

The Witch 151

Chapter 151: Vaan's Maxim

"How should we settle this, huh? That bozo picked a fight with someone he couldn't afford to offend and got his ass beat. How do you think we should settle this?" Vaan coolly replied.

After he finished leaking, he washed his hands with soap, dried them, and retrieved his bag from the bench. He was prepared to leave if Bram Krauss had nothing else to say.

"I don't want to fight," Bram Krauss stated with a slight frown before saying, "However, the boys under me are not happy with your conduct. And it is up to me, their boss, to answer to the injustice they feel."

"Their boss, you say?" Vaan glanced at Bram Krauss while holding the leather bag over his shoulders. "Aren't you mistaking a puppet for a boss? A boss is someone who leads his people, not someone swayed into action by them."

"If they have a problem with me, they can come to face me themselves. Not cry to their big boss for help. That's what bullies are; strong in numbers, weak in heart. And if that's all you are, you won't amount to much after leaving the academy."

"What do you mean?" Bram Krauss simply frowned despite Vaan's grating words.

"Do you think you are helping the boys under you if you stand up for them when they are wronged? Wrong. You are ruining them," Vaan stated.

"The weak band together for protection while the strong accept all challenges regardless of whether they can win or lose. Duels and spars are encouraged in the academy for a reason. Only through numerous battles will aura users grow quickly."

"Battle experiences are what they need to refine their skills and combat senses. It's not something you can just gain by doing extreme physical training. You won't find many places like the academy where you can fight and have someone to heal you."

"You won't be so fortunate once you leave the academy," Vaan stated.

Unfortunately for him, he couldn't strengthen his body through any form of aura training. Thus, he was easily killed by aura-powered attacks, even though he was within the academy.

Of course, Vaan was no longer the same person he once was in the Blackmoon Academy.

"I see. I have learned from you, Vahn Cadieux. That is your name, correct? You speak valuable words of wisdom," Bram Krauss was enlightened by Vaan before he knitted his brows. "However, I don't understand why you are telling me this."

"How does this benefit you?" Bram Krauss wondered.

"How does it benefit me? Well, obviously, I am encouraging you to fight me. I can see that you are quite a reasonable guy. However, you don't need to dislike a person to fight them. I'm sure we can both benefit from our duel," Vaan stated.

Considering the person in front of him was likely one of the strongest servants in the academy. He couldn't ask for a better sparring partner to test his strength.

"Furthermore, you can also give an answer to your men regardless of the result of our duel. Of course, I know I will win for sure, but that is beside the point," Vaan calmly added.

"Bahaha! You are absolutely right! I like your confidence. Then, let us fight at a more appropriate time and place. I am Bram of Krauss. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Bram Krauss burst into a fit of laughter before extending a hand for a handshake shortly after.

However, Vaan glanced down at Bram Krauss's hand and firmly refused, "I am not shaking that hand."

"Hoho, I see. I don't deserve a handshake, huh? I suppose I will only earn it after our duel," Bram Krauss retracting his hand without feeling offended.

He had completely misunderstood Vaan's reason for refusing to shake his hand.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't see the need to explain to Bram Krauss and continued to let the person misunderstand his reason.

After they decided to meet on the first training field at the end of the fourth class period for their duel, Vaan left the restroom with his bag.

A whole crowd of servants was gathered outside of the restroom. They quickly made way for Vaan when they saw him exit alone.

Shortly after, they stared at his departing back with doubt, uncertain of what happened inside the restroom with Bram Krauss.

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Nevertheless, Vaan ignored the curious gazes and returned to the library.

"Vahn, you're back. You're a little late. I was beginning to think that you weren't going to come back," Dahlia Payne welcomed him back as he stepped inside the library.

"I was held back by some other matters, but I believe I returned on time, my Lady," Vaan replied with a calm smile.

Right after he spoke, the academy's bell rang, signifying the end of the second period and the start of lunch break.

"I was hoping you would return sooner since I prepared lunch for you... But I guess you must have eaten while you were in the city," Dahlia Payne mentioned with some disappointment.

Vaan followed her gaze and noticed the food tray on the counter.

The roast chicken with herbs on it exuded an appetizing and invigorating aroma. It was a type of spiritual food with plenty of health benefits.

Furthermore, it was certainly not cheap to purchase.

"It's true that I had a light brunch while I was out, but I still have room to eat. However, even if the food had gone cold or I was full, I would still eat it since you had thoughtfully prepared it for me. Thank you, my Lady."

Vaan strolled forward, boldly wrapping his arm around Dahlia Payne's waist, and gave her a quick and passionate kiss as a reward.

"You have such a sweet mouth, Vahn," Dahlia Payne softly said with a flushed face, feeling a little too excited from the abrupt kiss.

Vaan responded with a slight smile.

One had to take extra efforts to flatter witches and make them happy to live a comfortable and easy life.

A happy wife equals happy life.

Although this proverb was only applicable to married men, the message was clear for all.

That being said, during Vaan's work experience in the red-light district, he did come up with a general truth that was applicable to all men regardless of their present relationship statuses.

Make her pussy wet, not her eyes, and she will make your dick hard, not your life – Vaan had lived by those words until now.

Chapter 152: Fighting for Vaan's Attention

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« Physical Attributes »

[155 Defense] [Mid-level Rank 2]

[58 → 60 Strength (↑2)] [Mid-level Rank 1]

[34 → 35 Speed (↑1)] [Low-level Rank 1]

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After finishing Dahlia Payne's prepared lunch very quickly, Vaan was stuffed.

His stomach inflated like a man with a beer belly. However, the roundness also disappeared when he contracted his abdominal muscles.

The roasted chicken with herbs was certainly delicious and filled with benefits, as he expected. It was one of the privileges provided by the academies.

Normally, such spiritual food could only be afforded by wealthier witches.

However, the academy offered such quality food at a discounted price for their academics. Even so, it was still costly for a librarian's wage.

Vaan understood that Dahlia was trying to repay him for solving two of her biggest headaches.

Nevertheless, shortly after Dahlia cleaned the grease off Vaan with a water-attribute magic spell and packed the food tray in her Magic Domain, Vaan dropped his bag off in the back office and changed into his library assistant suit.

Before long, young witches gradually poured into the library—some with food, some without.

Seeing Vaan as the library assistant, some were apprehensive as they recalled his brutality in his duel with one of the servants during the second period.

However, Vaan's amicable smile and respectable reception quickly whittle away their unfounded fears and allow them to become familiar with him.

Vaan had indeed revealed his ruthlessness to deter the servants and young witches. Still, he couldn't shoo away all his potential customers.

He just wanted to reduce the numbers so he didn't have to deal with too many people at once.

Nevertheless, the study area was quickly occupied as Vaan served the visiting young witches during lunchtime.

Some used it to self-study, some used it to eat their lunch, and some did both simultaneously.

Among the visiting witches during lunch break, Sabrina Redwood, Alicia Whitmore, and Cyrena Ashenborn also visited.

"Why are you back here again? Are you still bothering my teacher?"

"Why don't you ask your teacher whether I am bothering him?"

Without surprise, sparks of gunpowder could be sensed between Cyrena and Sabrina as their gazes clashed.

"Young Lady Cyrena is Vahn's student?" Alicia uttered with surprise, learning about it for the first time.

With Cyrena Ashenborn in the picture, no other young witches in the library dared to approach the group.

Although Cyrena Ashenborn couldn't use magic, she was still the daughter of the Lord of Redpine City.

Nevertheless, Sabrina didn't hesitate to show her close relationship with Vaan by wrapping her arms around his and looking back at Cyrena smugly.

Since the people had already guessed who took her virginity, there was no point hiding it.

Cyrena frowned at Sabrina's audacity before she went ahead and boldly claimed Vaan's other arm as if to retaliate.

"Miladies, I am still on duty," Vaan reminded them with a calm smile, thinking the young ladies were cute as they competed.

It was fine if they were trying to win his favor, but it was different if they treated him as some object. They needed to understand their positions and who was in power.

However, such thoughts had to be guided and not enforced.

"I have a duel appointment with Bram Krauss in the training field at the end of the fourth period today. Why don't miladies come and cheer for me? I'll certainly know who favors me if I hear your cheers," Vaan suggested.

In a short instance, the two ladies stopped trying to claim Vaan and thought about how they could show the other that they favored him more.

Before long, the slightly toxic rivalry between Cyrena and Sabrina became milder. Even so, neither of them let go of Vaan's arms.

The other young witches in the library didn't even have a chance to approach them, and Alicia simply spectated on the side.

"Bram Krauss? Fifth-year Gloria's servant? I will be there to cheer for you, Teacher!" Cyrena firmly stated. But then, she expressed her concern, "But... do you have confidence in winning, Teacher?"

"Of course, Vahn has confidence. It seems I believe in him more than you do, Young Lady Cyrena," Sabrina said smugly.

She was slightly surprised by the duel appointment, but she had seen how Vaan had decimated his opponent in the last duel.

"Vahn, I need your help with something," Dahlia Payne suddenly called him over.

"Librarian Dahlia calls for me, miladies," Vaan patiently informed with a smile.

Once he had spoken, Cyrena and Sabrina released him, albeit with some reluctance. Shortly after, he headed over to Dahlia and noticed her expression.

"What's the matter, Dahli? You look a little jealous, my Lady," Vaan softly mentioned with wry amusement in his heart.

In response to his words, Dahlia pouted slightly.

Sure enough, Dahlia Payne felt slightly envious when she watched Vaan's interaction with the other young witches in the library.

"Don't forget to do your job, Vahn," Dahlia tried to sound strict and indifferent, but she couldn't hide her envy from Vaan.

Vaan's lips slightly curved up before he whispered into her ears, "Don't worry, my Lady. I'll show you plenty of love after lunch break ends."

"Pah! Don't talk nonsense, Vahn. Who needs your love? Go and do your thing," Dahlia patted Vaan on the chest, urging him to work while seemingly rebuking him.

However, her fist had no strength, her face was flushed with embarrassment, and her heart started pounding excitedly. She wasn't really refusing, but she wasn't being honest with her desire.

Nevertheless, a glint of anticipation in her eyes was all Vaan needed to see for confirmation.

"Then, I'll look forward to later," Vaan slightly grinned.

"Go~!" Dahlia shooed him away, but her voice came out rather coy and inviting.

Vaan's teasing made her feel embarrassed. She wouldn't be able to maintain the last bit of her composure if he continued.

There were too many prying eyes in the library for her to act according to her emotions.

"Hahaha... Aye, aye, my Lady," Vaan softly chuckled as he left.

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Time passed, and the hour-long lunch break approached its end.

After Vaan sent off the last witch, he closed the library doors and glanced at Dahlia, who pretended to work on her thesis without noticing his gaze.

However, her bright-red ears betrayed her.

Chapter 153: Dahlia's New Experience

Vaan strolled over to Dahlia's desk and removed the ink pen from her hand, gently placing it back in its ballpoint holder without ruining her work.

"What do you think you are doing, Vahn?" Dahlia tried to reprimand Vaan, but she was as meek as a little lamb, whether it was the tone of her voice or behavior.

She didn't resist as Vaan picked her up from her seat and carried her like a princess with one of her arms wrapped around his neck.

"Someone wanted my attention and love. And now that there is no one to bother us, I can give both," Vaan smiled, carrying to their back office.

"You are being very bold, Vahn," Dahlia said in a small voice. "I've never said you could stop my work or carry me like this. Do you think this behavior is acceptable?"

"Whether it is acceptable or not depends on you, my Lady. However, I'm quite certain that you don't hate this," Vaan calmly replied.

Dahlia couldn't refute Vaan's claim and lowered her head shyly in silence.

Shortly after, Vaan carried Dahlia into the office and lay her on the soft mattress. Her arms were wrapped around his neck. Thus, he was slowly pulled on top of her.

Their bodies pressed against each other before Vaan felt the warmth emanating through Dahlia's clothes and her soft and delicate mounds on his chest, which thumped from her palpitating and nervous heart.

Dahlia did not dare to look into Vaan's eyes directly as she looked down in another direction.

However, Vaan lifted her chin, turning her head to face him before their eyes met.

Myriads of emotions were reflected on the surface of her teary grey eyes as she appeared extremely vulnerable, pure, and adorable.

A single glance could steal the hearts of ordinary men, commanding them to fight for her and protect her from harm's way.

As Vaan stared into her eyes, Dahlia also stared back into Vaan's starry black eyes that were like two black holes, deep and immeasurable.

The longer she stared into them, she felt like she was being drawn into an inescapable whirlpool—one that she did not want to free herself from.

Vaan inched forward and stole her soft cherry lips.

In that instance, Dahlia's heart melted as her world turned seemingly quiet and peaceful. Only the wonderful sensation brought by Vaan's skillful yet gentle kiss remained as she closed her eyes and relished it.

It was like the gentle winds of spring brushing against her face, calm and soothing yet also warm like she was being embraced by mother nature.

After becoming familiar with Vaan's rhythm, she added a playful twist of her own as her tongue tried to flee from Vaan's.

At the same time, Vaan's hand reached down for the knotted lace on her black and white dark academia dress and gave it a tug, loosening up her dress for him to remove.

He did so skillfully, making it feel like silk slipping down her body. Slowly but surely, her flawless bare body with skin as smooth as jade and fair like the pearls and snow was revealed for his eyes to feast on once more.

Dahlia's bare body slightly tensed at her vulnerability and embarrassment.

While Vaan kept most of her attention away with his passionate and smothering kiss, he traced his dexterous fingers down Dahlia's body like a wavy snake.

Slivers of delightful and exhilarating sensation impacted her body, causing her slightly tensed body to relax once more.

"Ahhn~!"

Dahlia voiced her joy as the cells in her body awakened one by one, stimulated by Vaan's increasingly warm fingers and nourished by the inflow of pure mana.

In that instance, her eyes reopened as her arms moved to cover her embarrassing breasts, which had found the perfect balance in size, neither too small nor too big.

"D-Don't look... It's embarrassing," Dahlia shyly said in a soft and meek tone as she felt Vaan's hot gaze on them, making her face flush with a rosy complexion.

Vaan's lips curled up at her words before he replied teasingly, "It's not the first time I've seen them, nor the first time you've shown them. It won't be the last either. How is it still embarrassing?"

"It just is~! Ahhh!"

Dahlia made an erotic cry of pleasure at the sudden assault on her cave entrance while she was still in the middle of her response. Her whole body quivered with delight.

After recovering from the waves of ecstasy, she threw him a dirty look.

Seeing Vaan's teasing smile, Dahlia pouted cutely while her competitive spirit was triggered. She didn't want to be at a disadvantage.

Her hands moved away from her supple, round breasts and helped Vaan undressed.

Once Vaan was in the nude, she aimed for his bulging dragon, hoping to trigger some interesting response from him as she stroked it.

Alas, her inexperience in the field proved futile in front of a master like Vaan.

"Someone's being rebellious and should be punished," Vaan smiled mischievously before flipping Dahlia onto her stomach, revealing her smooth and fair back to him.

"Ahh!" Dahlia cried at the sudden forcefulness.

At the same time, her heart started beating quickly as she felt strangely excited in her present position, not knowing what would happen next.

Before she could even begin to guess, an overwhelming wave of euphoria flooded into her nether region like a tidal wave as Vaan inserted his bulging rod into her wet pussy.

Aahhh~

Dahlia moaned with sheer bliss as her lower body quivered and her mind ascended to seventh heaven. She had climaxed from a single thrust.

But before she could relish in the aftertaste of her orgasm and relax, she felt a sudden sting of pain on one of her round, curvaceous bottoms.

Pah!

Vaan raised his hand before slapping down on Dahlia's buttocks again, causing her honey cave to tighten while he pistoned his little brother through the narrowed passageway.

Dahlia felt shocked as well as a greater sense of euphoria.

"V-Vahn?! What do you think you are doing?! Ahh~!"

"Administering punishment."

Pah!

Vaan boldly slapped down on Dahlia's buttocks again, causing her to cry blissfully. The conflicting feelings of pain and pleasure meshed in a strange and interesting way that heightened her sensitivity.

At the same time, the experience was new and exciting.

Dahlia couldn't help but quiver from achieving orgasm again as her mind ascended to cloud nine. But before she could relish in the sense of satisfaction of climaxing for long, her mind was awakened by another wave of pain.

Pah!

Vaan's smack brought her back before she could enjoy the fulfillment of climaxing. On the other hand, he didn't stop thrusting to make himself feel good while reaping the benefits of dual practice.

"Ahh~!" Dahlia repeatedly moaned with every growing enticement and charm as she achieved orgasms. "Vahn, this is so different from last time~! But, it also feels so good~!"

"It would be boring if there's no change. Isn't this more exciting?" Vaan calmly replied with a smile before he released his load into her love nectar-filled honey cave.

To make Dahlia Payne his completely, he had to dominate her in both mind and body.

Her body can be dominated through dual practice, while her mind had to be dominated through— Well, more dual practices.

Chapter 154: Friend of Wind

In another academy location, a group of first-year to fifth-year servants gathered in a garden near the foot of the fourth tower.

Only two dozen servants were present, but their hierarchy was clearly distinguished by their years at the academy.

The first-years lined up in the backmost row while the fifth-years stood at the front, right before a single person sitting on the garden bench.

His name was Osran Barclay, third-ranked among the top five strongest servants in the academy and the leader of the gathered servants.

He had medium blonde comb-over hair, blue eyes, a thick but short prickly beard, a square face, and a toned but not excessively burly body, outlined by his slim-fit black training attire.

Compared to Bram Krauss, Osran Barclay's body was slightly bigger. Even so, they were roughly equal in terms of strength.

Both were at the peak of Rank 1 Aura Warrior.

"So one of Bram's men got his ass beaten, and now Bram himself is being challenged to a formal duel by this newcomer who appears to be the new library assistant, huh? How daring."

Osran Barclay rubbed his chin thoughtfully after listening to the information relayed by his men. Shortly after, he called out, "Barrett, come forward."

"Yes, Boss?" Barrett Dred stepped forward from behind the second, third, fourth, and fifth-year servants.

"You did well holding back. Considering your strength is similar, you would have brought humiliation upon yourself and the gang if you had gone to look for trouble like that loser Rehan," Osran Barclay coolly said.

"This newcomer isn't a pushover. That being said, he has a lot of guts to challenge Bram Krauss to a duel. Whether it is blind confidence or true courage, we'll find out at the end of today."

"Are we going to watch the duel, Boss?" Barrett Dred asked, not minding that the boss compared him to a loser. He indeed didn't have the strength to refute it.

"How often do you think a fifth-year servant gets challenged to a duel? And a Peak Rank 1 Aura Warrior, no less. Of course, we are going to watch. There's value in watching a duel of this level," Osran Barclay affirmed.

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As the news quietly spread from the third to fourth period, more witches and servants learned about Bram and Vahn's duel in the academy.

Before long, the news also reached the instructors and Headmaster Tabitha.

Inside her office on the top floor of the academy's main building, Headmaster Tabitha stared outside her glass window wall while holding the Book of Solomon Raphna in her hand.

She was absorbed in her reading, but the news attracted her attention.

"Only the second day, but Lord Helia's recommended person is already causing quite the storm in the academy..." Tabitha Dawnbringer muttered with interest. Not that it was a bad thing.

"The servants' growth has become stale due to the formation of gangs. Thanks to Vahn Cadieux, the servants are being stirred into action again. I've made the right choice to conceal his background information."

The seven witch kingdoms were ruled by witches, but even witches had a preference in choosing their partners.

They wouldn't settle for someone sub-par. No, only a man among men would catch their interest, whether it was in terms of abilities or appearance.

And for witches without strong background, abilities were more important in a man than their appearance.

Naturally, a man with both appearance and abilities would be favored by many witches, even if the man ultimately served only one in the end.

"Vahn Cadieux... If Lord Helia's information is true, then he does seem like a man with both appearance and abilities—Hm?" Tabitha Dawnbringer suddenly paused.

"Vahn Cadieux... Vaan Raphna... Do men with the name of V possess such capability?—No!"
Tabitha Dawnbringer quickly shook the thought out of her head. "It's a blasphemy to even compare the two."

"How could Vahn Cadieux even compare to a person with transcendental wisdom like Vaan Raphna? I must be crazy to even think of such a thing," Tabitha Dawnbringer muttered.

Nevertheless, she couldn't deny that Vahn Cadieux seemed talented.

The duel with Bram von Krauss would be interesting to watch, even if it's only considered mere scuffles between children for someone at her level.

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Redpine Academy, the library's back office

As the time of the duel approached, Vaan pulled himself away from Dahlia's warm, pristine body, which seemingly glowed with a soft radiance from the nourishment of pure mana.

He let her rest on the mattress while he cleaned and dressed for the appointed duel ahead.

Ding!

<You have selected option one reward>

The lump of accumulated wind-attribute refined mana in Vaan's body spread out and fused with it under the system's guidance, manipulation, and control.

Ding!

<Your body has been reinforced with wind-attribute refined mana>

<Your overall speed has improved by five points>

<You have acquired a speed-type talent, Friend of Wind>

<Your affinity to wind has increased by 3%>

<Your resistance to wind has increased by 3%>

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«Physical Attributes»

[155 Defense] [Mid-level Rank 2]

[60 Strength] [Mid-level Rank 1]

[35 → 40 Speed (↑5)] [Low-level Rank 1]

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[Friend of Wind (Low-rank) (Upgradeable)]

Overview: When you are within the domain of wind, your movements will receive a small blessing from the wind.

Effect: Increase speed by 0.5%

Restriction: Only limited within the domain of wind.

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'Unexpected, I can improve wind affinity and magic resistance this way. However, I must have been quite lucky... No, this is the difference in benefits between dual-practicing with a True Witch and a Senior Witch,' Vaan determined.

He looked forward to the benefits he could obtain from dual-practicing with a High Witch. Alas, the road to the top can only be achieved one step at a time.

After equipping his modified black uniform, Vaan headed for the training field outside.

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A huge crowd of witches and servants had already gathered after the end of the fourth class period when Vaan arrived.

Many people were interested in the duel as if it were a big event.

"Quite a lot of people here," Vaan casually commented.

As he headed towards the first training field, the crowd of young witches and servants cleared a path for him.

"You're here. I've been waiting, Vahn," Bram Krauss spoke with his arms crossed.

Chapter 155: Tiger Flash Steps

"I believe I'm not late," Vaan coolly replied.

"No, I'm just early," Bram Krauss shook his head wryly and said, "I was looking forward to this duel of ours."

With one look at Bram Krauss's wry and awkward expression, Vaan understood that he wasn't the one who spread the news of their duel.

After all, Vaan had briefly mentioned the duel to a few people, and Bram Krauss had most likely done the same.

It was from those people that the whole academy ended up learning about the duel between them. Even the academy instructors have shown up.

People treated the duel as an entertainment event to end the day.

Even the academy's healer, Wihnilda Angelsin, was present, on standby, ready to act at a moment's notice—should the situation call for it.

"You're not going to use a weapon?" Vaan casually asked.

"For a friendly bout with the intention to learn, a weapon serves no purpose other than to inflict unnecessary injuries. Besides, an Aura User's best weapon is his body," Bram Krauss replied.

Shortly after, Bram Krauss took off his top and tossed it aside, receiving cheers from the excited young witches in that instance. Ignoring the hoots and cheers, he entered a battle stance and gestured to Vaan with two fingers.

"Come, Vahn! Let us fight!" Bram Krauss urged with rising battle spirit and unleashed his vigorous red aura, much denser than any Aura Users Vaan had ever met until now.

Considering Vahn was confident enough to challenge him and even believed he would win, Bram Krauss didn't intend to go easy on him.

"Taking off your top may not be a good idea," Vaan kindly and calmly advised, but his eyes flickered with anticipation.

A topless Bram Krauss would allow Vaan to study his body better and possibly gain insight into his aura training method.

Evidently, Bram Krauss practiced a higher level of aura training, unlike the rest of the Aura Users with overly huge builds.

Such excessive muscle mass granted extra power at the cost of maneuverability.

"Why wouldn't it be? Wearing it will only hinder my movements and restrict me from fighting at my best," Bram Krauss argued reasonably.

"Perhaps bad clothes would restrict your combat potential. Good clothes, on the other hand, will augment it. For example, it can obscure your opponent's vision and make your attacks unpredictable," Vaan calmly explained.

Some servants were enlightened by his words.

"That sounds like a dirty way of fighting," Bram Krauss frowned, not feeling very fond of the idea.

Vaan nonchalantly shrugged and said, "Perhaps. However, in a real fight, it doesn't matter whether a fighting method is fair or not. Only the result matters."

"Nevertheless, this isn't a real fight of life and death. So, I'll play your game and even the playing field," Vaan coolly stated.

After all, he wasn't looking for a quick win.

A few moments later, Vaan took off the coat piece of his modified black uniform and tossed it to the side, leaving himself with just a simple black shirt and pants.

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

Some young witches hooted with excitement after seeing Vaan take off his coat. Some of Bram Krauss's fangirls also jumped ship, converting into Vaan's fangirls.

That was only with Vaan's coat off.

It was hard to imagine how crazier the young witches would react if Vaan went fully topless. However, it clearly showed his growing popularity.

Even some witches overcame their previous fears to join the cheering crowd.

Alas, Vaan didn't satisfy their wish. After entering his battle stance, he asked, "Do you want to make the first move?"

"Oh my. How nice of you, Vahn," Bram Krauss chuckled and said, "Since you asked, you must be very confident. Don't mind if I do then!"

Boom!

Right after he spoke, Bram Krauss shot forward with explosive speed, leaving a deep imprint on the ground behind him.

Vaan narrowed his eyes instantly, taking in all of Bram Krauss's actions.

He engraved everything into his memory, from minor movements to major ones, as he evaded the incoming left fist, sidestepping to the left side of Bram Krauss with the Cloud Evading Steps.

Swoosh!

Bram Krauss struck empty air with a surge of wind, but he quickly followed up with a twist of his body and sent out a back kick with his right leg.

Swish!

Vaan evaded the second attack with Cloud Evading Steps again, albeit barely, as Bram Krauss's right leg grazed his shirt.

Although it was just a graze, the power behind the kick easily tore away Vaan's shirt, revealing a small patch of his left hip area.

Even with Cloud Evading Steps, a movement-type martial skill, it was clear Bram Krauss's speed was superior to Vaan's.

Vaan retreated several big steps as Bram Krauss glanced at him with a frown.

"You better augment yourself with aura, Vahn. Otherwise, I can easily cripple you with a single hit. There will be no point to our duel if that happens," Bram Krauss spoke out of kindness.

Vaan slightly smiled and said, "Worry about yourself, Bram. Even without aura, you'll be surprised by my durable body—if you can even land a solid hit."

"Then, we'll see. Don't say that I didn't warn you!" Bram Krauss barked.

Boom! Boom!

Bram Krauss charged forward with the same explosive step. But his eyes briefly froze in the same instance as Vaan catapulted toward him with a similar move.

No, it was the very same movement-type martial skill he used!

Peng!

Bram Krauss's temporary lapse in concentration caused him to receive a right hook to the left cheek, which sent him flying a few yards.

"What's the matter, Bram? You blanked out for a moment there. You better try harder if you don't want to get your ass beaten badly," Vaan goaded with a provoking smile.

"Ptui!" Bram Krauss spat out some blood, wiped his mouth with a thumb, and said with a slight smile, "I was just a bit surprised. I didn't expect you to practice the same Tiger Flash Steps as I did, Vahn."

"However, I promise you; it won't happen a second time," Bram Krauss added.

"We'll see."

Chapter 156: Picking Up Martial Arts

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Ding!

<You have learned the movement-type martial art, Tiger Flash Steps>

<You have gained proficiency in using the Tiger Flash Step>

<Basic-level Tiger Flash Steps → Intermediate-level Tiger Flash Steps>

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Having memorized Bram Krauss's micro-movements, including his muscles, with Omni-Sense, Vaan easily mimicked his movement-type martial art.

And with a single attempt, he improved his mastery to the intermediate level.

Nevertheless, Bram Krauss's proficiency in the Tiger Flash Steps was at the expert level. As such, the person was not too shocked by Vaan's use of it.

If Bram Krauss knew Vaan had replicated his movement-type martial art after seeing it once, he would have been shocked out of his mind.

After all, it was a skill that took five years to master to the expert level.

"I hope that wasn't your best shot, Vahn. The strength was a little lacking. I only felt a little sting. You need to put your back into it. I can take hits like that all day," Bram Krauss goaded back, not falling for Vaan's provocation.

"We'll see about that too," Vaan smiled before lunging forward.

Boom!

Vaan executed the Tiger Flash Steps, which relied on instantaneous movement to generate a high burst of speed, and closed the distance between them.

"Hahaha, come!" Bram Krauss welcomed Vaan's attack openly with joy.

Bam!

Vaan's fist struck squarely into Bram Krauss's palm.

But before Bram Krauss could grapple his fist, Vaan retracted his fist swiftly and followed up with a right-hand swing at his left ribs, which were guarded by an elbow.

However, a flurry of kicks and punches followed right after, forcing Bram Krauss to defend, not giving him an opportunity to retaliate.

Nevertheless, Bram Krauss was a Peak Rank 1 Aura Warrior. With the augmentation of aura, his defense, strength, and speed were all at ninety points or above.

Bram Krauss couldn't retaliate. But sometimes, in order to advance, one must first retreat, which was what he did.

With a single-step retreat, Bram Krauss escaped from Vaan's rain of attacks, followed by lunging forward with Tiger Flash Steps.

Boom!

At such proximity, Vaan couldn't entirely evade Bram Krauss's fist with Cloud Evading Steps. Thus, he took it head-on with his bare body in exchange for two hits.

Pow! Pow!

Before Bram Krauss could make any sense of Vaan's unnaturally sturdy chest when his fist connected, his left and right cheeks were struck by Vaan.

The consecutive blows to Bram Krauss's head disorientated him, allowing Vaan to deliver a chain of attacks, followed by a knee to the upper stomach, the diaphragm.

Vaan's strength was lacking but sufficient enough to deal some damage, resulting in Bram Krauss getting winded from the attack.

Afterward, he grappled the person's arm and hurled him over his shoulder, tossing Bram Krauss onto his back. But as that happened, Bram Krauss also forcefully grabbed hold of his arm and pulled him forward before giving him a kick to the stomach.

The two were separated by several yards in an instance.

Bram Krauss coughed several times before he recovered from the previous blows, while Vaan didn't suffer any damage.

His defense was too high.

Furthermore, he also had a passive regeneration ability to recover from any minor injuries he may or may not sustain in the fight.

"Not bad, Vahn. I can see where you get your confidence," Bram Krauss commented.

"You have solid hand-to-hand combat skills, and your defense is ridiculously high. If your strength and speed didn't fall short, I might not stand a chance against you at all. As you said, we have much to gain from our duel. I apologize for pulling my punches because you weren't using aura."

"I will be using my martial arts now. I'll definitely make you use your aura, Vahn!" Bram Krauss declared.

"That's more like it. Show me everything you got, Bram," Vaan smiled and said, "Otherwise, there won't be any point to this duel."

Right after he spoke, Vaan watched Bram Krauss perform a set of moves.

Although these moves didn't seem to do anything, they directed the flow of blood within Bram Krauss's body in a very specific way and made his aura seem more violent.

<Ding! You have gained some insight into a higher-rank internal aura circulation method>

"I'm coming!" Bram Krauss alerted, giving Vaan a fair warning out of goodwill. But it also showed his concern over the power of his upcoming attack.

Boom!

Bram Krauss closed the distance with Tiger Flash Step before thrusting out with a right palm, packed with a violent red aura that turned white as it revolved around his palm like a cyclone.

"White Tiger Palm!"

Vaan narrowly evaded the palm strike with his mimicked Tiger Flash Step, which raised to the expert level.

<Intermediate-level Tiger Flash Steps → Expert-level Tiger Flash Steps>

However, the violent white aura shredded his black shirt to pieces, revealing his front upper body and exciting the crowd.

"White Tiger Kick!"

Peng!

A followed-up attack struck Vaan in the stomach, sending him flying over ten yards. At the same time, he also felt some pain from the hit, but only a little.

If the previous attacks were only around ninety points, the last one was over a hundred, reaching Early-level Rank 2.

The martial art skill Bram Krauss used was at a higher level as it also involved aura manipulation.

<You have learned an offensive-type martial art, White Tiger Palm (Mid rank)>

<You have learned an offensive-type martial art, White Tiger Kick (Mid rank)>

Nevertheless, Vaan did a flip in mid-air and landed on his feet while the bruised area on his chest healed at a visible rate.

However, Bram Krauss did not give him a moment to rest as he had already closed the distance again.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Vaan was struck repeatedly in various parts of his body.

However, each time he was struck, his body also reacted accordingly to negate some of the damage, reducing Bram Krauss's offensive martial art skills to a level that could be recovered within moments.

At the same time, Vaan continued to gain insights into Bram Krauss's higher-level martial arts and aura circulation method.

The spectators saw Bram Krauss completely suppressing Vaan with his flurry of attacks.

But unlike Vaan, who retained steady breathing throughout the onslaught, Bram Krauss's breathing was increasingly erratic from exhaustion.

Chapter 157: Decisive Winner

Despite Peak Rank 1 Aura Warrior, Bram Krauss could exert the power of an Early Rank 2 Aura Master.

Such were the charms of Mid-rank or higher-rank martial arts. They could draw out more power through the more clever and sophisticated use of aura.

But no matter how great Mid-rank martial arts were, Bram Krauss couldn't close the gap between his attack power and Vaan's defense.

Furthermore, it didn't come without a price.

Bram Krauss was quickly exhausted from his consecutive use of Mid-rank offensive-type martial art skills.

Ding!

<You have learned the offensive-type martial art, Tiger King's Fist (Mid rank)>

<You have learned the offensive-type martial art, Great Tiger Descent (Mid rank)>

<You have learned the offensive-type martial art, Rising Tiger Uppercut (Low rank)>

<You have fully comprehended the Krauss Household's internal aura circulation method, The Way of the White Tiger (Mid rank)>

Vaan was sent soaring a few dozen feet into the air with the last uppercut.

At that point, Bram Krauss was almost completely exhausted and only had enough stamina for one more move, which he saved for last.

Bram Krauss entered a horse stance and held his fist with the other hand like he was charging up his attack as his red aura converged towards it.

"Try not to die on this one, Vahn!" Bram Krauss barked, but he wasn't so sure his following strongest move would inflict much damage.

As Vaan descended, he noticed Bram's final move converged all his aura to his fist, leaving the rest of his body vulnerable.

He twisted his body mid-air, fixing his center of gravity during his descent.

"Great Tiger Fist Cannon!" Bram Krauss roared as he threw out his charged fist.

At the same time, Vaan twisted his body like a spinning top to evade the blast wave of aura from Bram Krauss's fist before he flipped forward and kicked down with his heel while still in mid-air.

Great Tiger Descent!

Peng!

Vaan's counterattack connected, landing right on Bram Krauss's shoulder, which dislocated under the force of his heel.

However, Vaan didn't finish with just a single attack.

Right after landing, he did a low sweep with his leg, knocking Bram Krauss off balance before sending out a roundhouse kick, which connected with his ribs.

Ka-cha!

Several rib bones broke as Bram Krauss was sent flying several yards.

Having channeled all his aura into one place, Bram Krauss had sacrificed all his defense and speed for power, which ultimately didn't work out for him. He did not expect Vaan to be so nimble in mid-air.

"Ugh..." Bram Krauss grunted from the pain before suddenly coughing up some blood.

Evidently, his broken ribs had punctured one of his lungs.

Wihnhilda Angelsin, who had been waiting on standby, immediately stepped forward to intervene in the duel and cast a healing spell on Bram Krauss.

"Shall we put an end to this duel, Bram?" Vaan calmly asked as Bram Krauss was being treated.

After hearing his question, Bram Krauss put on a wry and helpless smile.

"As much as I want to continue, my stubbornness will only bring humiliation onto myself. It's your win, Vahn," Bram Krauss stated.

His body was exhausted, and his aura was also spent.

An exhausted body could quickly recover with time, while aura required both time and heavy training to recover.

Aura users generally don't expel aura from their bodies. While such methods generated great power, it was also incredibly wasteful.

"It was a good fight," Vaan said with a smile, having learned quite a few new martial arts from Bram Krauss.

Such quality of martial arts wasn't common and could only be found among the wealthy and powerful households. It was more advanced compared to what the common mass trained.

Evidently, aura training was divided into external and internal methods.

Thanks to the duel, Vaan had finally acquired an internal aura circulation method. Alas, he couldn't use it unless he produced some aura first.

Even the Mid-rank martial art skills he replicated couldn't demonstrate their full potential without aura.

That being said, Mid-rank martial arts with the empowerment of aura were still around the peak of Low-rank martial arts.

<Basic-level Great Tiger Descent → Intermediate-level Great Tiger Descent>

<You have learned the offensive-type martial art, Great Tiger Fist Cannon (Mid rank)>

"A good fight indeed," Bram Krauss admitted. He had learned of his shortcomings.

He was used to overpowering his opponents with superior strength, speed, and martial art skills. But when met with a stronger opponent, such a method of fighting would only make him lose quicker.

If he had conserved his aura and stamina, the situation might have turned out differently.

However, Bram Krauss didn't know that Vaan had trump cards he didn't use. He would only use them in life or death situations.

...

"The winner is Vahn Cadieux," Wihnilda Angelsin declared.

Right after, the crowd erupted with cheers after a period of silence. They had been shocked by the turn of events.

Not only did Bram Krauss lose to the new library assistant, but the new library assistant had shown how incredibly tough his body was.

"Incredible... I haven't seen a fight like this in a while... It was exhilarating! I feel like challenging someone now," a third-year servant mentioned with lingering excitement from watching the duel.

Suddenly a small group of fifth-year True Witches made their way through the younger crowd of servants and witches.

"Move it."

"Y-Yes, my Lady."

None of the servants dared to oppose the fifth-year True Witches, while the younger witches silently complied with unhappy looks.

"Vahn, was it? Become my servant—No, my man. Only a man of your caliber is a match for me," a fifth-year True Witch named Zaria Whisper spoke domineeringly.

She wasn't giving Vaan a choice. No, she was ordering him.

"Hmph!" another fifth-year True Witch snorted unhappily and said, "Don't listen to that stuck-up bitch, Vahn. Clearly, I am more suited for you. I don't have any other men, so I can shower you with plenty of love."

"Come with me, kay?" the fifth-year True Witch added with a flirtatious wink.

However, it wasn't just the fifth-year True Witches interested in Vaan.

He could feel the greedy gazes of some Senior Witch-level academy instructors as if they had found treasure.

Trouble was coming, but it was well within his expectations.

Chapter 158: That's All I Need

Although Vaan could feel the greedy gazes of the Senior Witch-level academy instructors, not all of them desired him as their man or personal servant.

A few were more curious about his ridiculously sturdy body.

"All of you, shoo. Go back to your dorms or do something else. This isn't the time and place for a hookup," a Senior Witch dispersed the crowd with a stern look before making her way over to the fifth-year True Witches. "This includes all of you too."

"Senior Edna, this isn't fair. You are clearly abusing your authority to remove us so that you can have Vahn to yourself," Zaria Whisper complained.

"Ahem, that's nonsense," Edna Stunner denied with an awkward cough and said solemnly, "You will get score deductions for false accusations, Zaria."

Zaria Whisper's eyes widened along with several other fifth-year True Witches. Edna Stunner's blatant abuse of authority could not be more obvious.

"Enough dawdling, students and servants. Vacate the first training field at once if you have no business here," another Senior Witch-level academy instructor named Cordelia Moonfall asserted authoritatively.

As the younger witches below fifth-year students dispersed from the area with grumbled complaints, several servants made their way over to Bram Krauss.

"Boss, no need to feel down. If it were a real fight with weapons, you would have easily defeated the newcomer."

"Yeah, Boss. The newcomer's defense might be high, but it's nothing in front of an Aura User's empowered weapon."

Bram Krauss's men tried to cheer him up.

However, Bram Krauss shook his head with a soft sigh.

"There are no what-ifs. A loss is a loss. Besides, I get the feeling that even if it were a real fight with our lives on the line, I would have still lost," Bram Krauss stated.

It was just a gut feeling, but he was not wrong.

Vaan had not used any of his hidden abilities in the fight. If he had used them, his combat prowess would have risen substantially—enough to challenge Early Rank 2 Aura Masters and possibly higher.

"It can't be... right?" Bram Krauss's men doubted.

However, Bram Krauss raised his head to look at them seriously and said, "Well, let me ask you guys. Did anyone see Vahn use aura?"

None of the servants could answer.

The newcomer's defense was so high that he did not need to rely on aura to win the fight. In order words, their boss, Bram Krauss, wasn't strong enough to even force the person to use aura.

...

While Bram Krauss's question stunned the servants in his group and the fifth-year True Witches complained to the Senior Witch-level academy instructors, a spirit bird made of pure light flew over from the main building's top floor.

After the spirit bird of light landed on one of the Senior Witches' shoulders and whispered into her ears, it dispersed into the air.

"What did Headmaster Tabitha say, Senior Edna?" another Senior Witch inquired.

Edna Stunner, who received the spirit message, stood frozen with a slightly stunned look before she eventually recovered with a blink of her eyes.

"Headmaster Tabitha had just released information on the new library assistant's background. Vahn Cadieux is Marquis Delarosa's daughter's betrothed and an elite raised by her household," Edna Stunner recounted the message.

"Additionally, Lord Helia holds him in high regard. Thus, she expects us to keep that in mind and treat him accordingly."

"Seriously?" the other Senior Witches expressed their surprise and disappointment.

No matter how much they wanted Vahn Cadieux, they wouldn't touch a man already affiliated with another household. It was related to the household's honor.

Forceful poaching would only lead to serious consequences, not to mention outright offending the affiliated household.

None of the Senior Witches dared to offend the Delarosa Household.

Furthermore, they had to consider Lord Helia as well.

"You all heard that? Vahn Cadieux is already betrothed to another witch and has a powerful affiliation and connection. Furthermore, he is the academy's library assistant, not some servant. You all better treat him with some respect," Edna Stunner declared to the fifth-year True Witches.

At the same time, Vaan was surprised by the news.

Considering his identity wasn't revealed from the start, he understood that even if he proclaimed himself as such, Headmaster Tabitha might not come out to vouch for him.

As such, he had prepared to deal with the excited witches in another way.

However, it was clear that it was no longer needed. Even so, he couldn't let so many potential mana suppliers leave just like that. It would be a waste of the present opportunity.

"While it's true that I am engaged, it does not hinder me from providing some services. For details of said services, please seek Lady Sabrina, Lady Cassandra, and Lady Alicia," Vaan said as the young witches were leaving.

When Sabrina and Alicia heard that, they were devastated.

They tried to keep Vaan's impressive pleasuring skills to themselves but forgot he could also advertise himself to others.

Nevertheless, Vaan's words sparked the other witches' interest at once.

"What kind of services?" Edna Stunner could not help but ask near Vaan.

Right after, Vaan briefly explained his service and conditions for exclusive contracts to her.

Although it did sound like he was only interested in deflowering young witches, it also made perfect sense to Edna Stunner and the others who overheard him.

Only dual practices with virgin witches were risk-free.

Considering Vahn Cadieux's fiancée was the daughter of Marquis Delarosa, it was unacceptable if his body became impure due to promiscuous practice without care.

Even if Vahn Cadieux's fiancée still accepts him, Marquis Delarosa wouldn't.

After all, a healthy man was a major consideration in choosing a partner due to the biggest issue that all witches face: fertility.

Witches have extremely low fertility.

As such, only an extremely healthy man can become the head husband of a witch. They had the highest chance of helping their witch conceive a child.

Average households don't care about it much, but it was treated with great importance within noble households like the Delarosa Household.

"No wonder... I can see why you can only accept virgin witches for an exclusive contract," Edna Stunner nodded with understanding. "After all, it directly affects your position in the Delarosa Household."

"However, virgin witches aren't your only option, no? I believe witches that abstained from all physical intimacy with men for at least a year are also risk-free to dual practice with."

"That's true, my Lady," Vaan nodded with acknowledgment. He had no problem dual-practicing with such witches if that was the case.

"Unfortunately, there aren't many witches in the academy who can abstain for a year after tasting the forbidden fruit for the first time. If I may speak freely, they normally become quite indulgent for a while," Vaan calmly added.

"That's also true," Edna Stunner acknowledged with a nod before giving Vaan a flirty smile, "But that only applies to the young students. Instructors like myself are more reserved after passing that period."

"I don't mind telling you that it's been three years since I've last touched a man," Edna Stunner mentioned seductively.

"Are you implying that you are interested in signing an exclusive contract for the dual practice service with me, my Lady?" Vaan asked with a slight smile.

"Don't get ahead of yourself, boy," Edna Stunner coolly said before adding, "I am interested, but it's not that easy to bed a Senior Witch. Before proceeding to that step, I will have to see if your full-body massage is truly impressive enough."

"And that's all I need," Vaan revealed a confident smile.

Chapter 159: Pocketing Goods

Seeing Edna Stunner was interested in his service, Vaan could not help but check her out.

Edna Stunner was stunning beauty, like her name.

She had shoulder-length snow-white hair, ocean-blue eyes, a small button nose, an oval face, a fair complexion, and a curvaceous hourglass figure with D-cup breasts hidden under a formal black and white renaissance dress.

Like most witches, she also stood six feet tall.

"That's all you need, huh?" Edna Stunner crossed her arms and rested her chin on one of her hands with a thoughtful look, not minding Vaan checking her out. "You're very confident, Vahn. But this is the kind of confidence you need to keep me interested."

"Unfortunately, I am booked for tonight. Thus, I cannot provide you my service today, my Lady. Will tomorrow night do?" Vaan politely asked.

"Since you've been booked, I suppose it would be rude to jump the queue. Alright, I can wait for tomorrow. I'll be in my private room on the second tower's eighth floor. Don't keep me waiting too long, Vahn. I won't be happy," Edna stated.

"Noted, my Lady. I'll be on time," Vaan confirmed.

"Good! Then, I'll see you tomorrow."

Right after she spoke, Edna Stunner left. After she did, the other Senior Witch-level academy instructors left as well.

Surprisingly, none of them approached Vaan for his services.

However, it wasn't because they weren't interested or hadn't abstained from dual practice with other men long enough.

They had already heard everything. Thus, they didn't need to inquire from him.

At the same time, seeing how they clung to Edna Stunner after they left, Vaan guessed they were planning to wait for her to experience his pleasure skills first before deciding whether to try the same.

As everyone gradually left the first training ground, Vaan didn't stay either.

The duel with Bram Krauss had caught most of the academy's attention. There was a chance that Wise Scholar Sacha might not have visited the wasteyard yet.

Furthermore, Vaan had sensed a few distant gazes from the main building and towers during his duel, which strengthened the possibility.

'Helia Ashenborn mentioned the Marquis Ember went to gather more troops from Blackthorn City to exterminate the remnant forces of the Assembly of Silent Night hiding in the Red Goblins Mountains. I have two days at most to prepare for that expedition.'

Vaan recalled the information he gained from his visit to Helia's Castle.

During that time, Helia Ashenborn had confirmed that she would also be recruiting mercenaries and joining the punitive expedition to assist the Grand Inquisitor.

News of the recruitment would spread tomorrow, but the actual time of the enlistment would take place on the day the Grand Inquisitor returns.

'I should visit the wasteyard. Even if I don't run into Wise Scholar Sacha for my other plans, I might still find something useful there,' Vaan mused.

Wasteyard was filled with throwaway goods. Anything that could be found there was up for grabs, free of charge.

Vaan wouldn't be able to find a better treasure pile where he could freely loot.

"Let's have a rematch another time, Vahn. I will train hard and challenge you when I feel I've become strong enough to defeat you," Bram Krauss shouted.

"Then, you'll have to train extra hard, Bram. Otherwise, that will never happen," Vaan left those words as he collected his modified black coat on the ground and departed from the area.

In truth, he did not believe Bram Krauss had what it took to close the gap between them. It would only get larger and larger.

If Bram Krauss wanted to grow quickly, his household's resources wouldn't be enough. He had to risk his life and search for opportunities out in the world.

...

Sometime later, Vaan reached the wasteyard after doing a loop around to the back of the main building.

The wasteyard was a huge pit, no different from a dumpsite for household waste.

For others, it was indeed a land of garbage. But for Vaan and a few others who saw its worth, it was filled with treasure.

Seeing no one was in the area besides a few young witches stalking him from behind simply out of curiosity about where he was going and what he was doing.

Even if he was an engaged man to one of the most influential households in the kingdom, he was still a new rising celebrity in the Redpine Academy.

Nevertheless, looking through the pile of scraps in the wasteyard, Vaan was immediately pleasantly surprised despite anticipating its quality.

'As expected of a higher-rank academy, this wasteyard has more high-quality scraps than Blackmoon Academy. There are quite a few rank three materials I can salvage here,' Vaan mused.

Vaan quickly gathered the rags and made himself a leather bag to collect some of the wasteyard goods with it.

At the same time, he scanned the surrounding area with Omni-Sense.

After giving himself the clear, Vaan quickly pocketed several rank three materials into his Heaven-Swallowing Space, including earth minerals, monster materials, and remnant herbal ingredients.

While salvaging through the wasteyard without forgetting about his surroundings, Vaan suddenly paused on a broken glass container with some red blood inside.

'This blood is...' Vaan studied the small blob of red blood with a few sniffs.

Although the blood's origin was harder to determine because it looked like any other human and beasts with red blood, it had a distinctive scent that set it apart from the others.

His vast wealth of knowledge quickly helped him find a description that matched the scent of the blood.

'This blood belongs to the Rank 3 Phantom Wolves...' Vaan determined, his eyes flickered brightly with insight.

'I didn't expect to acquire some wolf blood here, the blood of a Rank 3 Phantom Wolf at that. I'm quite lucky. If I'm right, this is just what I need to awaken my Immortal Lycan Bloodline, even if it's only partially.'

He had pondered how he could awaken Immortal Lycan Bloodline. Ultimately, he had come up with three solutions with the highest awakening chances.

The first and most impossible option was to consume more blood from Balmodon the Undying.

The next best alternative was to enrich the little bit of Immortal Lycan Bloodline in his body with blood-nourishing magic potions.

The last option was to stimulate the Immortal Lycan Bloodline with inferior wolf bloodlines, which was also a bit of a gamble.

'There's no telling what kind of effect or changes to my body the blood of the Rank 3 Phantom Wolf would have on me if I consume it. I better save it for a better time,' Vaan decided.

Shortly after, he stored it in the Heaven-Swallowing Space like the other valuable goods.

Chapter 160: Sacha Crane

Although it was just a tiny quantity of Rank 3 Phantom Wolf Blood, it was better than nothing. Even so, Vaan would need to collect more wolf blood if he was to expect any result.

The presence of inferior wolf blood could stimulate the Immortal Lycan Bloodline's awakening. But there was also a chance it could dilute the bloodline and ruin it. That possibility exists—according to normal situations, that is.

Fortunately, Vaan had the system.

As Vaan continued rummaging through the wasteyard scraps, he did not find any more wolf blood of any kind. However, he did find remnant blood of other beasts.

'Rank 2 Shadow Snake Blood, huh? The quantity is far too small to brew any useful magic potions... But potioneering isn't the only thing it is used for. I could mix it with some other ingredients through simple alchemy to create poison or lures if needed,' Vaan mused.

With that thought in mind, he collected it into Heaven-Swallowing Space. The fragmented glass with Rank 2 Shadow Snake Blood disappeared through his hand in that instance.

The ability to control the Heaven-Swallowing Space allowed him to use any part of his body to store and retrieve items from it. It didn't look much different from his body assimilating objects or spitting them out.

Nevertheless, Vaan gradually sensed people approaching before he stopped using the Heaven-Swallowing Space.

"What are you doing?" a woman directed a question at him.

Turning around to look, Vaan spotted a six-foot-one lady with slender, smooth legs standing by the edge of the wasteyard.

She had long, messy brown hair tied back in a singly fluffy ponytail, dull grey eyes that seemed unfocused, a celestial nose, a round face, a ghostly-pale complexion that seemingly lacked sunlight, and a near-anorexic slim body.

Coupled with her cheap, loose but comfortably worn t-shirt and shorts, the lady looked like a homeless beggar that had not eaten properly in months.

Although she was like a beauty buried in mud due to improper self-care, Vaan did not doubt that she was a heavenly beauty like other witches.

Furthermore, he could tell she wasn't just any witch but a Senior Witch. She was Wise Scholar Sacha, the artificing instructor.

No matter how poor and cheap she looked, she was still someone with enough wealth to purchase an Atomic Visualizer.

But upon further thought, she had most likely broken her wallet to acquire the said magic tool.

"I am salvaging reusable materials to forge myself a stronger weapon," Vaan calmly replied before adding, "I didn't know there were rules prohibiting people from scavenging goods in the wasteyard. If you want me to stop, I will, my Lady."

"There's no need for that," Sacha Crane shook her head and coolly said, "There's no such rule. I just didn't expect anyone else to come to the wasteyard for the same idea as me."

Shortly after, she hopped into the wasteyard and started rummaging for reusable scraps without bothering Vaan. The two kept their distance and salvaged materials in silence, just like neighbors that don't bother each other.

Nevertheless, Vaan subtly paid attention to the materials she collected to determine her purpose and find a topic to discuss.

However, Sacha Crane was the first to break the short silence between them.

"Just out of curiosity, what kind of metal are you using to forge a better weapon? You don't need to answer if you don't want to," Sacha Crane asked reasonably.

"It's okay. It's nothing I need to keep a secret. I will use a Rank 3 alloy based on these metals I've collected. It's a pity I don't have the right equipment. Otherwise, I could try my hand at making a Rank 4 alloy," Vaan casually said, but it drew Sacha Crane's interest.

"Oh? What kind of alloy is that?" Sacha Crane asked while thinking about a whole range of Peak Rank 3 alloys in mind.

"Well, it doesn't exactly have a name yet," Vaan said with a slight smile.

"What?" Sacha Crane uttered with surprise as she turned her head and directed her full attention at Vaan. Her eyes narrowed before she asked, "Are you saying you are going to make a new Rank 3 alloy, or you simply don't know its name?"

"Well, I can't say for sure whether it has a name or not under someone else, but the alloy I have in mind certainly doesn't fall under any of the present 512 Peak Rank 3 alloys in the records," Vaan replied.

Sacha Crane was someone who didn't care about her appearance, only her research.

As such, Vaan's words easily attracted her interest. But at the same time, it also made her doubt him due to her lack of trust and understanding of him.

She even started suspecting whether Vaan had purposely gone to the wasteyard to try impressing her because it was her area of interest and expertise.

"I don't believe you," Sacha Crane honestly stated and asked, "Do you mind if I take a look at what you've collected in the bag?"

"Of course, my Lady," Vaan forwardly handed over his bag of salvaged materials.

After Sacha Crane took a look at the contents of Vaan's make-do leather bag, she furrowed her brows in thought.

"Flaming Mithril, Dreamiron, Ethereal Frost Stone, Rubyevil Crystal, Prismatic Gold Dust, and Dustevil Meteorite... Besides Flaming Mithril, a Rank 3 metal, everything else is at Rank 2. Heck, you even have Rank 1 Prismatic Gold Dust."

Sacha Crane had to admit that the present materials combination did not match any of the 512 known Peak Rank 3 alloys.

However, that was because most of the present materials were off-world resources. They came from the Gehenna Realm, a place filled with the unknown. Many of its resources were still in the middle of research.

It didn't necessarily prove they could be mixed to create a Peak Rank 3 alloy.

"You really think you can produce a Peak Rank 3 alloy with these materials?"

"Of course not."

"What?" Sacha Crane blanked at Vaan's reply for a moment before her gaze turned serious. "Are you messing with me right now, Vahn Cadieux?"

"So you know my name, my Lady," Vaan softly chuckled without feeling pressured by Sacha Crane's threatening tone.

"I have the knowledge, theory, and calculations, but I lack actual results. So, while I am confident in producing a Peak Rank 3 alloy with said materials, I can't guarantee that I will make it until it is actually made."

"If I have a workshop with all the forging equipment, I would also be confident in producing a Rank 4 alloy with the present materials. But of course, this is also just based on my theory and calculations," Vaan added.

Sacha Crane's eyes flickered.

There were presently less than 12 known combinations of Rank 4 alloys produced by Master Artificers in the world of artificing.

Although Sacha Crane found it hard to believe in Vahn's claim, she also didn't want to reject the possibility. She was inclined to give him a chance.

After all, he was someone from the Delarosa Household.

"I'm not going to lie. You have caught my interest, Vahn," Sacha stated forwardly.

"If I can provide the workshop you need, will you be willing to tell me about the theory and calculations you used to arrive at the conclusion that you can produce a Peak Rank 3—possibly Rank 4 alloy with these materials?"

"Of course, my Lady. It would be an honor to share my artificing knowledge with a beauty like yourself," Vaan replied with a charming smile.

"I'm a beauty, huh?" Sacha thought with a self-deprecating smile before shaking her head. "Never mind that. If you're done here, follow me back, Vahn. I'll take you to my workshop."

"Understood, my Lady."