

The Witch 91

Chapter 91: Helia's Visit

"Before we jump straight into potioneering, I will give you another quiz on foundational knowledge," Vaan stated.

Cyrena Ashenborn's eyes quickly lit up.

"Yes, Teacher!" Cyrena Ashenborn answered with eagerness and anticipation. She looked forward to more surprises.

"In the process of preparation and potioneering, what do we need to consider?" Vaan casually asked.

Cyrena Ashenborn's expression quickly turned serious before recalling what she had learned.

"In the process of preparation, we need to consider the accuracy of the potion recipe, the quantity of the ingredients required, the spotlessness of the cauldron, and the concentration of mana solution to use. In the process of potioneering, we need to consider the fire intensity, mixing technique, and the ingredient order."

"That's right," Vaan acknowledged with a nod before continuing to quiz her, "Then, for the Rank 1 Pore Stimulation Potion, how much of each ingredient do we need to make it?"

"For the standard ingredients, we would need one Zapper Eel's Eye, one Darkray's Tail, seven stalks of Dragon Grass, three stalks of Summer Avens, six pieces of Pearl Ivies, five ounces of Wolf Seeds, and a one-year-old piece of Flaming Root," Cyrena Ashenborn answered according to textbook knowledge, found in Maleficum's Book of Potions.

"That is correct. But if we want to use Ruby Paprika instead of Summer Avens, how much Ruby Paprika would we need to balance out the ingredients?"

Once Vaan raised the question, Cyrena Ashenborn took slightly longer to think of an answer, allowing Vaan to understand the extent of her potioneering knowledge.

"We would need four ounces of dried Ruby Paprika in powdered form," Cyrena Ashenborn answered after some thought.

Vaan waited a bit before confirming Cyrena Ashenborn had nothing else to add.

"Ruby Paprika is more common and easily obtainable compared to Summer Avens. Why, then, is Summer Avens used as the standard ingredient instead of Ruby Paprika?" Vaan asked.

"Because the adrenaline-like side effect is also slightly stronger," Cyrena Ashenborn answered before adding further, "The standard recipe for the Pore Stimulation Potion is called standard because it is publicly accepted to produce the weakest side effect."

"Publicly accepted to produce the weakest side effect, huh?" Vaan slightly smiled and said, "I suppose that is true as far as the public believes."

"However, distinguished Potioneers have long created their own improved versions of the standard Pore Stimulation Potion, producing stronger stimulation with weaker side effects. People without a great understanding of potioning wouldn't know if rarer ingredients were used or there was just a simple adjustment in the ratio of the standard ingredients to produce such results."

"Anyhow, it's not my place to comment further on this topic. I just want to say that the current standard recipe isn't the best recipe for making the Pore Stimulation Potion," Vaan said, avoiding a sensitive topic regarding the pricing of potions and ingredients.

Human greed was insatiable regardless of the world he lived in; money controlled the advancement of civilization.

"I see..." Cyrena Ashenborn's eyes flickered thoughtfully before moving on with the lesson. "If I want to reduce the side effects of using Ruby Paprika, what would be my best option, Teacher?"

"If you don't want to substitute or add new ingredients to the recipe, you can simply increase the amount of Wolf Seeds from five ounces to six ounces. Of course, the result would be even better if you use half an ounce of Ocean Seeds instead," Vaan answered.

"Half an ounce of Ocean Seeds..." Cyrena Ashenborn uttered contemplatively.

Ocean Seeds were slightly less common, but they did seem plausible to use according to their properties.

In the next moment, Cyrena Ashenborn suddenly hurried over to the messy table in the corner to fetch a pen and paper to record the information down.

She wanted to take notes, lest she forgets.

Compared to earlier, Vaan could no longer see the young lady feigning indifference to everything from before. All he could see now was a young lady eager to learn.

"If I want to test the Equilibrium Principle and use a wood-attribute ingredient like the Sirre Root to substitute the Summer Avens, how much would I need, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn asked shortly after.

"Just a single five-year-old piece of Sirre Root will do," Vaan casually answered.

"Go and fetch the ingredients for it, Lady Cyrena. I will watch over your process of making the potion with the Sirre Root, from preparation to mixing the ingredients."

"Yes, Teacher," Cyrena Ashenborn complied excitedly.

If she could really produce a Pore Stimulation Potion with no side effects using the Equilibrium Principle, it would be an amazing feat!

Furthermore, Pore Stimulation Potions without side effects would sell for value.

After Cyrena Ashenborn quickly collected the ingredients, she laid them out on a stone table and used the mortar to grind five ounces of Wolf Seeds. As for the other ingredients, they didn't need grinding.

Once the ingredients were prepared, Cyrena Ashenborn checked the clean black cauldron before starting the fire under it, which was a stone plate-like magic tool that produced fire like a stove.

Shortly after, Cyrena Ashenborn filled the cauldron halfway with clean water. But just as she was about to grab a flask of mana solution on the shelf to add to the cauldron of water, she suddenly paused.

"Teacher, do we still need to add mana solution to the pot if we are going to harmonize the ingredients with the Equilibrium Principle?" Cyrena Ashenborn wondered.

"Simply adding ingredients into the boiling cauldron of water and stirring them will make them mix; it won't fuse their properties to generate the desired effect. That's why Potioneers use mana solution; it's an absolute requirement in potioneering," Vaan stated.

"Right... I forgot about that," Cyrena Ashenborn replied with an awkward smile.

No matter how amazing the Equilibrium Principle is, it's a type of truth, not a method. It can't change the fundamentals of potioneering.

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Nevertheless, as Cyrena Ashenborn proceeded with the steps of potioneering, the door to the Brewing Chamber quietly creaked open as Helia Ashenborn visited out of curiosity.

Hester Thornton quickly noticed and went over to greet, while Vaan remained focused on Cyrena Ashenborn's actions.

"Lord Helia," Hester Thornton greeted.

"How is Vahn Cadieux's teaching, Hester? Does he seem like a qualified teacher?" Helia Ashenborn quietly inquired without disturbing Vaan's lesson.

"This... It's easier if you watch Teacher Cadieux's lesson, Lord Helia. All I can say is I have nothing but respect for Teacher Cadieux."

"Oh?" Helia Ashenborn raised an eyebrow before replying with interest, "Then I better watch them."

"Yes."

Chapter 92: Cocoon-Weaving Technique

Although Helia Ashenborn tried to be quiet and not disturb the lesson, her presence still caught everyone's attention.

Cyrena Ashenborn tried to play it cool and feign indifference, but Vaan quickly noticed the weight on her mind, which caused her to be distracted and her movements to be rigid.

"Focus, Lady Cyrena. Potioneering is a delicate process that requires your full concentration. Otherwise, even with all the knowledge in your mind, you will still fail the potion production if you don't follow the practical steps properly," Vaan lectured.

Cyrena Ashenborn's mind quickly snapped back to the task at hand.

The useless and distracting thoughts in her mind quickly disappeared like dispersing mist, allowing her mind to become clear again.

Cyrena Ashenborn didn't need to consider Helia Ashenborn's presence or place importance on impressing the person with her potioneering feats. She didn't need to prove her accomplishment to her mother; she only needed to satisfy herself.

"Sorry, Teacher," Cyrena Ashenborn apologized before resuming the potioneering procedure.

First, Cyrena Ashenborn poured the flask of mana solution into the black cauldron, causing the boiling water to take on a light blue color, which was overwhelmed by the rising white steam.

Once the mana solution thoroughly spread across the water in the cauldron, Cyrena Ashenborn added all the supplementary ingredients next, leaving the two primary ingredients for last.

"Why do you need to add the supplementary ingredients first? Why can't the primary ingredients be added first instead?" Vaan quizzed her.

"Because the primary ingredients are too potent. They will react to other ingredients strongly. On the other hand, the supplementary ingredients are mild. As such, the supplementary ingredients are mixed first to create the base before welcoming the primary ingredients," Cyrena Ashenborn answered.

"Correct. You answered very well, Lady Cyrena," Vaan acknowledged with a nod, purposely praising her in Helia Ashenborn's presence,

"Your answer was exactly as recorded in Maleficum's Book of Potions. It's not easy to memorize everything recorded in the Maleficum's Book of Potions. Your talents for potioneeering cannot be doubted."

"Is there a specific order in which I should add the supplementary ingredients, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn asked while holding back her strange feeling of joy from being praised.

Being praised for her accomplishment in potioneeering by her potioneeering teacher back at the academy was nothing new.

However, Vahn Cadieux's praises seemed to hit differently.

'Is it because Mother is here?'

As Cyrena Ashenborn wondered, Vaan replied to her question, "There is indeed specific order in which the supplementary ingredients for the Pore Stimulation Potion should be added."

"However, you can add all the supplementary ingredients into the cauldron at once if you use a mixing technique. Have you mastered the Whirlpool Technique, Lady Cyrena?"

"Yes, it's one of the basic mixing techniques taught in potioneeering classes. It is used to help conflicting ingredients mix better if the concentration of mana solution is found lacking," Cyrena Ashenborn answered before furrowing her brows in doubt.

"However, I've never heard of the Whirlpool Technique being used to add all the supplementary ingredients into the cauldron at once."

"Oh? Yeah, I supposed not," Vaan agreed after a slight pause before saying, "Well, now you have, Lady Cyrena. Please use the Whirlpool Technique, and introduce supplementary ingredients into the eye."

"Yes, Teacher."

Shortly after receiving Vaan's instruction, Cyrena Ashenborn used the long mixing spoon to stir boiling water in the black cauldron accordingly.

Once the whirlpool was created in the center of the cauldron, Cyrena Ashenborn picked up the bowl containing all the supplementary ingredients and poured them into the center at once.

A magical scene unfolded in the next instance.

The supplementary ingredient reacted with the mana solution-mixed water, causing them to glow with colors as the whirling water spun them together. In a way, it was similar to cracking an egg in a whirlpool of hot water.

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On one side of the Brewing Chamber, Helia Ashenborn narrowed her eyes and used Observation Magic to get a better view of the situation unfolding inside of the black cauldron.

What Helia Ashenborn saw immediately stunned her.

The multi-colored supplementary ingredients spun according to the rotational force of the whirlpool. Its scattered glow of different colors was slowly pulled back towards the center in layers like weaving a rainbow cocoon.

The pretty sight looked like a piece of art.

Hester Thornton noticed Helia Ashenborn's expression before she also used Observation Magic to see what was happening. Without exception, she was quickly awed by the pretty scene.

"Can this still be called the Whirlpool Technique? Using the Whirlpool Technique to add all the supplementary ingredients like this... This should be called the Cocoon-Weaving Technique if it hasn't been named," Helia Ashenborn sighed with amazement.

"As expected of the Delarosa Household. They certainly command more advanced techniques as befitting of their prestigious household."

Vaan overheard Helia Ashenborn's heartfelt praise and admiration and inwardly smiled.

As expected, Helia Ashenborn regarded him as a person of the Delarosa Household, thanks to Linetta's claim, which was used to give him a layer of protection.

However, even Linetta would not have thought her reckless claim made Helia Ashenborn believe Vaan was more than just her betrothed, but someone specifically picked and trained since a young age to be her husband.

Nevertheless, the whirlpool gradually lost all its rotational force and disappeared entirely, leaving behind the cocoon-like lump of supplementary ingredients, which continued to revolve for some time.

Eventually, the mana solution-mixed boiling water dissolved everything solid into liquid and dispersed throughout the cauldron, causing the mana solution-mixed boiling water to undergo another change of color, turning whitish-violet.

Cyrena Ashenborn understood the base was finished and proceeded to add the two primary ingredients, the Zapper Eel's Eye and Darkray's Tail, simultaneously.

Shortly after, she used a basic mixing technique to slowly stir the cauldron with consistent strength until the boiling solution extracted the properties of the Zapper Eel's Eye and Darkray's Tail and fused with them.

In the end, the solution in the black cauldron settled on a light pinkish color, the color of the Pore Stimulation Potion, and exuded a pleasant scent that stimulates one's senses.

"I did it...!" Cyrena Ashenborn confirmed the process was a huge success.

Chapter 93: Business Opportunity

Cyrena Ashenborn celebrated with joy, not because she succeeded in potioneering, but because she learned a lot from Vaan's lesson.

Although she was more or less convinced by Vaan's Equilibrium Principle, hearing about it and seeing it successfully applied hit her differently.

"The Pore Stimulation Potion actually succeeded with a wood-attribute ingredient. This is amazing, Teacher! Mm, it doesn't have that hint of fiery aroma that normal Pore Stimulation Potions have. This means there are no side effects, right?" Cyrena Ashenborn asked excitedly.

"According to theory, yes," Vaan calmly nodded before suddenly adding, "However, that doesn't mean the Pore Stimulation Potion can be abused. Just like regular medicine, the body will suffer from overdosage if too much is taken in a single session."

"Furthermore, it hasn't been tested yet. So, we can't exactly say there's no side effect until it has been proven."

"Teacher is right. We should test its effects first," Cyrena Ashenborn agreed.

"Even renowned Master Potioneers would do a test run with a sample of their potions to ensure its effects every time they succeed in making a new batch."

"Un," Vaan nodded.

"Master Potioneers need this level of meticulousness to ensure there aren't any problems with their potions before putting them on the market. After all, a single major mistake is all it takes to cost them their entire reputation and career."

"Furthermore, it doesn't hurt to use some of the potions for testing. After all, just looking at this batch you made, you can fill up roughly a hundred two-ounce bottles of Pore Stimulation Potions," Vaan estimated.

The Pore Stimulation Potion was just a basic rank 1 potion. Thus, even if there were a lot of it, it wouldn't be able to sell for too much.

Also, witches only buy them in bulks like a carton of drinks. As such, only extremely huge sales will show

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On the side, Helia Ashenborn overheard their conversation and turned her head to Hester Thornton with surprise.

"What are they talking about, Hester? Cyrena used a wood-attribute ingredient to produce the Pore Stimulation Potion. Furthermore, it does not have the burning side effect as well?" Helia Ashenborn asked in doubt.

"Err, you weren't paying attention to the ingredients that Young Lady Cyrena used, Lord Helia? There was indeed a wood-attribute ingredient, the Sirre Root," Hester Thornton responded.

"Teacher Cadieux proposed that following the Equilibrium Principle would guarantee potioneering success. However, I am unable to confirm whether Young Lady Cyrena's Pore Stimulation Potion truly has no side effects until it is tested."

"The Equilibrium Principle? A Pore Stimulation Potion with no side effects? If what you said is true, then..." Helia Ashenborn's eyes shined with money.

"A standard Pore Stimulation Potion lasts an hour but requires a six-hour cooldown period between each dosage of two ounces while a Master Potioneer's improved Pore Stimulation Potion can reduce that side effect's cooldown period to two hours."

"On the other hand, a Pore Stimulation Potion without side effects would imply that it can be used consecutively after each hour... It will definitely be in great demand. If we can mass-produce this kind of potion, it will definitely sweep the low-end market!"

Helia Ashenborn could imagine the immense profit from the sheer sales. But after a moment, Helia Ashenborn subtly looked at Vaan's back with a serious expression.

If the Pore Stimulation Potion truly had no side effect, the Delarosa Household would have long put it on the market and reap in the profits.

But since Helia Ashenborn hasn't heard anything about it, it must mean that it hasn't happened yet.

'The sheer amount of manpower of potioners needed to mass-produce the Pore Stimulation Potion, and expenditure and effort required to procure the ingredients... the Delarosa Marquisate, which is closer to the southern borders, isn't ideal for carrying out the business.'

'As expected, the Delarosa Household is testing me to see whether I am worthy of being their business partner. Most likely, they only want to collect their share of the profit and leave the manufacturing and sales to me, Helia Ashenborn speculated.

At the same time, Helia Ashenborn concluded that Cyrena Ashenborn making the Pore Stimulation Potion without side effects was purposely planned by Vaan.

Vahn Cadieux wanted her to see it – or so Helia Ashenborn believed.

'This kind of bait... It's hard to resist taking the bait after seeing it. How shrewd. Look like I will have to negotiate the business deal with Vahn Cadieux after his lesson,' Helia Ashenborn thought.

After all, there was a lot of money to be made. She had to take the initiative to secure the deal.

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After Cyrena Ashenborn emptied the cauldron containing the Pore Stimulation Potion into 107 two-ounce glass bottles, she asked, "Should I test one now, Teacher?"

"Absolutely not," Helia Ashenborn suddenly interrupted before Vaan could reply to the question.

"No matter how confident you are in your potion, a potioner must never personally test their own potion. This should always be left to the potion-testers."

"If you don't have any potion-testers yet, I will assign one for you?" Helia Ashenborn said firmly.

At the same time, Vaan briefly glanced at Helia Ashenborn's strong reaction, causing his eyes to flicker for a moment. Shortly after, he casually agreed with a nod.

"Lord Ashenborn is right. This should be left to specifically assigned potion testers," Vaan inputted.

Cyrena Ashenborn furrowed her brows for a moment, but she eventually agreed with a nod, "Then, I will let Mother arrange it."

"Good."

After getting the consent of all parties, Helia Ashenborn instructed Hester Thornton to summon a few willing True Witches at the middle stage or higher to the open courtyard, where the air was fresh, and the mana was aplenty.

"Let us head outside too. We can't witness the effects if we are not there to observe it," Helia Ashenborn suggested.

Vaan and Cyrena Ashenborn agreed.

Nevertheless, Cyrena Ashenborn didn't let Helia Ashenborn touch the two potion racks of two-ounce Pore Stimulation Potions.

Instead, Cyrena Ashenborn used her spatial storage-type magic tool to store the potions before following Vaan and Helia Ashenborn outside.

Chapter 94: Business Opportunity (2)

Outside, in the outer courtyard of Helia's Castle, Vaan quickly gathered with everyone to watch the True Witches test Cyrena Ashenborn's newly concocted Pore Stimulation Potions.

Only three True Witches had been chosen for the potion-testing. If there wasn't a limit for potion-testers, several more True Witches serving under the Ashenborn Household would have volunteered.

After all, the Pore Stimulation Potion might be considered a low-end market item, but that doesn't make it cheap to the point that everyone could afford it—at least not lots of it.

Furthermore, the benefits of a single Rank 1 Pore Stimulation Potion, which only lasts an hour, couldn't compare to a night of pleasure in the red-light district.

However, that was only applied to an ordinary environment.

Within the vicinity of Helia's Castle, which has a large-scale mana gathering spell deployed, using a Pore Stimulation Potion to absorb mana would grant a multiplicative boost in its effectiveness.

As such, the True Witches serving Helia Ashenborn were more than willing to be potion-testers, especially when they acknowledged Cyrena Ashenborn's potioneering talents, even if Helia Ashenborn herself doesn't.

After Cyrena Ashenborn handed each of the True Witches a two-ounce Pore Stimulation Potion, they quickly removed the corks and drank the potions.

Several breaths quickly passed before a surge of mana started rushing towards the three True Witches from all directions.

The True Witches welcomed the influx of mana and devoured them all as they came, feeling euphoric and excited. But despite that, their faces and complexion remain unchanged and clear, as if they were enjoying an evening's cool breeze.

"No signs of flushing, increased blood flow, or body temperature... There really aren't any side effects. Even if there are side effects—they are so insignificant that they are negligible," Helia Ashenborn confirmed with amazement after some time passed.

Cyrena Ashenborn's eyes beamed, finding it unbelievable that Vahn Cadieux would teach her something so valuable.

"Is it alright for you to teach me something this valuable, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn wondered after realizing the value of the Equilibrium Principle and Pore Stimulation Potion with zero side effects.

"Aren't you worried that your knowledge might be exploited by others for their own benefit?"

"Well, that possibility certainly exists. But the people doing the exploiting would also have to consider whether it is worth it. Not that it matters to me. More importantly, I chose to become your teacher. Did you think I would be half-assed in teaching you?" Vaan casually replied with a shrug.

Cyrena Ashenborn immediately felt instant gratification. Just by that statement alone, Vaan was a more qualified teacher than most.

Meanwhile, when Helia Ashenborn heard Vaan's words, she understood a completely different meaning.

'People can exploit me if they want. However, they have to consider whether it is worth offending the Delarosa Household or not. I don't care if my knowledge is exploited by others. It was taught to me by the Delarosa Household, so they will deal with it. I'm just a small fry. It's the Delarosa Household that people have to worry about,' – was what Helia Ashenborn got from Vaan's statement.

Helia Ashenborn smiled wryly.

She naturally wouldn't dare to cross such a behemoth like the Delarosa Household.

Whether it was power, resource, knowledge, or connections, the Delarosa Household was vastly superior to the Ashenborn Household in every aspect.

The Transcendent Witch of Black Rose forbids territorial wars within the Kingdom of Black Rose, but there were many other ways to make a household decline with enough power.

"Cyrena, if you're done here, go back and study on your own. I have something to talk to Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn stated, placing a greater emphasis on addressing Vaan.

Cyrena Ashenborn's good mood was quickly ruined after hearing that. Her expression turned cold and indifferent.

Shortly after Cyrena Ashenborn snorted and stormed off to the Brewing Chamber, Helia Ashenborn turned her attention to Vaan without caring for how her daughter felt.

"Using the Whirlpool Technique to introduce all the ingredients into the pot at once is such a novelty that it leaves me in awe. May I learn of its name, Sir Vahn?" Helia Ashenborn spoke, unhurried to jump straight to business.

"The Cocoon-Weaving Technique," Vaan casually answered.

"Oh? Hahaha! Is that so?" Helia Ashenborn burst into pleasant laughter after discovering the name matched the one she thought of. "It seems I share a strong fate with the Delarosa Household."

"Shall we have a talk over some tea in the Great Hall, Sir Vahn? I have a business proposition for you. I hope you'll be willing to hear me out."

"Why wouldn't I be, Lord Ashenborn?" Vaan raised a slight smile in reply.

"Please, just call Lord Helia or Lady Helia. I don't dare to pull my weight around someone I acknowledge. Your profound knowledge has earned my respect, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn stated.

Vaan could sense that Helia Ashenborn's words were meant for the Delarosa Household, but he pretended not to notice.

Helia Ashenborn's misunderstanding was favorable to him.

"As you wish, Lord Helia," Vaan replied courteously.

A few moments later, Vaan joined Helia Ashenborn over tea in the Great Hall after she arranged for Hester Thornton to watch over the three True Witches until their potions' effects expired.

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"So what is this business proposition you have to offer, Lord Helia?" Vaan asked politely despite knowing full well what it was about. "I might be interested after hearing about it."

"Surely, you jest, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn smiled wryly.

"I'm quite certain that you already know what I want to talk about; it's about the Pore Stimulation Potion with no side effects. Given your high intellect, I'm also certain that Sir Vahn knows about its value."

"Would you like to start a business on it with me, Sir Vahn?" Helia Ashenborn stated her intention.

However, Vaan wasn't in a hurry to agree as he replied, "I'll decide after listening to the split and conditions required for this business cooperation, Lord Helia."

"That's only fair," Helia Ashenborn nodded with acknowledgment.

She would have been disappointed if Vaan blindly agreed without grasping his obligations and where he stood to gain out of the business deal.

Chapter 95: Negotiating Conditions

"I believe we still need to run a few more tests to accurately gauge the effect duration of Pore Stimulation Potion and examine its consecutive usage for any other side effects that may be unknown to us."

"However, once we confirm there is no problem with your version of the Pore Stimulation Potion, the Ashenborn Household is willing to shoulder all the cost, production, and sales of the potions and split the share of the Pore Stimulation Potion's sales 70% to us and 30% to you."

"What do you think of this, Sir Vahn? You have the authority to make the decisive, right?" Helia Ashenborn asked politely.

After hearing the conditions, Vaan fell silent to contemplate for a moment. Helia Ashenborn's offer was surprisingly very favorable.

"The standard Pore Stimulation Potion is sold on the market for 30 low-rank mana stones per a batch of 10 potions. Considering the average production yields at least 100 two-ounce bottles' worth of potions, that's a minimum sale revenue of 300 low-rank mana stones per production."

"However, just Zapper Eel's Eye and Darkray's Tail alone will cost 100 low-rank mana stones. If we include the total cost of ingredients required to make the standard Pore Stimulation Potions, we are looking at around 200 low-rank stones. Excluding the labor cost, we are looking at a profit of 100 low-rank mana stones. That is almost a 70-to-30 ratio in terms of cost to profit."

"If our business followed a similar cost-to-profit, that would imply that I would be taking 30% share of pure profit for doing nothing, while Lord Helia, on the other hand, will be making next to nothing. Can I understand it as such?" Vaan asked casually.

"I suppose you can, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn smiled before shaking her head. "However, you've spoken too seriously. How can your version of the Pore Stimulation Potion compare to the standard version?"

"Even if we consider the cost of using Sirre Roots, the total cost of production would only be around 250 low-rank mana stones. If we sell at 50 low-rank mana stones per batch of 10 potions, we have a sales revenue of at least 500 low-rank mana stones."

"Thus, even if Sir Vahn takes the 30% cut of 150 low-rank mana stones, I will still be left with 100 low-rank mana stones of pure profits," Helia Ashenborn stated.

"True," Vaan calmly agreed, having expected Helia Ashenborn to mention it.

However, the way Helia Ashenborn mentioned it straightforwardly let Vaan understand that she wasn't planning to play any under-the-table tricks with him.

That also made negotiations easier.

"Other Master Potioneers sell their improved Pore Stimulation Potions for around 60-80 low-rank mana stones per batch of 10 potions. Even though my version of the Pore Stimulation Potion isn't as effective per dosage, it can be used consecutively without a cooldown period in between."

"As such, I believe we can even sell our version of the Pore Stimulation Potion for 60 low-rank mana stones per batch of 10 potions. In that case, I will get a 180 low-rank mana stone cut, while Lord Helia will still gain a 170 low-rank mana stone profit."

"But if we also consider the labor cost, then Lord Helia will..."

"You don't have to worry about the labor cost, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn coolly said before adding, "I will be using my own people to produce the potions. Thus, they will receive other forms of rewards from me."

"I don't trust other potioneers to handle the production. They are more likely to leak the potion recipe into the hands of our business competitors."

"That is a possible risk that we have to consider when hiring other potioners," Vaan calmly agreed with a nod.

In truth, Vaan didn't care much if the potion recipe was leaked, and other potioners started selling the zero-side effect Pore Stimulation Potions.

True, the sales would take a plunge, resulting in less profit, but the Pore Stimulation Potion formula wasn't valuable to Vaan, to begin with.

What is considered valuable to others wasn't all that valuable to him.

Removing the side effects of a rank 1 potion is nothing impressive. In the end, it was still a rank 1 potion. Being able to use rank 1 potion ingredients to produce a rank 2 potion – now that would be truly impressive.

Of course, Vaan had no intention of sharing that potion formula with Helia Ashenborn.

"So then, I trust we have an agreement, Sir Vahn?" Helia Ashenborn sought Vaan's confirmation before he nodded.

"Naturally, Lord Helia."

"Great! I look forward to our business together, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn reached out her hand for a handshake. There was a brief pause in her movements before she ultimately pushed forward with it.

Vaan's eyes briefly flickered before he accepted the handshake.

He had seen Helia Ashenborn's hands fidgeting multiple times and knew something was wrong with her hands—something that she didn't want others to know; the silk gloves were proof of that.

Nevertheless, after they shook hands on the agreement, Helia Ashenborn added, "Oh, yes. You don't have to continue teaching Cyrena, Sir Vahn. I will grant you access to the public libraries. You can visit them with Hester's company."

"As for the academy's libraries, it will be a bit more tricky. I will have to write a letter of request to Headmaster Tabitha first. You'll be free to visit the academy's library once I receive word of her consent," Helia Ashenborn stated.

Vaan was pleasantly surprised after hearing Helia Ashenborn's decision.

"Thank you, Lord Helia. That would be great," Vaan said with a gratified smile before shaking his head. "I will visit the libraries during my breaks, but I won't stop teaching Lady Cyrena."

"Since I have given my word, I will teach Lady Cyrena for the full seven days we have agreed upon. I trust Lord Helia doesn't have a problem with that?" Vaan politely asked.

"How can I? It's great that you are still willing," Helia Ashenborn said joyfully. "But regarding our business, how would you like to receive the dividends, Sir Vahn?"

"Regarding that, I hope Lord Helia can help me open an account under Lady Linetta's name at the Witch Union Bank. The payment can be sent there."

"Under Marquis Delarosa's eldest daughter, huh?" Helia Ashenborn softly muttered before nodding, "Mm, it can be done. I will take care of it for you, Sir Vahn."

"Thank you, Lord Helia. Then, I will return to resume Lady Cyrena's lesson now."

"Of course. I'll call someone to guide you back there, Sir Vahn."

Chapter 96: Giving Homework

Shortly after Vaan left with a True Witch assigned to guide him back to the Brewing Chamber, Helia Ashenborn didn't stay in the Great Hall either.

Helia Ashenborn returned to the outer courtyard, where Hester Thornton and the three True Witches were previously left.

"Lord Helia," Hester Thornton quickly greeted.

"Un," Helia Ashenborn acknowledged with a nod before casting her gaze over the three True Witches. "How are they doing, Hester?"

"As you can see, Lord Helia, the True Witches are absorbing mana quite well thanks to the Sir Vahn's version of the Pore Stimulation Potion. There's no sign of steady temperature increase in their bodies," Hester Thornton replied.

"Their temperatures have been bouncing up and down around the same level. It's like their bodies are meant to rise in temperature due to the induced excitement, but at the same time, something is cooling them down."

"It's almost been a whole hour, but the situation remained like this. By the looks of it, I believe it might be possible to even increase the dosage and receive better effects per session," Hester Thornton thought.

"Is that so?" Helia Ashenborn calmly observed the three True Witches and mana flows before she shook her head. "But no matter how good this new version of the Pore Stimulation Potion is, it is still a rank 1 potion."

"This kind of potion is only attractive to True Witches. Senior Witches like us won't even consider using this level of potion. Only rank 2 potions or higher can entice us."

"You're absolutely right, Lord Helia," Hester Thornton agreed before saying, "However, the price of potions skyrockets after rank 1. Even normal Senior Witches would find it difficult to buy many rank 2 potions."

"That's not an issue you need to be concerned about as long as you continue to serve me," Helia Ashenborn calmly said. "I have the money and resource to procure the rank 2 potions we need—at least the ones we can buy on the market."

"As for those more special rank 2 potions, we only rely on connections and favors to obtain them. That being said, I've secured a business deal with Vahn Cadieux, who represents the Delarosa Household. This should earn us some mana stones. But more importantly, it's an opportunity to get closer to the Delarosa Household."

"In the future, we will have a better chance at obtaining those more special rank 2 potions, or maybe even rank 3 potions," Helia Ashenborn's eyes sparkled when she spoke about rank 3 potions.

Helia Ashenborn had already hit the wall that separated the experienced from the extraordinary. If she wanted to have any hopes of becoming a High Witch, she could only rely on rank 3 magic potions.

"Rank 3 potions... Is it possible to get them from the Delarosa Household, Lord Helia?" Hester Thornton wondered.

"I don't think anyone besides the outstanding members of their household would get any chances of being blessed with those rank 3 potions."

"It's hard to say, but we can only focus on building our relationship with them and hope for the best," Helia Ashenborn said with a sigh before giving Hester Thornton instructions. "When you're done here, go back and watch over Sir Vahn's lesson, Hester."

"Once Sir Vahn's lesson finishes, inform me at once. We still have things to finalize for our business deal, such as the Pore Stimulation Potion's formula and precise ratio of ingredients."

"I will be visiting the Witch Union Bank's branch in the city and taking care of other small matters on my end," Helia Ashenborn added.

"Understood, Lord Helia," Hester Thornton complied.

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Meanwhile, after Vaan was guided back to the Brewing Chamber, Cyrena Ashenborn's eyes brightened with excitement.

"Welcome back, Teacher!" Cyrena Ashenborn immediately welcomed Vaan energetically before her curiosity got the better of her. "If you don't mind answering, can I ask what you spoke about with my mother, Teacher?"

Vaan casually recounted the business deal and the library access granted him. When he mentioned that he didn't need to fulfill his obligation as a teacher, Cyrena Ashenborn felt devastated for a moment.

After all, it was easy to find a qualified teacher but difficult to find a great teacher to study under.

In the short time that they've spent together, Vahn Cadieux had precisely become one of those great teachers in Cyrena Ashenborn's heart, which was determined by his selflessness towards his students – or so Cyrena Ashenborn believed.

"Don't worry, Lady Cyrena. I will still be teaching you for the full seven days. And after those seven days, you can still find me when you have any doubts or questions. After all, I will still be your teacher. More importantly, I am a man of my word," Vaan lied as naturally as he breathed.

"I see... That's great!" Cyrena Ashenborn patted her chest with relief before adopting a studious look. "What will you teach me next about potioning, Teacher? Also, just call me Cyrena."

"Well then, Cyrena, I won't be teaching you any more about potioning for today," Vaan casually stated, but Cyrena Ashenborn quickly looked like her world collapsed with her frozen expression.

"What? Why?!"

"There's no point in learning new knowledge if you haven't completely absorbed and mastered what you previously learned. As such, there won't be any more lessons on potioning for today. Instead, I'll be giving you homework," Vaan calmly stated.

"Using the Equilibrium Principle, you have to come up with your own substitution formula for the Pore Stimulation Potion. However, you can't just list the name of the ingredients; you also have to calculate their required quantities."

"You can use Brewing Chamber to trial-run your formulas. Your goal is to develop at least one working formula by tomorrow's lesson. Do you think you can manage it?" Vaan asked.

"I will try, Teacher!" Cyrena Ashenborn said with a determined look, quickly turning to the ingredient shelf to get started immediately.

After all, the fact that her teacher only required her to come up with one working formula implied that it wouldn't be easy to come up with more.

Finding the right substitute ingredients would be easy, but figuring out the correct quantity would be hard.

However, just as Cyrena Ashenborn was about to walk away, Vaan stopped her and asked, "What are you doing, Cyrena?"

"Err... Starting my homework?" Cyrena Ashenborn answered hesitantly, feeling confused and doubtful.

"That's for after the end of the lessons. We haven't gone through all the lessons yet," Vaan casually stated. "Were you planning to neglect your other fields of studies?"

Chapter 97: Cyrena's Illness

When Vaan mentioned the other fields of studies, Cyrena Ashenborn did not feel any excitement. Instead, her mood plummeted with depression.

"Teacher, you already know my condition. If it's physical combat, I'm willing to learn. But as for the other subjects? There's no point in learning if I can't use magic," Cyrena Ashenborn stated.

"There's no point in learning if you can't use magic?" Vaan shook his head and said, "That's if you can't use magic forever."

"More importantly, if you don't try because you can't do it, why bother doing anything? Even potioneering that you are most proud of is nothing without magic at the higher ranks. Just because of that, are you going to give up on potioneering too?"

"No!" Cyrena Ashenborn answered before stubbornly saying, "Potioneering is different. At least, it is something I can do, even if all I can make is rank 1 potions! As for the others, I don't even have a chance!"

"You don't have a chance? – the chance determined by the ability to use magic? Maybe they don't give you a chance, but did you give them a chance? If a powerful person wants you dead, who do you think is more likely to survive? The one that immediately gives up, or the one that perseveres to the end?" Vaan questioned her.

Cyrena Ashenborn furrowed her brows and said, "The one that perseveres to the end."

"That's right. As long as you don't give up, there will always be a chance. You might not be able to use magic, but that doesn't necessarily mean you can't use magic later. Are you going to wait until you can use magic before you start learning the basics of magic?"

Cyrena Ashenborn contemplated with a frown before Vaan continued, "Even if you turn out to be a talented genius, you'll be left far behind by your peers. Is that what you want?"

"No, Teacher. But..."

"I believe I already told you this before, but I will say it again; as long as you believe in me, I won't give up on you. So don't give up on yourself, Cyrena," Vaan firmly said.

"Even if I want to, it's not easy..." Cyrena Ashenborn replied with a sigh.

She had been disappointed by so many supposed masters in the art of healing. Even High Witches were helpless against her unknown condition.

How can someone without magic resolve her inability to use magic and teach her magic on top of it? It was already impressive that her teacher was so proficient in potioneering.

Cyrena Ashenborn didn't dare to hope for more, lest she is disappointed again.

"It seems like you won't be able to move forward unless I, as your teacher, give you some hope," Vaan calmly said before asking, "Don't you want to know the real reason why you can't use magic?"

"Do you know what is wrong with me, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn widened her eyes in surprise after hearing Vaan's question.

"I've read through all the medical records overnight, so I have a pretty good idea. That said, I won't be completely certain until I perform a personal diagnosis on you, Cyrena," Vaan stated.

Although Cyrena Ashenborn found it hard to believe, she did become a little interested in what her teacher had to say.

After all, her condition was something that even High Witches couldn't figure out. And yet, her teacher claimed he might know.

"Then... can I get diagnosed right away, Teacher? What do I have to do? Do I have to... remove my clothes?" Cyrena Ashenborn gripped the hem of her dress bashfully when she thought she might have to.

However, Vaan casually shook his head.

"No, we don't need to go that far. I just need to observe you, run some tests with you, and draw some blood from you. Some touching may also be involved, so I apologize in advance, Cyrena," Vaan stated before asking, "Is there an infirmary room with such tools we can use?"

"Yes, of course. I will guide you there, Teacher," Cyrena Ashenborn volunteered.

Helia's Castle had everything needed to cover all the subjects taught in Redpine Academy, allowing Helia Ashenborn's children to learn ahead of their official enrolment day in the academy or self-study in their own time.

Nevertheless, after Vaan agreed, Cyrena Ashenborn led him outside to the only infirmary within the walls of Helia's Castle.

It wasn't a private infirmary but one used by the combat witches and aura masters serving under Helia Ashenborn. Its location was next to a training field in the outer courtyard.

As Hester Thornton waited for the effects of the Pore Stimulation Potions to expire on the three True Witches, she noticed Vaan and Cyrena Ashenborn as they walked past.

Although Hester Thornton wasn't sure why they were visiting the infirmary, she decided not to follow them until she completed her first task.

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Meanwhile, Vaan and Cyrena Ashenborn arrived at the infirmary.

Everything was clearly laid out, from the infirmary beds to the medical equipment storage cabinets, allowing Vaan to quickly locate where the needles for drawing blood were stored.

Nevertheless, Vaan didn't rush to grab the needles.

"Lay down, close your eyes, and steady your breathing."

"Yes, Teacher."

Cyrena Ashenborn obediently followed Vaan's instruction and laid on one of the white infirmary beds.

Once Cyrena Ashenborn closed her eyes, Vaan activated his Magic Vision, immediately revealing the peculiarities of the mana within her body.

Just as it was said in Cyrena Ashenborn's medical records, her mana veins were much thicker than ordinary witches.

Generally, such thick mana veins should have granted Cyrena Ashenborn superior mana absorption, allowing her to possess a great talent for magic.

And yet, for some reason, she could not use magic despite her natural endowment.

However, Vaan quickly saw through the problem.

'No more wonder no one could discover the problem in Cyrena's body. Something like this would have been easily overlooked if they were unfamiliar with the so-called curse plaguing Sunpeak Town and its surroundings...' Vaan mused.

'Did Cyrena catch the curse before the outbreak in Sunpeak Town or after it? If It was before the outbreak, then that would be quite the interesting discovery.'

Vaan rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

Chapter 98: Simple Massage

Nevertheless, even with Magic Vision, Vaan could only tell that Cyrena Ashenborn's mana veins were infected with parasitic substances. He couldn't tell how much parasitic substance had invaded her body.

After all, the parasitic substances were brimming with mana, making them look no different from mana itself. Thus, they were camouflaging with Cyrena Ashenborn's mana veins.

"I'm going to give you a simple massage to increase your blood circulation."

"Y-Yes, Teacher."

After Vaan informed her, Cyrena Ashenborn felt strangely nervous yet excited as her eyes remained shut.

Shortly after, Cyrena Ashenborn felt Vaan's warm hands on her calf, and her heartbeat quickened.

Her face quickly flushed with embarrassment, but it didn't take long for her embarrassment to be overwhelmed by waves of pleasure coming from her lower legs.

"Ahh~!"

A soft moan involuntarily escaped Cyrena Ashenborn's mouth, causing her to quickly cover her mouth with shame.

Cyrena Ashenborn was caught off guard by Vaan's dexterous hands that continued to send inexplicable pleasure, the likes of which she had never experienced before, as they moved up to her thighs.

'How is this a simple massage?' Cyrena Ashenborn was completely ashamed as she tried to hold back her moans.

Even so, she didn't want Vaan to stop. She could only bite her lips and suppress her voice through the wonderful sensation that brought her comfort and relaxation.

Cyrena Ashenborn didn't expect Vaan's massaging skill to be so extraordinary. She couldn't imagine what his 'good' massage would be like if his 'simple' massage was already this great. Even so, she couldn't help but look forward to experiencing it one day.

After a round of massage was completed on Cyrena Ashenborn's arms and legs, her whole body was warmed by the increased blood flow in her body.

But even with all the sensual stimulation, Vaan's Magic Vision didn't catch a speck of mana getting absorbed by Cyrena Ashenborn's body despite her supposed innate talent granting her superior mana absorption.

'It's that bad, huh?' Vaan narrowed his blue-glowing eyes before deactivating his Magic Vision with a calm, unsurprised look.

According to the medical records, Cyrena Ashenborn couldn't use magic, but she could at least produce some sort of response in the mana before the spell eventually failed.

That proved that her ability as a witch was undeniable—if not for the unknown factor preventing her from casting her spells successfully.

However, in the latter years, Cyrena Ashenborn could not produce any movement in the mana at all, as if her magic circuit had been completely crippled at that point.

'The parasitic substance must have built up in Cyrena's body over time until it completely sealed her ability,' Vaan mused.

Magic circles were formed to create the convenience of casting spells and increase mana capacity. But Cyrena Ashenborn's body was like a bucket that's already been filled with water—water that can't be used due to the parasitic substances.

As such, it couldn't absorb more mana.

Nevertheless, Vaan still needed to perform the last test to confirm everything.

Vaan went and grabbed the medical toolbox from the cabinet before checking inside. After confirming it had what he needed, he brought it back to Cyrena Ashenborn.

The basic steps were quickly performed before Vaan inserted his needle into Cyrena Ashenborn and extracted some of her blood into the syringe.

Shortly after, Vaan healed up the small needle wound on Cyrena Ashenborn's arm with a healing potion that came with the syringe needle in the medical toolbox.

Afterward, Vaan didn't hesitate to consume some of the extracted blood in the syringe.

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Ding!

<Parasitic substances have entered your body>

<The Earth Spirit, Topaz, has removed the parasitic substances from your body>

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

[Topaz's Mana Capacity]: 237/215 (Excess Mana)

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<The Earth Spirit, Topaz, is delighted for the treat>

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After receiving the system's notifications, there were no more doubts regarding the parasitic substances in Cyrena Ashenborn's body.

Vaan had collected all the evidence he needed.

"You can reopen your eyes, Cyrena," Vaan said after seeing Cyrena Ashenborn's eyes remain shut as she lay still on the infirmary bed.

Although Cyrena Ashenborn was still baffled why she had to shut her eyes, she was quick to reopen them after receiving permission.

She quickly sat up on the infirmary bed before her gaze fell on the syringe needle in Vaan's hand. After a moment, her gaze shifted back to Vaan.

"Were you able to confirm what my problem was, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn inquired with a lingering faint blush on her cheeks.

At that moment, Hester Thornton entered the infirmary before looking back and forth between Vaan and Cyrena Ashenborn. Her expression quickly turned peculiar, as if she might have missed something that happened between the two.

The young lady's expression did not seem right.

Nevertheless, Hester Thornton chose to remain silent and gave them the signal not to mind her. She was just there to watch over them.

Vaan nodded before replying to Cyrena Ashenborn's earlier question, "The problem preventing you from using magic wasn't innate. In fact, you were born with more talent than anyone."

"However, you caught the Curse of the Purple Umbala, which can be found in your blood."

"T-the Curse of the Purple Umbala?" Cyrena Ashenborn and Hester Thornton were both startled by Vaan's claim before Cyrena Ashenborn doubted, "But how is that possible? I've never been anyway close to Sunpeak Town in my life."

"Do you have evidence to prove your claim, Teacher Cadieux?" Hester Thornton asked in a solemn tone, sensing the severity of the matter if it was true.

Nevertheless, Vaan casually raised the syringe needle filled with blood and said, "As I said, the proof is in the blood."

"The curse is in the blood? Did someone put the Curse of the Purple Umbala on the Ashenborn Household's bloodline? But that doesn't make sense either... Young Lady Cyrena is the only one affected by it..." Hester Thornton muttered with doubt.

Cyrena Ashenborn was also confused.

"First of all, the Curse of Purple Umbala isn't a real curse caused by magic. It would be more accurate to consider it a type of parasitic disease. Second and more importantly, this disease is airborne and can be latched onto anyone," Vaan explained.

Chapter 99: Atomic Visualizer

"An airborne parasitic disease..." Hester Thornton furrowed her brows with surprise and doubt before saying, "But that still doesn't explain why Young Lady Cyrena is the only affected by it."

Vaan had expected such doubt and prepared a suitable answer for it.

"This just shows how great Cyrena's talent is. She possesses a rare constitution suitable for Water Magic Specialization," Vaan started to explain.

"However, this also makes plant-type substances naturally attracted to her. After all, water nourishes plants. Furthermore, Helia's Castle has a large-scale mana gathering spell deployed under it, drawing in the immense amount of mana from the surroundings."

"This naturally drew in the airborne parasitic substances and brought them to Cyrena, who had an innate water constitution," Vaan stated.

Although it was very likely that Cyrena Ashenborn was exposed to parasitic substances even before Lady Aeliana became a Plant-type Abomination, Vaan could only explain it as such and feign ignorance of the bigger truth.

There was definitely something going on between Helia Ashenborn and the original source of parasitic substances.

However, it wasn't something Vaan could say. Knowing too much gets people killed.

"That does make sense..." Hester Thornton agreed with Vaan's reasoning before adding with a frown, "But this still doesn't explain why Young Lady Cyrena is the only one affected, Teacher Cadieux..."

"Well, it's hard to say whether Cyrena is still the only one affected now."

"What do you mean, Teacher Cadieux?" Hester Thornton raised her eyebrow with a startled look.

"Since these parasitic substances originated from the spores of the Plant-type Abomination, let's just call them antimagic spores. There's only so much room for Cyrena's body to contain these mana-filled antimagic spores. Her body naturally wouldn't absorb anymore once it's full," Vaan patiently explained.

"As such, these antimagic spores can only latch onto alternative targets they come across."

When Hester Thornton heard that, she quickly drew her distance from Cyrena Ashenborn with a frightened and alarmed look.

Vaan inwardly smiled at her reaction before adding, "Of course, there's also a chance that Cyrena's body coincidentally absorbed all the antimagic spores before it became full, saving everyone else from suffering the same fate."

"I... I see..." Hester Thornton uttered.

However, Hester Thornton continued to keep her distance.

Magic was a symbol of a witch's authority. Losing the ability to use it meant losing their authority, something Hester Thornton didn't want to take her chances with.

"I apologize, Teacher Cadieux. I won't be keeping you company for the time being. This is a grave matter. Please excuse me as I leave to report to Lord Helia."

Shortly after, Hester Thornton left.

If there were no surprises, Vaan would be expecting to hear from Helia Ashenborn later.

Helia Ashenborn would summon Vaan to try and pry more information from him, but the same would also be equally true for him.

Although Helia Ashenborn seemed to be the mastermind that orchestrated Lady Aeliana's downfall, Vaan couldn't help but feel there was a factor he hadn't accounted for due to the lack of information.

There must be more to the story.

Vaan was bothered by the existence of the antimagic spores.

Nevertheless, after Hester Thornton was gone, Cyrena Ashenborn looked at Vaan with a hopeful gaze.

There was no present cure for the Curse of the Purple Umbala. But when Cyren Ashenborn saw Vaan's calm composure, she felt like he had a solution or would be able to find one—No, she wanted to believe that he did.

Cyrena Ashenborn's hopes were reignited.

"Do you have a way to resolve my problem, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn asked.

"No, I do not. But isn't that what we are trying to figure out? We found out the source of the problem, so all we need to do is come up with the right treatment for it," Vaan's reply shattered Cyrena Ashenborn's hopes before piecing them together again.

Cyrena Ashenborn's gaze fell on the syringe needle with her blood before she paused in thought.

"Are we going to study the antimagic spores in my blood, Teacher? But how can we study something we can't even see with the naked eye? Magic wouldn't work on them either, and neither of us could use magic. Are there other ways to do so?" Cyrena Ashenborn wondered with curiosity.

Even mana couldn't be seen unless they were concentrated.

"Well, there are both magic tools and normal tools that can allow us to see things that are too small for the naked eye," Vaan casually smiled before asking, "Have you never heard of the Atomic Visualizers, Cyrena?"

"Atomic Visualizers?" Cyrena Ashenborn uttered with a startled look before her memory was vague. "I may or may not have heard such a term in my artificer class..."

"Considering you don't pay too much attention to your other classes, I suppose it's not surprising if you aren't familiar with Atomic Visualizers. This type of magic tool has only been introduced in the past year," Vaan said.

"However, it will be strange if you aren't interested after learning about Atomic Visualizers. This kind of magic tool is fast becoming popular among potioners."

"Why is that so, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn asked, feeling awkward because she knew nothing about Atomic Visualizers.

Suddenly, Cyrena Ashenborn felt she should have paid attention to her other classes, even if she couldn't do what others did in class. At the very least, she wouldn't feel ignorant like she did now.

"Atomic Visualizers make use of lens and magic to magnify items by thousands to possibly millions of its size, allowing people to see a speck of dust as if it's the size of a watermelon," Vaan explained.

"As for why it is fast becoming popular among potioners, it's because it can allow potioners to understand the structural properties of their ingredients on a microscopic level, giving them insights into the ingredients and how to better use them."

"So, if we have an Atomic Visualizer, we can look at the structural property of the antimagic spores and figure out how to neutralize them, Teacher?" Cyrena Ashenborn asked with amazement.

"That's right," Vaan nodded.

"However, Atomic Visualizers are pretty new on the magic tool market. I'm not certain if there's one in Helia's Castle or the academy."

"We don't have one here, unfortunately, Teacher," Cyrena Ashenborn replied. Otherwise, she would have known about it.

"That's unfortunate indeed."

Chapter 100: Probing Helia

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Outside Helia's Castle, Helia Ashenborn returned from her short trip to the Witch Union Bank, a bank with powerful backing and is founded across all seven witch kingdoms.

"Lord Helia!" Hester Thornton called as she rushed over after spotting Helia Ashenborn in a timely manner.

Nevertheless, Hester Thornton's urgency startled Helia Ashenborn as the latter raised an eyebrow.

"What's gotten you all flustered, Hester? Did something big happen in my short absence from the castle?" Helia Ashenborn inquired with narrowed eyes.

However, Hester Thornton quickly shook her head.

"Not so much as something big happened, but I've learned something very important, and it requires your immediate attention, Lord Helia."

Shortly after, Hester Thornton recounted to Helia Ashenborn everything she learned about the antimagic spores from Vaan in the infirmary.

"Is that true? How did Sir Vahn figure out Cyrena's condition is related to the Curse of the Purple Umbala?" Helia Ashenborn asked with surprise.

"I'm not sure too sure either, Lord Helia. I missed out on the entire process of Teacher Cadieux's diagnosis. However, he was holding a syringe needle with Young Lady Cyrena's blood," Hester Thornton answered before suddenly shaking her head the next moment.

"More importantly, Lord Helia, shouldn't we consider imposing sanctions on travelers arriving from Sunpeak Town? Young Lady Cyrena's condition is most likely caused by those travelers carrying the antimagic spores over from Sunpeak Town."

"Sir Vahn didn't mention anything about the antimagic spores coming from Red Goblin Mountains?" Helia Ashenborn unhurriedly asked with a sharp look.

Hester Thornton was taken aback by the question.

"Why would the antimagic spores come from Red Goblin Mountains, Lord Helia? Wasn't the curse spread by the Plant-type Abomination in Sunpeak Town that transformed three years ago?" Hester Thornton wondered with a confused look.

"Oh... About that... Since the antimagic spores are airborne, they could have spread over Red Goblin Mountains before spreading to us. After all, the mountain winds blow in our city's direction..." Helia Ashenborn coughed and said, "Anyway, you are right. We should impose sanctions on travelers from Sunpeak Town."

"However, we will work on that later. Where is Sir Vahn now, Hester?" Helia Ashenborn asked.

"It wasn't long before I left the infirmary. Thus, if they haven't moved elsewhere, Teacher Cadieux and Young Lady Cyrena should still be in the infirmary," Hester Thornton replied after a short pause.

"I see," Helia Ashenborn nodded before saying, "I will have to trouble you to go back and call Sir Vahn to the Great Hall. I would like to speak to him again."

"Of course, Lord Helia," Hester Thornton obeyed with a bow.

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Sometime later, Vaan received word of Helia Ashenborn's summoning from Hester Thornton as he was leaving the infirmary with Cyrena Ashenborn.

"That was quite fast," Vaan casually commented before handing the syringe needle to Cyrena Ashenborn, "I will leave this in your care until I return, Cyrena."

"Yes, Teacher," Cyrena Ashenborn accepted the syringe needle containing her blood obediently.

Nevertheless, her eyes glinted with some disappointment and annoyance.

Although Cyrena Ashenborn was a little grateful to her mother for finding her such an incredible teacher, she also knew it wasn't out of consideration for her plight.

Her mother was simply using her to test her teacher's ability. And since her teacher's ability was confirmed to be the real deal, her mother has been taking away her precious learning time.

Cyrena Ashenborn knew her mother didn't place any importance on her education at all; she only cared about the benefits the Ashenborn Household could gain from her teacher's knowledge.

Darkness started to sprout in Cyrena Ashenborn's heart.

After learning about the cause of her inability, Cyrena Ashenborn began to wonder what was the purpose of staying in such a heartless family. She didn't receive any love; she only received scorn and humiliation.

'Why should I continue to stay in this cold castle? If I hadn't lived in this castle, would I have accumulated the antimagic spores that resulted in my inability to use magic? If I could follow Teacher, I would learn a lot and be happier too,' Cyrena Ashenborn thought.

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Meanwhile, Vaan followed Hester Thornton and returned to the Great Hall to meet Helia Ashenborn once again.

"I apologize for you calling you over again, Sir Vahn. However, what you learned about antimagic spores is too important for me to ignore. Not only does it concern the welfare of everyone in this castle, but it also concerns everyone else's lives in the city," Helia Ashenborn spoke.

However, under Vaan's observation, Helia Ashenborn didn't seem concerned for anyone at all. Not the people living in the castle nor everyone else living in the city.

If anything, Helia Ashenborn was only concerned about herself.

Nevertheless, Vaan played along and asked, "I'd be happy to help where I can, but what do you need from me exactly, Lord Helia? I'm just one person. You can't expect me to stop every traveler passing through Sunpeak Town to reach Redpine City, right?"

Even Helia Ashenborn, the lord of Redpine City, couldn't stop all travelers from entering her city—not unless she was prepared to face the repercussion of offending various people who come to trade in her city. It would hurt her city's economy.

Of course, that wasn't something Vaan could say.

"No, you can't stop travelers from entering the city. However, you were able to find out about the Curse of the Purple Umbala very easily," Helia Ashenborn seriously stated before asking, "As such, I wanted to ask you – how confident are you in curing the Curse of the Purple Umbala, Sir Vahn?"

"That's hard to say when I have yet to ascertain the difficulty of the task. All I can say is that finding a solution to a problem we already know is easier than finding a solution to a problem we don't know."

Shortly after saying that, Vaan decided to probe Helia Ashenborn, "That being said, Lord Helia seems to be especially concerned—or should I say anxious?"

Vaan also casually glanced at Helia Ashenborn's hands, which were covered by silk gloves. His simple action told Helia Ashenborn that he knew something was wrong with her hands.

Helia Ashenborn's gaze sharpened when she looked at Vaan. But after a moment, she sighed and waved her hand, dismissing all the servants from the Great Hall, including Hester Thornton.

Within moments, only Helia Ashenborn and Vaan were left in the Great Hall.

"Since you noticed it, I won't hide it from you, Sir Vahn," Helia Ashenborn started to remove her silk gloves.