

## The Witch 101

### Chapter 101: Black Card

"This is..."

Vaan's gaze turned serious when Helia Ashenborn removed her silk gloves, revealing the purple skin it covered.

"The Curse of the Purple Umbala, in its second stage. At first, it wasn't so bad—just the usual disruption of mana flow, affecting the success of casting magic spells. But then, it evolved, becoming one with the body," Helia Ashenborn explained.

Vaan furrowed his brows as he stared at Helia Ashenborn's purple hands.

Just as Helia Ashenborn mentioned, the antimagic spores had seemingly merged with her hand, altering the structure of her hand, including her bone, muscles, ligaments, and blood vessels.

"Isn't it painful, Lord Helia?" Vaan asked after a brief moment before adding, "How did it evolve to such a stage? I've been in Sunpeak Town, and none of the residents I've come across showed such symptoms."

"I may have been foolish in attempting to remove the curse from my body. These antimagic spores aren't simple and have a way of resisting. The harder I try to remove them, the harder they fight back to stay. What you see now is a result of those numerous attempts," Helia Ashenborn stated.

"As for whether it is painful? The answer is yes. Even now, I am in pain as we speak. However, I have no choice but to hide it and endure the suffering in silence, Sir Vahn. It should be easy for someone like you to guess why I have to."

"Right," Vaan casually nodded and said, "If news of the Curse of the Purple Umbala's second stage was spread, it would cause widespread panic in the city."

"Not only would people choose to flee the city to seek refuge in another, but even merchants from other cities would stop coming to Redpine City. In which case, all businesses would halt, and the city's economy will collapse."

"And that is something neither you, Lord Helia, and us, the Delarosa Household, want to see," Vaan added what Helia Ashenborn wanted to hear.

If they had not sealed a business deal, Helia Ashenborn would not have revealed her secret to Vaan, and his probing would have landed him in hot water.

"Glad to know we are on the same page," Helia Ashenborn said with a sigh of relief.

Helia Ashenborn would've hated to kill her business partner to silence him before their business could take off if Sir Vahn hadn't shared her views regarding keeping the matter secret from the public.

Furthermore, it would have been too difficult to pull off without earning the Delarosa Household's hostility as well.

Helia Ashenborn was glad everything worked out favorably and felt like a load had been taken off her shoulders.

"With everything said, curing the Curse of the Purple Umbala seems to be more of a 'you' thing instead of an 'everyone' thing, Lord Helia. How does the Curse of the Purple Umbala concern everything's wellbeing?" Vaan asked before adding, "I guess it has something to do with the method you used in your attempt to remove the antimagic spores from your body?"

"That's right, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn openly admitted before saying, "When I realized I was infected with the antimagic spores, I tried to flush them out with my superior mana reserve."

"However, this only resulted in the antimagic spores concentrating on my hands. The real problem comes after. No matter what magic I used to heal my hands or purify the antimagic spores, I am unable to get rid of them."

"On the contrary, the antimagic spores fed on my Healing and Purification Magic and strengthened themselves. Although I succeeded in preserving my ability to use magic, the Curse of the Purple Umbala is slowly eating away at my body. Nothing seems to work on them."

"Untreatable like Zellera's Curse, huh?" Vaan muttered thoughtfully.

After pondering for a bit, Vaan shared his thoughts, "The antimagic spores possess plant attributes, so it wouldn't be strange at all that water, light, and plant-attribute healing magic or purification magic doesn't work on it."

"If we want to neutralize the antimagic spores, then we might have to look at using fire-attribute magic or medicine," Vaan proposed.

"That does make some sense," Helia Ashenborn somewhat agreed with Vaan's suggestion as she wore her silk gloves to cover her purple hands.

"However, fire attribute is destructive in nature, and the condition of my hands is very tricky. If it's anything like Zellera's Curse, I'm afraid there is no way for me to regain my hands once I lose them."

"That being said, do let me know if you need anything that may assist you in finding a cure for the Curse of the Purple Umbala, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn stated before promising, "I will do my best to procure the items for you."

"Since Lord Helia offered, I will be straightforward then. There is indeed something I require, a magic tool called Atomic Visualizer. I wonder if Lord Helia has heard of it?" Vaan asked.

"I have actually," Helia Ashenborn acknowledged with a nod before suddenly shaking her head, "However, I do not possess one."

"That being said, I will be able to procure one as long as it is on the market. Thus, you can rest assured that I will fetch one for one, regardless of its price, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn promised.

"Thank you, Lord Helia," Vaan expressed his gratitude.

Shortly after, the two of them further discussed their business deal.

Having confirmed the effects of Vaan's Pore Stimulation Potion, Helia Ashenborn asked Vaan for the recipe so she could begin amassing the ingredient for its production. Vaan wrote everything down on a piece of paper he was provided before handing it over to Helia Ashenborn.

Afterward, Helia Ashenborn took out a black metal card with magic enchantment from her personal spatial storage space and handed it to Vaan.

"This is for you, Sir Vahn."

"This is..."

Vaan accepted the black card and glanced at the two names engraved on it, one in bigger font size than the other.

"I finished opening the account with the Witch Union Bank under Young Lady Linetta's name as you requested. However, I was afraid you may not have access to it, even with the account card presented at the Witch Union Bank, so I arbitrarily decided to add your name to the account. I hope you do not mind, Sir Vahn."

"No, I am grateful for your consideration, Lord Helia."

#### Chapter 102: Ember Killian's Sudden Move

After Vaan settled his business with Helia Ashenborn, he left the Great Hall with more questions than answers.

Although Vaan succeeded in raising Helia Ashenborn's trust in him, he still couldn't pry too much into her private affairs—not unless he wanted to raise suspicions instead.

Nevertheless, Vaan was able to draw new speculations based on what he learned in his talk with Helia Ashenborn.

Based on Vaan's understanding, Helia Ashenborn was a person who only acted for her benefit. She was an ambitious witch who thirsted for more power, even if she hadn't shown it openly.

'Lord Helia is someone who has lived for a few hundreds of years, but she's been stuck at Peak-stage Senior Witch. Seeing others become High Witches, there's no way Lord Helia doesn't desire it as well,' Vaan mused.

'If my guess is right, Lord Helia wasn't involved in spreading the rumor of the magic flower. She was lured into the Red Goblin Mountains like Lady Aeliana.'

However, Helia Ashenborn must have realized the problem with the magic flower and gave up on it, allowing Lady Aeliana to have the magic flower.

Thus, even if Helia Ashenborn wasn't the one who orchestrated Lady Aeliana's downfall, she allowed it to happen.

'But if Helia Ashenborn was already infected by the antimagic spores even before Lady Aeliana turned into the Plant-type Abomination and spread the antimagic spores, I should also consider that Helia Ashenborn's loss to Lady Aeliana during their duel wasn't intentional.'

As Vaan contemplated his findings, he realized this initial conclusion was incorrect. However, the truth wasn't far off.

Helia Ashenborn might not have been the mastermind, but she played a part.

'But it isn't important whether Lord Helia purposely or reluctantly lost to Lady Aeliana in their duel over the magic flower. More importantly, is who found out the existence of the magic flower and spread the rumor,' Vaan deeply thought on his way back to the castle's library.

'No wonder I kept feeling something was amiss. There was a third-party involvement in this entire situation surrounding Red Goblin Mountains,' Vaan suspected.

'Were high-level demons involved? Quite unlikely...'

Higher-level demons might be more skillful in hiding their traces, but it's rare to find them away from the frontlines. Furthermore, the higher-level demons were more interested in fueling human conflict than directly participating in harming humanity.

This wasn't something privy to men, but a conclusion Vaan arrived at based on the little bits and pieces of information he steadily accumulated over two years since his transmigration.

After all, why did the Great Devils of the Gehenna Realm decide to enter contracts with humans?

Why was all information pertaining to outside of the seven witch kingdoms withheld from the public?

The seven witch kingdoms' relationship with the other powers on the continent may not be as calm as it seemed and may even be very chaotic.

For all Vaan knew, there could even be an ongoing war. He wouldn't know due to all the information on the borders being withheld from the public.

'If a demon wasn't involved, it could be the work of a dark organization... But what can they gain out of this? Destabilizing a territory would indeed make their work in the area easier... But...'

A dark organization's involvement wasn't the only possibility.

It could also be the work of a rogue witch, someone who has abandoned their humanity and dabbled in all sorts of forbidden research in the pursuit of knowledge and power.

'A rogue witch, huh? It would make sense if the antimagic spores were a byproduct of a rogue witch's evil research. However, I don't have enough information to confirm it,' Vaan mused.

Nevertheless, a rogue witch wouldn't exist without an evil lair for them to carry out their forbidden research and experiments.

Thus, if a rogue witch did exist, people were bound to find it if they searched all of the Red Goblin Mountains.

Alas, it was something people rarely attempt to do due to its dangers.

'Let's just focus on my objectives for now,' Vaan decided as he arrived at the castle's library.

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Meanwhile, back in Blackmoon City, after Astoria Braveheart, Istana Gleriath, and Ember Killian united their forces to search the whole city.

Just when Astoria Braveheart and Istana Gleriath thought they wouldn't be able to find anything so quickly, Ember Killian suddenly instructed her people to surround a cheap night bar in the slums and blew off its roof with fire magic.

"Marquis Killian! Are you insane?! Why did you suddenly attack a civilian building without warning? There are people in there!" Istana Gleriath reprimanded as three of them hovered in the air with Flight Magic.

"Since when did you care about your people?" Ember Killian cast a nonchalant glance at Istana Gleriath before barking out orders to her people below, "Catch everyone that escapes! Kill whoever resists!"

"Yes, Grand Inquisitor!" the Senior Witches and Aura Masters under Ember Killian answered before working together to catch the frightened crowd scattering out of the three-story building.

Nevertheless, the people were primarily untrained men or True Witches with abysmal magic talents. As such, they were quickly captured by Ember Killian's people.

However, Ember Killian's people didn't have enough hands.

After Istana Gleriath frowned for a moment, still baffled by what caused Ember Killian to single out that particular building among many others, she ordered her combat witches to assist in the effort.

"Go and help out the Grand Inquisitor's people!"

"Yes, Lord Istana!"

Shortly after Istana Gleriath's combat witches joined forces with Ember Killian's people, they easily suppressed everyone that escaped the roofless three-story building.

However, there wasn't anyone who looked suspicious among them, nor was anyone strong.

"Marquis Ember must have a reason for targeting this building, right? I assume the Assembly of Silent Night's branch is located here, but how did you figure it out?" Astoria Braveheart inquired curiously.

At the same time, Istana Gleriath also kept one ear open to listen. She really couldn't tell what led Ember Killian to target the cheap night bar.

### Chapter 103: Furehengir's Blood

"The Assembly of Silent Night has been on my list for a while now. However, I never had a good enough reason to uproot them until now," Ember Killian stated before casting a short glance over Istana Gleriath and Astoria Braveheart.

"Did you think a witch-hunting dark organization like the Assembly of Silent Night could operate on Her Majesty's soil without her notice? The Assembly of Silent Night is just a group of rabid dogs that Her Majesty kept around because they have some use."

"However, Her Majesty has also given me the authority to cut them down once they overstep their boundaries," Ember Killian added with a sharp look.

"But if you knew where the Assembly of Silent Night's branch was, why did we need to search the whole city, Marquis Killian?" Istana Gleriath stared at Ember Killian with a big frown before accusing her with a displeased look, "Is it fun making us run around the city?"

"Watch your mouth, Lord Istana. I know you desire revenge for your daughter. But just because I understand how your feelings, it doesn't mean I will tolerate your disrespectful behavior and accusations," Ember Killian coldly spoke as she shot a glare at Istana Gleriath.

In that instance, Istana Gleriath felt like the mana in her body froze, suppressed by Ember Killian's sheer will, and caused her expression to stiffen.

"For someone with supposedly good control over their emotions, you sure are letting your emotions cloud your judgment, Lord Istana," Ember Killian coldly ridiculed before saying, "You think I let everyone around the city out of entertainment? I'm not that bored and free."

"The Assembly of Silent Night is a group of half-dogs. They have a very distinct trace of demon power, which can be detected with the right magic tool designed for it."



"As long as they are within range, I will be alerted of their presence," Ember Killian stated.

Shortly after, Ember Killian held up an item by its black metal chains, causing Istana Gleriath and Astoria Braveheart to focus their gaze on it.

The black metal chains were attached to a semi-transparent hexagonal prism-shaped blue mana crystal, reinforced with a black metal frame that ran along its edges.

Furthermore, magic circles and runic inscriptions were engraved on the black metal frame, indicating the semi-transparent hexagonal prism-shaped blue mana crystal was enchanted and reinforced with multiple spells.

A lump of dark-red demon blood was sealed within the mana crystal.

At that moment, the demon blood was stimulated as it glowed with a weak crimson hue and exuded heat that could be sensed from a short distance.

"This special detection magic tool will get hotter the closer it gets to demons or people in possession of the same bloodline sealed inside it, and it's been hot since we circled this three-story building," Ember Killian explained.

Istana Gleriath and Astoria Braveheart focused on the magic tool more intently with amazement after hearing Ember Killian's explanation.

"This is a rather impressive magic tool. I wonder which Master Artificer designed it?" Astoria Braveheart uttered with surprise before suddenly shaking her head. "No. More importantly, which demon does the blood belong to?"

"Furhengir," Ember Killian casually answered, stunning Istana Gleriath and Astoria Braveheart.

"Furhengir? The Furhengir?! One of the seven demon wolf kings and one of Evil Wolf God Kezan's descendants? That Rank 5 Demon Wolf?" Istana Gleriath exclaimed with disbelief, not expecting such valuable demon blood to be in Ember Killian's possession.

"No wonder I can sense such a tremendous amount of magical properties from it... That lump of demon blood definitely belongs to a rank 5 demon beast," Astoria Braveheart commented with a look of understanding.

At the same time, Astoria Braveheart understood why Ember Killian called the Assembly of Silent Night a group of half-dogs.

Ignoring how the Assembly of Silent Night managed to obtain a part of Fuhengir, they were people who had undergone body modifications and enhancement to acquire power through the rank 5 demon beast.

And if they were willing to lose their human forms for power, it was hard to say what they would do in order to explore the secrets of Vaan Raphna's body.

'I have to retrieve Teacher Raphna's body quickly!' Astoria Braveheart silently swore.

Nevertheless, Astoria Braveheart suddenly raised one of her eyebrows as she noticed a change in Ember Killian's magic tool.

"The heat is getting weaker," Astoria Braveheart mentioned.

Ember Killian immediately shot her gaze at the vicinity of the cheap bar, but she didn't see anyone else leaving the three-story building.

Everyone that already tried to escape was apprehended by their people.

After a short pause, Ember Killian suddenly became alerted after coming to a realization regarding the situation.

"The half-dogs are escaping through a secret underground passageway!" Ember Killian alerted before diving into the roofless building like a descending fire phoenix.

Boom!

The entire three-story building was leveled to the ground, and the scorching heat of Ember Killian's flames quickly vaporized the rubbles into black ashes.

After Ember Killian waved her hand and scattered the ashes with her crimson flames, a trapdoor was revealed on the ground level.

"Allow me," Astoria Braveheart shouted as she descended from above.

Without waiting for Ember Killian's reply, Astoria Braveheart swung her massive silver greatsword and cleaved the trapdoor and ground apart.

The entire ground floor quickly collapsed, revealing the underground space below.

Astoria Braveheart plummeted to the lower floor before she continued to swing her massive silver greatsword wildly as if it was as light as a feather, dicing everything in her surroundings in the blink of an eye.

The secret passageway was quickly revealed under Astoria Braveheart's barrage of sword strikes before she stopped and dashed into the dark passageway ahead of Ember Killian and Istana Gleriath.

"I'm going on ahead!" Astoria Braveheart's voice echoed out, informing the two witches with her.

Nevertheless, Ember Killian and Istana Gleriath didn't stay idle when the secret passageway was revealed. They quickly dashed into it and chased after Astoria Braveheart.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The passageway was filled with traps and obstructions like stone walls, but Astoria Braveheart broke down everything with brute strength as she charged forward, completely protected by a strong light barrier.

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The tremors reached all the way to the other end of the secret passageway, startling a group of seven people, who had their appearances hidden under a black hooded robe.

"What the f\*ck! Who the hell is chasing us?!" one of them cried with fright and alarm.

#### Chapter 104: Hot Pursuit

Boom! Boom! Boom!

As the seven members of the Assembly of Silent Night fled to the end of the passageway leading outside the southern side of Blackmoon City, tremors at their rear drew closer.

Without a doubt, the traps and obstacles they left behind were being destroyed at an alarming rate.

The Assembly of Silent Night's members felt like they were being chased down by a monstrous beast with unstoppable force—which wasn't exactly far from the truth.

Astoria Braveheart demonstrated physical power far beyond normal human comprehension, which greatly conflicted with her delicate and slim appearance. Even witches would suspect that she was using Body Enhancement Magic.

However, it was all raw physical strength. Astoria Braveheart was like a beast in human skin.

"Dammit! I saw a magic airship arrive in the city earlier. Did the Black Rose Kingdom decide to purge our organization or something?! Why are we hunted? Who the hell did we piss off?!" another member with a male voice cursed as he fled ahead of the other six, seemingly the leader of the group.

"I heard the branch in the Delarosa Marquisate accepted the commission to assassinate Marquis Delarosa's two daughters. Maybe they screwed up the job?" a third member speculated with heavy breathing as he ran with all his might, demonstrating speed far beyond the limits of a regular human.

Nevertheless, the person still barely managed to keep up with the group leader at the front.

"Goddamn! Why the hell did the Delarosa Marquisate branch even accept such a high-risk commission?! The noble households are off-limits, for f\*ck sakes!" the group leader cursed with growing anxiety as the distant sound of destruction drew closer.

As the group of seven black-robed figures broke out of the ground and continued to flee southward to the southern exit leading out of the Blackmoon Region, a heavy gust of wind blew back their black hoods and revealed their appearances.

Seven men, but neither of them looked human—not complete humans at the very least. Some had unnatural yellow eyes with sharp pupils, some had furry skin, some had large fangs, and some had wolf-like ears.

Regardless, each group member possessed at least two-to-three distinct traits related to wolves, making them greatly resemble Werewolves and Lycans.

However, it was unconfirmed whether they possessed similar abilities.

Nevertheless, none of the seven wolf-men cared about their exposed appearances out in the wild as they made their escape.

There was no one else in the vicinity—no one except Horned Rabbits that occasionally popped out of the ground before burrowing back into their holes out of fright as the wolf-men group rushed past them.

"We can't outrun them, Hawdyns!" the wolf-man lagging behind in the rear cried out the group leader's name. "What should we do?!"

Boom!"

As the wolf-man desperately asked for a solution, a column of soil suddenly rose in the sky in their rear as Astoria Braveheart blasted her way out of the ground.

Hawdyns briefly turned his head to check the rear before his expression turned grave.

"Headmaster Astoria!" Hawdyns cried with despair after realizing a High Witch was chasing them. Escape was impossible.

Astoria Braveheart's sudden appearance quickly eliminated the wolf-men group's hopes of escaping.

However, that didn't stop the group of wolf-men from fleeing with all their might. They would struggle until the end, no matter how helpless the situation seemed.

Hawdyns took out a single-use magic tool that looked like a firecracker before firing their Assembly of Silent Night's unique distress signal into the high skies, alerting the organization's neighboring branches of the Blackmoon City Branch's desperate situation.

However, Hawdyns wasn't hoping help would come by alerting the neighboring branches with the distress signal.

Outside the seven witch kingdoms, the Assembly of Silent Night's unique distress signal would naturally deliver a "we are in trouble, so please send help" message.

But within the seven witch kingdoms, the distress signal could only mean, "We are f\*cked. Don't come here."

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Shortly after Astoria Braveheart shot out of the ground, Istana Gleriath and Ember Killian also flew out of the large hole a few moments later.

They quickly locked onto the fleeing group in the distance before jumping straight into a hot pursuit with Flight Magic.

Even so, Istana Gleriath and Ember Killian failed to keep up with Astoria Braveheart, who increased her speed by several notches, kicking up dust storms with every powerful step she took.

With another powerful step, Astoria Braveheart directly launched herself into the air, pouncing down on the nearest wolf-men ahead, pinning the person to the ground, even breaking a few bones in the process of immobilizing the person.

"Ahhh! Save me!"

The wolf-man cried for help, but none of the other six wolf-men turned back. It was every man for themselves.

Nevertheless, Astoria Braveheart didn't stop at one. She quickly chased the next target, pinning them down with another big pounce from above before moving on to another after the target was incapacitated.

Just like that, Astoria Braveheart rounded up the wolf-men one by one.

Hawdyns, the strongest within the group, put up the greatest struggle. He even tried to grope Astoria Braveheart's breast for a window opportunity of escaping by disgusting her.

However, he failed miserably.

Astoria Braveheart stepped on Hawdyns' balls and destroyed his manhood, causing his wail to shake the heavens and earth before he lost all strength and laid on the ground like a defeated dog.

That day, the earth cried. The wolf-men cried. Hawdyns' future generations also cried.

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After Istana Gleriath and Ember Killian caught up, dragging the other incapacitated wolf-men, they each selected a target to interrogate.

"Where is he?!" Astoria Braveheart barked with one leg planted on Hawdyns' head, suppressing the person underneath her feet as he laid curled up on the ground.

"W-who?" Hawdyns uttered with difficulty as he endured the pain in his nether region with a pale and sweaty face.

"Don't play dumb with me! You know who! Where is Vaan Raphna's body?! Where has your organization taken his body?!" Astoria Braveheart questioned harshly, feeling very certain that Vaan Raphna's body was taken elsewhere as it wasn't in the basement of the third-story building she demolished.

However, Hawdyns was utterly dumbfounded by her question.

"Vaan Raphna?!"

Hawdyns gritted his teeth, feeling indignant at the sheer ridiculousness of the situation.

"Who the hell is Vaan Raphna!"

Chapter 105: Silver Hawk

Sunset Forest-Shadowacre Swamp

Northwest of the Redpine Region, a group of five wolf-men reached the eastern outskirts of Sunset Forest and gazed at the dark swampy land in the distance.

"Shadowacre Swamp is just ahead of us. If everything is going according to plan, Marquis Delarosa's daughters should not have passed Shadowacre Swamp yet," Black Crow stated while surveilling the region ahead.

"However, we don't have much time before they do. This is our last chance to complete the mission, so don't f\*ck it up."

"Everyone remembers the plan?" Black Crow stared at the group and sought their confirmation.

"Of course. Not exactly a difficult plan to remember," Poison Claw casually shrugged before recalling, "Incite the monsters in the swamp and make them attack Marquis Delarosa's daughter's group."

"It would be great if the swamp monsters could finish them off. That way, we won't have to take the risk of exposing ourselves," Poison Claw added.

"For something like that to happen, we would have to incite the lord of the swamp at the very least," Silver Horn calmly stated.

"However, that would also put us in danger, not to mention we don't exactly know where the lord of the swamp is dwelling. It's good enough that we can make use of the other monsters in the swamp. They are mostly rank 2 monsters."



"Anyway, we don't have a lot of time. Bring the Raging Blood Potion and monster meat over here. We need to prepare the scene before our targets arrive," Silver Horn urged.

Shortly after, Blood Knife hurled the heavy carcass of a Forest Boar over while dragging a barrel of crimson solution in the other.

"The Rank 1 Raging Blood Potion was hastily made without a proper cauldron and fire source. Would it even be effective on rank 2 monsters?" Blood Knife nonchalantly asked.

"Even cheap alcohol can get a man drunk as long as there is enough of it. We've prepared quite a bit of the Raging Blood Potion, so you don't have to worry about that, Blood Knife," Black Crow reassured.

Rustle...

The leaves in the forest suddenly rustled unnaturally before the whole wolf-men group's expression changed in an instant.

"Enem—"

Before Black Crow could finish alerting the group, numerous shadows descended from the trees above and suppressed the entire group in an instance.

Black Crow and the other group members all had their limbs immobilized, and their heads pressed into the ground tightly, making it difficult for them to utter a word.

Nevertheless, Black Crow forced himself to look up at their assailants from the corner of his eyes. After catching one of their faces under the hoods, his expression froze.

"Silver Hawk," Black Crow uttered through the gaps in his gritted teeth.

When the other Peak C-rank hunters in the group heard the name, their expressions also froze in shock.

"Silver Hawk, the B-rank hunter in the organization? What the hell are you doing?! We work for the same organization!" Blood Knife forcefully uttered with anger.

"What are we doing? That is what we should be asking you guys! What the hell is a group of Peak C-rank hunters from the organization doing in a B-rank restricted zone?" Silver Hawk coolly interrogated.

Black Crow and his team found themselves outmatched in both numbers and strength as Silver Hawk's group of thirteen B-rank hunters kept them suppressed.

"We are going after our mission's targets. Shadowacre Swamp is the ideal place to eliminate them without exposing our traces," Silver Horn explained with difficulty.

"The mission's target?" Silver Hawk glanced at Silver Horn with narrowed eyes before they flickered with a sharp glint. "So you lots are the fools who f\*cked up and ruined the organization's big plans in the Black Rose Kingdom. I should just cut you all down right here, you useless sons of b\*tches."

"What the hell are you talking about, Silver Hawk! Just because you are all B-rankers doesn't mean you can bully us like this! We haven't f\*cked up yet! So stop interfering with our work!" Blood Knife spat angrily.

"Haven't f\*cked up yet?" Silver Hawk muttered with a cold glint.

Silver Hawk quickly released his hold on Black Crow and crouched in front of Blood Knife before pulling his hair up for their eyes to meet.

"You think a mere C-ranker like you can treat us, B-rankers, like idiots? If you haven't f\*cked up your mission yet, then where the hell is the rest of your team?" Silver Hawk interrogated coldly before adding, "Because of your f\*ck up, everyone has to flee and hide from the kingdom's pursuit now."

"What the hell are you talking about!" Blood Knife's anger boiled like Black Crow and the others.

"Do you think our team members are missing because we failed an assassination attempt on our targets?! That wasn't it! We were attacked by a pack of Rank 2 Dark Hellhounds and even a Rank 3 because that crazy Lord B\*tch from Blackmoon City incited them!"

"Then why don't you tell me why the Lord of Blackmoon City incited the Dark Hellhounds in the Blackmoon Region in the first place?"

"How the f\*ck would I know what's wrong with that crazy b\*tch? Maybe someone pissed on her ancestor's grave or something! And what the hell do you mean by everyone has to flee and hide from the kingdom's pursuit?! What the hell is going on?!" Blood Knife questioned with boiling rage as much as he was confused like everyone else.

Silver Hawk studied Black Crow's group's expressions before turning to his own group members for confirmation.

After receiving their nods, Silver Hawk muttered with a frown, "Seems like you lot truly don't know what's going on."

"Nevertheless, your group will still be held accountable for the current mess. News of our organization accepting the commission to assassinate Marquis Delarosa's daughters had already been leaked. It may have been a trap from the start. The branch in Blackmoon City has already been destroyed. And it won't be long before the other branches in the kingdom are purged as well.

"Anyway, we need to hide in the depths of Red Goblin Mountains if we want to survive through this storm," Silver Hawk stated.

Black Crow and his group regained freedom of their movements before Blood Knife asked, "Why Red Goblin Mountains?"

"The Red Goblin Mountains is under the influence of the Curse of the Purple Umbala, which affects the activation of magic and weakens the effect of aura. It's the perfect place for us, whose bodies aren't reliant on magic or aura, to seek refuge," Silver Hawk coolly explained.

"However, it's not just the perfect place to seek refuge. If the witches and their minions dare to come looking for us in the depths of the Red Goblin Mountains, it will become their grave."

When Blood Knife heard that, his eyes glowed with excitement.

"I like the sound of that," Blood Knife commented.

"Hmph!" Silver Hawk snorted with disdain as he looked at Blood Knife's uncontrolled lust for witch blood. "If you want to follow us, get rid of the beast carcass and barrel. We don't need to bring anything that would slow us down."

"What about our mission targets?" Black Crow asked with a frown.

"Give it up. I can understand what your plan was, and I can say with certainty that it's not going to work. It's a sh\*tty plan," Silver Hawk disparaged before adding, "Do you even know who is escorting your mission targets?"

"Isn't it just a Rank 2 Aura Master and a lousy group of new recruits from the Steelguard Escort Group?" Black Crow raised his eyebrow with a frown.

"Heh, if it was just them, then your plan might have succeeded," Silver Hawk snickered with contempt and said, "You pieces of trash truly don't know anything. What the hell were you even doing with your time?"

"The Lord of Redpine City sent her strongest Senior Witch and elite retainers to escort Marquis Delarosa's daughters to the next city. Even if we joined you, we wouldn't have succeeded—not without taking heavy losses on our side, that is."

After Black Crow and his group listened to Silver Hawk's derision, their lips twitched. However, they didn't argue back.

If they hadn't wasted so much time waiting for their mission targets on Hobgoblin's Road, they could have easily learned the strength of the mission targets' escort beforehand.

Alas, they were outwitted by their mission targets.

"Anyway, we've wasted enough time here on you pieces of trash. Come if you want to come. Stay if you want to stay. My team won't be waiting for you lots to keep up," Silver Hawk suddenly stated before informing his group of B-rank hunters, "We're moving."

Shortly after, the group of B-rank hunters followed Silver Hawk into the Sunset Forest without further delay, using the forest's cover to make their way to the Red Goblin Mountains.

"Let us go too. They're a bunch of bastards, but they were absolutely right. Although I don't know how the f\*ck the Blackmoon City Branch was destroyed, we have to stick with Silver Hawk's group for a higher chance of survival," Black Crow stated.

Silver Horn and the others in the group nodded and shortly disappeared with Black Crow into the depths of Sunset Forest, following Silver Hawk's group's trail, even if they disliked them.

"Goddammit," the silent Poison Claw uttered with frustration as he dusted off the dirt on his clothes. Then he wondered, "Just what the hell happened for the Blackmoon City Branch to be destroyed anyway?"

"We're just as clueless as you are. Perhaps, Silver Hawk and his men will know more about it," Silver Horn guessed before adding, "My best bet is that it had something to do with why that crazy b\*tch lord incited the Dark Hellhounds."

"Sigh! We haven't done sh\*t, and we are already getting all the blame," Blood Knife spat with frustration before swearing, "If I find out which mother f\*cker was behind all this, I'll make sure he dies horribly!"

Chapter 106: Grand Library

Redpine City, Helia's Castle

After Vaan returned to the castle's library, he gave Cyrena Ashenborn self-study time to catch up on all of her neglected fields of study as there was no need to personally teach her the basics, something she could learn on her own.

Fortunately, Cyrena Ashenborn agreed without complaints. Restoring her hope in magic had certainly made her more willing to learn other things besides potioning.

Nevertheless, after getting Cyrena Ashenborn's agreement to study on her own, Vaan succeeded in freeing up his schedule to do other things for the day.

Vaan first headed to the library's entrance to reclaim his fang daggers and utility belt.

After collecting his belongings, he thought about his next destination when Hester Thornton arrived to keep him company.

"I hope I am not bothering you with my presence, Teacher Cadieux. However, I do have a duty to keep you safe," Hester Thornton stated, hoping for Vaan's understanding.

Of course, Vaan was aware that Hester Thornton offered more surveillance than protection. Even so, her arrival decided his next destination.

"Not at all, Lady Hester. It's my honor and joy to have a beauty such as yourself to keep me company," Vaan replied with a smile before adding, "Furthermore, you came at just the right time."

"I would like to visit the public libraries in the city. Would that be possible with your presence?" Vaan asked shortly after.

"Of course, Teacher Cadieux. Lord Helia had already granted you access. No one will bar your entry with me around," Hester Thornton replied with a light smile but otherwise unmoved by Vaan's casual compliment.

It became clear that Hester Thornton was used to receiving such compliments, which Vaan didn't find surprising in the least.

As the second strongest Senior Witch under Helia Ashenborn's command, Hester Thornton had no lack of suitors and admirers.

Even so, Hester Thornton's beauty was still overshadowed by Helia Ashenborn's seven daughters.

However, Vaan found a lady like Hester Thornton to be more charming than Helia Ashenborn's daughters, who were born with silver spoons and lived like royalties, with the exception of Cyrena Ashenborn.

In Vaan's eyes, Cyrena Ashenborn was still an unpolished gem covered in mud compared to her six elder sisters, who all seemed rotten based on his brief first impression of them.

All witches were peerlessly beautiful, but they still had differences that set them worlds apart from one another.

Hester Thornton's charm lies in her maturity, elegance, and experience as someone who toiled through life and rose to her position purely by her own effort.

"Nevertheless, I must say, an excellent man such as yourself shouldn't carelessly compliment other witches, especially if you are betrothed to Young Lady Linette, Teacher Cadieux. You might get in trouble if the Delarosa Household mistakenly thought you were having affairs with other witches."

Hester Thornton suddenly commented just when she seemed to have no opinion on Vaan's compliment.

"Your worries are unfounded, Lady Hester," Vaan calmly smiled before saying, "Despite how I look, I am still a witch descendent. As such, I am not forbidden from the benefits I may gain by indulging in sensual practices."

"As proof of that, I have been taught the art of pleasure and mastered it to a high level. I dare say my pleasure skills won't pale to the services offered by other men in the red-light district," Vaan claimed.

In the present era of magic, where the benefits of dual sensual practices are undeniably effective for the vast majority of witches and male witch descendants that don't have access to rich resources and miraculous medicine, sex was just business and love was another matter.

"Oh? If it was another man that said that, I would have doubted. But since Teacher Cadieux has been credible thus far, I have no choice but to believe it," Hester Thornton replied with interest before she suppressed her curiosity.

"My curiosity aside, I shouldn't delay your business any longer. There are a number of libraries in the city. Which one would you like to go to first, Teacher Cadieux?"

"Which one is the largest?" Vaan asked.

"That would be the Redpine Grand Library."

"Then, that's where I would like to go."

"As you wish, Teacher Cadieux."

Shortly after deciding on their destination, Hester Thornton led Vaan to the eastern district, where the Redpine Grand Library was located. Coincidentally, it wasn't that far from Redpine Academy.

"W-Welcome, Lady Hester! It's an honor for us to be graced by your visit," a female librarian with brown hair and hazel eyes like Hester Thornton greeted with overzealous respect.

"Control yourself, Bellona," Hester Thornton calmly dispersed the female librarian's excitement with a single sentence before informing her, "I am here on official business today."

"Teacher Cadieux at my side is Lord Helia's most important guest. I'm not sure if you've been informed, but Lord Helia has permitted Teacher Cadieux to freely peruse the knowledge in the city's libraries."

"As such, I hope you will pass the word to everyone working at Redpine Grand Library and ensure that Teacher Cadieux will not be inconvenienced by any matter during his visit," Hester Thornton stated.

"T-Teacher Cadieux? I-I mean, I understand, Lady Hester!"

The female librarian was greatly surprised by the amount of respect given to Vaan, but she complied with prying nonetheless.

"I will make sure no one will bother or make trouble with Teacher Cadieux during his stay," the female librarian solemnly promised as if she had been handed a great task.

Nevertheless, Hester Thornton eased her with a pat on the shoulder and said, "Relax, Bellona. No need to be so serious. I will also be here to prevent such troubles from happening. Just go and do what I asked."

"U-Understood, Lady Hester."

Nevertheless, after Hester Thornton settled the trivial matters for Vaan, he focused on the vastness of the library.



The Redpine Grand Library was a large tower-like building with fifteen floors, each floor designed with the bookshelves built into its walls in a circular pattern and could be clearly seen from the center of the grand library.

Furthermore, there was a circular counter in the center area, where several other librarians stood within, assisting visiting witches with their book searches.

Vaan witnessed multiple books either flying down from their shelves or returning to them.

#### Chapter 107: The Third Great Expedition

After Vaan received the cue to freely explore the grand library as he wished, he went straight up to the second floor with Hester Thorton following several paces behind him.

When men walked directly in front of other witches like Vaan did, it was generally regarded as a form of disrespect and disregard.

Multiple True Witches and a few Early-stage Senior Witches on the second floor were startled by the bold man walking in front of Hester Thornton.

Vaan quickly felt the growing hostile gazes, but it only lasted briefly before they were dispelled by Hester Thornton's warning gaze towards the witches.

Within moments, only curious and cautious gazes remained as the witches became aware that Vaan could be someone even more important than Hester Thornton.

The realization startled them.

Vaan couldn't help but feel like he was drawing too much attention, but it wasn't exactly a bad thing. At the very least, it saved him time as no one dared to approach and strike up a conversation with him.

The witches could only whisper curiously among themselves.

Nevertheless, Vaan eventually ignored the attention he received and focused on the bookshelves filled with countless knowledge.

Potioneering... artificing... magic theories... magic spells... enchantments... study of ancient languages... demonology... study of beasts... study of plants... abominations... history... records of the three eras and five great events... personal insights of notable witches...

The Redpine Grand Library covered a wide range of topics—if not everything.

As Vaan briefly browsed the second floor and went up to the third floor, he quickly discovered the pattern behind the arrangement of knowledge in the grand library.

The hundreds of thousands of books within the grand library weren't arranged based on their topics but their value.

Only the most basic knowledge could be found on the second floor, while the third to fifth floor contained knowledge at the level of True Witches.

The sixth to the twelfth floor was restricted to Senior Witch-level knowledge, and the thirteenth to fifteenth floor held High Witch-level knowledge.

As for Transcendent Witch-level knowledge, it was almost non-existent. Whatever Transcendent Witch-level knowledge the Redpine Grand Library possessed, it was mixed with the High Witch-level knowledge on the fifteenth floor.

Not every witch could access the knowledge on the upper floors—not unless they possessed sufficient privilege or authority.

However, Vaan was a special exception due to Helia Ashenborn's authority.

All the knowledge back in the Blackmoon Academy's library was mainly at the True Witch and Senior Witch levels.

As such, Vaan eventually stopped on the thirteenth floor.

There are far too many books in the grand library, and Vaan's time was limited. Thus, he decided to start with the most valuable knowledge and eventually work his way down if he had enough time to absorb everything the grand library had to offer.

Vaan had a bottomless appetite for knowledge.

'If I wasn't gifted, god knows how many lifetimes it would have taken me to read through everything in this library,' Vaan mused wryly.

After shaking his head, Vaan began making his way over to the abomination-related book section.

But just before Vaan reached the book section pertaining to abominations, he stumbled across the history book section. There, a book quickly caught his attention.

"Compendium of the Third Great Expedition..." Vaan muttered thoughtfully before picking out the thick black book from the bookshelf.

The black book was already over a decade old, but it was still in perfect condition, enchanted by magic as seen by the big magic circle engraved on the front and back cover, glowing the color of blue mana.

It was treated like a grimoire.

In fact, all the books on the thirteenth floor and above were enchanted with protection and anti-deterioration magic.

"Are you also interested in the Third Great Expedition, Teacher Cadieux?" Hester Thornton asked, her curiosity piqued by Vaan's first book selection. But then, she realized she had disturbed Vaan.

"My apologies, Teacher Cadieux. I didn't mean to disturb you. Please forget I said anything and continue what you were doing."

"No, it's fine. It's not bad to have a talking buddy," Vaan casually replied with a shake of his head before admitting, "I do happen to be interested in the Third Great Exploration. I'm an orphan, after all."

Hester Thornton's eyes flickered with understanding as soon as she heard Vaan's claim and felt she could sympathize with him.

"An orphan... Many children became orphans at the end of the Third Great Expedition," Hester Thornton mentioned.

"Although the raid on Fuhengir's Domain was a success, many Senior Witches and Aura Grandmasters fell during the raid. Even a few High Witches were gravely injured during the big battle with the Demon Wolf King Fuhengir."

"I heard Marquis Delarosa still hasn't recovered from the injuries she sustained in that raid. I can now understand why you were groomed by the Delarosa Household, Teacher Cadieux. Your parents must have been one of Marquis Delarosa's closest retainers."

"I am also an orphan as a result of the great expeditions. However, the Second Great Expedition was where I lost my parents," Hester Thornton mentioned before adding with a self-deprecating smile, "Alas, I wasn't so fortunate to be raised by any notable household."

"Are you trying to learn more about your parents' heroic feats during the Third Great Expedition, Teacher Cadieux?" Hester Thornton asked shortly after she stopped dwelling on her past.

Nevertheless, Vaan could only reply with a wry smile.

"Actually, I was never told who my parents were, so I am trying to learn who they were by studying records related to the Third Great Expedition," Vaan bullshitted.

Although it was true that Vaan did not know who the birth parents of his body were, it wasn't his reason for picking up the Compendium of the Third Great Expedition.

Vaan just felt like there was a connection between the etherstone he inherited, which housed the system, and the Third Great Expedition, where the seven witch kingdoms joined forces under the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose to raid the Demon Wolf King Fuhengir's Domain.

It just didn't seem unrelated to how he possessed the Immortal Lycan Bloodline.

#### Chapter 108: Unverified Knowledge

The Demon Wolf King Fuhengir wasn't just a powerful rank five demon beast from the Gehenna Realm and one of the Evil Wolf God Kezan's descendants.

After Balmodon the Undying stole the Evil Wolf God Kezan's divinity, Balmodon the Undying also made the Demon Wolf King Fuhengir one of his pets.

Fuhengir's Domain, the target of the Third Great Expedition, was just a tiny section of the vast territory under Balmodon's rule in the Gehenna Realm.

And although the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose succeeded in felling Fuhengir during the raid, the people on the human side came to learn how insignificant their strengths were compared to the seven Great Devils of the Gehenna Realm.

The seven Great Devils were divine existences that far surpassed rank five; they stood at a level of power that even the seven Transcendent Witches have yet to reach.

As such, academics had always been well respected in the seven witch kingdoms. They were the pioneers of magic who would someday help humanity cross the insurmountable difference between Transcendent Witches and the Great Devils.

Until then, humanity could only be at the mercy of the Great Devils, not knowing when the Great Devils would decide to erase them from existence.

...

As Vaan flipped through the pages in the Compendium of the Third Great Expedition and absorbed the information at a speed that would leave others in shock and disbelief, he learned more about the Third Great Expedition than what the Blackmoon Academy's library had to offer.

"Are you just skimming through the Compendium of the Third Great Expedition, Teacher Cadieux?" Hester Thornton asked with doubt.

"Hm, you can put it that way, Lady Hester," Vaan casually replied before adding, "I've read about the Third Great Expedition before, but none in a book as thick as this one. It has some interesting and new information."

"Oh?" Hester Thornton uttered with some interest.

Seeing how quickly Vaan flipped through the pages filled with words, it was hard for her to imagine he could have absorbed any new information.

Hester Thornton decided to ask, "What did you find new and interesting in the Compendium of the Third Great Expedition, Teacher Cadieux?"

"Compared to what I've previously read about the Third Great Expedition, the Compendium of the Third Great Expedition further details the name and level of the participants, as well as the aftermath of the raid," Vaan replied.

However, Vaan's eyes were fixed on the book, and his hands never stopped flipping through the thick black book as he absorbed new information, more specifically about the aftermath of the raid.

"It said that after Furehengir was slain, the expedition survivors were forced to retreat from the Gehenna Realm because of a more fearsome pressure than Furehengir's that descended towards them," Vaan mentioned.

"Ah, yes. I have also heard about that," Hester Thornton affirmed with a nod and added, "Everyone believed the fearsome pressure belonged to Balmodon the Undying. That is how we've come to believe that there were greater existences than rank five, such as the Great Devils."

"However, what's even more interesting is that after Furehengir's body was brought back from the Gehenna Realm, there was a dispute over its ownership with the other six witch kingdoms despite Her Majesty, the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose, being the sole leader of the expedition," Vaan continued.

"The other six witch kingdoms only supplied some troops for the expedition, yet they wanted an equal share of Furehengir's body for study purposes. Faced with the pressure of the other six Transcendent Witches, Her Majesty was forced to agree to the division of Furehengir's body."

"Our kingdom could only keep the head, while the other six witch kingdoms divided the body among themselves," Vaan mentioned.

"Yes, I do recall such an event happening. It was a great shame for our kingdom. Even just thinking about it makes my blood boil," Hester Thornton said with a rare show of anger. "We expended the most effort in the expedition and also suffered the most casualties, yet we have to share our prize with the other kingdoms."

"Ha, to make it even worse, one of the witch kingdoms failed to bring their share of Furhengir's body back to their kingdom and lost it to a third party who eyed Furhengir's valuable body," Vaan commented with amusement after reading that piece of information.

"Well, it wasn't the first time it happened," Hester Thornton said with a sigh.

"Similar incidents also happened after the first and second great expeditions. The rarities our ruler brought back from the Gehenna Realm were divided by other kingdoms and lost in the process of transference each time."

"I believe the incidents almost sparked a war between the witch kingdoms when it happened as well," Hester Thornton recalled.

"I see..."

Vaan rubbed his chin thoughtfully after closing the Compendium of the Third Great Expedition.

Once could be a coincidence. But when it happens a second and third time, it could no longer be regarded as such. There was definitely something going behind the scenes.

Nevertheless, the other witch kingdoms couldn't persecute the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose without proof, and a war between witch kingdoms had more losses than benefits.

The other witch kingdoms could only endure the losses and blame their own incompetence for losing the goods

Vaan continued to spend some more time in the history section, digging up more information that wasn't available at the Blackmoon Academy's library.

"Is it really fine for a man like me to learn such valuable knowledge here?" Vaan sought Hester Thornton's confirmation.

"Of course, Teacher Cadieux. Since Lord Helia has granted you full access, she is not one to go back on her words," Hester Thornton assured.

"Besides, a lot of knowledge on the grand library's upper floors is unverified. This is why even Senior Witches with some level of privileges can access the thirteenth floor and higher, even though most of the knowledge on these upper floors is considered at the level of High Witch."

"If this was in Blackthorn City, Senior Witches can only dream of accessing such information. But because it is unverified, we can bypass the official restriction set down by Her Majesty," Hester Thornton explained.

Chapter 109: Improvement Target

"I see..." Vaan uttered thoughtfully after listening to Hester Thornton's words.

In other words, there was a chance that the knowledge from the books on the upper floors was all fake. Such is what it meant to be unverified.

Nevertheless, Vaan felt peculiar and amused by the discovery.

Whether the knowledge is verified or unverified, it would still be breaking the law to peruse High Witch-level knowledge, which was considered restricted knowledge, without the adequate privilege or level.

Thus, even if the rule of the Black Rose Kingdom overlooks it with one eye closed, it could be used as a reason to screw someone over at any time.

Basically, everyone who had perused knowledge on the thirteenth floor and higher had committed a crime. But when and where they will be punished will be entirely up to the whims of the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose, ruler of the Black Rose Kingdom.

However, since Vaan received permission from Helia Ashenborn, the blame would fall on her. It was the same when Eniwse permitted Vaan to read the books in the Blackmoon Academy's library.

If Vaan wanted to screw Helia Ashenborn over, he could report to the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose that she was letting countless Senior Witches peruse restricted knowledge in the grand library.

But for Vaan to do that, he had to be important enough to meet the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose, not to mention he had to be sure the Transcendent Witch of Black Rose was willing to administer the punishment.



Although it's not a very good card, it was a card Vaan could use, nonetheless—if the situation ever requires it.

...

For most of the day, Vaan spent his time in the grand library, perusing the knowledge on the thirteenth to the fifteenth floor.

Vaan covered many topics besides the history and abomination-related topics he initially sought. This showed Hester Thornton that Vaan didn't have any particular goal and simply had a bottomless appetite for all knowledge.

As the day darkened, Vaan covered everything he needed to know in the abomination section, which simply reinforced the plan he had formulated in his mind.

'Before I enter the Red Goblin Mountains, I need to raise my strength level to around the middle stages of rank two. It will be even better if I can also improve my regeneration skill to the mid-rank,' Vaan mused before checking his abilities.

'Status.'

Ding!

=====

[Status]

<<Name>>

[Vaan Raphna (Vahn Cadieux)]

<<Race>>

[Human (90%), Devil (10%)]

<<Bloodline>>

[Spatial Bloodline (Heaven-rank)]

[Immortal Lycan Bloodline (Divine-rank)]

<<Age>>

[20 (Body), 31 (Soul)]

<<Unique Physique>>

[Heaven-Swallowing Physique (Heaven-rank) (Upgradeable)]

[Earth Spirit Body (Low-rank) (Upgradeable)]

[Immortal Lycan Physique (Low-rank) (Upgradeable)]

<<Cultivation>>

[N/A]

<<Spirit Contract/s>>

[Topaz (Named Spirit) (Mid-rank Earth Spirit)]

<<Skills>>

[Intermediate-level Weaponcrafting]

[Expert-level Heavenly Massage]

[Intermediate-level Hand-to-Hand Combat]

[Intermediate-level Cloud Evading Steps]

[Expert-level Mental Focus]

[Expert-level Magical Foundation]

[Expert-level Mana Application]

[Expert-level Mineral Interaction]

[Intermediate-level Dagger Mastery]

[Expert-level Observation]

[Basic-level Ancient Language]

[Expert-level Potioneering Knowledge]

[Expert-level Artificing Knowledge]

[Etc..]

<<Ability>>

[Heaven-Swallowing Space (High-rank) (Upgradeable)]

[Magic Vision (Low-rank) (Upgradeable)]

[Regeneration (Low-rank) (Upgradeable)]

[Earth Acceleration (Low-rank) (Upgradeable)]

[Earth Manipulation (Contract-dependant)]

[Telepathy (Contract-only) (Non-Upgradeable)]

[Wisdom From the Void (Heaven-rank)]

[Name Bestowal (Divine-rank) (Non-Upgradeable)]

[Blessing of the Moon (Low-rank) (Physique-Dependant)]

<<Physical Attributes>>

[150 Defense]

[25 Strength]

[32 Speed]

...

<<Topaz's Mana Capacity>>

[264/251 (Over-Limit)]

<<Elemental Affinity>>

[50% Earth]

<<Elemental Resistance>>

[50% Earth]

...

====

Vaan looked at his physical attributes before noticing his strength and speed had slightly increased by a few points.

Although the numerical point system seemed to have a more precise representation of his present capabilities, it didn't follow the world's power ranking system.

'Add the present world's power ranking system to my physical attributes according to my knowledge,' Vaan willed.

...

Ding!

=====

<<Physical Attributes>>

[150 Defense] [Mid-level Rank 2]

[25 Strength] [Low-level Rank 1]

[32 Speed] [Low-level Rank 1]

...

=====

Looking at the updated status, Vaan roughly guessed the 20 attribute points were the minimum of Rank 1 and around 100 attribute points for Rank 2.

'About 75 attribute points in strength are needed to reach Rank 2, huh? It looks like I'll be busy for a while,' Vaan mused as he thought of a plan to acquire the necessary strength.

"Teacher Cadieux," Hester Thornton suddenly called out before inquiring, "It is almost time for dinner. Would you like to return to Helia's Castle and join Lord Helia for dinner? You can come back later to further your reading?"

"It's already that time, huh? Time sure flies," Vaan glanced around before putting his book back on its shelf. "Sure, Lady Hester. I apologize if I may have bored you with my reading time here."

"Not at all, Teacher Cadieux. It was fascinating to watch you read," Hester Thornton joked with a smile, putting particular emphasis on the word 'read.'

Naturally, Hester Thornton was talking about Vaan flipping through the pages, which caught many witches' attention and made them upset.

After all, from their perspectives, Vaan simply came to the grand library to fool around instead of being earnest in acquiring new knowledge.

Alas, they could never comprehend Vaan's reading speed unless it was told to them.

After Vaan responded to Hester Thornton with a slight smile, he said, "I'm done here for the day, so there's no need for us to come back after dinner."

"However, it is a pity..." Vaan suddenly added.

"What is a pity, Teacher Cadieux?" Hester Thornton paused after noticing Vaan's disappointed look.

"It's a pity that I won't be able to visit the red-light district during my stay in Redpine City—at least not with the Zeller's Curse plaguing the city."

"You don't have to worry too much about that, Teacher Cadieux. It will only take five days at most until the businesses in the red-light district resume," Hester Thornton assured.

However, Vaan shook his head with a wry smile.

"Even three days is a bit long. But more importantly, I won't feel safe visiting even after five days. After all, it's hard to say whether Zeller's Curse would resurface or not. I wouldn't want to risk losing my little brother in a place that has been affected by Zeller's Curse."

"I'm sure we can come up with some other arrangements for you back at Helia's Castle if you need a dual practice partner, Teacher Cadieux," Hester Thornton stated before mentioning, "I wouldn't mind becoming your dual practice partner either."

"I am a little curious about those pleasure skills you've previously said to have mastered," Hester Thornton added with a rare look of anticipation.

#### Chapter 110: Headmaster Tabitha's Condition

After returning to Helia's Castle, Vaan joined Helia Ashenborn for dinner in the Great Hall. The table and chairs were already set up, and the food was already laid out upon his arrival.

Surprisingly, only Helia Ashenborn was present at the dining table.

Helia Ashenborn waved her hand and dismissed Hester Thornton and the rest of the servants from the Great Hall, leaving Vaan and her alone.

"I'm sure you've already heard from Hester, but please join me for dinner, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn gestured to the seats in front of her before continuing, "You don't have to worry about my daughters joining us for dinner."

"I've sent them elsewhere to make it more comfortable for you," Helia Ashenborn added.

Evidently, Helia Ashenborn hadn't overlooked her daughters' attitude during their first meeting with Vaan and was aware of their condescending attitudes.

Yet despite that, Helia Ashenborn simply sent them to have dinner elsewhere instead of educating them about Vaan's importance and how to treat him.

A dozen thoughts flashed across Vaan's mind before he guessed it was Helia Ashenborn's way of handling her children.

One of her children will eventually succeed her and become the new lord of Redpine City one day. But until then, she will only observe and select the most worthy successor among her children rather than nurture one from the start.

"I am flattered by Lord Helia's consideration," Vaan expressed his gratefulness before smiling wryly, "However, I'm afraid this will only make the young ladies dislike me even more. They will feel like I, a man, is more important than them."

"Which is not wrong, though it isn't generally the case," Helia Ashenborn casually replied.

"However, behind you stands the Delarosa Household, and we have a business partnership. Thus, even if you are a man, your importance exceeds theirs."

"If my daughters cannot collect the information to understand that much, then none of them are ready to succeed me," Helia Ashenborn coolly stated.

Vaan silently acknowledged with a nod.

Sure enough, it was Helia Ashenborn's way of raising her children. It was her way of testing her children and finding her successor.

"In any case, I've invited you to dinner with just the two of us, so we can discuss official business in private, Sir Vahn. You've been quite busy in the grand library, but I haven't been idle either," Helia Ashenborn brought up.

"Headmaster Tabitha has granted you permission to enter the academy and freely peruse the knowledge in the library. However, it is based on one condition."

"Oh? What condition would that be, Lord Helia?" Vaan asked.



"Headmaster Tabitha's condition is for you to work as a part-time library assistant in the academy," Helia Ashenborn stated.

"If you agree, you can freely peruse the library knowledge, whether on-duty or off-duty. But in the case that the librarian finds your work inadequate, you can be dismissed from your job, and your library access will be revoked."

"There's no need for me to send a letter to Headmaster Tabitha if you agree to her condition. It will be taken as you have agreed if you step foot into Redpine Academy," Helia Ashenborn informed him.

"I see..." Vaan uttered with a thoughtful look.

The condition to peruse the knowledge in the Redpine Academy's library was not much different from his situation back in the Blackmoon Academy's library.

So long as the librarian was easy-going and didn't make things difficult for him, he would have an easier time in the academy.

'Redpine Academy is a higher-rank magic academy than Blackmoon Academy. The knowledge in their library shouldn't be too shabby. Even if the librarian is a difficult person to deal with, I can put up with it for the potential gain,' Vaan mused.

"Also, I have also looked into obtaining an Atomic Visualizer for you, Sir Vahn. However, I must say I have underestimated the rarity and value of Atomic Visualizers," Helia Ashenborn mentioned.

"Oh? Is it difficult to obtain one, Lord Helia?" Vaan inquired.

"It is. This is the main reason I wished to speak to you over dinner, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn stated before continuing, "There was actually one on the market. Unfortunately, I was a step too late."

"It was purchased by Wise Scholar Sacha from the Redpine Academy not long ago. Although there is another Atomic Visualizer on the market. It's not from the local market. I will have to fetch it from another city."

"Furthermore, the price is not small. It will cost at least 120 high-rank mana stones to secure it," Helia Ashenborn stated.

"120 high-rank mana stones are 12,000 low-rank mana stones... that is definitely not a small sum," Vaan muttered in thought.

The currency in the seven witch kingdoms was divided into low and high currencies.

Low currencies include the most commonly used metal coins, such as copper, silver, and gold. Rarer metals also fall under the category of low currency.

On the other hand, high currency dealt with mana stones, which were divided into ranks based on their concentration of mana, ranging from low to high.

Higher ranks than high-rank mana stones exist but are generally not that common to be found on the market.

After contemplating for a moment, Vaan looked up at Helia Ashenborn.

"In other words, Lord Helia was hoping I could find a way to borrow the Atomic Visualizer from Wise Scholar Sacha—should I enter the academy?" Vaan asked.

"That's right," Helia Ashenborn confirmed with a nod and said, "If it's not too much to ask, I was hoping you could borrow the Atomic Visualizer from Wise Scholar Sacha, Sir Vahn. It would certainly save me a lot of mana stones."

"Furthermore, Wise Scholar Sacha is known to be quite a reasonable person. Given your excellence, Sir Vahn, I believe it shouldn't be too difficult for you to gain her favor. The brats in the academy won't trouble you if you have her protection."

"Wise Scholar Sacha is someone who treats knowledgeable people very well if you can gain her acknowledgment," Helia Ashenborn stated.

Most reasonable academics were like that.

