he couldn't help but feel impressed at Eustace's calm demeanor despite the potential dangers that lay within.

Before entering, Eustace skillfully utilized his ESP Spell to conceal his aura as an Arcanist, ensuring that his presence would remain undetected.

His enchanted necklace further aided in masking his magical energies.

As he stepped into the house, a wave of eerie sensation wrapped over him, confirming the immediate presence of the spirit suspected to be the Whispering Wraith.

Chapter 528 Wraith's Mystery

The spirit's appearance was unsettling, with a contorted visage resembling that of an elderly man, marked by deeply etched wrinkles.

It perched upon the ceiling, fixated on Eustace, and was emitting a ghastly gurgling sound.

Although it hadn't yet employed its life-draining ability, its mere presence was undoubtedly enough to terrify the inhabitants of the house.

'How did he last here for several weeks?' Eustace couldn't help but be impressed by Theodore's resilience, having endured the presence of this malevolent spirit for such an extended period.

It was fortunate that Theodore's third eye remained closed, preventing him from witnessing the abomination that this wraith truly was.

After some thought, Eustace refrained from immediately attacking the lingering wraith, choosing instead to explore the house and understand why the creature had chosen to remain within these walls rather than seek out more victims.

'If you have the power to suck someone's life, why would you stay here and not find other targets?' Eustace mused as he felt curious about the creature's decision to stay here instead of moving around.

After a thorough search, he silently identified an object that seemed to be tethered to the wraith's presence.

It took him a few moments to locate the object due to the lingering traces of the wraith throughout the house.

Making his way to a nearby shelf adorned with an assortment of shoes, he spotted a pair of boots emitting a potent dark energy. If his intuition served him right, this wraith haunting the house was once the owner of these very boots... or connected to it when it was still alive.

After contemplating his options, Eustace considered simply vanquishing the wraith and disposing of the boots. That would end his mission and he could return to the Arcanist Guild to get his reward.

However, after careful consideration, he decided to consult Theodore before taking any further action. Exiting the house, Eustace was greeted by Theodore's wide-eyed gaze.

"You're back? Is it finished?" Theodore asked with anticipation.

"Not yet..." Eustace replied swiftly to Theodore's inquiry. "However, I believe I have identified the source of the problem. It seems to be the pair of black boots on the second row of your shelf. Can you tell me where you acquired them?" Eustace inquired. He simply wants to satisfy his curiosity. After all, the things he learned in the Academy weren't as detailed as he expected.

He truly needs some real experiences to really understand the intricacies of the Arcane World.

Eustace was also in no rush, as he decided to take his time to complete the mission.

"Those boots?!"

Theodore was surprised upon hearing Eustace's words, indicating that he had reached a realization. Silence enveloped them for a moment before Theodore spoke again.

"That was my son's favorite..." Theodore's voice trailed off as his gaze shifted towards the house, now filled with a different emotion. The worry had dissipated, replaced by a nostalgic expression.

Eustace turned around, ready to take care of the wraith within the house.

"Alright, I will handle the wraith inside. As for the boots, I suggest burning them to prevent the attraction of any other spirits." He advised as he made his way back inside.

"W-Wait! Is there a chance that the wraith you mentioned is my son?" Theodore's voice quivered as he reached out and grasped Eustace's hands.

Eustace furrowed his brow, taken aback by the sudden question.

Although there's a chance for that, it was already a wraith.

"I don't think so..." Eustace responded after shaking his head.

"But... wait!" Theodore interjected. "Let me deal with it. Perhaps I can speak to his spirit!" He added.

Eustace paused, considering Theodore's request.

This was a dangerous request since Theodore was already weak.

However, before he could refuse, Theodore continued.

"Let me sign it. I will sign the mission I posted as completed. This way, whatever happens to me is no longer your fault."

Theodore said as he reached out his hand.

'I didn't really come here to complete the mission though... I came here for the wraith.' Eustace thought since he was simply planning to extract that spirit.

Anyway, he still gave the paper to Theodore to have it signed, confirming that the mission was completed.

With Eustace's agreement, he allowed Theodore to enter the house, giving him a chance to communicate with his "departed son."

"My son! Can you hear me?! I was wrong... I should've stayed with you at that time..."

Softly, Theodore spoke to the presence of his son, expressing regret and longing for the moments they had missed together.

Eustace felt a bit awkward listening to this since the wraith looked nothing like an adorable son to him. It seemed more like a deformed ancestor.

For more than 20 minutes, Theodore's words filled the air, but Eustace keenly observed the situation.

Despite Theodore's heartfelt pleas, the wraith remained indifferent, fixated on its eerie gurgling sounds.

Eustace realized that the spirit was not responding to Theodore's presence, confirming his earlier suspicion.

Deciding that it was time to intervene, Eustace employed his Darkness Manipulation Spell, skillfully binding the wraith and bringing it under his control. Without hesitation, he activated his System's Extraction Ability.

[Spiritual Being has been discovered. Would you like to start the extraction?]

Of course, Eustace extracted the Whispering Wraith, a malevolent entity that derived pleasure from slowly draining the life force of its victims.

[Extraction Successful. Energy +30, Vitality +1 Malevolent Essence +40?]

'Oh? Did I get a whole vitality from a single wraith? Isn't this a bit too generous?' Eustace mused.

After appreciating the result of his extraction, he turned his gaze back to the cobbler.

"That is enough, Mr. Theodore. The wraith has departed..." Eustace informed Theodore, his tone firm yet reassuring.

"I recommend burning the boots, as they hold a dense dark energy."

Eustace didn't wait for Theodore's response, knowing that the task was completed.

With a swift departure, he vanished from the house, leaving Theodore to process the events and find closure in his own time.

Chapter 529 Destruction

After returning to the Arcanist Guild, Eustace promptly presented the signed papers, effectively completing the mission.

The process was straightforward, and the Guild Attendant swiftly confirmed the completion of the request and prepared the reward.

Although the modest compensation originated from a small-time cobbler, it still brought a sense of fulfillment to Eustace, providing insight into an alternative path as an Arcanist, distinct from the academic route he might have pursued at the Academy.

There are indeed many other jobs for Arcanists like him aside from the options that were mentioned to him in the Academy.

Eustace couldn't help but smile after recalling those possible jobs: Occult Consultant, Paranormal Investigator, Museum Curator or Artifact Expert, Ritual Designer or Event Planner, Arcane Historian or Researcher, or even an Author or Teacher.

'Well, I guess I'm sort of a Paranormal Investigator when I accept these missions.' Eustace mused as he waited for the Guild Attendant to process the reward.

Upon receiving the 2,000 zen reward, the Guild Attendant inquired.

"Are you planning to accept more missions like this one?"

"I will take a few more missions while I remain in the city. However, I'll be doing some errands for now." Eustace responded with a smile.

Departing from the Guild House, Eustace noticed several Arcanists casting curious glances in his direction as he distanced himself from the area. He simply ignored their scrutiny since none of them were showing hostility. He could only think that they were interested in how a Summoner had accomplished the cobbler's mission.

Subsequently, Eustace proceeded to a secluded area in the eastern part of the city, where he found an abandoned house at its edge.

After carefully surveying the surroundings and ensuring its safety, he made the decision to summon his Moonlight Specter, directing its attention towards a nearby pillar without hesitation.

Upon activating the spell, the ethereal entity materialized...

Whoosh~

Then, without waiting for it to complete its form, Eustace swiftly checked his Spell Light, verifying that he could summon five of them before his Spell Light became depleted.

'That's quite a lot of energy...' Eustace mused.

It was completely unlike his Ghost Hands or Spectral Hands, which had low cooldown and low energy consumption. He could basically use those Spells every 5 to 8 minutes.

Soon, an icy aura enveloped the abandoned house, heralding the Moonlight Specter's advance towards the targeted pillar.

The Moonlight Specter's appearance was both captivating and unsettling. It manifested as a translucent, humanoid figure with a shimmering, silvery glow.

Its form seemed to waver and shift as if it were comprised of liquid moonlight, and its piercing blue eyes exuded an otherworldly radiance. The creature moved with an eerie grace, leaving a faint trail of sparkling mist in its wake as it carried out Eustace's bidding.

As the Moonlight Specter touched the pillar, it didn't seem to have any significant effect aside from the blackening of the pillar as if it was burnt.

'So it's no longer suitable to carry out simple tasks, unlike my Ghost Hands.' Eustace mused as he realized that the Moonlight Specter was really an attack-type specter. Nevertheless, he didn't think too much of it since the Mastery of his Darkness Manipulation was already Level 8 and on the verge of breaking into Level 9.

It means that he could already control it, similar to his Ghost Hands. It could act like an extension of his hands, which could even be better than his Ghost Hands.

'I'll just know how strong it is if I really fought against a strong opponent—'

As Eustace reached this thought, he suddenly felt something off.

His heightened senses, sharpened by his ESP Spell, alerted him to an imminent threat.

In response, the very fabric of space around him contorted, suffusing the area with a distinct, holy aura!

It was unmistakable - someone had detected the dangerous, dark aura emanating from the Moonlight Specter and had set out to investigate the disturbance.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Eustace swiftly concealed his Grimoire, while instructing Yvaine to retrieve his Devil's Mask and Devil's Dagger, preparing for the inevitable confrontation.

With a sudden and unexpected emergence from the spatial distortion, the figure who tried to step out of the cracked space was met with a swift and forceful counterattack from Eustace.

Eustace unleashed his Celestial Art, the Call of the Divine Lightning!

It caused the once serene sky above the city to darken ominously. Subsequently, twin bolts of searing lightning descended, hurtling towards the abandoned house with unrelenting force!

Boom! Boom!

The resultant detonations echoed through the city, their thunderous reverberations commanding the attention of the people in the city.

Startled onlookers emerged from their dwellings, their faces a mixture of awe, dread, and astonishment as they bore witness to the unparalleled spectacle unfolding before them.

"Is that the Heavenly Lightning I've heard so much about?"

"The city is being punished?"

"W-what's going on? This is definitely not a natural phenomenon. It happened almost without any signs!"

"A failed ritual?"

"It must be... But something must've attracted the lightning, and it could be a—"

"The Guild Leader has made an order to investigate the situation!"

"Hurry! A treasure must've been born in the place!"

As soon as someone said the word "treasure," they suddenly recalled the legends about various things like rocks, plants, flowers, or even animals that would mutate and give legendary powers to the people who had claimed it.

Though none of them could confirm whether these legends were true, they dared not miss this chance!

The Guild House was immediately emptied as everyone wanted to benefit from whatever they could see at the place where the "Heavenly Lightning" hit.

However, amidst the chaos and destruction, Eustace was compelled to retreat from the cataclysmic aftermath. He was well aware of the consequences brought by such a display of power.

"Mhmm?"

Eustace was taken aback as the holy aura, which had dissipated following the celestial lightning's strike, resurged with even greater intensity, permeating the entire vicinity with an unmistakable power that far surpassed its prior manifestation.

Eustace's face turned grave as he realized that he had met a really powerful Arcanist this time.

Before long, amidst the lingering smoke and debris, an aged voice resonated through the air...

"Hoh~ It's been a while since I got hit with such a strong Spell..." The voice intoned, carrying with it an air of authority as his figure slowly approached Eustace.

Chapter 530 The Mysterious Priest

The elderly gentleman was apparently undaunted by the formidable assault of the Divine Lightning.

He remained composed while patting his robe, displaying an unwavering calm that belied the sheer force he had just withstood.

Eustace, in turn, couldn't help but take a deep breath. He knew that he himself would have struggled to emerge unscathed from such a powerful attack.

As the dissipating haze revealed the old man's countenance, Eustace discerned that the latter either bore the impairment of blindness or deliberately concealed his eyes behind a dark blindfold.

'Where did this blind old man come from?' Eustace mused as he remained vigilant.

Clad in a black robe adorned with intricate rune circles, and wielding a staff suggestive of a potent Runic Weapon, the old man exuded an unmistakable aura imbued with sanctity and power.

'A Runecaster with a Holy Aura?' Eustace pondered, perplexed by the enigma presented before him.

Although he could perceive the radiance of the Holy Aura emanating from the old man, he remained uncertain whether it derived from yet another Rune Art or from the old man's own power.

Eustace exercised caution and refrained from activating his Divine Sense. He was worried that the old man possessed a higher level of mastery of the Divine Sense.

If that was the case, the old man could easily detect his spell.

Nonetheless, he remained secure in the knowledge that his own Half-Celestial Physique would effectively thwart any attempt by the old man to probe his Divine Sense.

"Tell me, what do you want?" Eustace inquired, deliberately modulating his voice with a touch of mystery through Voice Manipulation Spell. Well, he was seeking to maintain an air of intrigue as he was portraying a different identity.

"Mhmm... You're wearing the Devil's Face, crafted by the Church of the Three Paragons... So, you are the Masked Devil Incarnate I've heard about? Intriguing..." The old man responded, evading Eustace's question as he scrutinized the disguised young man even if he was blindfolded.

Frustrated by the old man's evasiveness, Eustace resolved to take action.

With a deft gesture, he summoned two additional Moonlight Specters, bolstering his forces.

"Let's see how strong you are."

Eustace then commanded the spectral entities to attack the enigmatic figure before him.

Whoosh~

As his?Moonlight Specters surged forward, the old man swiftly raised his staff, unleashing a torrent of holy energy, forming a protective barrier around him.

'A Priest using a Runic Weapon?' Eustace mused as he realized the true path of the old man from the clash.

The Specters' ethereal forms collided with the barrier, but the barrier held firm, repelling the spectral assailants effortlessly.

Crash~ Crash~

The Moonlight Specters didn't give up as they continued expanding their energy of corruption.

"I finally recalled these entities. They're Moonlight Specters. It's a Fusion of Three Advanced Realm Dark Spells. So you're really Dark Magician imitating a different Arcane Path with that Lightning?" The old man muttered.

Eustace ignored the enemy's words as he commanded the Specters to regroup, their haunting wails reverberating through the air as they prepared for another assault.

Meanwhile, the old man, his blindfold now undulating with a faint, otherworldly glow, seemed to be invoking a complex incantation, the runes on his staff pulsating with an ominous radiance.

As the Specters lunged once more, the old man's staff erupted with a blinding burst of light, propelling a wave of energy that rent the spectral entities asunder, dissipating them into nothingness.

'So strong?!'

Eustace gritted his teeth, as he didn't expect that those Specters would be killed so easily.

Nevertheless, he still found an opportunity from this clash.

He focused on his target as he triggered his Darkness Manipulation.

Dark tendrils snaked forth from his outstretched hand, ensnaring the old man in an inky embrace. The old man, momentarily caught off guard, struggled against the binding darkness, but Eustace immediately triggered his Extraction System.

Eustace, his heart pounding, sought to capitalize on the fleeting advantage he had gained. However, something unexpected happened.

[Living Human has been discovered. Would you like to start the extraction?]

"Yes..."

[Extraction Failed]

"W-what?!" Eustace was confused as his Extraction System would never fail him unless his target had already been extracted.

However, he had certainly never extracted this elder!

As Eustace grappled with his bewilderment over the unexpected turn of events, the old man reemerged behind him, catching him off guard.

"My clone was obliterated by those dark tendrils just from being touched... That's quite a dangerous move, young man." The old man remarked, leaving Eustace momentarily startled.

Then, just as the old man reached out to lay a hand on Eustace's shoulder, a female Dark Spirit materialized from Eustace's shadow, swiftly swatting the old man's hand away with a resounding slap.

Pah!

The force of the blow sent the old man stumbling backward, allowing Eustace the opportunity to create some distance between them.

Despite his formidable physique and current strength, Eustace was alarmed at the old man's palm strike. It was evident that the old man possessed a technique or spell that posed a genuine threat to his life.

In the meantime, the enemy was similarly startled.

"A spirit unaffected by Holy Aura? A Dark Spirit?" The old man mused, visibly taken aback. He had been convinced of his imminent victory and had intended to interrogate the Masked Devil Incarnate.

He was already planning to remove the mask and see the man's face.

However, the sudden appearance of the Dark Spirit had thrown him off balance. According to his knowledge, Dark Spirits were bound solely to the Vermont Family, renowned for their unparalleled mastery of spirit manipulation, far surpassing the Featherstar Family in this regard.

Fascinated by the unexpected revelation, the old man couldn't help but ponder.

"Interesting... So, the Masked Devil Incarnate is most likely from the Vermont Family... This is a huge discovery. You appear so youthful... not even 30 years old, yet you command a potent Dark Spirit without losing your sanity. I can't think of another reason aside from being a descendant of the Vermont Family."