

Earths GMagus 141

Chapter 141: Enchantress

Emery made his way toward Klea's residence. As the door opened, what greeted him was the thin clothes of Klea that showed a lot of her bronze, flawless skin. Her arms, thighs and chest was a feast for the eyes. When they got inside, only then did he notice that he was the first to arrive.

"Emery! Aren't you early?" said Klea with a surprise before giving him a charming smile. She pulled the door, letting him inside, and fashioned her black and smooth hair, revealing her small ears.

Emery's heart was starting to speed up. He went inside and the fragrant aroma of hers as he walked past her wafted into his senses. For some odd reason, he found this moment to be more intense than when facing the hundreds of dumas.

Klea had probably noticed Emery's expression for she smiled even wider. "So, what do you think of the dress, Emery? You know, I'm loving this attendant cube more and more everyday. It has hundreds of clothing choices and all can fit perfectly to my body. It is quite frustrating that I can only wear my uniform outside."

She continued on chattering while fixing the bosom section of her dress. Emery feigned distraction as he tried not to look. He knew she was teasing him again, but still, being alone with this beauty in her residence that was covered by her sweet scent, he could hear his heart thumping against his chest.

He fake coughed and walked directly to the living room. To get things back on track and to avoid more embarrassing moments, Emery said in a more serious tone, "Klea, I'm sorry but it's not time to joke around. I'm assuming that everyone hasn't arrived yet, right? If so, then will you tell me why you haven't shared with us the elite class?"

Klea frowned and pouted. She said in a slight annoyed voice, "You're no fun anymore, Emery. It seems you have become more mature after a year," sighing, she added, "well, to tell you the truth, I've never really cared about the elite class, the ranking nor the game. I just want to have fun, and I like being among you boys. As for the elite class... I'll tell you all about it once the others are here, okay?"

Emery nodded but to his surprise, Klea suddenly moved in front of him and pushed him onto one of the long fluffy seats. She lay right on top of him, their faces only inches away. Her intoxicating scent was once again trying to subdue his mind and the pinkish glow on her cheeks were awakening something inside of him.

Almost nose to nose, Klea's brown eyes stared directly at him and said, "What about you, Emery? What secrets are you keeping from us. Don't think of me as a fool, I noticed it. I wonder what has happened to you? You've become very different... you seem distant."

"I..." muttered Emery, feeling her steamy breath on his face. Her beautiful glistening eyes, alluring smell, soft chest pressing against him. He wanted to speak but his words were stuck on his throat. Somehow, it felt like this girl, sitting on top of him, was a man's greatest weakness. Her charm, her intellect, she seemed able to see through him.

Still unable to say a word, Klea seemed to have put him under her spell for he simply stared in a trance as her face moved closer to him. Her cherry lips were only almost touching and a burning desire on his

groin had flared up wanting to break free. Maybe he really should just let go and let this enchantress do her work, shouldn't he?

Knock! Knock! The two were startled as both turned their necks toward the door at the same time. The knocking continued. Klea pushed herself up using his chest and stood. Before heading toward the door, she placed a finger on lips and said almost in a hush, "We'll continue this later, Emery..."

Emery's pounding heart reached his ear as he watched her give him a charming smile and walked with her hips moving sideways, teasing him even further. He got up as well and made way toward the dining room. Right now, he could feel his face was burning and in fact it was as he just saw his reflection on an object that showed his whole likeness. It wouldn't be a good idea for his friends to see him, he wouldn't want them to have the wrong idea, so after he did several deep breaths, he went back to the living room and greeted all his other three male friends.

After they greeted him, Emery was a bit shocked in his heart seeing Klea interacting with them normally. He couldn't see any signs of Klea being as tense as him from earlier.

Once they were all seated, as a good host, Klea once again ordered her personal attendant cube to prepare food and drinks. As they moved toward the dining room, they all quickly shared all information they had gathered.

Thrax reported that Master Tahoggum was once again asking for more of that titanium mineral. At first they rejected him, but the dwarf had once again upped the ante by offering 500 white spirit stones for each ton they would submit to him.

Thrax and Chumo had done some checking and they found out Master Tahoggum's claim that his offer was a little bit above the market value of the stone was indeed true. Hence, if they could do that and compared to the price of tier three weapons, each person needed to mine 40 ton worth of titanium.

It looked good but as they discussed more about it and recalled their experience, it took a whole day or two just to get one or two tons each. Therefore, in the end, they all agreed that mining for more titanium wouldn't be a good solution to prep themselves since they only had five days left(also they were pretty sure Klea would once again act like a queen by counting the titanium and they, her laborers. They didn't want any more of that).

Emery decided to report next, so he could get his mind off what just happened between him and Klea. He mentioned the information about the carcass plant and what its function was. Quite optimistic with the hole they had found, which had more of that flower, Emery stated that another long trip to the place would be beneficial. Well, at least until once they had found a way to kill the dumas.

The idea was actually pretty solid in everyone's opinion. But then Julian voiced his thought that as much as tier three equipment were important, Darius, the instructor in the Earth Institute had mentioned that having the right spell would go a long way better than an artifact. Darius had given Julian a hint that the most important factor while competing in the Magus Games was to reach acolyte rank 6 before it because he had indeed confirmed based on past games that the only acolytes that had found success were teams who were able to cast tier three spells.

Chumo once again said nothing, but since he was with Thrax, all that they had found was already mentioned.

The last, but not the least, person to share her finding was Klea. First, she decided to share information about the elite class as inquired by Emery earlier.

She mentioned that when she arrived in the Magus Academy, she was transported to a different place first. A magus approached her and asked her to leave her class 77 and join the elite class instead. Which she had refused.

Apparently, ever since the beginning, the acolytes were already separated into different castes. Class 31 to 100 were called the lucky class, class 11 to 30 were the elite class and class 1 to 10 were the privileged class.

Klea then explained the main reason why there were only 80 acolytes left were because after seeing their first year acolytes' progress, they were being sent to another class. "I am sure Emery's snake girlfriend is also there with the elite class" Klea said while winking at him.

It occurs to them that those from Kalios even with all their resources were still not considered as elite or privileged, everyone in the group couldn't imagine what kind of acolytes were in the privileged class.

Klea then said, "I didn't share this because I don't want to break your spirit. However, to tell you the truth, I don't think we have a chance in winning the games." It's hard for the group to hear such words from the best among them.

While everyone was in deep thought, they didn't realize that a sixth person had snuck into the room, sitting among them.

"So, you guys are going to give up?" said the person.

Chapter 142: Friendly Gesture

The unannounced female voice startled everyone, making them jump away from their chairs.

Thrax quickly pulled his spear and the other also followed, They all pointed their weapons at the person who was wearing a huge black robe that covered all aspects of her body except for the red mask with a white stripe on the forehead.

For her to be able to walk in the dining room without being noticed, it was clear that they couldn't compare to her. And sneaking into a private residence without announcement most likely meant the person was up to no good.

"Who are you! What do you want!" Thrax shouted, pointing his spear.

"I am sorry. I understand that it's very impolite of me to suddenly barge in like this, but please be assured that I mean no harm," muffledly said the girl behind her mask. However, she kept her hands unseen inside the robe. Either she was confident she could overpower them even if they all attacked her at the same time or she truly meant no evil intentions.

Klea though wasn't convinced. A person coming in in the middle of the night, fully hiding their identity, the tip of her staff began to light up as she readied her spell. She said first, "Sneaking in at night like that, it's very hard to believe whatever you are saying."

"I am here under the order of my master. My master has asked me to come in secret. Again, I bear no ill-will," said the girl, showing her pale lady hands.

"Whatever you are selling, we are not interested!" roared Thrax. He was about to attack when Julian stopped him.

Julian quickly said, "Wait! Let us hear what she has to say first."

The girl nodded in appreciation and said, "My master was disappointed with what the five of you have been doing the last few days. Therefore, he sent a gift to support you on your way.' "

She then lifted her pale hands, took out a bursting-looking bag from her storage ring and walked slowly. It fell on the table with a solid thud. She then walked backward until her back was against the wall.

Everyone's eyes kept switching between the girl and the packed bag. They figured that if it was something dangerous, then she would have probably stood near the door. But since she was away from it nor from any windows, Julian cautiously walked up to open up the bag. As he untied the first knot, a ray of yellowish light reflected off his face and his expression became widened with disbelief. He took one gulped before turning to them and saying, "It's-it's spirit stones. Lots of it!"

The woman wearing the red mask crossed her arms and said, "1,000 piece of yellow spirit stones, to be precise. It is my master's gift for the five of you."

The group stared at the woman in shock. 1,000 yellow spirit stones? It was equivalent to 100,000 white spirit stones. As Emery remembered, the lowest price he had seen for tier three equipment was 10,000 white spirit stones, which should be 100 yellow spirit stones. This meant that all five of them could have tier three weapons and there would still be some left! Truly, this was a huge boon.

Then, Emery's mind took a step back. Calming himself, he stared at the thousand yellow spirit stones before looking at the woman wearing a red mask by the wall. Sure, it may not be a lot for her 'master', however, receiving something like this for free never happened. There must be a catch. Hence, Emery said, "What does your master want in return?"

"Nothing, it's just a friendly gesture," answered the woman, now leaning her back on the wall.

Julian picked up on Emery's questioning and said, "Nothing is free, unless you tell us what this is about, we... cannot accept it."

Everyone in the room noticed how Julian had sounded hesitant for a moment. They could tell he was conflicted in the thoughts of grabbing these stones so they could have a chance in the Magus Games against what was the real meaning behind this 'friendly gesture'. In fact, it was the same for everyone.

"Ahhh... I see. You people are either the proud type who think so highly of themselves or the clueless type who knew nothing. In any case, both are fools," said the woman in an exasperated tone.

Thrax, who had been constantly being called a fool, flared up again at this moment. His reckless nature got the better of him. He stomped the floor and bellowed, "Who are you calling fools! It's you're master whose the the fucking fool—"

Before Thrax could finish his sentence, the woman suddenly appeared behind Thrax, holding a short, sharp blade pressed against his neck. It took a good two or three seconds before their minds registered

what she had just done. They looked back at the wall where she was leaning and they could see a small crack where her foot had been placed. This woman's speed was beyond comparison against anyone from the group, in fact, even Emery didn't think he could match this woman's speed even if he was in his Fae form.

They all became on guard. But the woman did nothing else as she let the blade on Thrax's sit on top of Thrax's throat. She pressed it again a bit harder, touching Thrax's skin, which made it bleed a bit wherein she quickly said in the coldest voice they had ever heard, "Don't you dare insult my master in front of me, fool. If only my master hadn't told me to not kill or hadn't taken interest in any one of you. I would have already severed all of your heads, and as for you, the fooliest person amongst them, I would have minced it until it became dust."

Emery quickly said, "Please, senior. We have meant no offense. We truly just wished to make sense of this. Surely your master has some reasons or wishes for us. We just wanted to know more about it."

The woman gave Emery a cold stare before she unsummoned her blade and kicked Thrax away. She walked with her back turned against them to another side of the wall, leaned on it, and said, "My master had indeed mentioned to me that you guys might find it difficult to trust his gesture with just this. Therefore, he had ordered me to ask the girl, Cleopatra, a question."

Klea was startled upon hearing her name. While the others didn't seem impressed that the woman had stated Klea's name, they had reasoned out within themselves that this person had access to the class or the acolytes' information, Then, the next expression even garnered more reaction from her.

"My master wanted to ask, 'does Khufu's Tomb still exist today?' "

They all could see how Klea had become shocked. She tried to gain her composure before slowly answering, "Yes... Yes it is," with great respect.

"My master hope one day he can see the great pyramid of Gaza once again"

Klea seems to understand what it means, she then moved toward the table, took it and bow deeply. She said, "Please tell your master that we are accepting his graciousness with hearts full of gratefulness. Please also tell your master that we wish to meet him at his earliest convenience."

The cold and rough tone of the woman wearing the red mask softened for the first time. She nodded and said, "To answer you now, my master had given me a message to that question. He said, 'If your team didn't make it to the top 20 on the Magus Games, he shall not bother meeting you at all.' "

Klea bowed again and said, "Yes, we understand. Once again, we thank him for his graciousness."

Almost everyone in the room became confused as to why Klea had suddenly become docile upon the mention of a tomb. Well, except for Emery and Julian who seemed to have understood a gist of it.

The woman moved her position and said, "My task here is almost done. I just have one more message from my master. He said, 'Use your contribution points wisely. If you haven't figured it out by now, you should know that there are things that spirit stones can't buy, that's what contribution points are for.' "

After saying the sentence, the woman covered in black robe from top to bottom wearing a red mask with white stripes on the forehead became hazy right in front of them.

They all looked around for any signs, but it looked like she had disappeared like how she had appeared. Then, they all sat down lost in words while looking at the bountiful fortune they had been given out of their expectations.

Chapter 143: Spirit Serum

The brimming bag's content of thousand yellow spirit stones were then spread out across the dining table, which had been cleared of the drink and food. Klea took over the accounting and divided the fortune equally, giving each person two-hundred yellow spirit stones. This was equivalent to each person having twenty-thousand white spirit stones.

Next day arrived and the group met up at the Magus Hub first thing in the morning. This Magus Hub wasn't only a place to receive tasks, but a place where they could also purchase items. In fact, this location was a collection of hubs where they could get help with almost anything.

The reason for their arrival here wasn't getting a new task, rather, it was to buy a specific item called spirit serum. Like what Magus Darius had mentioned to them, according to Julian, getting to rank 6 should be their top priority in order to have a wider access to spells.

They went in front of one of the many counters and asked the receptionist to show them how much a spirit serum cost.

[Spirit Serum level 1 - 1,000 white spirit stones]

This item's main function was to help acolytes boost their spirit force so they could reach rank 6 at a faster rate. Actually, this was the liquified essence of multiple spirit stones after processing. Consuming the spirit stones' essence through this resulted in a much higher efficiency than directly consuming the stones. Once consumed, it could increase a person's spirit force.

Each dosage of the serum could increase 1 to 3 spirit forces. How high the spirit force would increase depended on the person's body ability to absorb the energy as well as the level spirit stone they currently have. Apparently, although this serum was considered a luxury product for most acolytes, ingesting it was one of its most common uses. It had other uses too, such as being a reagent in alchemy. But for now, Emery and his friends had decided to use it as a way to rapidly increase for acolyte rank 5 and 6.

This, however, would be harmful if used by people that were lower than rank 5 and as for people with higher ranks, it wouldn't have any effect. Reading through more of the description, this made Emery understand why his green potions were actually quite valuable.

Similar to the green essence potions, this spirit serum was actually also a product created by an apothecary practitioner. As Cedric had explained to him, these serums weren't difficult to make but the tools and skills of the alchemist had to be at least advanced. So, even if Emery had thought about making the spirit serums himself with 200 yellow spirit stones he had on him, he wouldn't be able to since he had no access to those information, not yet anyway.

Still, with their newfound wealth, the group bought serums with hopeful thoughts that they could quickly boost their spirit force to 100 and reach rank 6 acolyte as soon as they could. Each one of them bought what they thought they needed since their current spirit force varied from one another and their

bodies would react depending how their bodies absorbed the serum, the serums weren't collective rather individually.

Klea, for example, had already reached rank 6 and according to what they had shown them last time, her spirit force had reached 105. She had a couple of options she could do, she could either still buy the serums, which would surely be more than what the boys would have to buy, increasing her spirit force further, she could buy new spells here in the hub, or better equipment instead.

While Emery was standing in front of the counter, checking the spirit serums, Klea walked up to him and said, "If you don't have enough spirit stone to reach rank 6, I can share mine with you mine, if you'd like."

Emery rejected her offer. He shook his head and said, "That won't be necessary but thank you for your concern."

At the moment his friends still had no idea as to how much his current battle power and spirit force was. As his gaze fell onto the spirit serum once more, an idea then came on top of his head. He could reason out to them later that it was due to these spirit serums why his strength had increased by a lot. Therefore at the moment he doesn't need to explain about Killgrara and Khaos. As Emery's spirit force was already 90, he didn't think he needed the spirit serum, still he decided to purchase just one so he could better understand how the spirit serum functioned.

[Spirit serum - 1,000 white spirit stone]

[Purchase?]

Emery hit yes on the glowing interface. He held out his hand that had the symbol and the floating cube interacted with his storage ring. It placed the spirit serum, which Emery could tell was in a white box with labels on it, and then took 10 yellow spirit stones.

Once everyone had gotten the spirit serums they had come for, Emery looked at the symbol on his hand and confirmed they still had five more days until the Magus Games started. And like what they had agreed upon last night, Emery, Chumo, Thrax, Julian and Klea would focus on their personal growth and meet a day before the Magus Games commenced. All of them had their own plans on how to increase their strengths.

"Good luck, everyone," said Klea cheerfully to everyone, giving Emery a wink, and then all members separated their own ways.

Emery, however, didn't exit the Magus Hub. He went to another section of the Magus Hub and went to a counter that had a signage of a triangular container on the side. Although he could buy these basic apothecary tools and ingredients from all the other counters, since he was an apothecary apprentice, albeit rank 1, he had a discount of buying off items related to the Apothecary Institute.

He showed the receptionist his identification and after confirming his association with the Apothecary Institute, the receptionist returned it with a warm smile. Emery didn't have to look through the list of the tools tab since what he was searching for was on top already. He bought a basic cauldron, basic mortar and pestle, some ingredients to test out his apothecary skill, as well as a level 1 comprehensive guide for basic concoction. All of these cost him a total of 4,000 white spirit stones.

So far, all that Emery knew about alchemy had been taught by Granny. Similar to how his father had taught him the sword but became better after Emery had received a manual from the Combat Institute, he believed this concocting skill would give him the same benefit.

Once more, Emery looked at the time through the symbol on his hand. Although he understood that time was limited, he believed that learning more about Apothecary would bring value to the Magus Games later. Thinking about the tight 5 days schedule, he might as well just practice apothecary in between his training.

Exiting the information about the time left, Emery opened a different set of information through the symbol on his palm. It read:

[Emery Ambrose]

[16-year-old]

[Plant Spirit - Peak Stage]

[Water Spirit - High Stage]

[Earth Spirit - High Stage]

[Battle power: 27]

[Spirit force: 90]

[Spirit Core of Darkness - Foundation]

[Fey Bloodline - stage 2]

[Acolyte Rank 5]

In order to reach rank 6 as soon as possible, Emery knew that the boost from the spirit serum wouldn't be enough for the main requirement was to have a breakthrough in the understanding of elements. He needed to reach the peak stage for all his elements and now he still has two more elements to master. Having more element affinity than the others were both his advantage and disadvantage. Therefore, without wasting any more of his limited time, Emery headed toward the Earth Institute to have his earth element reach peak stage, then water would be next.

Chapter 144: Earth Spells

Emery arrived at the Earth Institute. He walked out of the portal, the endless sand dunes on his back and in front were the hundreds to thousands of houses made out of clay. The towering yellow pillar in the center stood in all its glory, welcoming all those who came to this planet called Animus.

While he walked on the streets, he noticed that the crowds were lesser this time around. He watched as a dozen of them of uniformed acolytes walked past him and some of the people he had passed by were actually not wearing the Magus Academy's uniform. Emery looked over those who were wearing the academy's uniform, based on the number of their badge pinned on the collars, Emery could tell that they were mostly junior acolytes, but only one or two were senior acolytes like him.

No longer paying them attention, Emery went inside of the yellow pillar and greeted a senior acolyte who was currently waiting in the grand lobby.

Emery approached him and after giving a nod, the acolytes responded with a friendly tone, "Is there anything I can help you with?"

"Yes," Emery said. "I would like to join the Earth Institute."

The last time he had been here, he had not yet reached rank 2 acolyte. He achieved it on the last day. Hence, he hadn't had the chance to apply formally in the Earth Institute since their requirement was to become a rank 2 acolyte first.

Instead of the test pushing the rock, the examination this time was quite different. A yellowish crystallized cube hovered in front of him and shot out a light, which scanned his whole body.

[Emry Ambrose]

[Acolyte rank 5]

[Earth elemental affinity found]

[You are eligible to apply to the Earth Institute]

[Accept?]

"Yes, accept," said Emery with a nod.

[You are now an Earth Institute member]

Emery was quite surprised as to why the test had changed and this was one much easier. He then figured that the rock pushing that Magus Darius had asked them to do the first time he was here was only for first year acolytes to gauge how quickly they would gain understanding regarding their affinity with the earth element. But apparently, since he had already reached rank 5 and no longer a new acolyte, the test no longer seemed necessary.

[Would you like to get your joining package?]

"Yes," Emery answered the floating cube.

[Understood. Since you are a member of the Magus Academy, we will provide you with one tier 1 spell as well as a tier 2 spell]

[Please choose a spell among the list.]

A bunch of spells appeared right before Emery's like. This was a bit different from how he had received the [Analyze] and [Universal Flora Knowledge] upon his joining in the Apothecary Institute wherein he hadn't been given an option. Still, these were free spells in which he hadn't to pay for so he was happy with that.

Emery was browsing and reading the description of spells.

[Rock Bullet - Tier 1]

[Stone Skin - Tier 1]

[Soften Earth - Tier 1]

[Glow stone - Tier 1]

[Mudwall - Tier 2]

[Ash Blast - Tier 2]

[Stone Fist - Tier 2]

At the moment, he already had a very reliable [Stone Skin] spell. The rock bullet could be useful, but its strength and function should be about the same with his water element [whip splash]. The [Soften Earth] and [Glow Stone] are more into utility spells. But Emery suddenly thought [Soften Earth] could be a very useful spell for him. He will always be around looking for plants somewhere, having a spell that could soften the rock could come in handy. There is also the Duma's underground tunnel that he needed to explore soon or later.

As for tier two spell, [stone fist] the description says different than [Stone Skin] that makes the whole body into stone, this spell focuses all the energy into the fist, making the fist attack much stronger. But as Emery doesn't know much hand to hand skill, this spell is not for him. The [Ash Blast] as an offensive spell also sounds very interesting, but Emery decided to go instead with the same tier two spell Julian had [Mudwall]. He thought this [Mudwall] would be more useful in a team fight, especially if they were about to be surrounded like his most recent experience in the savage planet with the hundreds of dumas. If he cast together with Julian, Emery believed they could create a much stronger defense.

[Soften Earth - Tier 1 - Earth element]

[Mudwall - Tier 2 - Earth element]

Of course Emery still needed to spend some time learning the spell before he could use it, but he was very confident he could quickly master this spell. Also, with the added information from the acolyte, it looked like he would also be getting a tier three spell, once he reached rank 6, just like Klea. Hence, he became somewhat excited at the prospect of reaching rank 6 as soon as possible.

Getting back to business, he shook off his rising thoughts and got straight to the point. He asked the acolyte, "I wonder... is the stone origin room available?"

The acolyte nodded with a smile. "Yes, and you are in luck! Currently, it's available for all acolytes."

The yellow crystal cube once again approached Emery.

[Entry to the Earth's origin stone room]

[500 contribution points for half day]

For first year acolytes there was a free half day usage to help with their quick ascendance in the acolyte ranks, however, for second year acolytes, this has been changed. This must be one of the reasons why they had extremely limited access in their first year. Emery and his friend have discussed the use of

contribution for time in the origin stone room, as it cannot be accessed with spirit stone but contribution point only, this was most likely one of the usage that woman's master had mentioned.

The earth origin stone room's main function was to help an acolyte better the element they were placed in quicker.

Right now, the benefit this room would provide him far outweighed what he would receive from consuming the spirit serum. He needed this more so he could finally breakthrough in his cultivation. So, without thinking too much about it, and since it was still quite early in the morning, Emery decided to pay one days worth of training.

[1000 contribution points has been taken]

Emery was then transported in front of the humongous stone gate. The stones which Darius had summoned before were no longer here, but the same guard was still here. After the guard checked Emery's information and access, he then allowed Emery to enter. In the moment Emery took one step inside, immediately everything within his being felt heavy but not as heavy when he had first come in here.

He walked toward the stone sitting on top of three platforms and unlike before, there were clearly fewer than a thousand cultivating in this place. Emery remembered that his limit before was eleven steps before he felt an unseeable wall blocking him, this time however, he was able to walk five more steps. After that, he once again felt the same feeling. He was unable to walk a step further. Since he knew trying to push through wouldn't work and the steps were based on how high his understanding about the earth element, Emery decided to just sit on the floor and meditate.

Emery kept his eyes closed feeling as if the huge rock was about to crush him once again. He kept calm though and then, he could suddenly feel the smooth flow of the earth element entering his dark core.

As he kept his focus, suddenly the illusion of the huge stone again trying to flatten him lessened. It stopped what it was doing and then the same stone flew right in front of him as if it was asking to be touched.

Emery did as his instinct was telling him to do and tried touching the stone. The instant his fingertips reached the stone, the rock glowed and his hand turned into a stone while feeling a wonderful sensation.

His hand became a bridge between him and stone as a rush of earth elemental power made its way to his dark core. Emery's dark core spun in excitement while receiving a huge boon of energy. Emery was then starting to feel that he was becoming one with the stone, unmoving and hard as a huge granite stone on a mountain.

Emery then awakened feeling ecstatic all over. He noticed a new piece of information from his palm and after he read it, he smiled.

[You have achieve breakthrough into reaching peak stage earth element]

[Spirit force has increased]

[Spirit force has increased]

[Battle power has increased]

He looked at the time and noticed just a little over half a day had passed. In that short amount of time, he had already received two points in spirit force and most importantly a breakthrough to his element understanding! It was a well spent 1,000 contribution points, he thought.

And since he still had more time left, Emery wasn't going to waste it and continued his meditation. By the end of the day, he received two more spirit force point.

Today's experience had really riled him up. It was addictive for him, so Emery couldn't wait to go to the Water Institute next.

Chapter 145: Rank Up

Most acolytes could stay awake for a week without sleeping and this was true for Emery as well. Although there were some exceptions, like doing extremely tiring physical or high demanding mental activities such as meditating in the earth origin stone room for a day straight, for example. That was a very tiring hurdle. However, when Emery's earth elemental affinity had reached a new height, the rush of energy to his body made it so he didn't feel the need to sleep at all.

Once Emery's time was up, he smiled in satisfaction looking at what he had achieved. He was a step closer to reaching rank 6 acolyte.

When Emery arrived to his residence, he immediately summoned the big cauldron in the middle of the empty living room. He asked the personal attendant to get him some tables on the side. Emery then placed the mortar and pestle on top of the table and arranged the tier one ingredients in a neat fashion.

Emery lastly took out the level 1 comprehensive guide for basic concoction. He focused his thoughts on it and the manual dissipated into streams of air going inside of him.

[Received Basic Concocting Rank 1 Techniques]

In an instant, Emery received theoretical knowledge of this world's apothecary. Having the theoretical knowledge however wasn't enough. Like all skills, he needed to practice this before it would be useful. So, Emery decided to make a basic tier one healing potion and strength potion using one of the most basic recipes readily available.

What Granny had taught him surely was in the manual he had just acquired. Similar to how he had been taught the sword by his father and when he received the technique in the Combat Institute. Like those experiences, the knowledge that originated from his world still couldn't be compared to the way an actual magus or acolyte concocted in this world, which was the peak of humanity's ingenuity.

The second reason was that by making different recipes of this healing and strength potion, he thought he might find a way to increase his current original recipes.

Several hours had passed and Emery's residence had been filled with the different scent of medicinal herbs. As he kept on pounding a herb in the mortar with the pestle, the rays of the sun had peeked through the window in this living room. He hadn't realized that morning had already arrived.

Emery stopped what he was doing and turned around to see the crushed herbs all around here, some stains and ashes on the flooring, the ceiling had a greenish tint caused by the rising vapor from inside the cauldron, which was still filled with green liquid.

He checked the stock of ingredients: it looked like all the ingredients he had left were the ones he was crushing in the mortar. All 1,000 white spirit stones worth of alchemical ingredients were all gone with just one night of experimentation and practice. Still, Emery didn't feel that bad seeing the stock had been emptied. In his experimentation, he had learned a couple of new do's and don'ts tricks. He knew practice was unavoidable if he wanted to progress.

After wiping his sweat and ordering the personal attendant cube to clean the mess, Emery went to the shower room, washing himself of the medicinal herbs' smell and getting ready for his next destination. The Water Institute, Varuna.

Emery's figure appeared just before the portal. He stared at the place of paradise with its long stretches of the coast, blue sky and crystal clear water. Breathing in the crisp, salty and refreshing air, he walked along the sandy beach. Each sinking step he took was tingling every nook and cranny of his feet. Eventually, he arrived at a bit more forested area with the blue pillar rising from the middle of the lake. Below there was the huge city-like structure, encased in glass walls.

Emery stared at the City of Varuna and then it occurred to him. How was he going to get there without the spell that allowed him to breathe in the water with Klea last time?

Looking around, he couldn't find any acolyte waiting to be given the spell. Maybe he was too early, he thought. Then, he saw the blue haired magus instructor passing by, whom Klea had introduced him to. If Emery recalled correctly, her name was Carla.

"You are Klea's friend, aren't you?" inquired the woman.

"Yes, Magus Carla," Emery replied politely. She didn't correct him, so that was correct. Emery thought it was amazing that the magus also remembered him.

"It has been awhile since I've seen Klea here. I wonder what she is up to these days..." said Magus Carla.

Emery was startled to know that Klea hadn't been to the Water Element Institute, which he had thought to be her favorite element. From the looks of it though, she had probably gone to a different institute for the meantime or maybe she was just wandering around. After all, Klea had spent a lot of time with them during the mineral gathering task and information gathering. So, he guessed it should be normal.

The beautiful magus kept staring at Emery and said, "You need help getting in I suppose?"

"Yes, please," answered Emery with politeness.

The woman then nodded, raised her hand and just like before, a beam of light covered his face. "There you go," she said.

"Thank you," Emery replied, bowing.

Emery then got on one platform and then jumped to the lake. He swam toward the dome located at the bottom of the lake. Passing by several colorful fishes, he finally arrived at the front gate of the city under

water. Emery swam inside the gate with some people beside him, and soon the water inside drained and they were now standing on their feet.

This time, he didn't bother receiving the spells after they confirmed his joining. He decided he would just get them later. His priority was reaching acolyte rank 6 and he was determined not to leave the place until he had done so.

From all four of his elements, water was the last one that had to reach the peak stage, and his last barrier for his advancement.

Again, Emery bought the one time full day access of the water stone origin room.

[1,000 contribution points has been taken]

Currently, Emery had a little over 1,000 contribution points left. But he wasn't worried, he couldn't wait for his rank 6 breakthrough. He believed it was worth it. Anything to reach his goal.

Entering inside the water stone origin room, he then found an empty spot and took a seat. He then started meditating, fully concentrated, to increase his understanding of his water affinity with the help of the water element origin stone.

This time, Emery was prepared for the illusion. As soon as the illusion of the water came into him, he jumped on the river's stream and swam with the flow all the while repeating the chantra of 'water always flows and never changes' in his mind.

As he kept swimming and going with the flow, Emery could feel his dark spirit core once again welcome the stream of energy going inside it. He could tell that the elements inside his spirit core were spinning with joy along with the increase of spirit force.

[Spirit force has increased]

[Spirit force has increased]

A cool and breezy sensation coursed throughout his whole body, entering his core. At the moment his three elements, the blue, green and yellow spirits, tried to interact with the dark core in the center. However, the dark core seemed to just keep on contracting and shrinking wildly. It appeared that Emery couldn't combine them all together in harmony.

Outside of the illusion, sweat was starting to trickle down Emery's face. Emery didn't give up and he started focusing on going with the flow and kept chanting the mantra so he could break through to the peak stage. Then, the cool relaxing flow of the water was starting to feel heavy and damp.

[Spirit force has increased]

Emery suddenly felt the need for more energy. He was on his last step, he could feel it! Just a few more boost of energy, his spirit force, so he could unite them all together. That was when he thought of the spirit serum sitting on his storage ring. Emery quickly summoned it and injected it straight into his chest! Suddenly, his heart started beating stronger as more waves of energy went inside him.

[Spirit force has increased]

The dark core started to spin smoothly again. It kept on spinning and spinning, getting faster with each moment Emery watched it. Then an explosion of energy coursed through all the nerves of his body! Once again, the wonderful sensation of breaking through, making him feel euphoric as he felt every inch of his body tingling. A notification appeared on the top of his palm.

[Congratulations! You have reached the foundation level of the spirit realm]

[You are now a rank 6 acolyte]

Chapter 146: Advantage

Emery looked into himself and felt his spirit core. He could tell the breakthrough to rank 6 had caused changes to his dark spirit core.

Before when Killgrahah had shown Emery through the dark room, he had seen his four elements hovering inside his spirit core. Now that he was a rank 6 acolyte, with the elements being in early foundation, three of the elements: earth, water and plant, had been firmly lodged in their own corners while the dark element sat on the center.

A bridge-like colored structure stretched from the three elements all connecting to the single element situated in the middle, the darkness element. The interconnected bridges had the same colors as the element they had come from and the darkness element served as their focal point.

Emery then once more focused his thoughts in an attempt to use a spell. Whenever he used a spell before, he could feel he was drawing from something like a lake, which he had deemed to be the spirit energy. This time though, when he had attempted to do so, he could feel that his overall strength had increased by two folds. Especially the pool of his spirit energy which determined how many spells he could use and how strong they were.

Opening his eyes, he smiled as he checked his status in his palm with great expectations.

[Emery Ambrose]

[16-year-old]

[Battle power: 29]

[Spirit force: 100]

[Plant Spirit - early foundation]

[Water Spirit - early foundation]

[Earth Spirit - early foundation]

[Spirit Core of Darkness - stage 1]

[Fey Bloodline - stage 2]

[Acolyte Rank 6]

This was great. The first task that they had all set for themselves, except for Klea, had been achieved. His status confirmed he was now a rank 6 acolyte and all three elements had reached an early foundation

stage. What was interesting, however, was the change of label in his Spirit Core of Darkness. Previously, it had been labeled as foundation, but now it was stage 1. Emery hoped he really knew what this meant, he wished there was someone who could guide him with this other than Killgragah, since that dragon wasn't an option.

Emery remembered this black dragon telling that until he obtained that piece of glittering rock, he shouldn't think about going back to pick him up. Then, Emery thought of the Darkness Institute. They might have information about the spirit core of darkness. So, Emery added a mental note that he would inquire about it after he finished all his immediate business with the other institutes.

Now that he had finally reached rank 6 and his cultivation time in the water origin stone room had elapsed, Emery got up and exited the room. It was now time to get the fruits of his labor from the elemental institutes and get himself ready to train and master these new spells, because what use would these spells have if he couldn't cast them. So he decided he would spend most of the remaining three days in seclusion trying to learn the new spells he was about to receive.

Emery then made his way toward the lobby of the Water Institute and approached the acolyte who had given him access to the water origin stone room. He mentioned to the acolyte that he would like to join. The bluish crystal cube then hovered in front of him and while he was being scanned, Emery stared at the wondrous view. He could see acolytes swimming alongside a multitude of multicolored fishes.

Once the scan was finished, Emery received the message that said:

[You are eligible to apply to the Water Institute]

[Accept?]

"Yes, accept," said Emery with a nod.

[You are now a member of the Water Institute]

[Would you like to get your joining package?]

"Yes," Emery answered.

This time, aside from the tier one and tier two spells, he was given an option to choose a tier three spell as well. He browsed through the list of spells available for him starting with the tier one.

Since he already had a tier one spell, the spell [Whip splash] which was for offensive, for his second tier one spell, Emery chose the utility spell called [Water Breathing], this spell allowed its receiver to be able to breathe underwater. It was the same spell used by Magus Carla and the other acolytes and magi that wanted to get access to this place. He would naturally return here in the future and having to wait like what had happened to him earlier wasn't a good thing. Emery believed this would come in handy, since he was sure the usage of this spell wasn't only for going to this place.

As for the tier two and tier three spells, Emery gave it more thought and finally arrived at selecting the offensive spells. His first tier two spell was called [Steam Lance]. It was the most powerful single target spell that he could find under tier two, and for the tier three spell, he chose [Crashing Wave], which he believed would be a good area attack spell.

For a moment, Emery became a bit worried he hadn't given these three spells as much thought as the others. But then again, at the end of the day, the faster you were able to eliminate your foe the better, prolonging the fight was always dangerous. So he figured that there should be nothing wrong with these offensive spells.

After the freebies from the Water Institute, he quickly made his way toward the Plant Institute and entered Elder's Respite.

Inside the great tree, Emery made his inside the twisted large roots that acted like stairs and pathways. He finally found the acolyte receptionist. And after going through the same scan thing from a greenish crystal cube, questioning, and confirming, he received a notification once again:

[You are now a member of the Plant Institute]

Another three free spells for him under the plant element. Emery couldn't express how happy he was for getting these free stuff, which otherwise would cost him either the hard-earned contribution points or spirit stones.

Normally, a tier one spell would cost around 100 - 300 white spirit stones. Tier two spells were around 1,000 and tier three cost from 3,000 up to 5,000 white spirit stones. Getting all these free spells from different institutions really was a boon that helped him a lot.

Emery currently had two plant element based spells. [Fragmentation] and [Nature Blessing].

This time he chose the spell he had always wanted ever since he first saw it in the swap area, west of here. He grabbed [Entanglement], the tier one spell that Cole and Silva had used on multiple occasions. Its usefulness wasn't only during a fight, but with a lot of other things such as getting to a location, like the wood bridge Cole had made before.

Next were the tier two and tier three spells. He looked over the list and found two more offensive spells that he really liked. But then, right before hitting the select option, he decided to select it more carefully. After about five minutes of deliberation, he finally chose a tier two spell called [Nature Sense] which was another utility type spell that would give him and his friends an edge in a battle. Lastly, for the tier three spell, he chose [Accelerated Growth]. This was a spell that would increase the growth rate of a plant. He thought it would be more beneficial for him and for apothecary related stuff in the long run.

Right now, he had six new spells. He had one more spell pending in the Earth Institute so quickly traveled all the way back there and received his tier three spell. He grabbed the self-explanatory spell called [Summon Stone Golem], the name said it all. It probably wasn't as strong as the huge golem that Darius had used against the red armored elf and the dragon, but having another body to throw in a battle was always extremely handy. And since this stone golem wasn't a living thing, the thought of it blocking some powerful spell that could seriously injure a human gave him a sense of safety.

Emery wanted to go to the Darkness Institute next. However, since it had already become late, he decided to retire for the day and rest in his residence.

As he stared at the ceiling, only then did it occur to him that he probably had a huge advantage over some acolytes, especially those who had achieved rank six with a single element only.

A rank 6 single affinity acolyte would have three spells for free. They would probably get something for an offense, defense and then utility spell. But him? He had received nine spells already for free, which meant he had more spells that he could use for different types of situations. Surely, this day was a moment of joy for him.

Chapter 147: Practice

After some well-earned shut-eye, Emery resumed his task of making himself stronger by practicing the spells. He got out of his residence and walked toward the back, where he could see the shadow of the mountain range with the silhouette of the ever stretching waterfalls. He only had two days left before the Magus Games started. Hopefully he will be ready with his preparations.

Emery sat in the middle of the dark and misty backyard and closed his eyes. He tried to communicate with the pool of spirit energy inside him, trying to learn the tier one spells first.

The first tier of spells didn't take long to master. He was able to cast the [Water Breathing] within just a few minutes of understanding its construct. The bluish light that covered his head lasted for only a few minutes. It was shorter than Magus Carla, but Emery believed he could increase the duration the more his spirit energy became stronger as well with his overall mastery of the spell.

The next spell he mastered from the tier one spells was [Soften Earth]. That too didn't take a long time to learn. With it if he grabbed a piece of earth, like a stone or soil, they became as soft as mud.

The last spell for the tier one was [Entangle]. This spell was a bit more challenging for Emery. The hard part of mastering it was commanding the roots where he wanted them to go, like making it wrap around an object or making a bridge.

He then spent another 20 minutes for each spell to familiarize himself with their executions. Once he felt like he had the gist of all three spells, he proceeded to practice the tier two spells.

For the tier two spells, it took him almost an hour before he was able to cast [Mudwall]. The soil in his courtyard had been raised to about a meter high and three meter wide, about a third of the size Julian had cast back in the savage planet. Emery guessed he needed more practice.

The second spell was [Nature Sense]. It didn't take as long as [Mudwall]. And, when Emery was able to execute it, he was definitely surprised at how thrilling it was to use.

[Nature Sense] allowed him to connect and be one with the plants in a way. When it was being channeled, he could feel the presence of an acolyte about hundred meters away from him through the grass that was being stepped on. He could also feel the presence of the wind from the twigs and leaves in a hundred meter radius.

Next was the [Steam Lance] spell. At first, Emery was concerned at how there was no source of water nearby. His residence was situated near the edge of the cliff and the waterfalls were like a kilometer away from him, but then he remembered Klea using it against the skyglazers with no immediate source. So, he gave it a try. He was surprised to learn that there was water in the air. In particular the morning mist seemed to get thinner, which meant it had some water in it.

The water formed into the shape of an arrow, the size of a spear, and Emery made it fly toward the tree.

The tree trunk cracked. He then tried it against the mudwall he had created but it only punctured about an inch deep. Not enough to make any significant damage.

Emery wasn't sure whether he should be happy or not. He was half-sure there would be other acolytes using this spell in the Magus Games, assuming it was a battle competition of sorts. It not being able to damage a mudwall meant that it wasn't powerful. And its power would be even less if he targeted an acolyte wearing a protective artifact.

Regardless, the end result made him frown. He had tried to make it several times and the results were the same. He had seen this [Steam Lance] used by Klea being much bigger and powerful that it could kill a level 3 beast, skyglazer with just one strike. It looked like he still had to practice this one more.

Finishing his practice on the tier two spells, the first light was starting to rise. He still had a couple more hours, so Emery tried to learn the tier 3 spell called [Crashing Wave] only to find out he wasn't able to decode its properties and execute it.

This was the first tier three spell he had attempted and this was when he found out that the difficulty of learning tier three spells was so much harder than tier two.

Still after about an hour and a half, Emery was somewhat able to use it, but he was disappointed. He came to a realization that he might have chosen a wrong spell.

The spell needed a huge amount of water. Although he was able to gather the water through the mist, the air and the dew on the leaves and grass, its effectiveness was almost the same as his tier one spell [Whip Splash]. Of course it looked different, since it looked like a wave. Still, Emery was a bit disappointed to know that he would have to be in a location where there was lots of water, before he would be able to use it to its fullest potential.

Again, he tried to familiarize himself with the spell. The deeper he tried to force it the more confused he became. He wondered if it was because he hadn't mastered the spell yet, maybe he had been doing it wrong or it could be because of the environment. In truth, now that he had thought about it, he could feel that something wasn't right. For some reason, he couldn't seem to access

the explosion of energy that he felt when he reached rank 6. Something definitely wasn't right.

Emery sighed and tried to calm himself. He tried to convince himself to not rush the learning of spells and be more patient. One thing for certain though, the light of this world's sun, the shining of its rays just above the peak of the mountain from afar, wasn't helping.

He decided to call it quits for now and went back to his residence to freshen himself and eat something for his rumbling stomach.

Now that he was all ready, he set his path toward the Darkness Institute. Hopefully, he would get answers to his questions.

Emery found himself in front of a cave, while the building of the Darkness Institute sat beside the cliff above. Fortunately, even though Chumo wasn't with him to guide him through the confusing tunnels, which felt more like a maze, there were some signages written on the ceiling of the caves to tell him where to go. This time, before he joined and received his welcome package, he planned to get some guidance from a magus to help him decide which spell to get for free.

He then remembered Magus Xion telling him to find him, if he ever made it to the second year. The magus also promised to compensate him for being unable to use last year half a day time in the stone origin room. And, since Emery now fully understood what the origin stone room was worth to his cultivation, he made a mental note to really get it. His mind then wandered off to what other kinds of compensation could he receive from the magus.

After arriving at a dungeon-like hall lit only by torches, he wished that the bad luck he had kept on having in this place would not hang around him today, since he only had two days left before the Magus Games started.

Emery went looking for Magus Xion from the acolytes at the grand hall.

"You're looking for Magus Xion? What is this about?" said an acolyte in an exasperated tone.

"He asked me to come see him last year," Emery said straight.

The acolyte then shook his head and answered, "You lower-ranked acolytes think you can just come see whoever you want, now do you? Well, I suggest you wait here and hope he passes by."

"I see, thank you. Does he normally pass by around this time?" Emery asked.

"Don't know. If you are lucky, he will pass by any minute now, but if he's cultivating, you might have to wait a couple of days, weeks or so..." answered the skinny acolyte. It was clear that he didn't want to help Emery.

Not sure what to do now, Emery once again looked around and saw only about a dozen or so acolytes walking in and out of the hall. He asked the other acolytes, but got the same answer, so he was hoping to maybe find Chumo or the magus.

Having to wait like this while he had a very strict time schedule was not good. He hoped to make the time run slower. Each minute passing was extremely important, so Emery was struggling whether to wait or return to his residence and keep on practicing the spells.

Chapter 148: Infusion

After deliberation, Emery came to a conclusion and decided to do something instead of just standing here. There must be something he could do.

He went around, putting away the discouraging thoughts, and started shamelessly asking each acolyte, young and old, who was passing around the hall.

"Have you seen Magus Xion? Hi, can you tell me where Magus Zion is?" he kept asking all acolytes his eyes fell upon.

The skinny acolyte, whom he had asked earlier, was standing around. When he noticed what Emery was doing, he walked up to Emery and said in an irritated tone, "You! You are making people uncomfortable, wait quietly or leave!"

Emery frowned, this skinny acolyte was making life hard for him. He was about to say something when a voice sounded from behind him.

"Excuse me, did I hear you were looking for Magus Xion?"

Emery turned away from the skinny acolyte and saw a group of young men and women. The beautiful girl in front with the molten red hair tumbling on her shoulder approached him followed by about half a dozen acolytes.

Emery gave a nod and the girl said, "I see. It looks like you're a second year acolyte. Which class number are you in?"

"Class 77," he replied. The moment he mentioned 77, Emery noticed how some of the people behind her gave a chuckle and a smug look. For some reason, he couldn't help remembering that hateful Rowe. They must be from a higher realm too or probably a higher class, such as the elites.

The beautiful girl however didn't issue any jerkish reactions like those behind her. Instead, she still spoke casually and said to him, "Your uniform is a bit different. Are you a member of any other institutes?"

Emery said, "Yes. I am an apothecary apprentice."

Once he said that, those who had chuckled looked amongst themselves. They were whispering, but Emery couldn't hear them. Afterward, Emery noticed that they started to take him more seriously including the skinny acolyte who had stood by the corner again. It looked like his hard-earned membership with the Apothecary Institute gave some sort of respect.

"I see... well, we're actually heading to see Magus Xion now. He will be conducting a class in a moment. Come with us," said the girl.

Emery then looked back at the skinny acolyte. He was angry at that person because he could have easily told him there would be a class! Why did he have to tell him to wait here.

Anyway, Emery proceeded to follow this group of people. Although he really didn't know where they were heading, moving around to where Magus Xion might be was better than waiting around and wasting time.

The group made their way toward one of the tunnels. They didn't stop, unlike Emery earlier who was checking every time the path divided into more than one path, which showed Emery how familiar they were at the place. Finally, after exiting one extremely long tunnel, they arrived at a huge hall, lit with torches as well, but it had rows of seats, similar to the place Magus Minerva had first spoken to them.

The girl turned to Emery and said, "He's teaching darkness combat spells today. Look, he's over there on the platform."

And true enough, he saw Magus Xion standing in front and preparing himself behind a table. Emery looked around and realized that there were others, a few more dozen acolytes, sitting in the chairs. Searching a bit more, he found a person with the bun style hair, Chumo.

It was the first time Emery had heard there was an actual class. Well, now that he had thought about it, this was a place of learning, so of course there would be classes. It was just that he had never taken any of the academy's classes before; he never had the time. For this one though, Emery figured it would probably be good. He would be able to talk to Magus Xion and learn more about spells.

Emery was about to give his thanks to the girl and go to Chumo when suddenly the girl asked, "You, what's your name?"

"Emery," said after a moment of hesitation.

"Okay, Emery of class 77, I am Annara," the girl with the red molten hair said before leaving.

Again, Emery gave Annara his thanks for showing him where Magus Xion was as well as leading the way. Emery then walked toward Chumo who seemed to have noticed him talking to Annara.

When Emery sat down beside his friend, Chumo mentioned to Emery that the person he had just come with, the girl and the people behind her, were among the top 10 second year acolytes of the Darkness Institute.

Emery was surprised hearing that. He glanced at the girl once more, sitting in the front row before asking Chumo, "What about you? What's your rank within the institute?"

Chumo answered, "I don't really like to show off, but I am in the top 50 amongst the second years."

"That sounds great-"

"Well.. you know the number of second year acolytes who have affinity in darkness are only 50 so..."

A moment of silence ensued between the two as Emery stared at Chumo who was grinning. Emery facepalmed himself at the joke Chumo had just made.

This was a side of Chumo he had never seen before. As it turned out, if there were no girls around, Chumo became the talkative and humorous type. Emery then began to wonder if Chumo was just shy around girls. Still though, Emery hoped Chumo would be able to speak in the future and solve his problem with girls. It would be inconvenient if he couldn't speak like if they were on a mission with Klea around and he wouldn't be able to say what was on his mind.

The noisy classroom became quiet the moment Magus Xion stood up. All eyes were on him and he started his lecture by withdrawing two blades.

He waved it around first and showed them that the weapons were normal, but then he issued a spell without speaking and both blades started emitting a blackish aura waving on the surface of the blade like a black fire.

Magus Xion then explained that these two swords were under the influence of two different powers. One of them was enchantment and the other was infusion.

Enhancement, according to Magus Xion, was a spell built into a weapon or artifact by an enchanter. He raised the sword on his right hand and mentioned it was a tier three weapon enchanted by request of its maker. He explained that this weapon was an enchanted blade due to the writings written on the fuller of the sword. While the second sword, which looked like Emery's sword, was a tier two normal sword that had been infused with the spell [Darkness Infusion] element. Magus Xion was a combat magus that specialised in darkness element.

He then called out one acolyte to try out the strength of one of the weapons.

Magus Xion handed out the acolyte the tier three enchanted sword and the acolyte waved the enchanted tier three sword against a puppet similar to the one seen in the Combat Institute. It almost cut through the puppet's hard body in half. Magus Xion didn't seem to give an approving nod.

He then handed the acolyte the tier two sword and asked the acolyte to infuse the sword with the darkness element. The sword glowed black and waved it at the puppet as well. But the damage this time was a lot smaller. It was clear that the tier three enchanted weapon gave a much superior result than the one infused by the acolyte.

The higher tier artifact had proved to be more advantageous for the user in its base form. However, Magus Xion took the tier two sword and personally cast his own infusion. Standing before the third wooden puppet, he cleaved it cleanly in half without much effort. This time, the tier two infused sword managed to do a lot more damage than the tier three sword.

He proceeded to explain that the result wasn't due to his battle power being stronger than the acolyte for he restricted that before wielding the blade. So, although the enchantments made the weapon stronger by itself, the spell inside it didn't become stronger overtime unlike the spell [Infusion], which was a basic utility spell always used by a combat magi, the stronger the spirit force of the caster, the better result it would be. The catalyst, which was the weapon of course, was a factor, but the biggest factor would still be the caster of the spell.

Such previously unknown knowledge about a spell was an eye opener for Emery. Emery had always wanted to be a knight this way he could be both a magus and a knight. Next time, he wouldn't worry as much about fighting an opponent with a stronger weapon. As long as he was able to continuously refine his spirit force to higher level, he would eventually come out on top.

The lecture ended on that note. Emery and Chumo then approached Magus Xion so he could collect his promise.

Chapter 149: Compensation

Magus Xion was sitting by his chair on the platform that overlooked the rows of seats where the students were filing out of the classroom.

Chumo led Emery to the magus, and when they arrived, Magus Xion said, "Yes, Chumo? What can I help you with? Ahh, yes. I remember your friend."

Magus Xion stared at Emery, seemingly thinking. Comparing all the magi Emery had encountered so far, Magus Xion was one of the youngest people he had seen. This man looked to be in his early twenties, a young adult some would say, but the appearance of course didn't reflect his true age.

According to what all acolytes had heard, once a person became a Magus, they would start aging much slower due to their constant intake of energy from the world around them. And Magus Xion looking to be in his twenties spoke highly of how talented he was in his acolytes years and being an instructor on top of that, it truly showed how capable of a person he was.

"Right, I recall telling your friend I would help him in the event he returns for his second year in the academy. My master was in an important training that time, so yes I will compensate you." said Magus Xion with a warm smile to Emery.

Emery gave a nod, staring at the young-looking Magus' bluish eyes. He was glad that this person seemed to be a man of his words. He was very friendly, easy to talk with, concise in his lecture and seemed to take note of every person he had met before. In fact, Emery wouldn't be surprised if this person had forgotten him just like how some seemed to have.

Magus Xion then continued, "Well, what do you want me to compensate you with? Mind you that I can't give out contribution points without completion of a registered task. That's breaking a rule. However... what do you say about using my points in getting you two days in the darkness origin stone room. If my mind serves me right, that's what you wanted last time right? So, would you like that?"

Emery gave Magus Xion's offer a thought. In hindsight, it was extremely generous. First year acolytes only received half a day access to the room. Knowing how hard it was to take in the contribution points as well as how helpful it was to the cultivation, being offered four sessions, which was equal to 2,000 contribution points sounded truly tempting.

However, Emery was bound to reject it. In two days' time, the Magus Games will be held. He shook his head and said, "Thank you for your generosity, Magus Xion. But we're entering the Magus Games. I won't be able to fully receive the benefits of the room."

"Right, you all will be competing the day after tomorrow, so two days in the room won't affect much. I concur. Then what about equipment? Do you have equipment ready? I can give you a tier three weapon or a tier two protective artifact you can choose one," answered Magus Xion. As Emery and Chumo listened in more to this guy being more proactive with his proposals, they were starting to like this guy more and more.

"Master Xion, can you give me an artifact as well?" said Chumo, standing beside Emery.

"Haha, it's not wise for a teacher to do that, Chumo. I am doing this since I disappointed your friend last time. This is giving fair compensation for what he had missed. All three offers were about the same in value," answered Magus Xion, giving Chumo a smile.

These were his three options: two full days in the darkness origin stone room, one tier three weapon or a single tier two protective artifact. They were all things Emery needed. But as he gave it more thought, all of these were things he could buy with spirit stones or contribution points. He needed them for the short run, but in the long run, it wasn't. Then, a new thought entered his mind. Something more urgent that involved his cultivation as a whole.

"Magus Xion, I have given it consideration and I would like to have your counsel instead. I have encountered a stumble whenever I practice my cultivation. I am hoping you can help me with this, and if you choose to help me, don't dare to accept any other compensation," said Emery, sounding as polite as he could.

Both Chumo and Magus Xion were startled by Emery's words. Especially Chumo since he knew how valuable the artifacts would be in the upcoming Magus Games.

"Hahaha! You are indeed interesting. Honestly, I thought you wouldn't be able to make it to the second year when I saw you last time. Being an acolyte with a spirit aptitude of rank B, you must have practiced very hard for them to consider your return here. I know it's no easy matter. But still, problems about cultivation for people below the magus level is not a complicated matter. I am sure I can easily solve it

for you. But are you sure you prefer this instead of an artifact or the cultivation room?" said Magus Xion in a questioning tone.

"Yes, I am sure. Please help me, Magus Xion," said Emery with his head now.

The magus stated at Emery. He was silent for a good couple of seconds before saying, "Okay then."

Emery believed this was the right way. He then ordered the symbol on his hand to show his stats to Magus Xion and Chumo included. Emery knew the magus would be able to use his authority to find Emery's status so he didn't feel the need to hide it. And as for Chumo, Emery actually felt glad in his heart that he had shown it even to at least one of his friends.

[Battle power: 29]

[Spirit power: 100]

[Water element: early foundation]

[Earth element: early foundation]

[Plant element: early foundation]

[Spirit core of darkness]

Chumo was visibly surprised while Emery watched him read through his stats. Chumo, himself, had in fact managed to reach rank 6 in the last two days, so seeing another person reaching 100 spirit power didn't surprise him much but when he saw how high Emery's battle power was, he realized Emery was probably the strongest member of the group. But when Chumo's eyes read the last bit of information that stated [spirit core of darkness], it baffled him and surprisingly, Magus Xion as well.

Chumo couldn't help his curiosity and asked, "What is the spirit core of darkness, Master Xion?"

Not answering Chumo, Magus Xion's face, which no longer contained traces of confidence, changed into a big frown. He looked at Emery, cast a spell on Emery that covered Emery's body from head to toe and then he frowned deeper. He then said, "Try to cast any offensive spell to that wooden puppet."

Emery hadn't expected the sudden request, but he quickly nodded. The water inside from the surrounding air converged on the top of his palm, turning into the shape of an arrow as big as a spear, before shooting the [Steam Lance] into it. The spear-like spell crashed against the wooden puppet, splashing the water all over its ground. It looked powerful but was only able to shake it.

"Again, use other spells and don't stop until I tell you to," said the magus, the crevice in between his eyes were ever more evident. Emery did as the magus asked and the magus continued to watch Emery issue all offensive spells he knew only to look more baffled.

Fortunately, there was no one around except for the three, so any possible competitors wouldn't have seen what spells Emery was capable of.

After Emery had done a [Whip Splash] Magus Xion said, "Emery, try using [Darkness Infusion]. It is a simple tier two spell."

"But I don't know how to do it," Emery answered.

Magus Xion then transferred a copy of the spell through the dimensional storage rings they had and within just 15 minutes or so, with the guidance of Magus Xion, Emery was able to cast it.

Emery took out his tier two sword and excited [Darkness Infusion] making it glow with a darkish aura like black flames. He dashed at the wooden puppet and struck it a couple of times, but his strikes couldn't get deeper than an inch. It was shown that Emery's slashes were even weaker than the slashes made by the previous acolyte.

"Ok, that's enough. You may stop there," said Magus Xion, his tone heavy and grave. "I have heard about this kind of spirit core before, but this is my first time seeing it. Through the spell I have casted on you, it allowed me to sense the flow of your spirit energy every time you use a spell. Now that I have enough information, especially with your usage of the infusion spell, it's easier for me to confirm it."

"What is it, Magus Xion? Please tell me," said Emery. He couldn't help but feel that something not good was about to head his way.

"Emery..." said Magus Xion, sounding hesitant. "You've made a mess of your spirit core. The very thing that is connected with your cultivation. And because of this you will not be able to cast any spell properly ever again"

Chapter 150: Zenoia

Several lit torches flickered, casting shadow on Magus Xion's face. The magus' statement of 'you've made a mess of your spirit core' and '...you'll never not be able to cast any properly ever again' repeated themselves in his mind like echoes reverberating inside a cave. He felt like he had become deaf for a second as the continuous thunder of Magus Xion's sentence didn't disappear.

Emery remembered Killgragah had told him that the way the dragon had taught him was another way of cultivating and the humanity's way was stupid. He had expected that some people from the Magus Academy would be surprised to know this way of cultivating but to never become able to cast a spell in its full effectiveness again? Had the black dragon, Killgragah fooled him somehow? The black dragon still needed him, he believed. That creature wouldn't save him in his moment of need and then just make a mess of him after, would he? No! Killgragah would have not lied to him, he wouldn't accept such a conclusion even from a magus.

Emery shook off the festering thoughts and said, "Please, Magus Xion, can you please explain?"

Magus Xion pondered for a second before looking back at Emery and said, "Tell me, who taught you to cultivate this way?"

"I... someone in my world did..." Emery answered, his voice in the end diminishing. He wasn't willing to tell them about Killgragah, it was too early to believe the conclusion Magus Xion had said. After all, this way of cultivation had pushed Emery to become on par with acolytes that had a higher aptitude than him. If they insisted however, he decided he would make up a story. Something like a person who had magical powers such as him in his world had taught him; the lady of the lake came into his mind.

Chumo, beside Emery, couldn't hide the shock on his face. He kept on switching his gaze from Emery to Magus Xion until it finally stayed on the magus and he said, "Please, Master Xion. Do you not have a way to fix this for my friend, Emery?"

"If you continue with what you are doing, Emery, you would—" Magus Xion paused mid-sentence. He recollected himself and said, "No, I'm not the person qualified to explain this. And since I have already promised to help you, it's... ok you should come with me. Chumo, it's best that you don't come with us."

Chumo made a face of repudiation but when Emery shook his head, Chumo resigned.

Magus Xion then led Emery out of the classroom and back to the lobby. They passed the darkness origin stone room, and after a couple more turns, Emery noticed that the torches were starting to become far and few in between on every divergent tunnel they entered. The written signs on the ceiling as well were starting to become more faded and only the sound of their steps were all Emery could hear. The increasing silence and darkness, however, was broken when Magus Xion suddenly spoke.

"Let's hope she's in a good mood, if not I am sorry to tell but I won't be able to help you," said Magus Xion, voice fuller in the encompassing tunnel.

"She? Who are we meeting, Magus Xion?" asked Emery.

"You'll know soon. Remember to be respectful and do not talk unless asked. Let me do the talking, do you understand?" said the young-looking magus, sounding a totally different person from the one he had heard in the classroom. Emery nodded.

They walked in uncomfortable silence and Emery finally took notice of the upward slanting floor. A faint whisper of the air whipped past his ear and when they got to the end of the tunnel, the image of a wide and mighty stair stretching over a cliff toward a gray palace entered his sight: they exited the insides of the mountain and were now near the peak.

Magus Xion didn't stop his tread and Emery followed not far behind. After they reached the end of the stairs, Emery couldn't keep his eyes off the decorated monstrous stone sculptures laid displayed on the side of the giant dark wooden door. Some had big bulging eyes, with fangs and wings; some also weren't humans, rather just a big eyeball the size of a human as well as all other things that looked as if it came out of a nightmare.

They paused in front of the towering door, and Emery saw Magus Xion taking a deep breath. The magus turned to Emery and once more minded that he should be respectful, don't do anything rash and speak only when asked.

Emery didn't say anything but simply nod. Afterward, Magus Xion reached out for the circular metallic door knob and slammed it loudly a couple of times.

Dang! Dang! Dang!

The magus waited for a second or two before announcing, "Master, it's me, Xion."

There was only silence until the huge door creaked open with no one pulling them from the inside of the palace. Magus Xion gestured halt to Emery and once he was inside, he gestured once again to follow the steps he had made behind him.

The inside of the palace was also dark. The light sources were scarce by the huge pillars which housed a couple more stone sculptures. The sculptures inside this time were mostly in humanoid form and most of them had a sharp outlook with fangs peeking out stony lips. There were even bat shaped sculptures

as well as young and adult, whether it be men and women who seemed to look like they were in great fear. Emery's spine ran a shiver for it felt like the sculptures were watching his every step.

They soon arrived at the grand lobby with a podium encircled by two large stairs on the side, with its surfaces covered by a crimson velvety carpet.

"Yes, Xion? What is it? Ahh, you've brought a gift for me today?" resounded a female voice inside the big, dark and empty lobby. Hearing the chilling words, Emery's heart pumped hard against his chest.

"I am sorry, master. It is not that kind of gift. This is a new acolyte of the darkness institute and his name is Emery," said Magus Xion, voice filled with the utmost respect.

"Ah... what is it about the boy's circumstances that you felt the need to bother my slumber," echoed the voice.

Magus Xion gulped. He spoke slow and kept his eyes locked on the empty podium. "Master, I owe this boy a favor. And after seeing his situation, I was hoping you could give him some of your precious time to see the boy interesting or not."

"I see... anything for my lovely student," replied the voice.

Emery stood on the spot frozen as he could feel a heavy and constricting force drawing closer. The silhouette on the podium appeared and as the raging fire cast its light on the shadow, his heart seemed to have stopped beating altogether.

He watched as a stunning woman revealed herself and took alluring steps down the stairs. Her paler than snow skin contrasted greatly against her skintight black clothes that seemed to merge in the darkness. He couldn't see where she was looking but he could tell she was staring at him with her ocean dark eyes, which felt fiery and able to penetrate his mind.

"Well, well, well, this boy doesn't look too bad, my lovely student. Are you sure you can't just give him to me?" said the woman. Her voice seemed to make Emery feel enchanted for a moment.

"Please, don't joke about things like that, master. It always scares me," said Magus Xion, seemingly unaffected by what had hit Emery. He turned and said, "Emery, gives your respect to Grand Magus Zenoia, the head of darkness institute."

Whatever she had done, it seemed to have lingered on him. When he recovered, he quickly said, "My respect to the Grand Magus—"

An invisible giant hand grasped Emery's full being and pulled him closer to the Grand Magus Zenoia the moment he was about to bow. She didn't give him any chance to react for raised her finger with a wide smile and then pressed it against his forehead. A great jolt of tingling energy rushed over his body. She kept it pressed and said, "Aaaah, you're a human but you also have a bloodline. I like you already. Hmm... quadruple affinity but a terrible aptitude. And this is — Hahahaha! Spirit core of darkness? Very good! Very interesting!"

Emery could do nothing, not even let out a scream. It felt like his only option was to accept this fate as whatever this prickling, sharp energy ran its course through every part of his body, for he knew there was no way he could resist whatever things this woman would do to him.

He then felt himself being lifted by the invisible hand into the air and Emery felt the flow of energy in his body being pushed upside down. More needle like stabs coursed in every part of his body! The pain was so unbearable but Emery gathered all his will so hard to resist.

"Let's see what happens if i do this!" shrieked the woman as she gave out a maniacal laugh.

Emery thought his body was being ripped apart but aside from the paid and weird sense of ecstasy was filling him just before he passed out.