

Arcane Academy: The Divine Extraction Legacy

Chapter 901: The 16th Path

The Perfect Vessel wasn't just in any chamber. It was a chamber that had come from the Celestial Prison Realm itself to perfectly preserve it.

Vale made his way to the hall after greeting Chad, Sreas, and the others...

Tap. Tap. Tap...

As he descended, the place grew colder, and the presence of the Dragons became a lot noticeable. Finally, he reached the Dragon's Chamber, where the Vessel was also being kept.

The body, or the Vessel, lay in a strange capsule. It was an advanced technology that only the Celestials could possess at that time.

Vale nodded at the two Dragons who were sleeping, and they acknowledged his presence for a brief moment. There was no need for conversation at all.

Seeing through the glass, Vale admired the Vessel's features before he decided to open it up...

Whoosshhh~

With the release of the air from the capsule, Vale then used his Shadow Manipulation in order to carry the body and put it in the stone slab they had prepared initially.

"So, this is a body that Celestial Beings would desire..." Vale mused.

Its features were serene and almost ethereal.

It was indeed genderless, with smooth, unblemished skin and an aura of otherworldly purity. Vale approached it, his eyes studying the intricate details. This body was supposed to be his new form had Denise not cured him in time.

"Ughh..."

He then shuddered at the thought of living in a body without a nether region. Not having that specific physical sensations he had grown accustomed to might drive him insane.

"But... Can I still use this as my Avatar?" Vale murmured to himself, as he didn't really want to waste such an incredible physique.

He pondered for a moment as he considered his plan.

The Vessel could serve as a second life just in case an accident happened to him... By placing a part of his Spirit within it, he believed that he could create an Avatar that would act independently yet remain connected to him.

It was completely different from the Avatar Creation Spell that he obtained. It would cost an extreme amount of Divinity, Soul, and Spirit. Because of that, he wouldn't be completely weakened, just like what happened to the other Immortals he had met, including the Seven Sins, the Demon Lord, Halvor, the Eminence of the Sea, and others.

The idea was both intriguing and daunting.

With a deep breath, Vale decided to proceed.

He consulted Spirit Immortal Constance, the two Dragons, Jin, Aurion, and even Odessa, with her knowledge about Spirit about this matter, and they all confirmed that it was indeed possible.

Then, what he didn't expect was that it would be Lotus, who would actually help him know more about the plan that he wanted to happen.

Apparently, as a Dark Spirit, she was the one with the most experience when it came to possessing or using her Spirit to control another body.

Although what he would do was different, there were still some similarities from it.

"I'm ready..." Vale muttered to himself.

After several days of preparation, he finally began the ritual...

Indeed, he wasn't going to do this with a Spell but through a Ritual supported by Formation Art and Rune Arts.

Soon, he started to chant ancient incantations. To be exact, he used levada and not Oardic or Magic Language.

Soon, the Spiritual Runes on the floor glowed brighter as their light converged on the Vessel. Vale extended his hand, and a blade of pure energy formed in his grasp. With a slow but accurate movement, he cut a small part of his Spirit, feeling a sharp pain as the essence separated from him. The fragment of his Spirit hovered in the air, a glowing orb of energy.

Needless to say, the blade wasn't formed through his spell but through Divinity with the help of the runes just now.

Anyway, he guided the orb towards the Vessel...

Vale concentrated on this as his heart pounded with eagerness.

As the orb touched the body, it was absorbed instantly... However, nothing happened.

Vale wasn't in a hurry though... He remained calm as he stabilized the pain in his body...

Unlike the Avatar Creation Spell that uses a lot of his Spirit, this process only required him to use a fist-size Spirit Form.

'His eyelid's moving...' Vale's eyes lit up as he saw. This was the first time he saw the handsome or perhaps beautiful Vessel to move!

Suddenly, the Vessel's eyes snapped open with a flash of light. The chamber was filled with a

bright light as the energy of the ritual was absorbed by the body!

Vale also felt that some of his Divinity was taken away from him.

However, he wasn't too worried as Divinity could still be replenished. Furthermore, the amount of Divinity didn't exceed 500 points after checking his status.

'Is it successful? Can it move now?' Vale wasn't too sure, as their connection was still too weak. The link between them had just been established.

Thankfully, he didn't have to wait for long.

The Vessel soon sat up, and from Vale's perspective, this person looked really impressive...

It then turned to look at him, with its eyes reflecting his own.

Thud...

Just like that, Vale felt their connection grew stronger... It was a bond that linked him to this new form. The experiment had succeeded; he had created an exceptional Avatar that had flesh, organs, blood, and bones!

Though calling it an Avatar might be a stretch since it should be some sort of Possession, Vale still believed that it was an Avatar since it was made by Celestials for that sole purpose.

"Welcome," Vale said softly, and relief could be heard from his voice...

The Avatar then blinked at Vale and nodded...

"I would like to celebrate this monumental achievement, but unfortunately, we made a huge mistake... This body shouldn't have woken up..." The Avatar said.

This confused Vale for a moment. He even felt worried that the body possessed some problem that could endanger the realm!

However, the Avatar's next words made him realize that it was finally his time to encounter these Practitioners of Void Arts, the sixteenth Arcane Path!

Chapter 902: Old Zeno

Three years had passed since Vale's transaction with the Chaos Alchemist, and during this time, a lot of things had changed.

The Philosopher's Elixir, once a rare and coveted potion, was now available to all. It had become a rite of passage, allowing every child over the age of twelve to unlock their magical potential.

While the elixir was powerful, it came with its limitations-those under twelve suffered bizarre mutations if they dared to drink it too early.

These mutations weren't harmful at all, but it was better to avoid them. These mutations could be having white streaks of hair, numerous moles, and yellowed teeth. They had become the hallmarks of impatience...

So, it became law to every nation that only those twelve and older could consume it.

Among those new Arcane Talents was Armin, a quiet but talented boy from an orphanage in Milton Kingdom's Melthorn City. He had spent his life within the stone walls of the orphanage, watching from the windows as the world outside changed.

Now, his time had come.

"It's really happening..." He muttered to himself.

Armin's reflection stared back at him through the window of the train as it sped westward.

His pale skin and dark eyes were quite common to see with his short, messy brown hair. There was only his bright and hopeful gaze that set him apart from the other children he'd grown up with.

At this time, he wore a simple tunic, patched at the elbows, and trousers that were too short- remnants of the orphanage's humble resources.

Despite his modest background, Armin had something others didn't. When he had consumed the Philosopher's Elixir just a few weeks ago, the examiners in the orphanage had been astonished.

Not only did he complete the transformation process quickly, but he had been marked as capable of mastering three distinct Arcane Paths-Dark Arts, Transformation Arts, and Combat Arts. Among the twelve known Paths, these were considered a formidable combination, and his talents had earned him the chance to several Academies, but in the end, he decided to choose the Marshall Academy, one of the new and most prestigious institutions for Arcanists in the west.

After all, it was an Academy that was built by a living Immortal!

The Academy was located in the Shadow Immortal's Domain, a vast and mysterious land governed by the legendary Vale, who had risen to power over the years.

Although Vale was known to have powers over the Shadow Domain, he initially started as a Dark Arts Practitioner.

Anyway, although it had only been a year since the Academy had been opened, it was known for its focus on advanced magical disciplines, and its reputation had spread far and wide.

Armin's decision to pursue the Dark Arts there wasn't made lightly.

Although there were more than a dozen of Academies that teaches Dark Arts recently, the Marshall Academy was still the best option. Not even the ones established by the Dark Arts Faction itself could say much about it.

Thud... Thud...

As the train rattled along the iron tracks, Armin couldn't help but feel excited. He then looked around to see if there were other aspiring students who were planning to enroll in the Academy.

Looking around, he noticed that the train's interior was a mix of rich and poor-nobles should be seated in the luxurious carriages in front, while those like Armin sat in the crowded economy section, squeezed between merchants and common folk.

"I guess I'm the only one here going to enroll... Is it still unacceptable to practice Dark Arts?" Armin mused as he recalled the expression of the volunteers working at the orphanage. Although they weren't saying it due to their fear of the Shadow Immortal, it

seemed that Dark Arts were still something that old people could accept deep within their hearts.

'Whatever...'

Thud... Thud...

The steady clacking of the wheels was almost hypnotic, but his mind was elsewhere after recalling the orphanage...

He clutched the small pendant around his neck, a keepsake from the orphanage. It wasn't worth much, but it was the only thing that had ever felt like home.

'No going back now...' He thought.

Whatever was ahead of him was definitely a world full of possibilities but also danger.

The Dark Arts were feared for a reason, and the path he had chosen would not be easy. However, if he wanted to follow the path of the Immortal, he believed that this was the only way.

Looking out the window, Armin could see the landscape changing.

The lush fields of Milton Kingdom gave way to the vast plains of the west, where the air felt fresher as if filled with more magic.

His mind wandered back to the stories he had heard of the Vorathi, the ancient Practitioners of Void Arts, one of the Lost Arcane Paths.

It was said that they had once walked this very land, long before the rise of the Shadow Immortal, and now they threatened to return.

According to the information that had been spread by the Arcane Bureau, the world needed more Arcanists, warriors capable of standing against the Void's power, and that's what Marshall Academy was training them to become.

Clunk... Clunk...

The train slowed as it approached a station for a brief stop.

The sound of the steam whistle then jolted Armin from his thoughts.

He glanced around, watching the other passengers preparing to disembark...

It wasn't his stop yet, so he remained seated. As soon as the new passengers came, he noticed

a few children his age together with their parents, their eyes wide with excitement or fear as

Armin realized that they too, made their way toward the Academy.

A grizzled old man across the aisle caught his eye and grinned, revealing teeth yellowed with age. "First time heading west, boy?" he asked.

Armin nodded. "First time on a train, too," he admitted...

The old man chuckled. "You'll be fine. If you manage to pass, you might actually become one

of my students."

"Ahh... Really?!" Armin was shocked. He didn't expect to meet a professor here.

"May I ask for your name, Professor?" He added.

"Zeno... Zeno Roquemont."

Chapter 903: The New Academy

"I'm Zeno Roquemont..." The old man said as he extended a hand. "If you're going to practice Dark Arts at Marshall Academy, there's a good chance you'll end up as one of my students."

Armin's eyes widened in surprise. He hadn't expected to meet a professor of the Dark Arts! Furthermore, he might not have known the name Zeno, but he knew about the Roquemont family. It was a family deeply entwined with the Dark Arts faction.

'The Roquemont family... I read about them after I studied a bit about the Dark Arts Faction...'

"Incredible!" Armin blurted, still processing the revelation. "Right... if you don't mind, Professor, I wanted to ask-do you think having five Spell Lights is enough?"

At this question, Zeno was a bit stunned before he let out a low chuckle.

This was definitely a simple question but because of the many changes happening right now, the standard had also changed.

"Five Spell Lights? That's more than enough, my boy. You don't have to worry. Although it's common to have eight spell lights upon awakening, it's still fine... Well, as long as you haven't already recorded any spell models."

Zeno then paused for a moment to look at the young man's expression before he continued.

"You'll be required to learn or record four mandatory spell models once you start at the Academy. But if you've filled your Spell Lights with models already, you'll have to visit the Spell Hall and request a purge before we can move forward. It's not something you want to deal with in the middle of a class."

Armin nodded quickly, a flood of relief rushing through him. "So it's four... The volunteer in the orphanage said that we just need three... It was something he knew about ten years ago. Anyway, I haven't recorded anything yet. I can barely maintain my Phantasm State for long enough."

The professor raised an eyebrow. "Oh? How long is your Phantasm?"

These people are truly lucky nowadays. After all, they no longer need to consume the Darkness Possession Potion in order to awaken their talent as Dark Arts Practitioner. Though they could still consume it in order to hasten the speed of their Spell Lights formation and help them imprint Spell Models faster, it was still better not to consume them since they would give incredible pain to the young Arcanists unless they have a physique similar to Maya.

Anyway, Armin hesitated before responding with almost a whisper.

"It's only four meters around me, and it lasts for about twenty seconds... It's not much. Plus, I need at least three minutes before I can enter the state again."

Zeno's expression shifted into something thoughtful. He stroked his chin for a moment before speaking. "Four meters within twenty seconds, eh? Not the best, but certainly not the worst I've seen. The Phantasm State is a personal skill that takes time to refine. Everyone starts differently, but you'll be surprised how fast you can expand that radius with the right training. You can push that limit once you understand the mechanics better."

Armin's face lit up with a bit of hope. "Really?"

"Absolutely." Zeno smiled as he looked at the young man...

Since their journey would still take some time, he decided to just talk with the young man and give him some tips based on his experience.

Zeno considered for a moment after learning more about Armin's situation...

"First tip don't think of it as just a field of magic. Your Phantasm is more than an extension of your senses and power. It's also a reflection of your willpower. The more confident you become in your Dark Arts, the more naturally your Phantasm will grow. It's like flexing a muscle you've never used before. The more you push it, the stronger it'll get."

Armin nodded intently, absorbing every word. The idea that his Phantasm could be developed over time gave him a sense of reassurance.

"But don't get frustrated if you're not seeing any improvement," Zeno continued. "Most students find their Phantasm State weak or unreliable when they first start. You'll learn techniques to focus and maintain it. At the Academy, we'll teach you to attune yourself to it, gradually pushing the boundaries of your range and duration. For you, control will be key. You've got the potential with three Arcane Paths, but raw power without control can be dangerous-especially in the Dark Arts."

"I understand, Professor!" Armin replied with enthusiasm.

As the train pressed on through the changing landscape, the conversation between Armin and Professor Zeno flowed easily.

Zeno continued to share more about the intricacies of Dark Arts, the importance of mastering one's fears, and how emotional control directly impacted spellcasting. After all, the duration of Phantasm State could also shorten depending on the caster's focus...

Zeno would surely not do such a thing if this was several years ago, but after he turned into an old due to many of his Dark Rituals, he had surely changed.

They discussed the types of students at the Academy, the possible challenges Armin would face, and the advanced rituals that awaited him.

Soon, as the basic things were finally explained, Armin asked about the other paths that he could've practiced.

Zeno also knew some things about the Transformation Arts and Combat Arts, so he decided to Share it with Armin. However, these two Arcane Paths weren't being taught in Marshall Academy."

Nonetheless, Armin felt grateful about it.

"So Transformation Arts are about manipulating your physical self or your environment, and Combat Arts... well, it was quite straightforward, but we can learn the Aura there... I guess my decision to stick with the Dark Arts was a good one."

He was excited by the prospect of learning such an Art, but also anxious. He had never felt particularly powerful, and growing up in an orphanage had left him with a lingering sense of

inferiority.

'I can do this...' He thought to himself.

Zeno must have sensed his apprehension and gently spoke...

"You know, most people at the Academy don't come from wealthy or powerful backgrounds. You're not the only one from humble beginnings. I've seen ordinary people rise through the ranks faster than noble-born students who thought their family names would carry them. The only thing that matters here is your commitment. If you give it your all, the Academy will give back more than you can imagine." Zeno said... He had indeed witnessed several people without any background rise in the late Vermont Academy.

Chapter 904: Enrollment

904 Enrollment

Armin smiled after hearing the old man's words, feeling a little more at ease.

His insecurity was quite obvious, and that was due to his poor background. As a matter of fact, there were only three main Academies with free tuition fees. The others had to be paid, or they could allow a loan or even just give miscellaneous tasks to the students in order to cover their tuition fees.

Thanks to the Marshall Academy's free tuition fee for first-year and second-year students, Armin had a chance to learn, show his talent, and even earn a scholarship.

The thought of being able to build his future with his own hands, without wealth or status over him, gave him a lot of hope.

The two continued to chat a bit more, and before long, the train began to slow as it approached the Shadow Immortal's Domain.

The once lush forest area of this region was already gone. Nonetheless, there were still areas with patches of trees as a natural resource of the region.

As the travel took plenty of time, the sun was already beginning to set...

Then, as the train entered Clovis City, the place where the Academy was located, Armin looked at the window and searched for the signs of the Academy. After all, he heard that it was a grand place.

"It's there..." Armin muttered.

The sight of Marshall Academy in the distance filled Armin with awe. Even from here, the dark, gothic structures exuded a very imposing aura for him...

After a couple more stations, where he saw several Black Towers or perhaps Arcane Towers, Armin knew that this city was a lot more powerful compared to the Melthorn City where he had come from.

"Well," Zeno said, standing up as the train came to a halt, "looks like we've arrived. We'll see each other again." As Zeno said this, his body collapsed into many pieces of feathers... It was a Movement Spell!

A few people saw this as well and were shocked as the old man vanished. However, knowing that this place had numerous Arcanists all over the world, they immediately calmed down.

Nonetheless, some of them were still a bit spooked at what had happened and held their charms, talismans, or various Artifacts in their hands to give them courage and move on.

'Awesome! I wish I could learn that as well.' Armin commented in his mind. Well, the first Spell that he wanted to record was indeed not killing or attacking Spell. Defensive Spell was also possible but what he truly wanted was something related to Speed. A movement Spell that could help him escape from any dangerous situation.

After all, he just wanted to live a long life.

Armin felt excited as he gathered his things.

As he stepped off the train and followed the signs leading to the Academy, he felt the weight of his journey settle in. He was no longer the orphan from the Milton Kingdom. He was now an Arcanist-in-training, ready to unlock his full potential.

"This place feels really good... The sky is clear, and there are no factories spewing smoke everywhere."

Armin muttered as he got through the bustling streets of the city... If he compared Melthorn City to this place, Clovis City, he would rate this place as more advanced in terms of the quality of life of the people residing here.

'I'll be like them soon...' Armin thought to himself.

Anyway, signs adorned every corner, each one etched with directions leading newcomers toward various places. Of course, he just focused on the ones leading to the Marshall Academy.

He followed the steady flow of people, most of whom looked about his age, with a few older students here and there, all heading to the same destination.

The cobblestone streets were lined with mysterious shops, bright alleyways, and vendors hawking strange wares, from crystal pendants to enchanted scrolls.

As he rounded a final corner, the Academy gates came into view.

Hu~

Armin's breath caught at the sight.

The gates were towering. It was formed from iron with intricate carvings of an Ancient Language he didn't know, and even without using his Phantasm State, he could tell that it had powerful protective spells.

"I'm finally here..."

Crowds had gathered outside, and the area buzzed with chatter. After listening to a few conversations, he pieced together that nearly 500 students were enrolling in Marshall Academy this term.

Apparently, the Academy not only teaches Dark Arts but also Mystic, Psychic, and Elemental Arts.

'Amazing... This really feels like a place of the Immortal.' He thought.

Soon, Armin worked his way through the crowd, asking questions here and there, confirming that the large group wasn't unusual.

Among the applicants, an astounding 340 students had chosen to pursue Dark Arts.

Aside from that, he also learned that today's examination wasn't about acceptance—each student who could basically enter Phantasm State could enter the Academy.

Instead, the assessment right now was to determine their class placement.

Marshall Academy divided students into ranks, with Class 1 reserved for the elite—the most talented, promising Arcanists.

On the other hand, Class 2 and the subsequent classes would be placed progressively based on skill and potential, with each lower class receiving less prestigious instructors and more foundational materials.

No matter what, the Academy also needed money to operate, and most of the resources would still be provided to the talented.

"Mhmm?"

Suddenly, the Academy grounds buzzed as rumors circulated about the attendees. Armin overheard one boy exclaim, "Did you see Karla Moonspire? She's the daughter of Lyrus Moonspire, the famous Dark Arcane Researcher! She was the one who made that new version of Recording Crystal... They must be really rich now... I wonder why she decided to enroll here instead."

Armin's eyes widened. Lyrus Moonspire was legendary in arcane circles and was known for pushing the limits of arcane theory and practice. At the very least, that was what he read in the old newspaper in Melthorn Kingdom.

She was the reason why the Recording Crystal had become so advanced right now...

Armin glanced at the girl, curious about her appearance.

Chapter 905: Examination

905 Examination

Karla was a tall girl with black hair that seemed to have a silver gleam in the light... This hair that seemed to shine could easily attract people. Furthermore, she stood near the front of the crowd with a calm and confident gaze.

It looked like she was used to being the center of attention.

'Incredible...' Armin felt glad that these seemingly unattainable people were getting somehow closer and closer to him. It was completely different when he was still in the orphanage. For some reason, he felt more significant and wanted to quickly pass the examination.

Just as he was absorbed to his imagination, he heard another voice, this one belonging to a red-headed boy.

"That's Rehan Borne," he whispered to his friend, "the son of the best Paranormal Investigator in the region! His father, Cassian Borne, uncovered that Dragon Cult two years ago!"

"Wait... Isn't that achievement supposed to be from Miss Aubrey Hall? I heard Miss Hall was one of the professors here."

Armin listened silently as he heard some unfamiliar names. He might not understand what they were saying, but he was sure that he would soon learn more about this.

Anyway, the young man they called Rehan stood a few paces away, casually leaning against a pillar. He didn't look like a young kid like him at all since Rehan seemed to be taking in his surroundings with a calculating gaze.

'They're aura is completely different from me.' Armin thought.

He also thought that since Rehan's father was a Paranormal Investigator, Rehan might've gotten that habit from his father.

Anyway, with the appearance of the two, it no longer surprised them that there were more than two promising figures in this year's enrollment.

Well, it seemed that the Featherstar Academy that the Dark Arts Faction established wasn't as famous as the new Marshall Academy.

As they were waiting for their turn to be examined, Armin just continued to absorb all the information as he learned about the famous people. He needed this information!

After all, he learned in the orphanage that he either had to stay out of their sight or get on their side if he wanted to survive peacefully without any background and with only his average talent he could rely on.

"Do you think that's Ely Grey?" another student whispered, pointing toward an elegant girl with white-blond hair and blue eyes. She was with a group of enrollees, and she seemed to have formed her own clique already.

"She's the daughter of the First Captain of the Order of the Evanescent Vessels."

The Order of the Evanescent Vessels was a legendary division within the Dark Arts Faction. They were known for handling the most dangerous supernatural threats.

However, that Order was connected to the Dark Arts Faction and not the Shadow Immortal's Domain.

From what they heard, the Domain had its own special force called the Shadow Pillars. It was the one handling the protection of the whole Domain. This was the reason why there weren't any visible guards in the boundaries of the Shadow Immortal's territory.

Of course, Armin only had superficial knowledge about this, so he couldn't really be sure about it.

Nonetheless, he at least knew that the First Captain of that Order was practically royalty among them, and here was her daughter, ready to immerse herself in the quite new Academy that was also teaching the Dark Arts.

Armin took a deep breath, as he felt really glad that he was able to get here.

He felt like his world had expanded once again.

'I'm going to study with these influential figures... This is my chance...' Armin thought to himself.

He hadn't expected this many influential figures to pursue the Dark Arts. He heard from Mr. Zeno before that there were cases that students in each year would only composed of 20 to 30 enrollees. This time, however, they had more than 300 new students who wanted to learn the Dark Arts!

Soon, a group of people came out of the examination tent just behind the gates of the Academy. That was where the examinations were actually being conducted.

As this group of students left, he overheard another conversation pointing at another person.

"That boy, Aiden Stormshard, over there... His mother is a top Rune Artisan. And look—over there's Mira Emberlane, daughter of High Priestess Helena of the Holy Arts."

"Ahh? That's true... I've seen their pictures in the newspaper before. Why are they even planning to study Dark Arts?"

"Do you think they also consumed the Philosopher's Elixir and were only granted to have Dark Arts Talent?"

"That's impossible. With their bloodline, there was no way they'd have such a child."

"They're definitely unlike us who had to rely on Elixirs to obtain a talent."

Armin wryly smiled at this, but he nodded. He was also confused with the appearance of children coming from a lineage that practiced a different Arcane Path.

Anyway, it wasn't his position to question their decision.

"Hey! Mira! Can you tell us about the exam inside?" One of the brave enrollees asked.

Mira, clad in simple but elegant robes, looked at the student who asked before she smirked.

"There's no use knowing about it beforehand." With that said, she left the Academy.

The class would start with two weeks, so she decided to just explore Clovis City for now.

"Hey! Don't leave yet. Why would the daughter of a high-ranking Holy Arcanist delve into the Dark Arts?" Another one asked while she was walking away. This question attracted everyone's attention, including Aiden, who was walking just behind her.

Unfortunately, she simply smiled and did not bother about this question. She didn't feel inclined to answer such questions. Furthermore, she also didn't know that answer since she was just following her parents.

She was only 12 years old, after all.

Armin wanted to ponder about their reason as well, but soon, it was his turn to get examined and learn which class he would join at the start of the class 2 weeks later.

Chapter 906: Finding Talents

Armin felt a bit nervous after realizing that it was finally his turn to get assessed. There were a total of five tents where there was a group of examiners to assess them. He also noticed the

four other enrollees like him, and as expected, they were also nervous.

This made him feel a lot better.

"Right... Everyone is just like me... It's also their first time coming here. I can do this." He muttered to himself. In any case, he believed that this academy wasn't looking at the background of their enrollees when assessing the talent of their students. What was important was the result of their own assessment.

After calming down, Armin stepped forward as he was guided by one of the attendants... Looking at it closely, he realized that this figure was probably the rumored metal golem.

It was quite an interesting sight...

Anyway, he had to erase his random thoughts and focus. Armin's heart pounded as he entered the examination tent.

Inside, five examiners sat behind a long table, each one cloaked in dark robes bearing the emblem of Marshall Academy: a silver raven surrounded by arcane symbols.

Their presence wasn't too imposing as he had expected, and they even seemed welcoming.

They each looked at him with a calm gaze. They seemed relaxed as they measured his worth with their eyes alone.

Armin took a deep breath as he confirmed that Professor Zeno wasn't part of the examiners. They were all quite young, around the age of 30.

The first examiner was a man with graying hair. He gestured for Armin to approach the Spirit Converging Crystal on a platform in the middle of the room.

This Crystal was renowned for its ability to reveal the strength of one's spiritual energy-a fundamental trait for Arcanists. However, there are already some changes with this item for more accurate results. To be exact, this Crystal was specially made for those pursuing the Dark Arts.

They confirmed his name first before they started.

"Place your hands on the crystal," the examiner instructed. His voice was calm, so Armin felt grateful about this.

Armin smiled and gently nodded before he placed both hands on the Crystal.

He felt a slight tingle in his palms as his spiritual energy began to flow into the Crystal. The Crystal hummed softly, and slowly, seven white strands appeared within, swirling like tendrils of smoke. Furthermore, there seemed to be a few black orbs within... He didn't count them as they disappeared swiftly.

'Seven strands... Amazing...' Armin smiled. It wasn't too great, but not that terrible either. It was the same for the Examiners. They just nodded, unimpressed but not disappointed. "Seven strands," he noted aloud, scribbling on a parchment in front of him. "Moderate strength, typical of a new Arcanist. Strong enough to proceed but with room to grow."

Armin exhaled quietly. While he had hoped for a higher number, he reminded himself that he wasn't alone-many students would have similar results. Besides, this was only the first part of the exam.

"Let's move to the next assessment," the second examiner said, gesturing to a table at the back of the tent.

Armin followed, noting the odd assortment of items laid out-a vial of ink, a small knife, a black feather, and a silver mirror.

This examiner, a younger woman with large, dark eyes, explained, "You should be able to enter your Phantasm State.... But to excel in Dark Arts, you must have control over your Dark Energy. This test requires you to shape the dark energy into a symbol of your choice, using nothing but your intent. Stand in front of the silver mirror to help you with your concentration."

Normally, it requires a Dark Manipulation Spell to control the darkness; however, as long as you have talent in the Dark Path, this could also be done but with very limited duration and level of control. With the mirror, they would have an easier time to focus.

Armin nodded and followed the examiner's instructions... Soon, his mind focused-he'd practiced basic Dark Energy control before but never to this degree. He closed his eyes, visualizing a bird.

Concentrating, he pushed his Dark Energy, shaping it with his mind. Slowly, in front of a mirror, a shadow of the darkness shifted. This darkness seemed to be blurring and stretching until it formed a rough, bird-like shape. The image wasn't perfect-the wings were uneven, and the beak slightly misshapen-but it was recognizable.

To be honest, Armin didn't know that he could actually do something like this.

Poof...

In just four seconds after it formed, the formed energy he made disappeared.

The examiners nodded approvingly. "Not bad. Control will come with time. You've passed this stage."

Feeling a surge of pride, Armin turned his attention to the next examiner for the third exam. The next examiner was a middle-aged woman.

"This test is about resilience against the possible corruption brought by the Darkness Possession. The possibility is not low, but it is still possible. You have to consume that vial of dark liquid for this exam." she explained.

'So that's not an ink? That's some sort of potion?' Armin mused.

"You'll need to have strong resilience as well if you want to use Phantasm State for more than an hour in one cast in the future.

She then uncapped the vial for Armin. "Drink it, and remain standing. This potion induces mild phantasmal disorientation-an illusionary effect similar to the energy strain you'll experience in intense dark arts training. Let's see how long you can resist its effects."

Armin hesitated only briefly before taking the vial and downing its contents. Almost immediately, his vision blurred, and the tent seemed to twist around him. Shadows lengthened and darkened, and he felt a dizzying sensation, as though the ground was shifting beneath his feet.

"So it's starting... This new method of examination is really weird." A man with a draconic

aura said.

During all of this examination, there were two figures who were actually monitoring everything that was happening within the tents.

"Chad, you're here... Do you want to take my position? I don't think that there will be trouble here. I'd rather check out the Chaos Arts Tower today." Denise said as she looked bored monitoring the situation...

"Well, isn't that because Vale was there, training?" Chad said with a chuckle as he looked at Denise who was about to hit him.

Chapter 907: Armin's Background

While Chad and Denise watched the examination in order to ensure that nothing went wrong and also to find a good seedling, Armin continued on with his task.

He had just consumed a diluted blood of an Asura... A single drop of Asura's Blood was able to make 10 liters of these potions. The vial he consumed only contained 20mL of this potion, and it also had various ingredients to ensure that its effects were good enough for the human body.

Well, after Shane learned that the Asura was the origin of the Dark Arts, it was natural that he'd take advantage of this. Because of that, he envisioned that all Dark Arcanists who would practice the Path here would become better.

Of course, with the Towers they obtained in the Celestial Prison Realm, Vale could actually decide to teach all the Arcane Paths in the Marshall Academy.

However, the problem would still be the existence of great teachers. After all, even if he had the resources, he couldn't just let anyone teach the young students. Education wasn't just about reading and writing, after all.

Anyway, after Armin consumed the potion, he immediately felt its effects.

He planted his feet firmly, struggling to keep his balance as the examiners watched in silence.

'It's really strange...' Armin frowned as he did his best to concentrate and not lose consciousness.

After all, he had a feeling that he would fail the exam and be placed in the lowest class if that happened.

Since he was already here, he wanted to at least attend Class 2 or 3! The Class 1 might be impossible for his average talent, who had to rely on the Philosopher's Elixir to obtain a physique that could practice the Arcane Arts, but he believed that he should have the ability to at least get into the second class!

Nonetheless, Armin soon felt a ringing sensation in his head as the strange disorientation clouded his mind, making it difficult to focus. He could only close his eyes and wait for everything to subside.

'I can do this...'

Armin breathed deeply and steadied himself with his willpower...

This willpower was formed from many days in the orphanage where he had no food to eat and had to rely on salvaging food in the trash cans. During that time, the invasion of strange beings from a different world was happening, so most of the volunteers who had been helping their orphanage didn't have the time to care for them.

The government subsidy was also non-existent aside from the rundown building they're using to cover their heads.

'I have suffered more than this... This is nothing...' Armin told himself.

Then, minutes seemed to pass in slow, distorted waves. At last, the sensation began to fade, and his vision cleared. He opened his eyes, steady on his feet.

"Well done, you've lasted a lot longer than we expected..." the examiner remarked, giving him a nod of approval. The others only lasted a minute or two before their bodies gave up. From this, they could tell that the person's Phantasm State wouldn't last 10 minutes in normal cases. However, in Armin's case, they believed that even without the assistance of their Academy, Armin would be able to train his Phantasm State to a degree in that could last for 30 minutes after about five years or so.

"You showed impressive resilience. We'll skip one of the tests we prepared because your body is still being nourished by the potion. Let's proceed to the final test, so you can fully benefit from that potion you just consumed."

"Thank you, Sir..." Armin gently nodded and expressed his gratitude. Though he had no idea what test he skipped, he was happy to know that this was for his benefit.

'It seemed that I did well digesting the potion...' Armin was certainly proud of himself because of this...

He then looked at the last examiner. He was a tall, thin man with piercing blue eyes and gestured to the floor...

Armin wasn't too focused on the floor a while ago, but now that the man has gestured to it, He realized that he stood near a complex, arcane circle drawn on the floor.

Symbols he couldn't understand glowed faintly along its edges, exuding an eerie energy. "The final test is of courage," he said. "Step into the circle. This spell will surround you with a projection of your deepest fear, an illusion crafted from your own subconscious. Overcome it, and the test is complete. Right... In case you think that this is just to scare our students, this test will help you learn difficult or even those Forbidden Spells in the future... You have to remember that even if Forbidden Spells are prohibited, they are only for those evil people who would use them for their own selfish benefit. However, if you passed various tests from the Headmaster, restrictions would slowly be lifted..."

Armin was shocked after hearing this. Although he had no concept of how great these Forbidden Spells were, he believed that these Spells were incredibly powerful and could harm a lot of people, which was why they were forbidden in the first place...

Though he never thought of learning it before, he suddenly felt excited hearing this and nodded to the examiner.

Armin swallowed hard. There was some excitement, but still, nerves were prickling at the thought of confronting his greatest fear.

'What do I even fear anyway?' He wasn't sure what he would see here, but he somehow felt that whatever the result was, he would be able to achieve a good result.

'Ahh...'

Then, as he was about to get engulfed by the Arcane Circle's power, Armin recalled the only item in his possession that came from his relative...

Although he had no recollection of his parents, a man named Eustace had recently come looking for him and gave him a gold-plated timepiece, informing him that it was from his

great-grandfather.

This followed a series of fortunate events, such as being the only 12-year-old who had been luckily selected in the Orphanage to consume the Philosopher's Elixir.

Chapter 908: The Clovis City

Now that he thinks about it, his luck has truly started after being able to obtain the pocket watch.

'Great grandpa... Please help me...' Armin prayed silently.

As he felt the activation of the Arcane Circle, Armin felt incredibly powerful for a moment as his body was filled with Arcane Energy. Soon, however, he felt a cold, creeping sensation enveloped him.

In an instant, he was no longer in the tent.

He stood alone in a dark, silent forest where the trees twisted as if they were alive.

'So this is the test of courage, huh...' Armin reminded himself. The fact that this test could help determine whether he could practice Forbidden Arts actually excited him.

He hadn't considered it before, but now, he was already thinking about what Forbidden Arts could he possibly be learned.

After all, who doesn't want to have a trump card? Anyone would want to have at least a powerful spell as a backup, even if it was a forbidden one. In any case, he would only use it if his life was being threatened.

'Right... If I can learn one someday, I want a Forbidden Art that could make me super strong and kill anyone I wanted.' Armin thought as he wanted to keep his mind busy.

If he wasn't mistaken, there were Forbidden Arts that could help him recover to full health, stay alive in any situation, or even escape from any danger. However, instead of such Forbidden Arts, he wanted something that could make him unstoppable.

Thud...

As he was trying to keep thinking of random things, the Formation Art started disturbing his mind.

Shadows danced around him, and he also started hearing whispers in harsh, taunting tones.

He couldn't understand them, but he kept reminding himself that it was just a test. After some time, something emerged from the shadows... It was a figure-one of the overseers from the orphanage where he had spent his childhood.

"Ahh... What are you doing here?"

The figure then approached him in a hurry. He knew this person really well and one of the strictest people he knew in the orphanage... Nonetheless, this person triggered memories within him..

As this figure started getting closer, its face suddenly contorted with a cruel smile, reminding him of all his shortcomings every time he'd been told he wasn't enough.

"You..."

Armin clenched his fists, anger and fear mixing within him.

He knew it wasn't real, but the intensity of the illusion made his skin crawl. With a deep breath, he forced himself to meet the figure's eyes, focusing on the knowledge that it was only a test. Summoning his courage, he took a step forward and then another, each one dispelling the illusion bit by bit. The forest dissolved into mist, and the mocking voice faded into silence. All this time, he was unconsciously holding the pocket watch on his chest.

Thud...

Suddenly, he was back in the tent. The examiner's gaze relaxed, seeing how Armin handled the test. There was also a faint smile of approval on everyone's lips.

"You've done well, Armin. Not everyone can face their fear so directly. You ended that test with yourself instead of waiting for the test to be over. Impressive."

Armin let out a long breath after hearing this. Apparently, his heart was still pounding from that strange experience.

However, what was important was the fact that he'd passed.

All tests were completed.

The examiners exchanged glances, making notes on their parchments and muttering in low tones. Armin knew that the final placements wouldn't be revealed until the first day of classes, but he couldn't help but feel a sense of triumph at completing the trials.

Then, he was given a student token that he could use to prove his identity as an enrollee of the Marshall Academy.

As he turned to leave, the first examiner spoke...

"Welcome to Marshall Academy, Armin. In two weeks, you'll discover your class placement. Until then, take this time to prepare yourself. Get yourself familiar in the city.

"Thank you..."

Armin nodded, grateful, and walked out of the tent. He was surely proud of himself.

Just a while ago, he was simply an ordinary orphan... But right now, he was one step closer to becoming a full-pledge Arcanist.

Outside, Armin then felt the student token for a moment before he tucked it safely in his pocket...

After walking around, Armin found Zeno's suggestion as he arrived at the Rosewood Inn, just a short walk from the Academy grounds.

The innkeeper noticed his age and was soon asked whether he had the student token...

He was pleasantly surprised when the innkeeper, upon checking his token, offered him a generous discount.

'So there's something like that... Incredible...' Armin thought.

The innkeeper was a friendly man named Jorn. He seemed genuinely pleased to host a new Marshall Academy student.

'I guess they have some benefits I'm not aware of...' Armin thought.

"Anything you need, you let me know, lad," Jorn had said, clapping him on the shoulder. "A student token from the Shadow Immortal's Academy goes a long way in Clovis City."

"Thank you, Mr. Jorn..."

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, Armin decided to explore Clovis City.

Clovis was bustling with its paved streets and was certainly alive with numerous merchants, street performers, and travelers.

'Street performers... They've been long gone in Melthorn City...' Armin commented in his mind as his attention was turned to the shops.

There were Alchemist shops lined the roads, each with names as enchanting as the items they sold: The Cauldron's Dream, Arcane Essence, The Talon's Talisman.

Of course, Armin started looking at these shops...

They have shelves displaying vials of elixirs with all shades of color, alongside bins filled with

herbs, rare crystals, and peculiar trinkets.

Some stores even had small, intricately crafted golems-tiny automatons designed to perform specific tasks, like carrying a small bag or lighting candles with the flick of a matchstick.

'This is incredible...'

Armin's eyes were particularly drawn to a store called Mystic Machinations, where rows of odd devices crafted by skilled magic artisans were displayed in the window.

Small orbs that radiated light on command, brass compasses that pointed not north but toward the source of arcane energy, and others he couldn't explain...

'Right... I should be able to find an appraiser here...' Armin thought as he held his pocket

watch.

Chapter 909: Watched

The pocket watch seemed to be quite mysterious, and he couldn't help but think that it had assisted him during the examination a while ago.

If there was someone who could tell him more about this item, he would certainly want to meet them. Of course, he was also hoping that their professional service wouldn't be so expensive.

Anyway, as he continued to look around, he realized that there were Fortune-tellers scattered along the road as well, with signs inviting patrons to "Discover Your Destiny" or "Peer into the Unknown."

"Whoa~ Are these things real?" Armin hesitated. Certainly, it wasn't impossible that true Seers existed. After all, there were 12 Arcane Paths that deal with various arcane studies, magic, or mysticism.

However, Armin wasn't really sure about how it worked since multiple Arcane Paths had a branch that nurtures Seers. The two most popular were the Holy Seer and the Dark Seer.

As for the ones on the streets, Armin was sure...

Nonetheless, now that he was on such a new journey in his life, he couldn't help but show a bit of interest.

Each had elaborate booths decorated with curtains, candles, and ornamented trinkets.

As Armin walked past a row of these fortune-tellers, a sharp voice through the crowd caught his attention, making him pause.

"Young man, would you like to see what the future holds for you?"

He turned to see an old woman seated behind a small table draped in dark purple cloth, her eyes were smiling, and they were unnervingly bright despite her age.

'She probably not getting a lot of customer... Should I help her earn for the day?' Armin thought as he had a soft spot to old people.

The old woman was still working despite already having silver hair... Anyway, this hair was tied in a loose bun, and various charms dangled from her wrists, clinking softly with each movement.

It was the typical look of possible fraud fortune-tellers.

However, Armin hesitated, unsure. He had never really believed in fortune-telling, but the woman's gaze seemed to pierce right through him, as if she already knew something he didn't.

Sensing his hesitation, she leaned forward and lowered her voice. "The first reading is free, boy. Just sit and listen, and if it means nothing, then you've lost nothing."

Armin glanced around and then back at her, intrigued by the intensity of her gaze.

'Well... There's nothing to lose, just like what she said. Plus, I'm not in a hurry anyway...'
He reasoned in his mind.

With a small nod, he sat across from her, feeling oddly nervous than the ones in the exam. Anyway, the old woman's face softened, and she reached into a small box beneath the table, drawing out a set of Tarot cards.

She shuffled them with surprising grace... It was perfect handling... Her fingers were nimble as they moved the cards in rhythmic patterns.

Then, the strange happened.

The noise of the crowd seemed to fade around them, leaving just the sound of the cards as she whispered something under her breath.

Finally, she looked at him and said, "Place your hand on the deck and close your eyes, boy. The cards will speak more clearly when touched by the one seeking answers."

Armin did as she instructed, his palm resting against the cool, slightly worn surface of the cards. When he pulled his hand away, she began to draw them, setting each card down in front of him with care.

Her fingers lingered on each one as though she felt the weight of its meaning before she spoke.

The first card was the Wheel of Fortune.

'Armin had no idea what was that. However, he knew the word fortune...'

The old woman's eyes glinted as she looked from the card to him.

"This is a powerful symbol... It means change is coming... Changes beyond what you imagine. You're entering a time of transition, and fate itself will play a role. The wheel is turning in your favor, but it will also test you."

The second card was the Hanged Man. She didn't seem alarmed by it but studied it closely.

"Sacrifice and patience. There is something you hold that is dormant, waiting to awaken. You will need to understand this mystery before you can fully control it. Perhaps something you wear, something precious... an object of both time and power."

Armin felt a shiver run down his spine as his hand drifted to his pocket, where the weight of his gold-plated watch pressed against him. He hadn't mentioned the watch to her, but her words struck too close to be coincidence.

The last card was the Sun. The old woman smiled softly, her voice lowered almost to a whisper.

"Ah, the Sun. The promise of fortune, success, and light. But beware-only those who recognize opportunity in its truest form will claim this light. The keepsake you carry has a greater purpose; it may be the key to something hidden, waiting for you in the dark."

She then looked at him with a mysterious smile as if she was seeing something more from him.

"I can only say that there are forces guiding you, boy. You may find answers at the Academy, but remember the path will not be easy. Keep that whatever you're holding close; it will lead you to what you seek, but only if you pay the price..."

Armin was silent. He was hesitating whether this was just a prank on him or this woman was really something else.

There was an awe and disbelief swirling within him.

'Is she just guessing based on my reaction? Ugh...' Armin thought...

The old woman then folded her hands and gave him a faint smile. "Beware, though. Not all knowledge comes freely."

In the end... Armin just nodded slowly, feeling as if he had just glimpsed something beyond his understanding. Before he rose to leave, he decided to just give a tip to the old woman so she could dehydrate as she looked really parched.

In the meantime, as Armin left the old woman, another figure who had been watching everything was stunned at what he had just heard.

It was none other than Kyle Marshall, also known as Clovis, Vale, and Eustass...

"That old woman is something else..." Kyle muttered in disbelief. He didn't expect that such a powerful figure was able to enter his city unnoticed until now.

Chapter 910: True Value

The old woman's ability was definitely not some trickery to get a customer. It was a true Arcane Art, and Kyle had only noticed this when the woman started pulling out the tarot cards.

Nonetheless, he had no reason to interrupt since she wasn't doing anything harmful at all. Although he was curious, he decided to just let it go since Merlin had already warned him that participating in mortal matters would add more karma to him, and soon, the Will of the Realm might start pressuring him to ascend or leave this realm.

Of course, it was impossible to ascend now because of what the Timeless King had done to their realm, but nonetheless, he didn't want to affect the fate of the mortal realm too much, or he'd be the one to suffer.

'I'll just observe for now...'

For now, Kyle had no intention of knowing more about this woman and just watched Armin for now, the only living relative of the old man who had given him the Temporal Timepiece. As for the reason he was doing this, it was all to understand the Timepiece's true nature...

Nonetheless, Armin continued looking around the huge and lively city.

He could tell from the clothes of many people around that Arcanists from various factions were very common. It was indeed true that the Shadow Immortal's Domain doesn't discriminate to your Arcane Path.

It was completely different from other territories where certain practitioners had to hide themselves or they might get picked on.

Anyway, after passing countless enticing shops and stalls, Armin finally found himself in front of an elegant building with tall, arched windows and finely carved details across its stonework: the Silver Light Auction House.

It was the sign near the entrance that announced their promotion for the day-free appraisals for any items brought in.

"Perfect!" Armin muttered. He didn't expect that the Auction House would do such a promotion today.

He was actually unsure about the item in his possession since the appraisal value would depend on the items value.

If Timepiece was just a normal ornament, he wouldn't have to pay much. However, if this heirloom was actually a great Magic Artifact, then he wouldn't know if he could pay at all.

Thankfully, the Auction House's promotion came at the right time.

As he glanced at the entrance of the building, he saw that there was a line of around thirty people had already formed. All of them were clutching a bag or precious items or trinkets. Armin hesitated as he wasn't sure if this would take a long time. However, this promotion may no longer happen on the next day so he could only join the line.

'I just hope the appraisal won't take too much time...' He thought.

Since he had no idea how the process worked, he could only pray that he wouldn't stay here for now as he was already starting to get hungry.

He then pulled out his gold-plated pocket watch from his pouch, glancing down at the delicate engravings along its surface. Eustass informed the managers of the orphanage that it was an heirloom from his great-grandfather, and nothing much was mentioned about it.

He could only wonder if it held any significance beyond being a simple timepiece, but he'd never had the means to find out until now...

'I hope there's something to this...' He prayed silently. Since this world was filled with mysticism, there should be a high chance that this keepsake was unnatural. However, the fact that the volunteers, who were fourth-class Arcanists, failed to notice anything strange about it, made him feel down once again.

'Err... They're only fourth-class Arcanist... So if this is special, they might not notice it with their weak Arcane Energy...' Armin said to himself while waiting...

Then, as he waited, he overheard some of the conversations from others in line.

The person ahead of him, a middle-aged woman with a bundle of red and green feathers, was muttering excitedly to her friend. "They say if you get an item appraised here, you might even be able to sell it directly. I heard someone once found an ancient artifact in their attic!"

Behind him, a young man clutched a tarnished brooch, explaining to his partner, "If this is genuine Dark Spirit's remnants, we could afford a room at the finest inn in Clovis for a whole year with free meals!"

Armin listened to some more of these conversations, and all of them seemed to be sure that the items they were holding were of value.

Armin continued listening to similar conversations and even started learning a few more things about this auction house. Apparently, this place was actually owned by one of the Shadow Immortal's friends or maybe a subordinate. It means that they could trust their items to them, and they wouldn't get undervalued by the offers they might give.

As a twelve-year-old, he could only hope that his item wouldn't get stolen once he got it appraised, so hearing how trustworthy this place was made him heave a sigh of relief. Finally, Armin reached the front of the line and was greeted by an appraiser in dark green robes, his hands were adorned with various rings that shone faintly with enchantments. "And what do we have here?" the man asked, gesturing toward Armin's watch.

"It's just an old pocket watch, but it's an heirloom, so..." Armin replied, offering it with both hands. "I don't know much about it, but it's something from my ancestor..."

The appraiser took it gently, examining the engravings, the quality of the plating, and the intricate clockwork visible through the glass cover on the back.

'It seemed to have been repaired a few times... But let's see...' The appraiser muttered before his aura changed.

He seemed to have triggered a formation circle or perhaps started a ritual as he murmured an incantation.

Then, a soft glow emerged around the watch, casting faint symbols in the air that only he could read.

After a few moments, the appraiser's eyebrows shot up in surprise, and he looked at Armin

with interest.

"This isn't just a watch..."

Chapter 911: Recognized

911 Recognized

The Appraiser took a few moments before he squinted and said, "This isn't just a watch... This is crafted from an alloy I've rarely seen—a blend of arcane silver and wyvern gold. Such craftsmanship was popular many centuries ago among scholars who practiced the Mystic and Dark Arts in unison. They would hide unique spells within items like this, spells that could only be unlocked by one bearing the right lineage. However, there seemed to be something else on this. I'm not sure if it's another Arcane Spell, I can't understand, or it's just a Curse..."

The last part was just muttered by the Appraiser since he wasn't really sure about it...

Of course, Kyle had already extracted the powers from the items left by the Three Paragons. This Temporal Timepiece was now just the original heirloom of Armin's family. It was the same for the Creation Ring and the Stormbringer Sword.

Armin's heart skipped a beat. "Does that mean it's enchanted?"

"Possibly," the Appraiser replied, carefully handing it back to him. "It's not active now, but with the right knowledge or key, it may reveal its secrets. I can see that you're most likely a new student. I'd advise taking this to one of the Academy's professors in Mystic or Dark Arts—they might be able to help you uncover its true purpose. Although the

consultations today are free, they are only for low-tier and some mid-tier artifacts. If it's higher than that, you'd have to pay quite a huge sum of money to get the professionals."

"I... I see... So this is possibly a high-tier Artifact?" Armin repeated.

"Probably. However, I'm not a Professional, so there might just be something off about it that stops me from fully appraising it."

Armin then realized that the Auction House wouldn't really hire professional Appraisers for volunteer work. It seemed reasonable, considering the significance of their jobs.

Armin then thanked the Appraiser, tucking the watch safely back into his pouch.

His curiosity grew even more since this item seemed to require a higher level Appraiser! He couldn't help but feel excited about this.

What could this watch mean for him?

'Am I going to be rich if I sell this?' He mused for a moment before shaking his head.

In any case, he decided not to show this to anyone until he was able to find a trustworthy person. After all, if this was really precious, he would be helpless to protect it against strong Arcanists that may desire the item.

Days passed quickly, and finally, the entrance ceremony for Marshall Academy had arrived.

The atmosphere seemed to have changed, and there was this sort of refreshing feeling and familiar sense of comfort within.

Armin was among them. He then scanned the vastness of the campus and the towering structures that rose at the center and the southern parts of the Academy.

"This feeling is awesome..." Armin muttered to himself, as he could tell that everyone was excited.

Anyway, Guides were stationed at various points, helping to direct the newcomers toward a grand building near the center of the grounds.

The students soon found themselves funneling into the admission office, which was bustling with activity.

Inside, clerks and assistants scrambled between tables stacked high with items and organized some bundles for each student.

The room was filled with chatter, laughter, and the occasional shout from a clerk calling out for a specific student or item.

It was lively and Armin liked it.

Soon, Armin was finally at the front of the line. He then accepted his own set of items: a formal academy uniform tailored to fit the rich azure and black colors of the Shadow Immortal's domain, training clothes, a silver-and-blue badge marking him as a first-year student, and an assortment of academic supplies, from a high-quality leather bag to an assortment of writing materials and even a booklet or campus guide.

As a final item, the clerk handed him a small iron key labeled with his dormitory number.

"Hold on to that key!" She reminded him before she gave the key. "Lose it, and you'll need an approval slip from the office to get a new one. That'll take a while."

Armin kept the key away securely and expressed his gratitude.

"Thank you!"

With that, he joined the other students who were leaving the bustling office. Around him, he heard the other's excited conversations as the students admired their new gear.

"This uniform feels so high quality!" A girl nearby was impressed as her fingers ran over the fabric.

"I heard they were all enchanted." One of her friends added.

"That's true... Did you see the badge? Makes it all feel official... I'm really a student of the Shadow Immortal..." Another student said, grinning as he fastened it onto his coat.

"What? We're not the Immortal's students. Dream on..." The others beside him said and shook their heads.

Armin also chuckled as he looked ahead.

As they filed out of the building, Armin saw a breathtaking view of the academy grounds. The Shadow Tower stood at the heart of the campus, a dark, grand tower that seemed to cast a mysterious aura over the Academy.

But for now, Armin and the others had their instructions to reach their dormitories. They turned left from the main path and followed the paved walkway, passing several study buildings and classroom centers...

Then, the closer they got to the dormitory area, the quieter the paths became, as most of the older students were likely already settled in their routines.

Armin's dormitory was a large, three-story building with rows of balconies overlooking the courtyard.

"This looks good." He muttered. At the very least, the outside was clean and nice. He was hoping it was the same inside.

As they entered, they were then welcomed by a grand staircase leading to the upper floors, and students clustered around the stairwell, some already laughing and chatting while others scanned their room assignments.

And to Armin's surprise, someone recognized him!

"Armin!"

Chapter 912: Marshall Academy (1)

912 Marshall Academy (1)

"Armin! I didn't know you'd be here!"

Startled, Armin looked around. He hadn't expected anyone to recognize him. Coming from an orphanage in a distant city, he thought he'd arrived at the Academy without knowing a soul.

But his confusion was quickly cleared as he smiled when he spotted a familiar face among the crowd.

It was Myla, the daughter of the innkeeper from the place he'd been staying these past few days. She was a petite girl with lively green eyes and short, curly hair that framed her face.

Armin remembered her from her shifts helping at the inn. She was really cute and was well trained by her father, as she was always quick and had a warm smile as she worked, carrying trays or organizing rooms.

'She's actually a student as well...' He was really surprised.

"Myla..." he greeted. He was a bit delighted since he finally knew someone. He hadn't been speaking to anyone since he wasn't really good at socializing.

"You're here too? I didn't expect to see you!"

"I know, right?" Myla laughed, a bit shyly but clearly pleased. "I wanted to surprise you, but I couldn't resist saying hi when I saw you. My father never told you I'd be here, did he?"

Armin shook his head. "No, not at all! I thought I was here on my own. What a relief to see a familiar face."

Myla grinned as this was what she wanted to see.

"Well, here I am! I enrolled a while back. I want to study Psychic Arts. I've always been a bit... curious about the mind's mysteries," she admitted, as her expression turned serious.

"It's amazing being here, though a bit nerve-wracking, right?"

"Oh, tell me about it," Armin chuckled, adjusting his bag as they walked down the hallway. "I still can't believe I'm actually here."

A few more students joined them as they talked—Myla's friends, who she introduced eagerly.

There was Rumi, a tall girl who wore her long hair in a neat braid; Harry, a lean boy with glasses that constantly slipped down his nose; and Finn, a silent boy with brown hair and a shy demeanor.

"Everyone, this is Armin," Myla introduced him. Her tone filled with pride as if they were long-time friends...

"He's going to study Dark Arts!"

Her friends all looked impressed, and a couple of them exchanged surprised glances.

"Dark Arts? That's intense!" Harry said in surprise. "You must have a lot of talent if you're going for that."

This confused Armin since he thought that Dark Arts were the most common here.

"Yeah," Rumi added, smiling with genuine admiration. "We all tried for Dark Arts initially, but it turns out none of us had any natural aptitude for it. Psychic Arts felt right, though, so here we are."

Armin scratched the back of his neck, smiling.

"Thanks, I'm really just learning all this too. I'm not sure what to expect either."

"Well, we're sure you'll do great," Myla said with confidence. "Dark Arts requires some serious skill. You'll have to tell us all about your classes once you're in them!"

The group chatted easily as they continued toward the dormitories, sharing laughs and stories of their first impressions of the Academy. Myla and her friends asked Armin with questions about his background and his plans, fascinated by his journey from the orphanage to the Academy and his choice of the Dark Arts path.

As they reached the staircase where they'd part ways, Myla turned to him one last time. "Good luck, Armin. See you around..."

He nodded with a smile and waved goodbye to Myla and her friends. The Academy felt a little less intimidating with familiar faces around.

"I hope they're also as friendly as her..." Armin muttered, referring to his roommates and classmates.

He then continued to find his room on the third floor. Soon, Armin pushed open the door to see a surprising sight: standing by one of the beds was a figure that looked mostly human—except for the prominent, floppy dog-like ears atop his head.

'Beastman? So they're really here...' Armin's eyes lit up as he saw this. There were already some mentions of them in the newspapers. It was mentioned that they only lived in the Shadow Immortal's Domain, but since he hadn't seen them even in the huge city, he had already forgotten about their existence.

However, now that he saw one of them around, he couldn't help but feel elated. This was such an amazing sight for him.

The boy then turned at him, revealing a pair of amber eyes, and raised a brow when he saw Armin staring.

"Uh, hi," Armin stammered, trying to keep his curiosity in check. "I didn't expect to, well..."

"Share a room with someone who has these ears?" The boy finished with a hint of amusement in his voice. He reached up, scratching one of his ears nonchalantly. "Yeah, I get that reaction a lot. I'm Valen. And yes, they're real."

Armin nodded, feeling a bit sheepish but unable to hide his interest. "I'm Armin. Didn't know we had... uh... I mean, didn't know someone like you would be at the Academy."

Valen grinned. This action showed his sharp canines, but they weren't threatening.

"Not a lot of people do. I'm from a family of beast-kin, though we're fairly humanized—well, except for a few things." He flicked his ear playfully. "They say we have an affinity for transformation arts so here I am, following my father's words. You're studying Dark Arts?"

Armin nodded. "Yes... Just got my badge and everything. You?"

"Same here! I'm also a new student. Figured I'd take advantage of the family gifts." Valen shrugged, then gave Armin a quick lookover.

'Did he get gifts from his relatives after being accepted?' Armin mused.

"Let's hope they put us in the same class. First-year classes are all about foundations anyway, so there were cases where even different Arcane Paths would go in the same class, like History, Basic Alchemy, and stuff... Right, I've heard Class 1's a tough spot to land, but they give you access to a lot of cool spell models. Do you think you'll be in Class 1?"

Armin chuckled as he had never considered that at all.

They chatted for some time before they finally heard the announcement all over the Dormitory about the entrance ceremony later this afternoon.

Chapter 913: Marshall Academy (2)

The Four Arcane Assembly Hall was located near the central part of the Marshall Academy. It had an incredible interior that showed how the Academy spent a lot of money to build it.

Its domed ceiling wasn't just an empty, boring view. It was actually embedded with starlight runes that seemed to attract everyone's attention as it cast a soft, silvery glow on the rows of first-year students below.

Students from all four branches-Dark Arts, Mystic Arts, Psychic Arts, and Elemental Arts- were seated in designated sections. Since the ceremony hadn't started yet, the hall was filled with everyone's chatter.

They were mostly discussing the Class Sections they hoped to enter and the professors they wanted to teach them.

Armin sat among the Dark Arts enrollees, feeling excited and curious about the result of his test. He felt that his actions at that time weren't enough to allow him to enter Class 1, but he would really be happy if he somehow managed to get into Class 2.

Thud...

Suddenly, the hall quieted as everyone felt the faint aura of a powerful Arcanist. It signaled the arrival of someone important. The massive double doors at the far end of the hall opened, and all eyes turned as a figure walked confidently toward the podium.

Needless to say, the one and only Headmaster of Marshall Academy had arrived.

"Ah~ Is that the Headmaster?"

"Whoaaa- She looks amazing."

"So young..."

"So the rumors were actually true."

Instead of the wizened elder many had envisioned, a strikingly young and elegant woman ascended the stage.

Her blue hair fell straight past her shoulders, and her azure eyes seemed to see through every soul in the room.

She was also dressed in an Arcanist Robe of deep indigo. It was embroidered with intricate silver patterns of the Academy, and aside from that, she exuded an aura that was quite similar to a normal person. It was really strange that was why the hall fell into stunned silence.

"Welcome, students," she said. Her voice was clear and gentle to everyone's ears. However, it was enough to hold everyone's attention effortlessly.

"I am Constance Leore, Headmaster of Marshall Academy."

A wave of awe swept through the crowd. More whispers broke out as most of the students couldn't imagine that their Headmaster had such a youthful appearance.

Constance couldn't help but smile after seeing their reaction.

"I know what many of you were expecting," she said with a wry smile. "An old man with a long beard and a staff, perhaps? Let this be your first lesson: appearances are often deceiving. In this Academy, we look beyond the surface. Talent, dedication, and the strength of your spirit matter far more than preconceptions or bloodlines."

Her words hung in the air, resonating deeply with many students, including Armin.

Constance then continued while her gaze swept across the crowd.

"At Marshall Academy, our mission is not only to teach you the ways of the arcane but to prepare you for the responsibilities that come with such power. The arts you have chosen to study-Dark, Mystic, Psychic, or Elemental-are more than tools; they are extensions of who you are and who you will become."

She paused, letting everyone have some time to absorb her words...

"We demand excellence, not perfection. We value progress, not comparison. You will be challenged here, yes, but you will also be guided. Our faculty is among the finest, and they will ensure that you leave this place not just as practitioners of magic but as architects of the world's future."

A round of applause erupted from the students after she finished her speech. Their spirits were suddenly bolstered by her encouragement.

"Now, to the practical matters," Constance said as her tone became slightly more formal.

"You will all be sorted into classes based on your potential and aptitude. The sorting process has been difficult, but this is all for your own good since it will determine the pace and depth of your learning."

With that, she gestured to the side of the stage, where another figure stepped forward. This was Professor Odessa Morgaine, a woman with short, ash-blond hair and green eyes. She wore a tailored uniform of dark grey, marking her as a senior faculty member in the Dark Arts branch.

"Professor Morgaine will now announce the class assignments," Constance said, stepping back as the students erupted in murmurs once again.

Finally, they would know which class they'll be arranged.

"Thank you, Headmaster Constance," Professor Morgaine softly said.

"Welcome, students. I will now begin the announcements. As the Headmaster mentioned, your class placement reflects your starting point. Remember, your class today does not define your future. Growth and improvement are always possible."

She unfurled a scroll, its parchment gleamed faintly as everyone waited for her next words. "Class One," she said...

"The following students have demonstrated exceptional potential and will join our elite cohort."

Professor Morgaine began reading the names, and each announcement drew gasps or murmurs of approval from the crowd.

Several familiar figures from the dormitory hallway were called, including Celeste Vayne, the Paranormal Investigator's daughter, and Marcus Drayen from Rune Arts' family...

Armin listened intently while his heart pounded in his chest as the names continued...

Armin's name had yet to be called, and his palms were beginning to sweat. Was this a good sign or a bad one?

There seemed to be 30 students who would be in Class 1, and there were three names left... "Aiden Stormshard, Mira Emberlane, and Armin."

Armin was shocked as soon as he heard his name. He was even unsure whether he heard it right but as soon as he heard Myla's soft voice from behind, he knew that he had really done it.

Anyway, the announcement continued.

"Class Two," Morgaine called, shifting to the next group. "These students have shown commendable abilities and will receive specialized guidance to help them reach their potential."

The pattern continued as she listed the names for Class Three, Four, and beyond.

Even after the announcement was over, Armin still couldn't believe it... Only when they were ushered to his room together with the other Class 1 students did he realize what had

happened.

Chapter 914: Marshall Academy (3)

Armin walked into the Ebonshade Building, the designated space for Class 1 to Class 5 students. He was feeling both nervous and excited as he didn't really expect this to happen.

Nonetheless, he was thankful to be a part of Class 1, which accepted many students from notable backgrounds.

After taking a deep breath, Armin looked at the surroundings. The hall was spacious, with dark wooden desks arranged in a semicircle to ensure every student had a clear view of the central platform where their instructor would teach.

'Are those things Formation Circles?' Armin mused as he saw the walls, which seemed to be adorned with intricate carvings of magical runes that glowed faintly, giving the room a strange magical vibe around it.

He couldn't explain it properly, but he could say that the place felt completely different from the normal structures he'd see every day around the city.

Anyway, the 30 students seated around him were also observing the place, and none of them were bothering to strike up a conversation with him. At the moment, none of them really knew each other, and it would still take quite some time before everyone formed their own cliques.

Then, as he looked around, he recalled the names of his classmates who were quite known. To Armin's surprise, as soon as he spotted Celeste Vayne, she nodded at him with a smirk on her face. He could only return the gesture as he didn't want to offend her.

On the other hand, Marcus Drayen seemed engrossed in examining a small rune-inscribed pendant he was wearing. It seemed as if he was praying.

After a few moments, the classroom started buzzing with quiet conversations as they started to get to know each other.

However, that didn't take long, as the door opened, and a man entered...

He wasn't what anyone had expected for their first instructor. With his plain brown hair, freckled face, and simple black robe, Professor Dalton Stranway looked more like a common scribe than a master of the Dark Arts. Yet, his unassuming appearance seemed very mystical as well. With the way he carried himself, they could tell that there was some confidence around him.

Nonetheless, his presence silenced the room as he approached the podium.

"Welcome to Class 1... Many of you have probably heard about my name already, but for those who weren't aware, I'm Dalton Stranway..." Professor Stranway said as everyone immediately recalled the rich Stranway Family who should be connected to the Dark Arts Factions...

It seemed that he was already part of the Shadow Immortal's Faction and not the Dark Arts Faction led by the five families...

Then, after looking at the expressions of the students, he continued.

"You are here because you've demonstrated exceptional potential in the Dark Arts and related disciplines. This is an achievement, yes, but do not let it lull you into

complacency. Being in Class 1 means you will face the highest expectations and the most difficult challenges."

The room was silent as they started imagining their future here. However, since they were selected to attend this Class, they must have something with them that will allow them to overcome such challenges.

"As first-year students, you will undertake a curriculum designed to build a strong foundation for your magical growth. There are eight core subjects, and each of them is critical to mastering the Dark Arts and becoming a well-rounded Arcanist."

He gestured, and a glowing list appeared on the blackboard behind him.

1. Elementary Spirit Law
2. Fundamentals of Magic Zone
3. Magic Language
4. Darkness Path
5. Arcane History
6. Rudimentary Usage of Mystical Artifacts
7. Practical Spell Application
8. Introductory Cursecraft

"These subjects will cover the theoretical and practical aspects of Arcane Spells, from understanding the principles of spirit energy to the delicate craft of creating Curses with or without Spell Models. Each will demand your focus, diligence, and curiosity, so I hope that you'll all listen and take notes during your classes and review them during your vacant time."

A few murmurs were soon heard through the room at the mention of Cursecraft, a notoriously complex and controversial subject. Professor Stranway's eyes swept the room, and the whispers died immediately.

"Your schedule will not be too demanding. You will have plenty of vacant time as well. However, you can attend other lectures if you want to listen to them... However, you must participate in guided practices, and undertake multiple examinations to assess your progress. Speaking of examinations, remember that the true test lies not in grades but in your ability to innovate, adapt, and wield your knowledge responsibly."

He paused, allowing his words to sink in. The students may not understand him right now, but he knows that it will happen soon. After taking a deep breath, he continued...

"Now, I will accept any questions."

As soon as he said this, several hands shot up immediately.

Professor Stranway pointed to a confident-looking boy in the front row, who stood and spoke loudly.

"Professor, will we have opportunities to learn the compulsory Dark Spells of the Academy this year?"

"An excellent question," Professor Stranway replied. "Our academy has four spells that you must learn... It will be introduced gradually. In your first year, you must learn one of them before you can advance to your second year... It will be taught to you in your Darkness Path class."

Next, a shy girl with spectacles raised her hand. "Professor, why are we studying Cursecraft so early? I thought it was an advanced discipline."

Professor Stranway nodded. "It is advanced, but this is an introductory course. Cursecraft, while complex, is integral to the Dark Arts. You will begin by understanding its ethical considerations and theoretical frameworks before delving into practical applications in later

years."

Armin decided to ask a question as well. He raised his hand, and Professor Stranway gestured for him to speak. "Professor, how will we be evaluated for each subject? Is there a standard grading system?"

This was something he really wanted to know since he was aiming to graduate and get a stable job, after all.

Chapter 915: Marshall Academy (4)

"Good question," Stranway said. "Each subject has its unique evaluation methods. Some, like Magic Language, will focus on written examinations, while others, like Practical Spell Application, will involve demonstrations and real-time assessments. Your overall performance will be graded on a combination of effort, creativity, and skill mastery."

The questions kept coming.

A tall girl at the back inquired about access to the academy's Spell Archive, and Professor Stranway explained that it was restricted to higher-year students, though Class 1 might receive special permissions for exemplary performance.

Another student, clearly ambitious, asked about pathways to enter advanced research programs, to which Stranway advised that such opportunities would arise for those who excel consistently.

"Is that all your questions?" He asked once again as he was already considering dismissing the class.

However, it seemed that they were finally curious about him as a student near the front, a curious girl with brown hair and bright eyes, raised her hand.

"Professor Stranway, may I ask about your background? You seem quite young to be teaching us, and we're all curious about your journey."

Dalton Stranway chuckled, clearly having anticipated the question. He just didn't expect that it would be asked a bit late...

Anyway, his freckled face lit up with a genuine smile as he leaned slightly against the desk in front of him.

"Ah, I've finally sparked some curiosity," he began.

Of course, he introduced his background as part of the Stranway Family, which was already known, and about his specialty, which was Dark Magic... However, he knew that they weren't too interested in this.

To engage a bit more conversation and pass the time, he added... "Well, I was classmates with someone you all surely know-Vale, the Shadow Immortal."

Finally, some reactions were made as the room fell into a stunned silence... Then, whispers erupted among the students.

The name of Vale carried incomparable weight, being the only known living True Immortal and the protector of the Shadow Immortal's Domain.

There were other rumored Immortals around, but they weren't being seen at all. It was only Vale, the Shadow Immortal, who could be seen by normal people and had a clear background or history as a student of the previous Vermont Academy, and he was also from the Chambers Family.

Vale was basically the Immortal who felt closer to them because of his origin.

Anyway, they were still all surprised that such a monumental figure had once sat in the same classroom as their Professor. It was almost too incredible to believe.

It must have been an amazing experience.

"Yes," Dalton confirmed. With this, his smile widened at their reactions.

"Vale and I were classmates from our first year until our third. In our fourth year, however, we diverged into different specializations. I pursued Dark Magic, while Vale chose to study Rituals and, to a lesser extent, Necromancy."

One of the boys seated near the back raised his hand hesitantly. "Professor, is it true that Vale founded this Academy?"

"Indeed," Dalton said with a nod. "After achieving True Immortality, Vale decided to establish this academy to ensure the survival and prosperity of the Arcane Arts. He wanted a place where practitioners of Dark Arts, Mystic Arts, Psychic Arts, and Elemental Arts could train and contribute to our world's defense against growing threats... You will know about such things in your higher years."

Everyone was excited after hearing this. Some students even exchanged thrilled glances, clearly ecstatic to be a part of something with such a profound legacy.

Another student, a quiet boy with silver-rimmed glasses, raised his hand. "Professor, what was Vale like as a student?"

Dalton's expression softened with a mix of nostalgia and pride. Well, he thought of him before as his rival for achieving the Top 1 Status, but he certainly wouldn't tell his students that now.

"Vale was...brilliant. Dedicated, yet humble. He was always the one asking the questions no one else dared to ask, and he saw potential in things others overlooked." He said. Apparently, he wasn't sure as he couldn't really recall his past at that time, and only a few important things were retained in his mind.

"Ahem... But I'll admit, back then, none of us could have foreseen his rise to True Immortality. He was exceptional, but he still seemed like one of us. Immortality wasn't even something we were considering. We're just thinking about the Spell Models we want to record. We're carefully planning them so we won't have to waste our Spell Lights."

A girl with braided hair raised her hand next. "Wait, Professor, you mentioned different specializations a while ago. What are they, and how do they differ?"

Dalton straightened up, his tone becoming more formal. He was considering whether to discuss this now...

Looking at the time, he still had about 10 minutes, so he decided to continue and even used the writing board behind him.

"In the Dark Arts, there are five primary specializations, each with its own focus and mastery path. These are..." Professor Stranway said as he started writing...

"Dark Magic, Rituals, Corruption, Necromancy, and Dark Alchemy... They are the main ones."

Everyone then looked at the notes written by the Professor.

1. Dark Magic: The manipulation of shadows and negative energies for both offensive and defensive purposes.

"It's versatile and often the most studied." He commented...

2. Rituals: A meticulous discipline that involves intricate ceremonies to summon entities, seal

forbidden powers, or enhance spells.

"It's not for the faint-hearted." He added.

3. Corruption: Focused on altering and disrupting magical or physical systems. Practitioners

can weaken wards, twist spells, or even afflict living beings with debilitating effects.

4. Necromancy: The study and control of death energy, including raising the dead or channeling power from the underworld. Dark Alchemy: A fusion of alchemical practices with

dark elements.

"This Dark Alchemy is completely different from other Arcane Paths, so you have plenty of time before thinking of choosing this path..." Dalton said as he recalled the amalgamations he

had seen before.

Chapter 916: Marshall Academy (5)

916 Marshall Academy (5)

Dalton then paused for a moment.

His expression turned serious as the next things he'd explain weren't something allowed before, or else they would get hunted by the Arcane Bureau.

This time, however, it was already different. After all, Vale had already taken over the Arcane Bureau. Several things had changed, and of course, Vale decided to take advantage of it and stopped the Bureau from prohibiting such practices.

Well, it was in a condition that the students would attain some requirements first.

"Then there are the Forbidden Arts and Anti-Magic branches in this Academy... These are highly restricted and only accessible to those who meet rigorous requirements." As he said this, everyone immediately felt excited.

Most of them already had some idea about these two special courses. It was an open secret of the Academy, after all. The only thing they didn't know was the extent of these courses.

They knew what Forbidden Arts and Anti-Magic Arts could do to other Practitioners. Not many Arcanists would want to be on the receiving end of such skills.

Learning those two would surely benefit them.

Anyway, seeing that a few of them were a bit confused. Dalton explained a bit to them.

He informed them that the Forbidden Arts delve into powers and knowledge that challenge the natural laws of the world, while Anti-Magic focuses on nullifying or countering all forms of magical energy.

"However, both come with significant risks and moral questions." He added.

The class buzzed with conversation at the wealth of information.

Some students whispered excitedly about which specialization they might pursue in their future years, while others gazed at Dalton with admiration.

"Professor," another student asked, "do you think Immortal Vale's presence here will influence us, even indirectly?"

Dalton smiled knowingly.

The student didn't directly ask, but he knew what they all wanted to know.

"Vale may not teach here directly, but his influence is everywhere. This Academy is his vision brought to life. If you truly dedicate yourselves, you may one-day cross paths with

him—or at the very least, make him proud by upholding the ideals this Academy was built upon."

The room fell silent as Dalton's words sank in.

"Now," he concluded, glancing at the time. "Any more questions before we end for the day?"

After nearly an hour of questions, Professor Stranway finally raised his hand to signal the end of the session.

"That's enough for today. Your formal classes will begin tomorrow. Use the rest of the day to familiarize yourselves with the Academy and its facilities. You should've received the handbook with you and know about the Academy Rules. Keep them with you in case you needed. There's plenty of information there."

Everyone acknowledged the professor's words, and soon, the students filed out of the room.

At this time, an old Professor of the Marshall Academy was walking within the halls of the Marshall Academy's main building.

It was Professor Zeno Roquemont. Though his frail appearance—marked by silvered hair, hollow cheeks, and a slightly bent posture—contradicted his true age, Zeno was not as old as he seemed.

Like Professor Dalton Stranway, he was in his early thirties, but his participation to the fight against the Abyssal Demon Invasion several years prior had left him looking decades older.

Zeno even shared a dormitory room with Vale, the now-renowned Shadow Immortal, during their years at the Vermont Academy.

While Vale ascended to immortality and became a huge figure of hope for humanity, Zeno had taken a different path, one that played vital role against Demon Saints yet far more sacrificial.

Anyway, the Summoning Hall of the Marshall Academy was quite huge...

It had tall, vaulted ceilings inscribed with runes. Just by entering, he immediately felt the controlled flow of mana within the room.

"Mhmm..." Zeno couldn't help but feel surprised after seeing the surroundings carefully.

On the periphery, a dozen humanoid androids stood motionless. These constructs were the Academy's failsafe. They were basically powerful sentinels that would intervene if any summoning spiraled out of control.

Zeno Roquemont stepped into the hall with his cane tapping against the polished stone floor.

Despite his seemingly frail appearance, his eyes were filled with life.

Those who truly understood magic would recognize his state; the price he had paid for defending humanity during the Abyssal Demon Invasion still clung to him.

As Zeno surveyed the room, his gaze fell on one of the three active summoning circles. Two were dormant, but the third was alive with fluctuating energy.

Zeno recognized the person.

The one attempting to summon was a half-dragon—a tall, muscular man with dark scales along his forearms and neck.

His long tail flicked behind him, and there were even two curved horns protruded from his forehead....

"Chad Bulmung..." Zeno murmured, recognizing the individual immediately.

Curious, Zeno stayed silent, observing Chad's ritual. He didn't expect Chad to attempt such a thing after all.

'Well, he's still a Dark Arcanist despite being a half-dragon...' He thought.

Whom~

Soon, the summoning circle flared with power...

Slowly, shapes began to form within the circle. They were ethereal forms, taking on solid shapes!

With a burst of energy, three towering Dragon Spirit Warriors appeared.

Each of them was over seven feet tall... Their forms were a blend of draconic might and spectral energy.

"Interesting... He can actually summon Dragon Spirits... Did they come from the Dragon Realm or Spirit Realm?" Zeno mused for a moment.

The moment they materialized, the android sentinels tensed, their heads tilted slightly as they assessed the situation.

As a professor, Zeno had a bit of control over these Androids, so he raised a hand, silently signaling them to stand down.

This action was certainly felt by Chad, leading him to turn to Zeno.

"Professor Roquemont," he greeted.

Zeno inclined his head. "Chad. Dragon Spirit Warriors is impressive..."

Chad wiped the sweat from his brow after hearing this.

"Ugh... I've been refining the technique. Vale told me to teach a bit of Summoning Arts..."

Chapter 917: Marshall Academy (6)

917 Marshall Academy (6)

"He wants you to teach Summoning Arts?" Zeno repeated.

Obviously, they weren't referring to the Arcane Path. After all, it requires a grimoire to do that. The Summoning Arts they were talking about was their unique ability to connect to the Shadow or the Realm of the Darkness.

"Yes... He's not telling me to teach some advanced techniques but just some elementary stuff level. In any case, I'm practicing so that I won't look too nervous when demonstrating." Chad replied with a chuckle.

Summoning creatures in a controlled environment like this helps stabilize the process and their Arcane Energy as well.

"Ahem... I still need to improve their synchronization during combat, though." Chad said. He was also considering the Summoning Technique to be usable in combat, after all.

Zeno then approached the summoning circle while his cane tapped rhythmically.

He examined the Dragon Spirit Warriors carefully before nodding.

"Their forms are stable, but the summoning is connected to your life force... Ugh... This is not good for the students. But the synchronization may not be entirely your fault. This just suited you really well with your high life force..."

After saying this, he then gestured to the glowing lines of the circle .

"This design restricts their movements to this world greatly. In a real battlefield scenario, where the summoning circle dissipates, you might find their coordination improves naturally if you make some changes to it..." Zeno said as he started giving some advice to Chad.

Zeno might be considered weak in terms of strength, but his knowledge of these types of things was still higher than Chad's. Of course, Chad wasn't entirely clueless about this, but he still appreciated the man's desire to help.

Anyway, Chad still nodded as he started considering the advice.

"That makes sense. Still, I'll need to practice deploying them quickly without losing integrity."

The two of them then started brainstorming to have a student-level summoning technique that Chad could teach soon.

After some time, Zeno's gaze softened.

"You've made remarkable progress, Chad. First of all, I can't even a single Dragon Spirit Warrior, let alone three. Just don't expect your students to be able to summon them. Just teach them to focus on summoning creatures a few levels below those Spirit Warriors." Zeno reminded.

Chad's lips curled into a slight smile after hearing this. "I'll keep that in mind." He said with a chuckle.

Zeno nodded at this as he looked at Dragon Spirit Warriors silently observing them...

"Would you like to see them in action?" Chad asked after a pause...

Zeno chuckled softly. "Why not? Show me what they can do, Chad. Right... Let's see if your warriors can stand against one of the academy's training constructs."

Chad's eyes lit up, and with a nod, he gestured to the android sentinels. He had no intention of correcting Zeno and calling them Androids. Anyway, it wasn't that important.

"Activate training mode," Chad commanded.

One of the androids then stepped forward. Its unusual metallic body glowed faintly as it entered a combat-ready stance.

Chad then informed the Dragon Spirit Warriors about what they should do through his mysterious connection to them.

Soon, Chad's warriors seemed to have roared as they prepared for the mock battle.

Zeno leaned on his cane while a faint smile slowly appeared on his lips.

He had seen numerous summons in action but never these Dragon Spirit Warriors, as they require a lot of time to call them and do your bidding. He really wanted to see them fight against the renowned Androids made by Denise...

"Let's begin!"

With a command from Chad, the Dragon Spirit Warriors moved forward, their movement weren't too fast or slow. They were more than enough to match the speed of the Android.

The halberd-wielding spirit warrior led the charge with its weapon slicing through the air!

Whoosh~

The Android it targeted responded instantly, raising a pulsing energy shield to block the strike.

It was one of the many features of Android and was commonly used by them when defending.

Bang!

The clash echoed through the hall like thunder, sending sparks and fragments of magical residue flying.

"Ho~" Old Zeno's eyes lit up after seeing this.

Then, he saw the glaive-wielding spirit circle to the flank, using its speed to evade a volley of energy blasts fired by Another android.

It closed the distance with a spinning attack, its glaive, then continued to cut a crescent arc of light. The Android countered with a blade extension from its arm, and the two engaged in an exchange of strikes that tested their speed and power...

"Beautiful..." Zeno couldn't help but comment as he realized how strong these two types of 'creatures' in battle.

Meanwhile, the greatsword-wielding spirit warrior faced off against two androids simultaneously. It swung its colossal weapon and crashed into the androids' defenses and, creating shockwaves that shook the ground.

However, the androids adapted quickly, working in tandem to outmaneuver the spirit warrior. With their synchronized movements, they were able to slowly advance their step.

"This is really interesting..."

Zeno watched from the sidelines, his arms crossed as he analyzed every move.

In the meantime, Chad decided to further assist his summons.

He started using his Draconic Sense and started giving clear instructions to his Spirit Warriors.

Then, when the glaive-wielding warrior was cornered by an android, Chad channeled a surge of magic through their connection, empowering the Dragon Spirit Warrior to break free with a burst of energy.

Chad then watched as the Androids responded in kind, deploying new strategies.

"This... Why did Denise make them so strong?!"

One of the Androids unleashed a net of binding energy, ensnaring the halberd-wielding Dragon Spirit Warrior! Then, the same thing happened to the rest of his summons!

Chad knew that the Spirit Warriors were still full of energy and could even fight the Asura he was familiar with.

However, the Androids' unusual method of capturing their opponents made it difficult for him to see the full strength of his summons.

"Ugh... I have to let Denise know about this... This has to be fixed!"

Chapter 918: Marshall Academy (7)

Chad couldn't help but complain about the strength of the Androids here at all. He felt that they were too advanced, and he believed that the students practicing with these Androids would not enjoy this at all, which might just discourage them.

Anyway, Chad didn't give up; he assisted the Dragon Spirit Warriors and made them stronger with his own energy to make the battle fair.

With the boost in their Draconic Energy, the Warriors were able to escape from their bindings and battle once more.

The fight continued for a little while, and the battle reached its peak. Chad finally realized that the Dragon Spirit Warriors were better off if they had just formed a coordinated assault against an Android.

Chad immediately gave them an order, and the Warriors responded by unleashing a coordinated assault according to his instructions.

"Now! Destroy those chunk of metals!" Chad shouted, and Denise would probably not like how he was addressing them.

Anyway, the halberd-wielding spirit slammed it weapon into the ground and created a seismic wave that staggered the androids.

The glaive-wielding spirit used the opening to sweep through the opposition with several strikes from behind while the greatsword warrior delivered a finishing blow, splitting one of the androids in half with a powerful draconic force...

One by one, the androids fell... Though formidable, as soon as the Spirit Warriors were able to work together and target a single opponent, they were able to win.

The Androids were either shattered or powered down as their energy cores dimmed.

"Whew~"

Chad let out a deep breath. He really liked the result of this battle. He then looked at Zeno as his eyes gleamed with satisfaction...

Soon, his warriors returned to their spectral forms and dissolved back into the summoning circle.

"That was an incredible fight... I didn't expect those Androids to be that strong. No wonder there were a lot of them sent out at the borders of this domain." Zeno muttered as he realized how scary these Androids were, especially if they formed an Army.

In his estimation, only those Special Orders of the Arcanist Factions could somehow deal with these Androids.

Nonetheless, before the hall could settle into silence, the soft sound of footsteps echoed from the entrance.

Zeno and Chad turned to see a figure stepping into the room-a tall, fox-eared beastman clad in a dark green cloak.

His amber eyes scanned the hall, and his bushy tail swayed behind him with a sense of urgency.

They had no idea who this beastman was, but they had an idea where he had come from. "Professor Zeno, Chad," the beastman spoke. His voice smooth yet firm.

"The headmaster has called for all professors to gather at Magnus's Castle. The meeting is to begin shortly."

Zeno raised an eyebrow. "Magnus's Castle? Why not the Academy's faculty instead... It's not like there's a lot of us."

"Might be an advance payment? Who knows maybe Vale decided to give some gift to us to start the Academic Year..." Chad replied with a chuckle.

He then wiped the sweat from his brow and looked toward the beastman. "I'll wrap things up here. Thank you for the message, Soren." He said after seeing the nametag on his chest.

The beastman, Soren, nodded... His fox ears even twitched slightly. "Yes. She said that not to keep her waiting and that Headmaster Constance values punctuality."

Zeno chuckled and nodded. "Of course. We'll follow right away."

As Soren turned to leave, Zeno gave Chad a nod. "Well done today. If possible, I'd like to see you practice again. Your control over the Dragon Spirit Warriors is impressive..."

Chad laughed at this as he wasn't sure if Zeno was being sincere or just being polite. Nonetheless, he was quite happy that even though Summoning wasn't his forte, he had a decent ability on it and perhaps, he could really teach students on this.

'Anyway, I'll just have to teach everything on that book that Miss Faith and Vale prepared.' Chad thought as he recalled the teaching guide given to him.

Well, he had the talent and skills already and as long as he followed the guide, he should be able to properly lead the live summoning classes.

After some time, the professors arrived one by one at Magnus's Castle, a grand structure that towered further north of the academy grounds. Its old era of architecture was quite beautiful but also terrifying because of the prominent aura of the true Dragons living here. Anyway, The gathering hall was vast. It was a circular chamber with a painted dome overhead. There was a long table that occupied the center of the hall, flanked by high-backed chairs... Professor Zeno walked in with his cane tapping softly

against the floor. He was among the first to arrive. Behind him came Professor Dalton Stranway. His freckled face also scanned the room, but he didn't speak.

Professor Chad Bulmung, the half-dragon expert in Practical Spell Application, strode in with his characteristic confidence.

It was already in his bloodline to be confident after all.

Next was Professor Lenora Veylin, who taught Elementary Spirit Law. Her emerald robes and serene character gave her an ethereal presence. She greeted Zeno with a small nod as she believed that Zeno was the oldest there.

Professor Varren Kael, an expert in Fundamentals of Magic Zone, followed closely. He was a broad-shouldered man, but his prominent feature was still his long silver beard. Anyway, he was also known for his firm teaching methods...

There was also Professor Althea Morrigan, the instructor of Magic Language, who arrived shortly after. With her ink-stained hands and intricate runic tattoos spiraling up her arms, she had a reputation for being enigmatic.

Professor Elias Trantor, the senior lecturer of Arcane History, had also arrived. Despite his frail appearance, it felt as if he had boundless knowledge.

The youngest among them, Professor Mira Calveris, was assigned to the Rudimentary Usage of Mystical Artifacts Class and had a vibrant presence...

There were still 10 or so other professors, and Chad couldn't help but feel impressed.

'I wonder where he got all of these professors.' Chad thought to himself as he confirmed that it was Vale himself who had recruited all of these Professors.

Dalton and Zeno were quite understandable with their past, but the others seemed to have come out of nowhere.

Chapter 919: Two of the Sixteen

Though Chad was curious, he wasn't complaining about the professors; he was simply curious about Vale's criteria for recruiting them.

After all, he believed that Vale could've recruited better or stronger experts. If they did that, they would certainly be able to attract more students coming from prestigious families.

Anyway, he could only think that Vale's decision was heavily influenced by the Arcane Bureau's information network.

'They must be special...' Chad mused...

He then glanced at the quiet professor, who seemed to have a very weak presence... This person felt as if he would disappear if he didn't focus his attention on him.

'Impressive... Is this guy Manager Faith's relative or something?' Chad commented in his mind.

Chad knew a little about this person, Professor Darion Vex. If his memory was right, this professor should be in charge of the Introductory Cursecraft Class.

His dark cloak swirled around him as he walked around silently...

Anyway, time passed as the professors exchanged greetings and speculations about the meeting.

However, it didn't take that long; the room fell silent when the grand double doors swung open.

At last, Headmaster Constance entered. She was still looking really young and beautiful. With her blue hair cascading over her shoulders, she gracefully approached the Professors.

She wasn't wearing a normal robe, and everyone could feel the strange Arcane Energy surrounding it. She was definitely wearing a robe made of mystical energy.

"Thank you all for gathering here on such short notice," Constance, the Spirit Immortal and the Headmaster, said.

"As you know, our academy is not just an institution for education but something that the Shadow Immortal built against those who threaten our world."

She paused, ensuring that every professor felt the weight of her words.

"We are entering a critical period," she continued. "It was confirmed, even by the Avatar of the Goddess of Secret and Concealments, that the rise of the Void Art Practitioners would be inevitable in just a few years. Our students must not only excel in their chosen paths but also be prepared... This requires us, their mentors, to guide them..."

Of course, everyone already had a rough idea about this when Vale had recruited them before. Constance simply emphasized its importance to them.

After briefing them for a bit, Constance finally decided to start with their main topic. "There is much to discuss, but I want to begin by introducing you to something that will shape your journey here at the Academy. Many of you may have noticed the towering structures located at further north of the Academy--the Black Towers. Among these, two of the sixteen towers have been prepared for your access: the Dark Tower and the Elemental Tower."

A murmur rippled through the professors.

"We're having access to those places?"

"So we can have such privileges..."

While the existence of the sixteen towers was known, the idea of gaining access to them was something entirely different.

These towers were said to house immense arcane energy tied to the core principles of the 16 Arcane Paths.

"Each of these towers," Constance continued, "represents one of the sixteen Arcane Paths. The lost Arts were already included. These towers are not merely symbolic--they are powerful sources of energy, made through unknown immortal techniques filled with the very essence of their respective paths. Obviously, the Dark Tower embodies the power of the Darkness Path, while the Elemental Tower resonates with the primordial forces of nature. For those of you teaching or specializing in these fields--No, even if you're not, I encourage you to make full use of them."

Her words were met with silence as the weight of the revelation settled in. They were all looking excited.

"Your emblems," she said, gesturing to the badges pinned on their robes, "have already been registered. They will grant you access to these two towers. I would urge you to explore them." Constance then thought for a moment as she believed that they weren't aware of what these Towers could do. She didn't want to explain too many things about them, so she just gave them a brief introduction.

"These towers are more than just a place to study your path. You can think of them as sanctuaries where your Spirit Strands can be nurtured and increased. It wouldn't be surprising to get another 10 or even 20 of them."

"We can do that?!" Professor Varren, who was teaching the Fundamentals of the Magic Zone, was surprised. After all, her Spirit Strands and other Strands were already stagnant. They might even be decreasing.

It wasn't just him. A few of the professors exchanged glances as well.

Spirit Strands, the invisible threads representing one's spiritual strength, were notoriously difficult to improve once they reached a certain level.

The opportunity to increase one's Spirit Strands by ten or even twenty was a rarity that even Grandmaster Arcanists would kill for.

"I really hope that can happen... You're not joking, right? Headmaster?" Professor Mira Calveris asked. She actually had a closer relationship with Constance as Mira was also one of the Arcanists who had worked to build Constance's Arcane Tower.

"Yes," Constance replied with a knowing smile. "Not only will your Spirit Strands grow stronger, but you may also gain additional Spell Lights... For many of you, your number of usable spells may have stagnated over the years. The towers have the potential to change

that..."

Everyone smiled after hearing this. However, even if it was possible, some of them couldn't help but feel worried that they had already squeezed out all of their potential and that their physique may not be able to handle any more improvement.

However, Constance caught their worry and added.

"Vale, the Shadow Immortal, saw the potential in each of you when he invited you to teach here. I am confident that these towers will help you rediscover parts of your power you thought long forgotten."

As she said this, Constance decided to end their brief meeting by inviting them to her Arcane

Tower...

Well, she wanted to boast for a bit but before that could happen, he heard Vale's voice through telepathy.

Chapter 920: Vale's Academy

Constance hurried to the Academy grounds after hearing Vale's request.

'I wonder what he's thinking this time...' She mused for a moment as she headed to the Academy's Mission Hall. This place was supposed to open once they had students in the 4th year. However, the Academy just started last year, and there are only 2nd year students right

now.

Clink...

Constance entered the building... The inside of the Mission Hall was silent aside from the faint movement of the two androids stationed at their posts.

Constance entered the hall while looking around. The lounge and the mission board were empty, but there was a person standing near the windows overlooking the fountain.

It was none other than Vale.

Constance's heels then clicked against the polished floor as she observed Vale's figure. Vale smiled after seeing her and walked casually near the central counter.

"Wait? What?" She was confused after seeing Vale's current appearance....

Instead of his usual imposing presence, he was wearing the uniform of a second-year student: a neatly pressed blazer with the Academy's emblem over the chest, dark trousers, and polished shoes. His face and physique were entirely altered.

His features were youthful, his hair shorter and darker, and his build was less intimidating- he looked like an ordinary, sharp-eyed, student.

'Ugh... What with his attire this time?' Constance wryly smiled...

Vale chuckled after seeing Constance blink in disbelief. He couldn't help but feel amused seeing her refined composure momentarily slipping.

Vale was, of course, in his student mode... He maintained an expression too casual for someone of his status.

"Ah, Constance. Thanks for coming on such short notice."

"Vale..." Constance replied. She paused for a moment to find the right words before asking. "What are you doing? And why, of all things, are you dressed like a second-year student?"

Vale shrugged as he showed a faint smile on his lips.

"It's more comfortable, and it helps me blend in. I'll be observing some students soon. This way, I won't draw unnecessary attention. I'm practicing..."

Constance sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose. "Only you would think that an Immortal pretending to be a student is a reasonable idea. What exactly are you planning to observe?"

She had no idea why Vale decided not to use his immortal skills to observe someone and instead decided to act like a student. However, she didn't really mind this, considering how she trusts Vale a lot.

Vale waved a hand dismissively.

"Nothing sinister, if that's what you're worried about. Aside from the students I want to observe, I also want to see how the Philosopher's Elixir changed the Arcane Practitioners... After all, the second-year teachers had really praised them a lot." Vale said...

"I want to see how they're adapting-how they think, how they approach challenges in Spell Mastery. Besides, since I made this Academy, I want to ensure the environment we've created nurtures them properly."

Constance exhaled deeply, finally letting her composure return.

"Right... You've met with the second-year Professors... Did they like your gifts to them?" Constance asked.

"Yes... They now have access to two more Towers. How was the new Professors?" Vale asked. "They're good. They've adapted well." Constance said as she approached the counter, her gaze flicking briefly to the two androids stationed as the Mission Hall's receptionist and manager.

They were humanoid in design, with polished metallic surfaces and faintly glowing eyes. Their movements were human-like as they organized stacks of mystical scrolls and dusted the mission tokens.

"So, why here?" Constance asked, gesturing around the empty hall. "The Mission Hall isn't supposed to open until the fourth-years are ready to handle the tasks. Most of our students are still too green for this."

"That's exactly why I called you," Vale said, leaning casually against the counter. "I'm thinking of opening the Mission Hall next year, for the second- and third-year students instead of waiting until the fourth. The missions will be adjusted to their skill levels, of course, but I believe exposing them to real-world scenarios earlier will accelerate their growth. I want to believe to the Professors who said that they were improving really fast." Constance tilted her head thoughtfully. "That's ambitious. But I can see the value in it. The Philosopher's Elixir has already changed the playing field. Practitioners today have a much faster progression curve compared to before."

Constance had the right to say this, considering she had met numerous students every year challenging her Mystic Soul Tower.

"Exactly," Vale said, nodding. "Back then, even the most talented students would need years of grueling effort to reach the proficiency levels these students can achieve within a year. The elixir has shortened that gap, but it's also created a new problem-many of them lack the life experience and situational awareness that come with traditional training. They have power but not the wisdom to wield it responsibly. I read reports from the Arcane Bureau that there were more cases of misuse of Arcane Spells all over the continent."

Constance crossed her arms and nodded.

"And you think missions will provide that?"

Vale nodded. "They'll be guided, of course. No student will be sent on a mission they can't handle. The goal isn't to throw them into danger but to challenge them in ways the classroom

can't..."

The Headmaster tapped her chin thoughtfully. "It's an intriguing idea. However, the infrastructure for managing those missions would need to be expanded. The androids alone won't suffice; we'll need human overseers-perhaps alumni or senior instructors-to monitor the students and intervene if necessary."

"I've already considered that," Vale replied. "The Arcane Bureau has offered to lend support, and I've also reached out to a few trusted practitioners who owe me favors. They'll act as supervisors when needed."

Vale smiled as he recalled these 'trusted practitioners.'

Constance raised an eyebrow as she considered who these trusted practitioners were... Then, a faint smile played on her lips.

"If it's like that... Then just go ahead... This might even excite the students. However, make sure not to include those Demon Generals among those practitioners you're talking about..."

Chapter 921: Vale's New Method

Since Vale had just started the Marshall Academy and he envisioned it to nurture students who would soon be capable enough to fight against strong practitioners of Void Arts, he had to make several adjustments in order to do that.

As he continued to observe his surroundings and keep updated on everything that was happening around the continent, he couldn't help but make changes. These changes were obviously the things he believed to benefit his students and also the professors.

The next day, formal classes had finally started.

In Elementary Spirit Law, Mira Emberlane, daughter of the esteemed High Priestess Helena of the Holy Arts, found herself seated near the middle of the classroom...

'I'm finally going to learn Dark Arts!' Mira's eyes shone brightly at the thought of learning the Dark Arts instead of the Holy Arts that was being pushed on her by everyone in her family.

She even woke up early and prepared herself for the class. At this time, her golden-blond hair was neatly tied back as she waited for the start of the lesson.

She could actually feel a lot of gazes pointed on her. Well, that was expected.

Despite coming from a lineage that specialized in healing and light-based Arts, Mira had chosen to study the Darkness Path. Many people guessed that she was seeking balance and understanding of the duality between light and darkness but that was completely wrong... She was simply fascinated by the Dark Arts, which was previously known as some sort of heretic or evil. Then, it became the powerful art that could defeat demons, fallen angels, time manipulators, and evil creatures.

Since she grew up hearing about how powerful the Dark Arts was, there was no way she would miss it as soon as she confirmed that she had a talent for it, thanks to the Philosopher's Elixir.

Of course, even though her presence in Class 1 had already drawn some attention, Mira also paid some attention to some of her classmates...

Her eyes darted discreetly around the room.

She noted the interesting student named Armin, the orphan who had somehow found himself in the prestigious Class 1. There was something intriguing about him. She wasn't sure if it was his calm confidence or the way he seemed to absorb everything without drawing attention to himself. Anyway, he had already piqued her curiosity yesterday.

She also took note of a tall girl sitting two seats to her left with red hair and green eyes, Sienna Vaelmoor, rumored to come from a family of renowned ritualists. Then, there was Aiden Stormshard, Celeste Vayne, and others...

'Mhmm... Mother agreed to let me study here, but I had to form a good relationship with quite a few people here. Ugh... I'm not really good at socializing, but I have no other choice...' Mira sighed as she recalled her mother's instructions.

She then glanced at Theo Grayson, a stocky boy with ash-gray hair who appeared lazy at first glance but had been surprisingly attentive to the things happening around him. Anyway, each of them seemed to possess unique qualities that hinted at their potential, and she was sure that her mother would want her to befriend these students.

'I'll just observe you guys for now...' Mira thought to herself since her mother wasn't here to reprimand or urge her anyway.

She simply made a mental note to keep an eye on these individuals as the days progressed. Suddenly, the class quieted as Professor Lenora Veylin entered the room.

She was a graceful woman with black hair streaked with silver, tied into an elaborate braid that flowed down her back. At this time, she wore a dark purple robe that every Professor has...

The moment she stepped in, the students felt the subtle pressure of her aura—a sign of her immense spiritual strength.

"Good morning, Class..." Professor Veylin greeted...

"Today, we will begin the foundations of your journey into Spirit Law. By the end of this year, you should have a solid grasp of the basics, but understand this—Spirit Law is not merely an academic subject. It is the cornerstone of everything you will achieve as an Arcanist."

She paced slowly at the front of the room. Her gaze swept across the students and nodded. "Your spiritual strength determines your potential. A stronger spirit grants you more Spell Lights, which you will use to record Spell Models. It also lengthens your ability to remain in the Phantasm State, the meditative trance that allows you to access and cast those Spell Models. Without sufficient spiritual strength, even the most powerful spells are useless to you."

The students were rapt with attention.

It was basic for everyone except for Armin, but nonetheless, they knew that their Professor was just starting...

Mira leaned forward slightly, her notebook open and quill ready to take some important notes.

Professor Veylin then paused for a moment, and with a wave of her hand, glowing runes appeared on the blackboard behind her, illustrating the concepts she was explaining.

None of them knew that Professor Veylin practices such an Art.

"But," Professor Veylin continued... "while every academy teaches its students methods to increase their spiritual strength, here at the Arcane Academy, we utilize a unique method- one developed by Vale, the Shadow Immortal himself."

'This is it...' Mira thought to herself.

The room was silent as they all waited for her to continue. This was the reason they attended this Academy: to learn something from the Immortal, which some others could not learn in normal Arcane Academy.

Professor Lenora smiled faintly, as if anticipating their awe. She raised a hand, and a shimmering Arcane Circle materialized in the center of the room. It was intricate and

beautiful...

"This," she said, pointing to the circle, "is the Dark Arcane Resonance Circle. It is a creation of Vale's brilliance..."

Needless to say, Vale just modified the Animus Haven Hall's Arcane Circle. After all, that circle was too difficult to resonate with. However, once someone did it, it would be extremely

helpful.

Anyway, Vale just simplified it to make it easy for everyone to use.

Chapter 922: Classes

'Dark Arcane Resonance Circle...' Everyone in the class repeated in their minds.

All of them were awed after listening to the Professor.

This was the main reason they were here. They wanted Vale the Shadow Immortal's legacy, something that was exclusive to this Academy!

Nonetheless, before everyone could ask questions, the Professor continued.

"This special Arcane Circle is designed specifically to enhance spiritual strength through focused meditation. Unlike traditional methods, which rely solely on the practitioner's own willpower and concentration, this method uses the power of the Arcane Circle to amplify and harmonize your spiritual energy."

As the students stared at the Arcane Circle, Professor Veylin clapped her hands, and one of the android assistants brought out a tray holding a collection of gleaming crystals. These crystals glowed faintly, each of them radiating a deep blue color with a faint silver light at its core. "These are Resonance Crystals," Professor Veylin explained. "They are attuned to the Arcane Circle and serve as special mediums for your spiritual energy. During meditation, these crystals help to stabilize your Spirit, allowing for a deeper connection to your Phantasm State and promoting growth in your spiritual strength."

Everyone had no idea about these Resonance Crystals and were all interested to see such an unknown artifact...

Sienna Vaelmoor, the one who came from a family of Ritual Experts, had never heard of such a Crystal before. He had started learning about the Mystical Artifacts when she was five years old, so she couldn't help but feel surprised after learning about this incredible item.

'If that Resonance Crystal can really help with stabilizing our Spirit during meditation, maybe it could also be used during Spirit Summoning Rituals. Brother Khan will be ecstatic about it if he learns about this item. This Academy might really be better than Featherstar Academy of the Dark Arts Faction.' She mused.

Professor Veylin then stepped into the circle while carrying one of the Resonance Crystals.

After whispering some words, the Arcane Circle beneath her feet began to glow brighter, and the Resonance Crystal she was holding started to hum...

Just like that, a faint energy started orbiting around her.

Whom~

The room was filled with a soft hum, a vibration that the students could feel in their very souls.

Of course, Professor Veylin didn't plan to meditate and just wanted to show the kids how to use it.

Seeing that she caught everyone's interest, she put the Resonance Crystal down and explained.

"When you meditate within the circle, you will focus on the rhythm of the Arcane Circle. Allow its energy to flow through you, merging with your own spiritual essence. The crystal will respond to your unique Spirit, amplifying its strength and refining its structure."

She then stepped out of the circle, and the light dimmed. The crystal's mysterious movement had then disappeared, and the hum subsided.

Professor Veylin looked at the students, and her expression had turned serious.

"This method is exclusive to our Academy. It is not something you will find in any other institution, and it is a privilege to use it. However, it is not without its challenges. The process requires intense concentration and a strong will. Some of you may find it difficult at first, but with persistence, you will see results. Furthermore, the Resonance Crystals that could be used a few dozen times could only be obtained at our Academy."

Professor Lenora Veylin may not have mentioned it, but these Resonance Crystals came from the Dark Tower. They were all nurtured in such a special environment and could really be useful for Dark Arts Practitioners.

In the meantime, as Professor Veylin continued explaining the nuances of the method, Mira found herself fascinated.

The concept of using an Arcane Circle and Resonance Crystals to augment spiritual strength was entirely new to her.

Not even her parents were aware of...

'I wonder if I can surpass my mother's Spirit Strands with this...' Mira thought enthusiastically.

Of course, she also wondered what it would feel like to step into the circle, to feel the hum of the energy coursing through her.

Glancing at her classmates, she noticed everyone was equally attentive. They all seemed excited like her, to try the method that was being taught to them.

Professor Veylin started discussing a few more things about Spirit Law, including the dangers of practicing Arcane Arts, especially the Dark Arts.

By the end of the lesson, the students were eager to try the Shadow Arcane Resonance Circle for themselves. Professor Veylin promised that each of them would have the opportunity to practice in small groups under her guidance in future sessions.

As they left the classroom, Mira found herself yearning for more... She couldn't wait for the next Elementary Spirit Law Class.

However, they still have a few more classes for today.

After a fascinating morning in Elementary Spirit Law, the students of Class 1 moved to their next class, Fundamentals of Magic Zone, led by Professor Kael.

The classroom was located in the western wing of the Academy. The room they would use was designed to encourage both focus and experimentation.

The walls seemed simple, but it was filled with formation arts to protect the place.

Professor Kael stood at the front of the room as the students filed in. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man with a prominent long silver beard.

Unlike Professor Lenora, who exuded an air of professional Arcanist, Kael seemed more relaxed, though no less formidable.

"Good afternoon, Class 1... You should know my name by now..." He spoke softly, but everyone in the class could hear him.

"Today, we'll delve into the concept of the Magic Zone, one of the core elements of your training as practitioners of the Dark Arts-and, frankly, as any kind of Arcanist. Whether you're summoning spirits, unleashing elemental destruction, or invoking ancient curses, understanding your Magic Zone is non-negotiable."

He leaned against his desk, crossing his arms as his gaze swept over the students. "Ahemm... But before we dive into how it works for you, let's take a step back and look at the broader picture. Different Arcane Paths require different states of mind to access the Magic Zone. For Dark Arts Practitioners like you, it's the Phantasm State. However, other paths use different

methods."

As the class began, Vale, who was looking at the new Professor he hired, couldn't help but feel

amused...

'So he's like this if he's not in front of me.' Vale wryly smiled and shook his head.

Anyway, as the class started, Vale suddenly had an urge to become a Professor as well.

Chapter 923: A Reaction!

In the meantime, while Vale was considering becoming a professor, Professor Kael continued with his teachings.

He moved to a glowing diagram on the wall that responded to his gesture, expanding to display a map of energy fields connected to different Arcane Paths.

"For instance," he said, pointing to the first image, "Mystic Arts Practitioners enter the Mystic State. It's a meditative state that attunes their spirit to the natural flow of magic, allowing them to manipulate the fabric of reality itself. Rune Arts Practitioners, on the other hand, rely on the Chrono Shift-a heightened state where they synchronize their energy with the passage of time, enabling them to wield runes with extreme precision. Right, it's different from controlling time, so don't misinterpret that..."

He shifted to another section of the diagram. "Holy Arts Practitioners access the Blessed Sense, a state of divine connection where they draw power from the celestial realm. Knights and other physical-based practitioners use the Radiant Spirit, a state that amplifies their vitality and merges their physical and magical capabilities."

Kael then explained about the other special state of the remaining Arcane Paths.

Then, he turned back to the students. "But for us Dark Arts Practitioners, it's all about the Phantasm State. This is your key to unlocking your Magic Zone."

Kael stepped away from the diagram and gestured for the class to focus on him. "Now, what is the Magic Zone? Simply put, it's the area within which you can cast spells effectively. Think of it as the radius of your influence, defined by your spiritual strength and mastery over your Arcane Path."

He began pacing slowly with his hands clasped behind his back.

"When you enter the Phantasm State, your spirit extends outward, creating this zone. Inside the Magic Zone, you can activate your spells, summon entities, and manipulate energy with precision. The range of your Magic Zone and the duration you can maintain it are two critical metrics that will define your prowess as an Arcanist."

Kael paused and turned to the students... He knew that the things he was teaching were mostly the basic things, but he still had to ensure that they didn't have any misconceptions about their abilities.

"Now, let me give you an example. Six years ago, my Phantasm State could last for 12 minutes, and my Magic Zone extended to 28 meters." He smiled faintly, as if recalling a

distant memory. "It took me years of training to achieve that. Of course, what I've achieved since then... well, I'll keep that as my little secret."

The class was impressed after hearing the 12-minute Phantasm State and 28-meter range. However, they couldn't help but chuckle softly at the last part.

Nonetheless, Mira Emberlane leaned forward, her eyes narrowed with curiosity. She actually felt that the duration and the range were off.

'Wait... Is it because it's different with Holy Arts?' Mira mused. After all, the comparison that she made was from the teachings of her private tutor from the Holy Arts Faction.

She believed that if you achieved 12 minutes in Phantasm State, then you should have more than 40 meters already...

That seemed to be a plausible reason since the Spell Models of the Dark Arts were said to be more dangerous than Holy Arts and a few others. Perhaps that was the reason why their range of Magic Zone was smaller compared to others.

Anyway, the others were excited to learn how to increase their duration of Phantasm State and to reach farther with their Magic Zone.

On the other hand, Armin, sitting near the front, quietly jotted down notes. There were a lot of new things he was hearing this class, so his mind was also racing with questions.

Well, this wasn't something he would learn in the orphanage after all. Plenty of things were new to him, so he had to write them down.

Clap!

Kael clapped his hands, and the class immediately noticed some changes within the room. The glowing inscriptions on the walls dimmed, replaced by a faint dome of light that enclosed the class. "Now, let's give you a taste of what a Magic Zone feels like," Kael said...

Magic Zone should be invisible to everyone except for the caster. Nonetheless, they curious about what he was about to do.

With a wave of his hand, the dome responded to his energy, dividing the classroom into individual spaces for each student.

"These are simulation zones," he explained. "Inside them, you'll try to enter your Phantasm State. Don't worry if you can't extend your Magic Zone very far yet... I just want to see what level you are at." Professor Kael said.

To be honest, he was amazed by this method of Marshall Academy. He heard that this Runes in the classroom were made by Headmaster Constance, and he couldn't help but appreciate it since it would surely help with his teachings.

The students nodded, and Kael instructed them to sit cross-legged in their zones. "Close your eyes," he said. "Focus on your spirit. All of you in Class 1 can easily enter the Phantasm State, but based on the records, only a few of you have a very stable one... Ahem, now, feel your spiritual energy pulse within you. Let it extend outward. Don't force it-guide it. This room's specialty is to improve your focus, especially your control with the Phantasm State, so you can't waste this opportunity."

With that said, the room grew quiet, filled only with the sound of steady breathing as they focused on their Phantasm State...

Armin focused intently, recalling Professor Lenora's earlier lesson about spiritual strength. He imagined his spirit as a glowing sphere within him, expanding slowly outward.

At first, he felt nothing, but then-a faint tingling sensation, as if his spirit was brushing against an invisible barrier.

The process was a lot smoother than what he had recalled. It seemed to be the effect of the room itself...

However, as he did this, something unexpected happened.

The pocket watch in his pocket suddenly started getting warm!

Chapter 924: Vale's ESP Spell

Armin had no idea what was happening... He immediately stopped what he was doing to observe his pocketwatch carefully.

'Eh? It's normal...' Armin muttered as he realized that there was nothing wrong...

'Is it my imagination?' He mused.

He already had it appraised outside, and it should not be a normal item. He was told that it was better to have it appraised in the Academy.

'I should find someone soon.' Armin thought to himself before he focused on his Phantasm State... As he did so, the pocketwatch no longer reacted as he had imagined...

Then, after some time, the Professor seemed to have noticed his efforts.

"Good, Armin," Kael suddenly said, startling him slightly. "I can feel your Magic Zone's starting to get more stable. Keep going."

As he said this, Kael also started commenting on the Magic Zones that the others created.

Based on all of his comments, it seemed that he was more focused on having their Magic Zone stable or controlled instead of their duration or range...

Armin realized this point, so he knew that he was indeed doing the right thing.

Nearby, Mira Emberlane had also managed to create a stable Magic Zone and even change its form a little.

'It's a bit different from how it was described by my mother, but it's still quite the same... Control is the most important other than having a strong spirit.' Mira mused.

After about 10 minutes, Kael clapped his hands again, and the faint zones dissipated.

Since he could no longer see everyone's Magic Zones, it meant that their practice had also ended.

"Not bad for your first year..." He said while nodding approvingly.

Well, they were all from Class 1, so it wasn't really surprising that they were capable of these basic things. Nonetheless, he still appreciated all their efforts.

"I even noticed some of you managed to extend your Magic Zones by a meter with the help of this room's Formation Arts. That's a good start. With practice, you'll be able to refine this skill further. Remember, range isn't everything-control and precision are just as important." This last statement may seem to be a simple knowledge, but Professor Kael had deeper meaning on this, but that would be for his next classes.

He glanced around the room, his gaze lingering on a few students for a brief moment.

"Those who did particularly well must continue their training even after our class." He said, making all students sit up straighter.

"Keep that up, and you'll find yourselves ahead of the curve."

Kael then dismissed the class after giving them an overview of the exercises they would practice in the coming weeks to improve their Phantasm State's Magic Zone.

As the students filed out, some of them couldn't help but glance at Armin... He was an orphan, but it felt as if he had come from a prominent family and had been trained for years.

After all, almost all of them were trained by their families when they were only five or even six years old. Since Armin doesn't have such a background and even had to use the Philosopher's Elixir being given to the public, and not the high-quality ones being provided by their family, they really felt a bit of pressure from this person.

Armin, meanwhile, was unbothered. He didn't even notice their gazes as he walked out of the room, since he was deep in his thought. He was already planning how he could improve his control over his Magic Zone.

Kael watched them leave, a small smile on his face. "They'll make for an interesting generation," he thought to himself, already looking forward to seeing their progress.

Time had passed quickly at Mashall Academy, and the students of Class 1 had settled into their daily routines...

It has been a month, and each subject has started to get more challenging and exciting for everyone. Nonetheless, if all of them were to be asked, none were as intriguing-or as unsettling—as Introductory Cursecraft, taught by Professor Darion Vex.

The class was held once a week in the bright chamber deep within the east wing of the Academy. This place had become one of the most talked-about courses among the first-year students. Cursecraft was as fascinating as it was taboo in most parts of the continent, and the students were eager to delve into its mysteries.

After all, it kind of brings some excitement to learn something that should be forbidden. Anyway, as the students sat in their seats, the heavy wooden door creaked open, and Professor Darion Vex entered.

He was a tall man with short black hair and green eyes that seemed to see right through everyone. His dark robes swayed as he strode to the front of the room, carrying a small, intricately carved wooden cage. Inside were several large bullfrogs with their golden eyes blinking slowly.

Before everyone could guess what they were for, Professor Vex spoke...

"Good afternoon, Class 1. Today marks an important step in your journey into the art of Cursecraft. For the past three weeks, we've studied the theory behind the Skin Corruption Curse-its structure, its magical resonance, and its applications. Ahem... I hope you all studied even if you're not in my class. Anyway, theory alone does not make an Arcanist. Today, you will practice."

Excited whispers broke out among the students.

On the other hand, the frogs croaked ominously in their cage, as if they understood what was

about to happen.

Professor Darion then raised a hand, and the room fell silent.

His eyes scanned the class, lingering on a few faces before he made his decision.

"Armin, Mira, and Aiden," he said, pointing to each of them. "You three will demonstrate what you've learned."

At this time, Vale, who was just listening from a few rooms away, suddenly had a strange feeling.

"Mhmm?" Vale was confused since it had been a long time since he felt something like this.

For some reason, his Level 10 ESP Spell warned him of something disastrous appearing not too far from him.

Chapter 925: Out of Control

'What the heck was that just now?'

Vale didn't like this feeling, but he had no idea about the source of this danger. After all, none of the Formation Arts surrounding his Domain was warning him.

The agents from the Arcane Bureau also seemed unaware as they remained unmoved. Then, the True Immortals weren't alarmed, and the Androids all over the Domain weren't reporting any suspicious thing at all.

Shane didn't like this feeling, but he had no other choice but to observe the situation for now.

In the meantime, the class led by Professor Darion Vex continued.

At this time, Armin, who was suddenly called out, felt a jolt of nervousness but quickly masked it. He then stood up as he looked at the Professor to show that he was ready

for this... Mira, on the other hand, wasn't too concerned about this. She flipped her hair over her shoulder and gave a small, confident smirk as she rose.

Aiden, on the other hand, looked slightly hesitant but nodded and joined the others at the front. His family was known as Rune Artisans. Dark Magic wasn't really something their family was known for. To be exact, no one in their family or even relatives had entered the Dark Path at all.

'I can do this...' Aiden encouraged himself.

Professor Darion Vex then placed the cage on the table and carefully removed three frogs, setting them down in front of the chosen students.

"These bullfrogs are ideal for beginners," he explained. "They had mutated after being exposed to various Dark Alchemy... They have a natural resistance to Magic and will force you to focus your intent and control their power. In short, a sloppy curse will fizzle out; a focused one will take hold. Remember the key components-intent, energy alignment, and the resonance of the curse itself."

He gestured for the students to take their places.

"Now, each of you will cast the skin Corruption Curse. Don't worry if you fail the first time- this is a learning process. However," he added, his eyes gleaming, "I do expect effort."

The rest of the class watched intently. Their eyes glanced between the three students and their unfortunate amphibian targets.

Mira went first, as Professor Vex instructed.

"Begin..."

With this, she stepped forward confidently and extended her hand over the bullfrog in front of her. There weren't any mystical effects around her aside from the faint Dark Energy gathering around her.

She then murmured the Oardic incantation under her breath.

As she spoke, her voice remained steady as she couldn't make a mistake on this.

After all, this cursed spell she wasn't using wasn't a Spell. It doesn't have a Spell Model imprinted on her Spell Lights at all.

What she was using was quite similar to Dark Rituals instead of Dark Spells. After all, the curse they were using was incredibly weak, even against new Arcane Arts Practitioners who could also use Arcane Energy.

This curse was only useful against non-practitioners.

'Huu-'

Anyway, a faint dark purple light began to form around her palm, growing brighter as it pulsed toward the frog before completely disappearing.

This effect lasted for only about three seconds or so, so it wasn't really eye-catching.

The bullfrog then let out a croak and squirmed as the curse took hold. Its green skin slowly darkened, turning a deep, blotchy purple. Mira stepped back, her expression seemed smug but she certainly had the right to act as such since she was able to succeed in the end.

"Well done, Mira," Professor Darion said, nodding approvingly. "Your control is admirable. The curse is stable and effective. Next, Aiden."

Aiden stepped forward. Although he was hesitating for a moment, his expression was now calm as he focused on the task.

Soon, he placed his hand over the frog and muttered the same incantation. His energy flared briefly but fizzled out before reaching the frog.

'Ugh... I bit my tongue...' Aiden thought as he looked at the Professor.

Professor Darion Vex didn't seem to care and just told him to continue. "Again, Aiden. Focus. Feel the curse resonate within you before releasing it."

Aiden nodded, visibly embarrassed by his failure just now.

However, none of his classmates could laugh at him since they were also unsure if they were capable of doing what Mira just did.

Anyway, this time, Aiden took a deep breath and allowed his Spirit to align with the curse's frequency. The purple light returned. This time, it felt steady on his palm. Then, with his control, it flowed toward the bullfrog.

Just like that, the frog's skin turned dark with a hint of purple, though with less intensity than Mira's.

"Better," Professor Darion said. "Your control is there, but your hesitation is holding you back. Trust in your abilities."

Finally, it was Armin's turn.

"You've watched Mira and Aiden. You know the process. Begin."

Armin took a deep breath as he looked at his target...

He extended his hand over the bullfrog, feeling the faint stir of his Spirit as he tapped into the dark energy within him.

The Oardic incantation formed on his lips, steady and clear.

Soon, purple light shimmered around his hand. It was faint at first but quickly grew stronger.

The class watched in silence as they waited for the target to turn dark...

The bullfrog let out a low croak as the curse began to take hold.

At first, everything seemed normal.

The bullfrog's green skin darkened slightly, as expected. But then, something went horribly wrong. Instead of turning a blotchy purple like Mira's or Aiden's frogs, the bullfrog's skin began to shift unnaturally.

Small bumps started to form across its surface, growing rapidly in size and number. Within seconds, the bumps multiplied uncontrollably, covering its entire body.

"Ah... That looks different."

"Did he fail?"

"What's happening?"

The class started feeling curious. They heard Armin's chant after all. So they knew that he did

the same thing as the other two...

However, the frog suddenly let out a series of distorted croaks. Then, its body convulsed as the curse spiraled out of control!

Chapter 926: Shadow Immortal

"What?!"

"This is different from what Mira and Aiden did!"

The class gasped in horror as the once-normal bullfrog transformed into something unrecognizable. It didn't just turn dark like it should be after receiving the curse.

Instead, its body was now a terrifying mass of pulsating, uneven growths of muscle or flesh. Indeed, it no longer resembled a frog but a distorted, quivering lump of flesh.

"This..." Armin froze, his hand still outstretched, but his face was already pale.

"What... what happened?" he muttered, his voice was barely audible. He didn't do anything else aside from following the instructions. There shouldn't be any problem at all!

"Return to your seats..." Professor Darion Vex said as he activated the classroom's formation art to seal the frog that acted differently.

Based on his observations, Armin followed everything, and there shouldn't be any mistake. At the very least, it wasn't something he was able to detect.

Anyway, if the problem wasn't the student, it means that there could also be a problem with the frog. After all, the frog had been influenced by dark alchemy's magic prior to this activity.

Soon, the rest of the class murmured among themselves as the students returned to their seats.

As soon as the Professor sealed the frog, everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

However, the Professor still felt something off as he waved a hand, and a faint glow of dark energy enveloped the terrifying creature. As he did this, the frog's writhing ceased, and it slumped lifelessly onto the table.

The room was silent as they weren't sure if Armin's curse was too strong or if something went completely wrong.

Darion frowned deeply, his eyes narrowed as he examined the aftermath of Armin's spell. 'That's not the Skin Disease Curse... This is something entirely different. However, he chanted the Skin Disease Curse.'

Inwardly, Darion thought of various possibilities. 'It felt similar to the Body Destruction Curse. An advanced curse... and one I certainly didn't teach. Did Armin learn it beforehand? No, it doesn't seem like it. This isn't the result of memorization-he must have gathered the dark energy differently. Instead of casting the curse on the skin, did he somehow target the essence of the frog itself.'

The thought both impressed and concerned him. 'Impressive, yes... but this is dangerous. Very dangerous if not properly controlled.'

For now, he wanted to ensure his students that everything was fine.

Looking at the students, a few of them seemed impressed, while others were eager for their own turn to try the curse in future lessons. They just believed that Armin made a mistake for

now.

'I should investigate for a bit.' The Professor thought.

"What did you do?" The Professor asked as he pointed at the frog.

Armin swallowed hard, his eyes darted nervously between the Professor and the remains of the frog.

"I don't know... Professor... Believe me."

"This..." Darion gestured to the distorted creature, "is no longer the Skin Disease Curse. What you cast was something far more advanced. Something we don't even begin to teach until much later-if at all."

Armin's mouth went dry. "I didn't mean to... I-I just followed the instructions. I swear!"

"I believe you," Darion said, surprising Armin and everyone in the classroom.

His tone wasn't accusatory but rather contemplative. "You didn't cast this intentionally. That much is clear. What you did was... instinctive. Somehow, you altered the curse's resonance. Instead of corrupting the surface-the skin-you targeted the frog's essence directly. That's why it became... this."

He gestured again at the distorted mass on the table.

This statement had, of course, surprised everyone in the classroom.

The room erupted in whispers.

"Is that even possible?" one student muttered.

"How did he do that?" another asked, their tone a mix of awe and fear.

"That's terrifying..." someone else added.

Mira watched Armin with a curious gaze while Aiden leaned closer to her and whispered, "What do you think that means?"

"It means," Mira said softly, "that Armin isn't just some ordinary student."

Professor Darion turned back to the class, silencing the murmurs with a single sharp glance.

"Let this be a lesson to all of you. Cursecraft is not to be taken lightly. Even the simplest of curses can go awry if not handled properly. And in the wrong hands... or with the wrong intentions... the results can be catastrophic."

He looked directly at Armin, his gaze intense but not unkind. "Armin, I will speak with you privately after class. For now, take your seat."

Armin nodded shakily and returned to his desk, his mind was filled with various thoughts.

As the class resumed, the atmosphere remained tense.

Professor Darion finished the lesson with a demonstration of the proper execution of the Skin Disease Curse, but most of the students' minds were still on what had just happened.

When the class finally ended, Mira approached Armin as he was gathering his things. "That was... unexpected.... You really know how to make an impression, don't you?"

Armin gave her a weak smile. "Yeah... not exactly the kind I wanted."

"Still," Mira continued, her eyes gleaming, "it was impressive. Scary, but impressive. I wonder what Professor Vex will say to you."

Armin sighed, slinging his bag over his shoulder. "I guess I'm about to find out."

As he headed to Professor Darion's desk, the rest of the class filed out, leaving him alone with

the Professor.

Armin then approached Professor Darion Vex. He wasn't sure what to expect. Was he in trouble? Or had he unintentionally proven himself worthy of some praise?

He couldn't help but sigh as the remains of the bullfrog still lay on the table.

Darion sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Armin, what you did today... it's not something a first-year should be capable of. Not with this level of instruction. I need to know -have you been practicing curses outside of class? Reading forbidden texts?"

Armin shook his head quickly. "No, Professor! I swear, I've only been doing what you've taught us. This... this just happened."

Then, before Darion could respond, the air in the room grew heavy...

'Ahh...' Darion was surprised as he suddenly felt a chill. It was as if the room was filled with otherworldly energy.

Then, shadows coiled along the walls, pooling into a single spot near the center of the room. The temperature seemed to drop, and a faint hum of Arcane Energy burst out.

From the churning darkness, an imposing figure appeared. He was clad in a dark, flowing coat

that seemed to suck in the surrounding light.

Needless to say, Shane, the Shadow Immortal, stepped into the room!

Darion immediately bowed deeply, his voice reverent.

"Shadow Immortal! What an honor. Your presence graces us."

Chapter 927: Another Test

Armin was stunned after realizing the person in front of them. He quickly followed suit, bowing as low as he could.

"I-It's an honor, Shadow Immortal!" He stammered. His voice was trembling as he didn't expect this at all.

Vale raised a hand, his tone calm and even. "Rise. Both of you. There's no need for formalities right now."

As they straightened, Vale took a step closer, his gaze now fixed on Armin, or be exact, the pocket watch underneath his clothes.

'There's really a reaction as I expected.'

On the other hand, the young student could feel the weight of that stare as though Vale was peering into his very soul.

"So," Vale said, his deep voice carrying a hint of curiosity, "this is the student responsible for the... unusual curse craft today."

Darion nodded, stepping to the side. "Yes, Immortal. Armin demonstrated what seem like a Skin Destruction Curse when he was supposed to cast a Skin Disease Curse. It was unintentional, but... remarkable."

Vale's lips curled into a faint smile. "Remarkable indeed."

Armin felt a mix of pride and nervousness under the Shadow Immortal's scrutiny. "I... I didn't mean to do it, sir. It just... happened."

"That," Vale said, "is precisely why I'm here."

Vale clasped his hands behind his back, he finally found the best opportunity to see more of the pocket watch's mystical abilities.

After all, in his hands, it was just a mysterious item that could use the power of time. After extracting its power of time, Vale confirmed that it was still a mystical item, but he could no longer extract it.

He didn't know what kind of power it was, but as he had expected, only the bloodline of that mysterious old man could truly unlock its potential.

Of course, Vale decided not to share too much about the pocketwatch as it might cause harm to the young student.

"Armin, what you did was no accident. You have a gift-an innate understanding of the dark energies that most practitioners spend years trying to grasp. Such talent is rare, even among the most promising students."

Armin blinked, his mind racing. "A gift? But... I don't understand what I did."

Vale chuckled softly... "And yet, you did it. Your instincts guided you to channel the curse in a way that targeted the frog's spirit, rather than its surface. That's not something that can be taught..."

Darion looked surprised but remained silent, waiting for Vale to elaborate.

"I've been watching the students of this academy closely," Vale continued. "When I noticed what happened here today, I knew I had to investigate a bit... And now that I have..." He paused, his eyes locking onto Armin's.

"I've made my decision. Armin, I plan to accept you as my disciple if you pass one of my tests... This will be done secretly, of course."

Armin's jaw dropped. "Your... disciple? Me?"

Vale nodded. "Yes. But this is only an opportunity, and it will not be an easy path. Even if you pass, you will still continue your regular studies, of course, but outside of that, you will undergo specialized training with me. You'll learn to harness your unique abilities to refine them. However, this must remain a secret for now. Even your classmates must not know."

Vale could've probably done this a lot earlier, but he wasn't too sure how the mysterious Temporal Timepiece would react once it was held by its true owner. This was why he decided to observe it first...

'If it's really related to the Void Arts Practitioners... Then...'

Armin, on the other hand, swallowed hard as his heart started pounding.

"Why me? I'm just... I'm just a first-year student."

Vale expected this much doubt, so he smiled and answered sincerely.

"You're more than that," Vale replied. "I see potential in you... If cultivated properly, I believe you could grow into something extraordinary. That's why I'm giving you a chance... The question is, are you willing to take this path?"

Armin hesitated for only a moment before nodding firmly. "Yes. I'll do whatever it takes."

Vale's faint smile returned. "Good. Then it's settled. I'll arrange for your test soon..."

Vale then turned to Darion, who had been watching the exchange with a mix of awe and intrigue. "Professor Vex, I trust you'll keep this matter to yourself."

"Of course, Immortal," Darion said, bowing again. "I will ensure that nothing of this leaves this room."

"Good," Vale said with a smile.

He looked back at Armin. "Remember, Armin, this is an opportunity, and many might be jealous if they learn it. So I have to emphasize that you must keep it a secret. For now, you must know that your abilities are a gift, but they can also be a curse if not handled properly. You'll have much to learn-and even more to unlearn. So it's better to be careful whenever you use Dark Arts..."

Armin nodded as he felt surreal at the moment. "I understand."

Vale then decided to leave since Armin still had other classes. He also planned to think more about the test that he'd give to him.

Shadows around Vale began to stir, signaling his departure. He then left Armin with one final piece of advice.

"Focus on your studies first, and I'll soon look for you."

With that, Vale dissolved into the shadows. His immense presence lingered in the room for a few moments before vanishing as well.

Hu~

Both the Professor and the young student heaved a sigh of relief for different reasons.

Darion looked at Armin. His expression had certainly become softer now.

"You've just been given an opportunity most practitioners can only dream of. Don't waste it." Armin nodded again. His mind was still processing everything that had just happened.

"I will do my best, Professor!"

As he left the classroom, he couldn't help but feel that his life had just taken a turn he never could have anticipated.

It seemed that the pocket watch that his ancestor or relative left for him was truly his lucky

charm!

'Right, I hope I can ask the Immortal to appraise this...'

Chapter 928: Meditation

Armin then continued with his daily class after the last incident in Professor Vex's class. However, the following weekend, Vale summoned Armin once more.

Needless to say, it was for the test that Vale had mentioned before.

The summons came through a seemingly ordinary scroll delivered to his dorm. It looked nothing special, but the weight of its presence made his fingers tremble as he opened it.

"Come to the Dark Chamber beneath the Arcane Arts Tower. Midnight. Come alone."

The message was short, leaving no room for hesitation. Anyway, the Arcane Arts Tower was a separate tower from the 16 Towers. This tower was located further south instead.

He heard that this tower was meant to train higher-year students, but he wasn't too sure about it.

At midnight, Armin made his way to the Arcane Arts Tower, where Vale awaited him at the entrance. The Shadow Immortal was cloaked in his usual enigmatic aura... What Armin really felt curious about was his dark robes, which waved as if alive.

Gulp-

Armin couldn't help but feel nervous.

Without a word, Vale led Armin to a spiral staircase hidden behind a concealed door in the tower.

The descent was long and silent...

As they went deeper, the air grew cooler. Thankfully, as Armin was feeling a bit hazy, they reached a massive iron door etched with runes.

With a wave of his hand, Vale deactivated the runes, and the door creaked open to reveal a cavernous chamber illuminated by a soft glow of various orbs.

Vale gestured for Armin to sit at the center of the chamber, where an intricate circular diagram had been inscribed into the stone floor.

It was unlike anything Armin had ever seen, with overlapping markings that seemed to be some sort of high-level Arcane Circles.

"From today onwards, you will be learning the Asura Meditation, a technique passed down from the very origin of the Dark Arts. It is dangerous and demanding, but for those who master it, it offers incredible benefits. You will be the first student of the Academy to try this." Armin's breath fastened as he heard that he was the first to learn this.

However, he soon realized that the meditation he had learned was connected to the Asura!

From their history class, the Asura were briefly introduced as the primordial beings who were said to have forged the foundation of the Dark Arts!

However, there was almost nothing else mentioned after this, so he didn't really appreciate the Asura at all.

"Whoa~"

To learn a technique from their era felt surreal. Armin couldn't help but feel excited! Vale smiled and continued... "This meditation will allow you to strengthen not just your Spirit, but your soul. Your connection to the darkness will deepen, and your potential will grow exponentially. However, the process can be taxing to your body since this was originally a method used to train an Asura... However, I have modified it a lot to make it safer for Arcanists... You have six hours to learn and perform its sequence. Fail, and this opportunity will be lost."

Armin nodded resolutely, determination blazing in his eyes. "I'm ready."

Vale didn't mention it, but this was the perfect time for someone to learn it. It wasn't suited for Arcanists who had already developed their current meditation method after all.

In fact, he couldn't practice this method in order to increase his affinity to darkness. He was already too developed for that to happen. Nonetheless, with Armin's talent and mysterious pocket watch, Vale was hoping that this would be more than enough.

For this process, Vale placed a small obsidian crystal in front of Armin.

It pulsed with a dark energy and Armin had no idea what it was.

"This crystal is a medium to assist you with the Asura Meditation..." Vale explained. "Focus on it, follow the patterns it will show you, and align your Spirit to the flow of the Arcane Circle. Let the darkness guide you." Vale said the last part with a hint of mystery about this method.

"I will do my best."

Armin closed his eyes as he steadied his breath.

As he began connecting to the crystal, he immediately felt a surge of resistance- the crystal's energy seemed to be pushing back against his attempts to sync with it.

Of course, he didn't give up...

He focused a bit more, and he bombarded it with his own energy.

Then, he realized that the technique required him to split his focus: part of his mind needed

to control his breathing, while another part had to decipher the Arcane Circle's shifting patterns. Meanwhile, his Spirit had to harmonize with the crystal's energy.

It was overwhelming.

Twice, he lost focus, and the crystal seemed to flare angrily, sending jolts of energy that left him gasping. But he gritted his teeth and pressed on, drawing upon every ounce of willpower he had.

After four tormenting hours, the resistance began to lessen. Armin's Spirit found its rhythm, flowing in harmony with the crystal and the Arcane Circle... The mysterious energy around the crystal no longer overwhelmed him. Instead, they felt like he could use its power like an extension of his own will.

By the sixth hour, Armin's mind, body, and spirit were in perfect alignment.

The crystal's energy had fused with his own, creating a serene yet powerful flow that coursed

through him.

When he opened his eyes, Vale was standing over him, a rare smile gracing his lips.

"You've done well, Armin. Better than I expected."

However, this wasn't completely over... He hadn't mastered this Asura Method just yet. He

just learned how to use it.

The following week, Armin dedicated himself to perfecting the Asura Meditation.

Each night, he practiced alone, revisiting the sequence Vale had taught him.

The effects were almost immediate. By the end of the week, Armin noticed a dramatic increase in his spiritual strength. His Spirit Strands had grown a lot, and his Phantasm State felt more stable and vibrant. But the most profound change was within his soul—an unshakable core of power that resonated with the darkness he now wielded.

"This is incredible!"

Chapter 929: Compress

929 Compress

Armin did his best to train and master the Asura Method. He even successfully obtained 8 Spell Lights and recorded 5 Spell Models!

This was something that would never be possible without the Asura Method.

At the end of the week, Vale summoned Armin back to the Dark Chamber for an evaluation. This time, Vale challenged Armin to maintain his Phantasm State while casting three simultaneous spells within his Magic Zone—a feat that had seemed impossible before.

"Understood!"

Armin closed his eyes as he entered his Phantasm State with ease. His Magic Zone expanded to nearly 15 meters—a noticeable improvement from before.

With a wave of his hand, he conjured three spells at the same: Shadow Bind, Shadow Needle, and a basic Repulsion Barrier.

'Easy...' Armin thought to himself. However, casting the Spells was completely different from releasing them simultaneously.

The strain was immense, but the Asura Meditation had thankfully fortified his Spirit. He held the spells for a full thirty seconds before releasing them...

Thud... Thud... Thud...

Vale nodded as he saw the release of the spells. Since Armin was the first one to practice the revised version of the Asura Method, he was certainly unsure what kind of improvement Armin would get.

It was a good thing that Armin's Spirit Strands, Spell Lights, and his mental fortitude had been truly developed.

"You've surpassed my expectations, Armin. This meditation has unlocked your potential but remember: power is only as valuable as the wisdom guiding it. Stay disciplined." Vale said briefly.

Well, this was his first time getting a disciple, so he didn't want to say less or say too much just in case he made a mistake.

Armin bowed deeply, gratitude and determination etched into his face. "Thank you, Master Vale. I won't let you down."

Armin actually asked Vale about the pocketwatch previously. However, he was only told that it wasn't the time yet. Because of this, Armin was training relentlessly as he wanted to reach the level where he would be allowed to know more about the heirloom from his ancestor.

08:20

Armin actually asked Vale about the pocketwatch previously. However, he was only told that it wasn't the time yet. Because of this, Armin was training relentlessly as he wanted to reach the level where he would be allowed to know more about the heirloom from his ancestor.

Nonetheless, with the Asura Meditation now part of his arsenal, Armin felt completely above his classmates during his classes.

He had a longer Phantasm State, larger Magic Zone, higher Spirit Strands, and more Spell Lights...

"I might be at the top of the class right now." Armin muttered to himself as he believed that it was only natural since he was being guided by an Immortal.

It would surely be a disgrace if he didn't improve at all.

After this evaluation, his Master Vale informed him that he would be contacted in a few weeks or so... Because of that, he just had to focus on his Asura Meditation and also his studies to deepen his foundation.

Just like what Vale said, in the days and weeks that followed Armin continued his meditation and attended classes regularly...

At first, he thought that it would be easy but soon, he realized how taxing it could be.

However, despite the weariness in his bones and mind, Armin's focus had become sharper than ever.

He felt that he was learning two when the Professors were teaching one. It was an incredible experience at times.

Professor Lenora Veylin of Elementary Spirit Law was truly helpful as she continued guiding them through the complexities of the Spirit Web—the unseen network that connected an Arcanist's Spirit to their physical and mental faculties.

Over the past month, Armin learned a technique called Spirit Web Anchoring, a method to stabilize and strengthen his spiritual connections. This was done within the Magic Zone using a combination of controlled breathing, visualization, and an incantation that resonated with their individual Spirit Strand frequencies.

This process could mainly help them control their Spells and completely know everything within their Magic Zone, but it could also allow them to obtain more Spirit Strands as a side effect.

"The stronger your Spirit Strands, the more Spell Lights you can house and the longer your Phantasm State will hold," Professor Lenora reminded them. "A Magic Zone that wavers will crumble under pressure. Strengthen it now before you regret it on the battlefield."

The class practiced Anchoring by sitting in meditation circles marked with intricate Arcane Circles that glowed faintly when the Spirit was balanced.

Armin struggled at first, often losing his focus, but by the end of the week, he could stabilize his Spirit Web probably. He could even do it for nearly eight minutes—progress that Professor Lenora noted with an approving nod.

Armin believed that he would get a decent grade for this class.

Then, under the stern but brilliant Professor Varren Kael, Armin continued studying the Fundamentals of the Magic Zone.

Armin learned that the Magic Zone was not merely a range within which spells could be cast—it was also a projection of their inner energy and intent.

For Dark Arts practitioners like him, the Phantasm State was the gateway to accessing their Magic Zone, and its range was directly proportional to their focus and spiritual power. However, this Magic Zone wasn't just his limit or range to cast Spells. It was like an extension of his will that he could reshape at his will!

Thankfully, his Spirit Web Anchoring was taught properly by Professor Lenora, so he could do this reshaping with only a bit of practice.

"Again... your Magic Zone is an extension of you," Professor Kael lectured one morning.

"If you were trained already with your Spirit Web, it would be a lot easier to detect movement, emotions, and energy within its boundaries. It can also repel, suppress, or enhance. But it will only obey you if you master your intent."

During the practical sessions, the students were tasked with creating barriers within their Magic Zones. This barrier wasn't made of through a Spell Model but just a manifestation of their Magic Zone...

It was an intriguing method and Armin was able to create such a barrier about a meter around him in just a couple of days!

This news surprised everyone in the classroom since none of them could even compress their Magic Zones yet!

Chapter 930: Trusted Ally

930 Trusted Ally

Vale was secretly observing their progress, his gaze sharp yet concealed. He needed to confirm that the adjustments they had made to learn new techniques of Dark Arts were superior to those of the previous batch of students.

After all, their academy was still in its infancy, and they were pioneering new methods of teaching Dark Energy. These methods aimed to help Practitioners cast Dark Arts without relying heavily on traditional Spell Models.

"They're improving faster than I expected," Vale muttered to himself, a hint of satisfaction in his voice. "The Philosopher's Elixir must be working better than I anticipated. The Chaos Alchemists are proving far more useful than I thought."

He recalled how Miya had been tirelessly working to transform everyone into Arcanists as quickly as possible. Of course, her efforts were also driven by the desire to make their church wealthy and powerful. But since everyone was benefiting from the arrangement, Vale didn't mind whether they became the richest organization in the land.

For now, Vale hadn't called for Armin. The boy needed time to solidify his foundation, and learning their new techniques would be the best way to achieve that.

This time, Armin was immersed in his favorite subject: the study of Magic Language. It encompassed ancient languages, runes, and glyphs—the very backbone of all spells. For Armin, it was both fascinating and maddening.

Under the guidance of Professor Dalton, they delved into the foundations of Inscription.

Professor Dalton introduced them to Shadow Script, a specialized subset of Magic Language used exclusively in Dark Arts spells. Unlike the broader scripts of Holy or Rune Arts, Shadow Script was limited in scope but required a strong Spirit to wield effectively.

"Shadow Script isn't static," Professor Dalton explained, drawing a spiraling rune on the blackboard. Though this wasn't his primary subject, teaching an introductory level of it was effortless for him.

"What makes Shadow Script unique is its connection to your emotions and energy," he continued. "If your intent wavers, the script will falter with you. This is unlike Rune Arts, which you can simply copy from textbooks."

Dalton had only been practicing Shadow Script for about two years when Vale had contacted him again. This method, he explained, was a legacy of a true Asura—the originator of Dark Arts. It was one of Vale's secret strategies to strengthen the academy's Dark Arts Practitioners.

Because of this, Dalton was still relatively new to the technique and practiced it nightly alongside other professors.

For now, the class focused on inscribing basic Shadow Scripts. They began with simple symbols like "Sharn" for concealment and "Drenn" for repulsion.

"I suppose he's receiving private lessons from Vale," Dalton thought as he observed Armin's rapid progress.

Armin found the Shadow Script both entertaining and meditative, despite its challenges. He absorbed every piece of knowledge he could, and by the end of the month, he successfully inscribed "Nyran," a script for reinforcing barriers, onto a parchment.

Unfortunately, this parchment could only be used by its creator, unlike Rune Arts Practitioners, who could share their runes with anyone. In essence, Shadow Scripts were akin to exclusive Talismans, though their principles differed.

Still, this was merely a small branch of Dark Arts, serving primarily as a support tool.

The next class was Darkness Path, Armin's least favorite subject. It was taught by a second-year professor specializing in a different field, adding to the class's mystique. Darkness Path was both feared and revered among students, largely due to its instructor: Professor Renald Corvus, a man with sunken eyes and an aura that reeked of violence.

Armin disliked Professor Corvus. Unlike the calm, composed demeanor of the other professors, Corvus exuded the aura of a killer. While Armin understood the reasoning behind it, he struggled to concentrate in the man's presence, as he was highly sensitive to such energy.

"I'll have to get used to this," Armin thought. "After all, I'm studying Dark Arts, not Holy Arts. This is part of the territory."

Over the weeks, Armin learned about Corruption, a dangerous energy unique to the Darkness Path. Practitioners could use it to empower their spells, but it was volatile. When controlled, Corruption could amplify a simple spell into something far more devastating.

Armin's hands trembled the first time he tried to channel Corruption into a simple Shadow Needle spell. After several attempts, he succeeded. The resulting Shadow Needle was infused with Corruption, turning a wooden target completely black before disintegrating.

08:21

"Corruption doesn't simply empower you—it consumes," Professor Corvus warned. "Harness it without discipline, and it will tear your soul apart."

The students were understandably wary of this energy, but since it strengthened their abilities, they had no choice but to learn how to use it.

Armin's hands trembled the first time he tried to channel Corruption into a simple Shadow Needle spell. After several attempts, he succeeded. The resulting Shadow Needle was infused with Corruption, turning a wooden target completely black before disintegrating.

"Corruption... this is terrifying," Armin thought. "I only succeeded once, and I already feel dizzy."

Still, Armin pushed himself to master the technique, determined not to disappoint his master, Vale.

Finally, there was Arcane History, taught by Professor Elias Trantor. He entertained the students with tales of past invasions, focusing on the rise of the Abyssal Demons that had once threatened their world.

Armin learned about the Abyssal Generals, powerful beings who led armies of demonic creatures. Each General had a unique affinity: fire, decay, shadow, poison, ice, blood, and storms. These stories captivated the class, leaving them both excited and awestruck by the power of the Shadow Immortal and his forces, who had protected their continent.

The tale of the Divine Vampire, who served the Shadow Immortal, was particularly memorable.

According to Professor Trantor, the Divine Vampire was not merely a servant but a legendary figure in her own right. She was once a mortal, but she had transcended his humanity through a pact with the Shadow Immortal, gaining immortality and unparalleled strength.

The tales weren't too accurate but it was said that her transformation had been fueled by a thirst for vengeance against the Abyssal Demons, who had destroyed her homeland.

Aside from that, the Divine Vampire's power was unmatched, even among the Shadow Immortal's most trusted allies. She could manipulate blood, using it to heal, harm, or even resurrect the fallen thralls.

"Divine Vampire... I wonder if I could ever meet her." Armin muttered to himself.

- Chapter 931: Common Mystical Artifacts (1) |

Chapter 931: Common Mystical Artifacts (1)

931 Common Mystical Artifacts (1)

After teaching them about the past events, Professor Elias Trantor tasked his students with researching the methods that the Arcanists used to defend against the Abyssal forces.

It doesn't matter whether it was a method used by different Arcane Arts Practitioners. Professor Trantor just wanted them to learn more about the past of the Arcanists and how different they were compared to today's Arcanists.

This was really an important subject, so they could all realize that the teachings within this Academy were on a whole different level. This should make them appreciate their lessons and learn passionately within the Academy.

Armin even witnessed a demonstration of an artifact called the Hexbound Gauntlet, a cursed glove that amplified curses but drained the user's vitality. Watching Professor Brin wield it filled Armin with both awe and caution.

Aside from this class, Armin and the others also learned the Rudimentary Usage of Mystical Artifact with Professor Mira Calveris. Apparently, aside from being a professor, she was first an Artifact Collector before she was recruited to become a professor.

On the fourth week of their class, she filled the classroom with bizarre relics from various eras.

Indeed, Professor Mira Calveris had an unmistakable flair for making her lessons captivating. Her class was always enjoyable. As a matter of fact, every student was quite excited whenever she appeared in the class.

Today, when the students entered the classroom, they found several mystical artifacts on display. Artifacts of varying shapes, sizes, and auras filled the table in front.

Professor Calveris stood at the front as she waited for her students to sit down... She had really prepared for today's class.

"Welcome, students! I know that your previous class is history, so you shouldn't be tired yet, right? Today, we'll be exploring seven remarkable mystical artifacts. Each has a story, a purpose, and, most importantly, practical uses—even for beginners like yourselves."

Seeing that her students were listening and were ready to take down notes, she continued. "Alright, let's dive in!"

Professor Calveris held up a small, translucent sphere that seemed completely like a normal object. It doesn't look mystical at all. However, as she used a bit of her Arcane Energy, it finally glowed faintly.

"This little beauty is called the Everlight Orb," she began. "It's a favorite among adventurers or Arcanists who were mainly tasked to explore things. Why? It produces constant light in even the darkest of places. This could also be used even by a normal person as long as they were carrying the recently popular item called Blue Spirit Pearls."

She tapped the orb, and it immediately activated, casting a soft or warm glow that brightened the whole room.

"You may think that this is a very basic mystical item and shouldn't be here but the best part about this item is that it doesn't need any form of energy to recharge once a certain amount of energy was provided. Normally, it would be about three Blue Spirit Pearls and after consuming that amount of energy, this orb will start to draw power from surrounding energy. However," she added with a sly smile, "if you're in a completely mana-devoid area, it'll dim over time."

Everyone knew about the Spirit Pearls after a few days of classes. It was a very popular item that Arcanists would need to develop their Spirit Strands during their early days.

However, the Blue Spirit Pearls were quite a bit new to the market. It had similar effects to the normal Spirit Pearl but the blue ones that were being sold to the public were more regulated or safe for anyone's use including a normal person.

Of course, it was another product of the mysterious alchemist who had also created the Philosopher's Elixir.

At this time, one student raised a hand. "Can it be used to ward off dark creatures?" She asked curiously. After all, they learned that almost everything that involved Arcane Energy would always have some sort of effect on the surroundings.

"Excellent question! While it won't harm them directly, many lesser evil spirits despise its purity and will avoid it entirely. So, yes, it's a great tool for protection! However, lesser evil spirits that get scared of these wouldn't harm first-rate or second-rate Arcanists."

Seeing that everyone understood, the Professor continued with her lesson.

Next, she picked up a small silver pendant shaped like a crescent moon.

The students nodded after seeing this item.

They had seen its illustration in their books and knew about this item. They also knew that it was created by Denise, the mysterious and powerful Dark Alchemist of the Shadow Pillars, the mysterious organization or Secret Order protecting the Shadow Immortal's Domain.

Nonetheless, Professor Calveris still continued her lesson.

"The Whispering Pendant," She introduced.

"This artifact is for secret communication. It allows two people wearing matching pendants to speak telepathically, as long as both of them are within the Immortal's

Domain... If outside, they only have a limited 100 meters so it wouldn't be that useful, unless the situation allows you."

She then passed the pendant around for the students to examine. "Be careful with these, though. The connection is unbreakable once forged. So you have to choose your recipient wisely... If you want to communicate with others using the pendant, you have to get a different one. In short, if you want to connect telepathically, you may have to bring more of these pendants..."

Armin turned it over in his hand... Because of the professor's reminder, he imagined its potential in covert missions or staying in touch with important allies during combat. It was quite an interesting item but it's a bit pricey for an orphan like him.

While the pendant was still being passed around to let the students know how it felt and to let them use their abilities to inspect it, Professor Calveris moved to a table and picked up a delicate cloth with unusual threads...

Everyone turned their attention to the cloth as they realized that it wasn't something in their introductory book regarding basic mystical artifacts.

They couldn't help but feel curious about it.

Chapter 932: Common Mystical Artifacts (2)

932 Common Mystical Artifacts (2)

"This is the Spirit Veil Charm..." Professor Calveris said as she showed the item to everyone.

"It's a protective item that can temporarily hide you from malevolent spirits. When draped over someone, it creates an aura that masks their presence. This is a popular item created by the Shadow Consortium when there's a huge problem with the rise of evil spirits. After all, there weren't enough exorcists or practitioners to deal with them."

The Shadow Consortium was a huge merchant organization that dealt with various mystical artifacts, and they became really popular after they released a limited edition Divine Talisman. There were only ten of them being sold in an auction every year. Because of such products, their high-grade Elemental and Curse Talismans also earned a high reputation and became popular products in the market.

Furthermore, Cane, the leader of the Shadow Consortium, was actually quite popular as he appeared in many newspapers. After all, aside from being rich, he was also a benevolent man who would donate a lot of money to various charity organizations.

"Anyway, you probably hadn't seen this item a lot since the problem with the malevolent spirits had lessened a lot after many Arcane Arts Practitioners had awakened... However, there are still a lot of things you can learn from this mystical item."

To demonstrate, she draped it over a small enchanted doll she had brought. The doll's faint magical aura vanished, leaving it undetectable to anyone attuned to spiritual energy. However, after many of them entered their Phantasm State and focused on that area where the veil was placed, they certainly felt a slight fluctuation of energy coming from there.

However, it meant that the veil was indeed effective as long as they didn't enter their Phantasm State and focus on that area.

After giving them some time to inspect, the Professor continued.

"It's not foolproof as you can see..." she said. "Stronger entities might still sense you if you're too close. But for quick escapes? It can be a lifesaver."

After this, the Professor turned to the next item.

The next artifact was a ring made of dark stone with some tiny red veins running through it.

"The Emberstone Ring..." She said as she slid it onto her finger.

"This is quite a simple but effective artifact. It stores a small amount of fire energy that can be released on command. Although we're using Dark Arts, flames and other elements weren't something that you should be unfamiliar with. Sometimes, we have to use talismans or other Artifacts to confuse our opponents about our real Arcane Path..." As she said this, many of the students were immediately stunned.

After all, Holy Arts, Elemental Arts, Rune Arts, and some others would consider using other Arcane Paths as disrespectful to their chosen Path.

Anyway, the professor pointed her finger at a nearby candle and activated the ring. A small burst of flame ignited the wick instantly.

"This is quite popular among those who have awakened and can use a bit of Arcane Energy or are still just learning their Path... It's great for survival situations—cooking, warmth, even self-defense. But," she added with a chuckle, "don't overuse it. The stone needs time to recharge its energy."

After taking notes on the qualities of the said ring, the professor moved on and continued with her lecture.

She soon held up a bronze bracelet with some markings on it.

"This is a Hexbane Bracelet," she said with a dramatic flourish. "This is a bit more expensive than the Emberstone Ring but it's a must-have for anyone dealing with curses or malicious enchantments."

She then explained its function. This item could be considered a Talisman and it could absorb and neutralize weak curses aimed at the wearer.

"It won't stop the really nasty ones," she admitted, "but it's fantastic for beginners. Plus, it tingles when it activates—like a built-in warning system!"

Armin and everyone else imagined its usefulness in their Cursecraft class... They couldn't help but feel interested in this item.

Everyone couldn't help but appreciate the Professor as they confirmed that the items she was showing to them were indeed helpful for beginners like them.

The next one was a plain-looking band of copper.

"This is a Mirage Band. Don't let its simplicity fool you. It creates illusions... Although it can only create simple illusions, it could fool not just normal people but also Arcanists if they were caught in surprise..."

She then wore it on and conjured an illusion of a small, flickering flame hovering above her palm.

With how she perfectly controlled the flame around her body, she looked like a true Elementalist! Perhaps, if they didn't know that she was a Dark Arts Practitioner and was using a mystical artifact, they would really believe her if she said that she was an Elementalist instead!

This mystical artifact was a lot more interesting than they thought.

"It's perfect for distractions or misleading enemies. Just don't rely on it too much; the illusions are easily dispelled by sharp magical senses."

The professor then called for a volunteer to try and test how to use it.

Aiden, one of Armin's classmates, couldn't resist trying it...

After a few moments, he created an illusion of a grinning cat that had the class laughing... It was indeed quite an interesting sight as they also saw Aiden looking really tired. It seemed the item also uses a lot of Spirit Energy.

Finally, Professor Calveris showed them the last Mystical Artifact.

She unveiled a multifaceted crystal and it seemed to be a luxurious gem to be used by nobles for their jewelry... However, since they knew that it wasn't, they simply waited for the professor to introduce it to them.

"This is the Mana Harmonizer Crystal..." she said.

"This one is my personal favorite. It stabilizes your mana flow, making spellcasting smoother and less taxing."

As soon as they heard this explanation, there was no need to justify why it was her favorite! If what she said was true, it wouldn't be surprising if this was the favorite item of all Arcanists!

Chapter 933: Common Mystical Artifacts (3)

933 Common Mystical Artifacts (3)

The Mana Harmonizer Crystal had truly caught everyone's attention with such an introduction from the Professor.

Then, she explained how holding the crystal during meditation or casting helped align one's internal energy with the ambient Arcane Energy around them.

"For those of you who feel fatigued after casting spells, this will be your best friend. However, this is only effective for those with 30 or fewer Spirit Strands. The higher Spirit Strands you have, the weaker effect it would have.

Mira leaned forward as she was fascinated with this item. It was probably another new artifact since the current era was just like that. There were a lot of new things appearing in their current generations. Whether it was Philosopher's Elixir, androids, new Spells, and even rediscovering of the lost Arcane Arts, this current era was definitely a great age of Arcanists...

"Professor, can it amplify spells too?" Mira asked.

Calveris nodded slightly at this question. "To an extent, yes. But it's not a shortcut for poor technique. You still have to use it wisely."

Once again, the items were passed around, so they could all inspect for a bit and familiarize themselves with Mystical Artifact.

Of course, the class would last for four hours, so their lesson hadn't ended just yet.

Not even an hour was used when she introduced all the items.

After a few minutes, Professor Calveris clapped her hands to get everyone's attention.

"Alright, class, it's time for a little hands-on activity!" she announced with a playful grin.

"We've covered quite a few mystical artifacts today, and now it's time to see how well you can put them to use."

The students perked up, their eyes lighting with excitement.

Armin, sitting near the front, adjusted his notebook and pen, ready to tackle whatever challenge the professor had in store.

The other top students were also paying attention as they liked such activities.

"Here's the deal," Professor Calveris continued, holding up a small wooden box. "I've prepared a set of mystical artifacts for each group. Your task is to work together to solve a series of tests using these artifacts. The first group to complete all the tests wins a special prize—a rare talisman from my personal collection!"

The class erupted into murmurs of excitement. And soon, the Professor decided to make a team. Well, she seemed quite lazy and just told them to group with those near their seats.

In the end, Armin for a team with the people beside and behind him.

He then glanced at his teammates—Celeste, Mira, and Aide...

In his mind, they were definitely quite an incredible team.

"Let's show them what we've got," he said quietly.

After everyone had been divided into small groups, she handed out the artifacts. Each group received a Spirit Veil Charm, an Emberstone Ring, a Hexbane Bracelet, a Mirage Band, and a Mana Harmonizer Crystal.

Before the start of the activity, she first reminded them and gave them a clue about what they should do.s

"Remember..." Professor Calveris said, "These artifacts are tools, not shortcuts. You'll need to think creatively and work together to solve the puzzles."

After this, she explained the first activity...

The first puzzle involved the Spirit Veil Charm that she had just shown to them...

Each group was tasked with sneaking past a "malevolent spirit"—actually a magical sensor set up by the professor—without being detected.

The students were, of course, confused for a bit about this but the Professor slowly explained it to them again. They just have to basically use the veil and walk through the sensor she had arranged. Furthermore, the group has to do this at the same time.

Anyway, they only had a minute to prepare, so the Professor just pointed at the group in front to start with it.

It was Armin's group as they were seated at the very front.

Realizing that no one wanted to take the leader, Armin decided to just take charge of the group... The others didn't mind it at all since he was performing really well in other classes.

"We'll probably need to move slowly and ensure not to emit any form of energy..." he said as he picked up the Spirit Veil Charm and draped it over the group.

The thread on it was like silk and it even smelled really good...

After taking a deep breath, Armin decided to continue giving his suggestions. "Celeste, you're the lightest, so you go first. Mira, you follow, and Aiden, you bring up the rear. Let's all keep the charm steady."

No voiced a disagreement as they felt that this was very simple and easy.

Soon, under the watching gaze of the professor and the other students, Armin's group moved cautiously, as they approached the sensor.

However, to their dismay, the sensor let out a loud beep, signaling their detection. The group froze after hearing it, their faces showed confusion and frustration.

"What happened?" Aiden whispered. "Did the charm break?"

Armin frowned, examining the Spirit Veil Charm. It looked perfectly fine, but the sensor had clearly detected them. "I don't think so... Maybe we moved too fast?"

However, none of them could answer it. The professor also just smiled and called for the next group to try, and sure enough, they too failed to pass the sensor.

One by one, each group attempted the test, only to be thwarted by the sensor's detection.

The students began to murmur among themselves, convinced that the Spirit Veil Charm wasn't working correctly for some reason.

"Maybe the charm is defective," one student suggested.

"Or maybe the sensor is broken," another added.

Professor Calveris watched the chaos with a knowing smile.

Once again, she reminded. "Remember, class," she said, her voice calm and reassuring. "The Spirit Veil Charm is a tool, not a guarantee. You'll need to think creatively and work together to solve the puzzle."

Armin's group then huddled together as they tried to figure out what they were missing. After all, they knew that their professor was giving them a clue and they just have to figure it out!

Chapter 934: Curiosity

934 Curiosity

"Maybe we need to move even slower," Celeste said. "Or maybe we're not using the charm correctly."

Armin's group continued discussing the matter quietly as the other groups also began figuring out the test. Needless to say, everyone who had tried so far had failed. Those who failed decided to discuss their approach for a while, while others simply tried again, hoping for different results.

However, even after about 10 minutes, no one had managed to pass.

Mira, who had been quiet up until now, suddenly whispered, "What if the charm has a limit? Like, maybe it can only cover a certain number of people at a time?"

Armin's eyes widened as the realization hit him. "That's it! The Spirit Veil Charm might only be able to cover two people at a time... I think I read about it somewhere. That would explain why we were detected."

However, the Professor explained that they all had to pass the sensor at the same time, so they couldn't just split the group and let some walk through first before passing the Spirit Veil Charm to the others.

Nonetheless, the group quickly revised their strategy.

Mira and Aiden would go first, using the Spirit Veil Charm to mask their presence. Armin and Celeste would follow, using the stealth techniques they had learned in their other classes to avoid detection. Armin and Celeste were the most confident in their stealth

skills, as Mira and Aiden preferred using Curse Techniques and hadn't practiced stealth as much.

"Alright, let's try this again," Armin said as they finalized their preparations.

As they made their way to the testing area, not many students were watching them, as most assumed they would simply fail. Everyone else was busy devising their own plans.

Mira and Aiden moved slowly and cautiously, the Spirit Veil Charm draped over them. Armin and Celeste followed, using their stealth skills to avoid detection. The sensor remained silent, but they had to walk about four meters to completely pass the test.

Thankfully, they succeeded!

The sensor stayed silent, and the group completed the test without a hitch.

"Whoa! Someone finally did it!"

The class erupted into applause as Armin's group returned to their seats, their faces beaming with pride. The professor smiled, clearly pleased with their success.

The Professor then allowed the other groups 15 more minutes to figure it out. As expected, four more teams managed to solve the puzzle. It seemed natural for Class 1 students to learn quickly.

Since time was running out, the Professor decided to end the test.

"Well done... I know the others would figure it out eventually, but we don't have much time left for the other tests if we wait too long," she said.

She then looked at the groups who had passed and smiled. "You've all demonstrated the importance of understanding the limitations of your tools. The Spirit Veil Charm can only cover two, sometimes even just one person at a time, and it's up to you to adapt your strategy accordingly."

The lesson was clear: even reliable tools have their limits, and it's up to the user to understand and work within those limits. With the trick revealed, she allowed the others to try again. Thankfully, they had also learned the most basic stealth techniques for Dark Arts Practitioners.

Soon, Professor Calveris clapped her hands again. "Excellent work, everyone! Now, let's move on to the next test."

Calveris then explained the next test, though she felt a bit nervous as she realized her class was being observed by a few Professors, including the half-dragon. In fact, she hadn't known about this until her friend, Lenora Veylin, warned her.

'Ugh... You just made me self-conscious,' Professor Mira Calveris thought.

Anyway, the second test required the use of the Emberstone Ring. The group had to light a series of candles arranged in a specific pattern using only the ring, without relying on other techniques or spells they'd learned.

In this test, however, only one member of the group needed to pass to make it quick.

Armin handed the ring to Celeste, who had a natural talent for precision.

"If you can, focus on the center candle first. Then work your way outwards," Armin suggested.

Apparently, the center candle required the most focus, while the outer ones were less demanding. This way, she would be less likely to fail.

Celeste nodded and put on the ring. With a flick of her wrist, she released a small burst of flame, lighting the candles one by one. The pattern glowed brightly, and the group passed on their first try.

After 15 minutes, the test moved on.

The third test involved the Hexbane Bracelet. The group was faced with a series of glowing talismans that seemed to shift and change whenever they approached. Armin and Mira, who had a keen eye for detail, noticed that the talismans were actually curses designed to confuse and disorient them.

However, many of them were fake curses and would explode with glitter-like dust if the bracelet's power was used on them.

"We need to neutralize the real curses," Mira said as she slipped the Hexbane Bracelet onto her wrist. "Let's see if this works."

As she approached the talismans, the bracelet reacted, and with her concentration, she was able to identify which talismans contained true curses.

Armin and the others also helped, using their keen senses to locate the cursed talismans. It wasn't difficult but it required patience and attention to detail.

Meanwhile, the tests continued while the other Professors watched from a different room.

However, unlike what Calveris had expected, they were actually observing Armin, Shane's disciple, the entire time. Apparently, the news about his existence had already spread throughout a huge group behind the Academy. This includes Magnus himself.

However, Magnus couldn't come and had to send other people to take a look.

"Hey... He doesn't look special... What do you think?" Chad muttered as he glanced at Denise, who was staring intently at the young student.

Chapter 935: Vale's Mission

935 Vale's Mission

Denise and Chad had already seen Armin before. At first, he didn't seem special aside from the fact that the mysterious pocket watch was in his possession.

However, when he started to train under Vale's guidance and learn the Asura's method, there were indeed some incredible improvements or changes that had happened to him.

"Hmm... He was selected for a reason... I'm just curious whether he's really going to be useful once the Void Arts Practitioners arrive." Denise commented.

She knew how Vale was working hard to unite this world to some degree. He was even trying to form a relationship with the large Orthodox Churches even if some of them were a bit hostile to him.

After all, he didn't want to have backstabbers once those practitioners started coming here to retrieve their divine items.

The fourth test required the use of the Mirage Band that the professor had previously shown. This activity, however, must be done outside. To be exact, within the training field.

The groups had to navigate through a maze filled with illusions.

This time, they decided to take the test last to see how they would go through the test and unfortunately, they didn't learn anything because of the nature of the test.

Anyway, Aiden, who had a knack for thinking outside the box, took the lead this time.

"Alright, let's create an illusion to guide us through," Aiden said, slipping the band onto his wrist. "How about... a trail of shadow scripts?"

With a wave of his hand, Aiden conjured some shadows leading through the maze. The group followed the trail as they dodged the illusions of giant spiders and roaring lions.

Finally, the group reached the last test, which required the use of the Mana Harmonizer Crystal. The test involved casting a series of spells in quick succession without losing focus or energy.

This time, they had decided to go first since no one was volunteering.

Armin took the crystal and inspected it for a bit.

"Alright, let's do this," he said. "Celeste, you cast the first spell. Mira, you follow. Aiden, you're up last."

The group worked together impeccably. Everything went smoothly because of their high Spirit Strands together crystal's stabilizing effect. The final test was completed just like that and the other groups who saw it erupted into cheers.

Professor Calveris clapped her hands again, a proud smile on her face.
"Congratulations, You've completed all the tests!"

Armin, Celeste, Mira, and Aiden exchanged high-fives...

The professor handed them the special prize—a small, intricately carved talisman shaped like a phoenix.

"This talisman is called the Dark Phoenix's Embrace," she explained.

"It grants the wearer a burst of Dark Energy in times of need. Consider it a reward for your hard work and teamwork."

Meanwhile, Vale was inside his chamber. He was behind his oak desk reading some reports.

Indeed, the Shadow Immortal, the owner of the Arcane Academy and one of the most powerful practitioners in existence, was currently busy reading through sealed documents from the Arcane Bureau.

It was his daily routine to go through the reports of the Arcane Bureau's secret agents all over the continent.

Anyway, each parchment bore the Bureau's sigil, marking it as highly classified.

"Ohh.... It's about time..." He muttered.

These reports contained updates about the Seven Forbidden Lands—places so treacherous that even veteran Arcanists hesitated to explore them.

As Vale read deeper into the reports, he couldn't help but smile. Indeed, the agents were working hard to ensure that these lands would be completely explored. Shane wanted to ensure that they would no longer become forbidden lands in a few years or so.

Anyway, the seven forbidden lands include the Overseer's island.

According to the reports, it seemed to be desolate land locked in eternal winter. It had icy winds capable of freezing even the first-class Arcanists. The air itself was filled an energy that sapped vitality and disrupted spellcasting.

Vale then looked at the bottom of the report to see some additional notes from the agents.

'Threats: Icebound Wraiths and Frost Guardians patrol the ancient ruins scattered across the land.'

'Key Intelligence: Rumors suggest that these ruins house forgotten tomes of Ice Magic. However, no one has survived long enough to confirm their existence.'

'Note: Unable to explore further until Ice Mystic Artifacts were replaced with a higher level.'

Vale nodded as he decided to ask Constance if she could help on this matter.

He then turned his attention to the report of the other forbidden land.

[The Holy City of the Forsaken]

[Description: Once the pinnacle of holy magic, this city now lies in ruin, overrun by malevolent spirits and cursed relics. The event that corrupted it remains a mystery.

...

Threats: Holy Revenants, twisted beings that retain fragments of their former purity, and spectral knights armed with cursed weapons.

Key Intelligence: The legendary Heart of Purity is rumored to remain untouched, capable of neutralizing even the most potent curses.

'Note: Unable to fully explore the land unless assisted by Practitioners who can handle mind corruption or those members of the Order of the Evanescent Vessels]

Vale found this interesting but he simply nodded and continued reading the other reports.

[The Ebon Lake]

[Description: A black, toxic lake that emits a maddening aura. Hallucinations are common, and the waters are said to corrupt all who come into contact with them.

...

...

...

Threats: Shadow Leviathans, massive aquatic creatures capable of manipulating shadows to ensnare their prey.

Key Intelligence: Strange lights have been observed beneath the surface, hinting at activity within the lake's depths.

Note: Unable to explore further unless assisted with those Master Water Elementalists or Storm Knights]

Vale couldn't help but frown at this since it appeared that the forbidden lands had truly earned their reputation.

Nonetheless, as he continued reading the reports, he finally found a report that alarmed him.

[The Psychic Holy Land]

[Description: Once the sacred ground of the Psychic Arts practitioners, this land is now a corrupted haven for malevolent creatures. The Ancient Families of the Psychic Arts have claimed a small part of it as their stronghold.

...

...

Threats: Mindflayers and psychic anomalies that distort reality itself.

Key Intelligence: The Bureau reported plans for a ritual to summon an Ancient Devil. The ritual involves a Sanguine Crystal, the Essence of a Thousand Minds, and the psychic resonance of the Sanctuary of the Mind, located at the land's heart.

Notes: 25 Agents had already disappeared after taking this mission.]

Chapter 936: Explorations

936 Explorations

'The Holy Land of the Psychic Arts Practitioners, huh...' Vale muttered. The practitioners of this were truly mysterious. His knowledge about them was mostly from the memory fragments he absorbed, books, and the Psychic Arts that Constance learned.

Of course, he also knew a bit of their past but he wasn't sure how significant it was right now after learning that they had made a lot of changes over the past decades.

Anyway, Vale continued to read the reports about the three other Forbidden Lands. He opened the next report and read it. Similar to the other three reports, the agents gave quite a long description to the current situation of the forbidden land and he just skimmed through it.

[The Abyssal Rift of Zenthra]

[Description: A colossal chasm filled with chaotic energy. The terrain is unstable, with violent rifts opening at random, swallowing everything in their path. It's possibly a phenomenon that resulted from the Abyss Realm's before trials when entering this realm.

...

...

Threats: Abyssal Spirits were detected and the danger of falling into the void had to be kept in mind.

Key Intelligence: Recent activity suggests the rift is expanding, potentially destabilizing nearby regions.

Notes: More than 10 Agents had already died exploring this land. No exploration is scheduled for the time being.]

'This rift...' Vale frowned as he felt troubled about this matter. After all, he doesn't have the ability to close these rifts. Furthermore, even if he could, they might just return unless he was able to fix the core problem.

Anyway, he turned to the next report.

[The Ashen Plains of Myrrh]

[Description: A barren wasteland where flames burn eternally. The area is the aftermath of a battle between an ancient Pyromancer and Great Fire Elementals.

Threats: Sentient flames and Ember Wraiths roam the plains, attacking all intruders.

Key Intelligence: The Fire Core, a relic said to grant unparalleled control over fire, is believed to be hidden here.

Notes: Only Fire Elementalists and specific Arcanists could explore the land due to its condition. There were three known treasures that could possibly be Sovereign Ranks or even Arcanas in this location.]

"Possible Arcanas... I hope that is true... I might consider exploring this place next..." Vale muttered to himself as he realized that he had several Spells he could use to ensure that he'd be comfortable even within such a harsh environment.

Then, Vale continued as he read the final report.

[The Obsidian Caverns]

[Description: An extensive underground network of caverns beneath the Ebon Peaks, the Obsidian Caverns are filled with black crystal formations and volcanic activity. The air is heavy with sulfur, and the walls are with veins of glowing obsidian.

Threats: Crystal Golems. They are sentient constructs formed from the caverns' unique obsidian crystals, immune to most elemental magic. Lava Wyrms. They're enormous serpentine creatures that dwell in the magma rivers and are capable of spewing molten rock.

Key Intelligence: The caverns are home to the Obsidian Core, an artifact of immense destructive power capable of harnessing volcanic energy. The energy within the caverns is so volatile that even advanced protective wards can fail unexpectedly, making prolonged exploration extremely hazardous.

Notes: Recent reports suggest signs of organized activity, possibly from rogue Arcanists or outlaw factions attempting to mine the caverns' resources for forbidden rituals or war machines.]

'This Cavern... I should take a look sometime.' Vale felt that this cavern contained a lot of treasure... Since it was a forbidden land, it means that numerous Arcanists had already died in this place, which forced the Arcane Bureau to forbid people from entering this place.

It would also be a good idea to at least make this place less harsh for other people to explore.

On the next morning, Vale made his decision. Having prepared the Academy for his absence, he entrusted the daily operations to the capable hands of Headmaster Constance and the professors. His Avatar, a lesser version of his essence, remained within the Academy grounds to ensure continuity and to intervene should anything demand his immediate attention.

Vale planned to leave for a bit.

His destination was obviously one of the Seven Forbidden Lands scattered across the continent. These regions were

It was the Holy Land of the Psychic Arts Practitioners.

Anyway, Vale was concerned that 25 Agents had already died in this place. He wasn't happy about this at all.

Anyway, before going there, he continued his research.

He learned everything he could about the Holy Land of the Psychic Arts Practitioners...

It was previously the greatest shelter of those Mind Art users... Over centuries, it had become shrouded in darkness, infested with malevolent creatures, and killed many practitioners.

According to intelligence from the Arcane Bureau, a small portion of that land was being used as a hidden sanctuary for the Ancient Families of the said Arcane Path...

Anyway, after a few days of follow-up investigations, the Bureau had recently discovered traces of their activity, including the possible existence of an artifact known as the Mind's Pinnacle, a relic said to amplify psychic abilities to unprecedented levels. Such an artifact could not be left in the hands of those who might misuse it.

'Let's see if you're really an Evil Path...' Vale muttered.

Vale stood in his private chamber as he made up his mind...

"The Academy will be fine," he murmured to himself. Then, with a thought, his dark robes shifted into a travel-ready form, with subtle enchantments for protection and agility.

Moments later, he summoned a shadowy portal using his unparalleled mastery of Dark Arts. The swirling black vortex was silent yet ominous, leading to the edge of the Psychic Holy Land.

Indeed, he had already mastered the technique from the Broken Arcana.

The air around him became cold as he stepped through.

Whom~

Vale then emerged thousands of kilometers away from his domain without any issues. Although he could also travel using his foot technique, it would take a lot longer to reach there. At this time, in front of him was a vast forest, with unnatural shapes of trees as if molded by a malevolent force.

There were also faint cries of spirits echoing in the distance...

With that, Vale's Divine Sense spread throughout the surroundings...

Chapter 937: The Psychic Arts Practitioners

937 The Psychic Arts Practitioners

After observing the surroundings, Vale confirmed that the land was indeed treacherous as described in the report he had read...

Although he didn't believe that anyone could hurt him in his current realm of strength, Vale moved cautiously while spreading his Divine Sense and other inspection skills throughout the surroundings.

'Interesting...' Vale muttered as he realized that there were indeed a lot of strange entities within this place.

It was as if this was the place where all Dark Practitioners would dump their summoned evil spirits from various dimensions.

The oppressive aura of the land had also started oppressing his spirit, to be exact, his mind...

However, he was unfazed by it all as he was strong enough to ignore it.

His current strength allowed him to fortify his mind against such psychic interference.

Not long into his exploration, he encountered the first obstacle that the agents of the Arcane Bureau must've faced.

He saw a pack of Ethereal Wraiths, malevolent entities that thrived on psychic energy.

They emerged from the ground as if they'd been waiting for him. They had translucent forms and seemed to be excited to devour him...

Of course, Vale could easily deflect these creatures if he just brings out his Dark Grimoire. Just its presence alone could deter any weaker dark entities. However, that wouldn't kill these Spirits.

Since some of the agents may have fallen because of these entities, he had to at least show them that they shouldn't be killing humans.

Vale did not hesitate. With a swift gesture, he summoned a sphere of darkness that expanded outward, consuming the wraiths in silence.

It happened too quickly...

Their forms flickered and vanished as they were unable to withstand the concentrated Divinity.

It happened too quickly...

Vale did not hesitate. With a swift gesture, he summoned a sphere of darkness that expanded outward, consuming the wraiths in silence.

Their forms flickered and vanished as they were unable to withstand the concentrated Divinity.

This was just a small obstacle and so, Vale continued on his investigation of the place.

As he ventured deeper, Vale soon started to find some signs of habitation—a village hidden within the Holy Land's forests.

The dwellings were ancient, constructed from stone, and reinforced with Arcane Energy that seemed to be related to Psychic Arts.

Vale also started feeling some form of energy that was trying to corrupt his mind. There were faint whispers, calls, or voices messing in his mind that seemed to emanate from the very ground.

"No wonder many agents died here... This place is a lot more sinister than I thought." Vale muttered as he continued to observe the surroundings.

He could tell that unless one had reached a level of Master Arcanists, any Arcanists that would enter this place would truly be in danger.

Vale thought for a moment before he concealed his presence. The skill he used wasn't too special as it was simply his mastery of shadows allowing him to observe undetected.

Soon, he observed the villagers, clad in robes bearing some insignias of the Ancient Families who had built the foundation of the Psychic Arts.

Vale didn't disturb these people as he watched them move around. He could probably extract their memories to obtain more information but after reaching the Immortal Realm, he had to think twice when taking the lives of mortals or karma might affect his current status and the Will of the Realm might target him.

In any case, as Vale listened, he confirmed that their conversations hinted at rituals and preparations that were about to happen somewhere.

It basically coincides with the reports he read about their plans to summon an Ancient Devil.

One name caught his attention: the Mind's Pinnacle.

It wasn't a simple artifact with the way they described it. It seemed to be an Arcana that they needed to summon the Ancient Devil. It seemed not to be included in the report he read.

Anyway, what made Vale confused, however, was their reason to summon the Ancient Devil.

No one was threatening them in their Holy Land as far as he could tell.

'Is it revenge?' Vale mused as he thought that the higher-ups of this community probably had some hatred piling up against an organization or even a country. Perhaps, they wanted to destroy those who had brought their Holy Land to such a state...

Well, he wasn't sure.

What he knew, however, was the strength of an Ancient Devil should be reaching the level of Immortals. Based on the books he read, the powers they had could flatten mountains. It could only be done if they were some sort of Immortal.

Vale then recalled the report from the Bureau.

'The ritual involves a Sanguine Crystal, the Essence of a Thousand Minds, and the psychic resonance of the Sanctuary of the Mind, located at the land's heart.'

"If the Ancient Families have indeed kept the Arcana and those things hidden here, they might really summon a powerful Devil." Vale thought but he also believed that the restriction that the Timeless King had placed should stop it.

After all, ever since the restriction happened, they could only access lower-realm summons and not the higher ones like the realms of Giants, Vampires, or even the Abyss.

Vale wasn't sure if they would be successful or not, but if they succeeded, it would be a huge catastrophe.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, Vale arrived at the next village. With his Divine Sense, he was able to tell that the villages were surrounding another settlement that seemed to be the main area for the huge ritual.

For now, Vale thought of going around the villages to gather information.

He had also decided to wear clothes similar to theirs after stealing some of them.

Just like that, he blended seamlessly into the local life. Furthermore, since he had already extracted various Psychic Arts, he was confident that he would not be found out at all.

No one was able to find anything wrong with the way he behaved as he gathered more and more information about the ritual.

'The ritual will take place in five more days... I can relax for now...' Vale thought as he calmly observed the village.

Smoke curled lazily from chimneys, and the faint scent of cooking filled the air. After being confident with his disguise, he even struck up conversations with villagers.

There, he learned that the main families of the Faction rarely interacted with the common folk but maintained an enigmatic hold over the region...

However, this didn't change the fact that these common people were actually using cruel methods to learn the Psychic Arts!

Indeed, Vale found out how everyone in the village learned how to use the Psychic Arts without the Philosopher's Elixir's assistance!

Chapter 938: The Ritual (1)

Vale continued his observations without harming any ordinary people. He wanted to see how the ritual would proceed after all.

Of course, Vale didn't have to stay for long in one village. After he completely understood their situation, he moved to other villages.

The second and third villages were both eerily similar to the first. The villagers were also concerned with various things happening as the ritual was getting closer. There were cases like livestock disappearing, nightmares that seemed to warn them about their near death, and a heavy, oppressive feeling that lingered in the village.

Though they were still busy with the preparations for the ritual, they didn't seem happy at all.

'This ritual... It's negatively affecting everyone in the surrounding village.' Vale thought to himself as he started to understand how dangerous it was. It seemed as if the higher-ups of his place didn't care about the common folk.

In the third village, Vale discovered a small shrine dedicated to the Sanctuary of the Mind. Its presence confirmed the psychic resonance mentioned in the Arcane Bureau's report. He inspected the shrine discreetly and detected faint traces of psychic energy.

A Grandmaster-Level Arcanist had just left the place...

Vale frowned at this since there was no report that a Grandmaster-Level Mind Manipulator assisted them when they fought against the Demons of the Abyss Realm.

He recalled that low-level Arcanists assisted with their defense even at the cost of their life. However, it seemed that the people here just hid from the disaster caused by the Abyss Realm's invasion.

They might have a reason not to leave this place but Vale was no doubt disappointed. He recalled that even the representative they sent to his castle to pay respect to an Immortal like him was only an Adept Arcanist.

'Whatever... Let's see what they're up to...' Vale muttered to himself.

Vale didn't hurry and by the third day, his understanding of the region deepened. The fourth village showed signs of recent distress—there were burnt fields and abandoned homes already. The villagers here were less forthcoming. They weren't that welcoming to him, unlike the other villages. Although he had introduced himself from another village, they just didn't like visitors at all.

'With their current strength, they should be able to do mystical work and earn a lot of money if they were brought to the city outside this land. But here they are, living frugally in this godforsaken land.'

In the fifth village, Vale overheard talk of the "Crimson Robe Gathering..."

It was said to take place in the main village, a sacred tradition of the Ancient Families shrouded in secrecy. As for the Crimson Robe, they seemed to be the high-level Mind Manipulators of the faction.

On the fourth day, Vale reached the sixth village, the closest settlement to the main village. Unlike the others, this place was bustling with activity. Men and women prepared offerings and carts filled with goods headed toward the central village.

Vale sensed that as the ritual approached, the people here had a mix of fear and reverence.

Although they respected the ritual that was about to happen, they all couldn't help but feel afraid of the unknown.

Vale then considered for a moment before he disguised himself using his Transformation Spell to be part of the convoy that was heading to the main village as a porter.

The path they used doesn't have a good pavement so the journey was a bit rough. Then, as they neared their destination, Vale finally felt an oppressive aura and smelled the stench of blood in the whole village.

'Their ritual is a lot more sinister than I thought...' Vale mused as he decided not to spread his Divine Sense and only used his Spirit Vision.

Divine Sense was related to Holy Arts and it might be detected... However, the Spirit Vision was completely undetectable after reaching Level 10 or Perfect Realm. With the addition of his Divinity, unless there's an Immortal here, he wouldn't be detected at all.

The main village was completely different compared to the other villages. There were many towering stone structures in their small land. Vale could also see numerous Formation Arts protecting them from outsiders or detection Spells...

'Oh... They have eight Half-Immortals hiding here?' Vale was shocked. Even the large Orthodox churches only have one. However, this faction actually had eight of them!

Anyway, Vale only observed them for a moment and realized that these eight were already reaching the limit of their lifespan. Perhaps, in another 40 to 50 years, they'd already meet their end.

He then shifted his focus to a structure at the center of the village. It was the focal point of the ritual. As soon as their convoy passed through the Formation Arts, Vale disappeared and started his exploration.

Vale wandered among the villagers, cloaked in his guise.

"They're here..." Vale muttered as he noticed individuals dressed in ceremonial robes.

'I wonder what kind of Ancient Devil they're about to summon with all these preparations.' Vale mused.

The Sanguine Crystal, a massive, blood-red gem, was displayed prominently within the grand hall that seemed to be newly built.

That night, Vale found a secluded spot overlooking the open hall.

From his vantage point, he observed the final preparations that were happening all over the village. Somehow, he felt quite excited seeing something new about to happen...

However, Vale shook his head as he had to take this seriously since there were already many people who had suffered because of this event.

The Sanctuary of the Mind was being exploited as a focal point for the ritual.

As the day of the ritual approached, he soon recognized the Essence of a Thousand Minds, a crystalline object exuding powerful psychic energy, brought into the hall under the heavy guard of several Mind Manipulators...

"Are they actually aware of the Timeless King's restrictions? Are they aiming to pierce the barrier, with that essence?" Vale mused.

"If they succeed, the consequences should affect this whole continent." Vale muttered.

Whether the ritual succeeded or not, Vale was prepared to confront this matter later on...

Soon, the ritual began as the Crimson Robed Arcanists finally arrived.