

D. Extraction 141

Chapter 141 Assistance

Thanks to the books in Heinz's laboratory, Vale learned plenty of Dark Spells even before he attended Professor Morton's class.

It means that he had a long time considering the spell that he would like to learn inside the Academy.

Furthermore, Vale actually felt helpless after hearing the Professor's suggestion, he only wanted him to write at least six Dark Spells.

However, as he entered his Phantasm State, he can see 12 Available Spell Lights!

That's right, aside from the four Spell Models in his body, he can see 12 other bright lights indicating that he can learn 12 more spells. Furthermore, he knows that this number can still increase since he hadn't reached his limit yet.

According to Master Heinz, the Spell Lights will only stop appearing at around 18 years old.

He still has about 4 years to accumulate Spell Lights!

He can only hope that the Malevolence Infection Spell will not consume more than 5 Spell Lights when recording its Spell Model.

After writing his set of spells and explaining why he chose this combination of spells, Vale submitted the paper to the Professor.

The class finally ended after Jody, the last student, submitted her paper. She took almost an hour to think about her plans.

"We still have some time left but I'll be returning to the faculty now to check your papers. Alright, class dismissed."

With that said, the professor left the room as the class celebrated. It was finally their free time so they immediately gathered their things and left.

Some of them would visit their clubs while others would have their tea in the cafeteria.

Lisa, Chad, Aubrey, and Blair, on the other hand, decided to quickly finish their spell recording as they went to Vale to ask for his help.

"Vale, I'm sure you have some secret on how you recorded your spell faster than those high nobles... I'm not asking you for free. I'll give you three Spirit Pearls. Ahem... Only low-grade ones though." Aubrey said as her group surrounded Vale.

Since Aubrey started to mention giving gifts, the others started copying her.

"I don't have Spirit Pearls but I have an extra pocket watch with me. I notice that you don't have one so you can have it. It's a mystical item but it's not a standard quality. Well, it can only help the wearer increase his focus a little amount." Chad said as he recalled the pocket watch he wasn't using and still in his luggage.

As Lisa and Blair were about to mention their gifts, Vale immediately stopped them.

"Alright... Alright... I'm not taking anything from you. I'll help you all and you just have to keep this as our secret and a favor from me. Soon, I'll be asking you some favors that you can't turn down."

As Vale said this, his classmates were the ones who were stunned. However, it was only a moment of hesitation. They immediately agreed with this...

"It's fine. As long as you're not going to ask us to do something illegal." Lisa said.

"I won't. I promise." Vale said with a smile. His plan was simple, he would ask them to bring him some corpses. Maybe not today or this year, but it would happen someday.

He wanted to gather these people so he could get some helpers someday and get more access to corpses.

His reputation may look questionable if he did this but he doesn't care anymore. As long as he gets stronger with more corpses, he wouldn't mind this at all.

Once he becomes one of the strongest out there, who would dare to disrespect him?

Of course, he also not planning to reveal all of his secrets to them. He only thought of assisting them without informing them of his secrets...

Vale soon left the classroom and returned to his dormitory. He was planning to help them later around seven in the evening.

Although he initially thought of doing this on Sunday, he wanted them to have more time to record the spell so he changed it to a few hours later.

As soon as he entered his room, he swiftly changed into more comfortable clothes before talking to the Dark Spirit in his shadow.

"Lotus, did you hear our conversation... You will be helping my classmates in their Spell Recording."

"Fine... However, I'll be drained quickly if I use my own energy. You have to supply me." Lotus answered with her ethereal voice.

Vale felt blessed just listening to her sweet and gentle tone of voice, if possible, he would like Lotus to be more active in conversation but unfortunately, she can't spend her energy on useless matters.

Since she's no longer in the Spirit World, the abundant spiritual energy is no longer within her reach. She would have to always calculate her move in order to not waste her energy.

"I'll supply you. You mentioned that aside from Spiritual Energy, you can also use Dark Energy, right? I have plenty of those." Vale said with a proud look on his face.

Vale has already confirmed one of the principles of this world, it is the higher vitality, the higher the Dark Energy reserves.

Since he has 10.05 Vitality Points, his Dark Energy Reserves would have twice that of an adult practitioner. According to his knowledge, having 4 to 5 points in Vitality is considered normal while

his 10 points in the same attribute can only be achieved through the help of the Arcane Arts like potion, ritual, or mysticism.

"Hmm... I can tell. That's why I suggested it." Lotus replied perfunctory making Vale a bit speechless.

"Ahem. I see... Very well, I'll look forward to your help later. In any case, they already know about you so it shouldn't be that shocking to reveal your secrets." Vale muttered.

He previously thought of revealing his Magic Circle to his classmates but changed his idea after his long chat with the Dark Spirit last night.

Vale soon fell asleep as he felt the need to recharge his energy.

A few hours passed quickly as Vale completed his nap and assisted his friend with their spell recording after their dinner.

They soon revealed an excited look on their faces as they realized that they will be helped by the Dark Spirit that Vale summoned in the assessment.

They have never expected this at all!

On Monday, Lisa and the others surprised the whole class after revealing that they'd already recorded the Darkness Manipulation Spell Model!

Chapter 142 Sold

Lisa and the others kept Vale's secret and didn't reveal Lotus' ability to help with their Spell Recording.

First of all, Vale mentioned that this type of help can't be done repeatedly since Lotus doesn't have an infinite amount of energy and is already cut off from the Spirit World. He decided to exaggerate Lotus' condition so Lisa and the others won't rely on her from now on.

It's not like he was being stingy but he knows that he has to limit this type of assistance as well. Learning how to properly record a spell without the assistance of Dark Spirit is what should be done since experience is what's really important in this type of thing.

After all, Vale wouldn't always be there for them.

On the 6th of June, Professor Russell Ravinie entered Class 2's room with a serious face.

He looked at Vale for a moment before he spoke with a solemn voice.

"Vale Chambers will take the Class Advancement Exam for my class. However, the Headmaster requested it to be watched by him since this is the first time someone tried doing this after a long while. Follow me." As he said this, Professor Ravinie couldn't hide his smirk.

He reported this matter with grievances to the Headmaster for this exact reason.

He mentioned how Vale was acting lazy in his class and disregarded his pieces of advice most of the time.

His efforts obviously bore fruit as the Headmaster would also watch Vale take the exam.

Even though Vale was smart, he would certainly feel nervous in front of the prestigious Headmaster... It means that he would have a higher chance of failure!

Professor Ravinie could no longer wait for what he would do to Vale once he failed and become his student assistant.

There was no way he would make it easy for Vale.

As expected, the whole class felt worried that Vale would fail the exam.

Taking a difficult test alone while guarded by the most prestigious person in the academy, would be nerve-wracking.

"Good luck, Vale." Lisa whispered as Vale stood up to follow the Professor.

"I'm sure that you can do it. I envy you." Aubrey said with a smile as she believes that Vale wouldn't take this exam without some confidence in his skills. Although the pressure will be immense while taking the exam, as long as Vale managed to compose himself, then it should be possible to pass this advancement exam.

Vale thanked his friends for their encouraging words.

Of course, he wasn't nervous or bothered by the fact that he has to take the exam with the Headmaster.

Perhaps, he would be nervous before but now that he had gotten closer to him. Vale felt more at ease taking the exam with the Headmaster. This would even allow him to ensure that there wouldn't be any tricks in the exam itself.

"Headmaster, this is Vale Chambers that I mentioned a while ago. He will be taking the exam under your watch as you've requested while I'll be lecturing at Class 2." Professor Ravinie said after entering the Headmaster's office.

Headmaster Jean is currently seated behind his desk and reading a few papers.

He looked at the newly arrived people and showed a faint smile.

"I understand. How long will he take the exam?" The Headmaster asked.

"The time limit is two hours, Headmaster. I already spoke with Professor Charlotte about the time he'll take."

Since the Arithmetic Class is only one hour, Vale had to get permission to skip the next class to take the exam.

Luckily, Professor Ravinie already worked on this matter and Vale only has to think about the exam.

Vale soon found the prepared desk for him to take the exam. There was a stack of papers on it filled with arithmetic problems.

After the Professor left some instructions to Vale, he left the Headmaster's office to return to the class.

At this time, Headmaster Jean was looking at Vale with interest.

Vale didn't mind it and just focused on writing on the test paper... Since the exam is only for a Grade 7 or probably Grade 8 student, Vale felt confident since even if he hasn't studied math for a long time, he can still easily recall the formulas and equations that he had studied for many years.

Seeing that Vale was busy on his test and didn't seem to be unbothered, the Headmaster decided to speak instead.

"You look confident. You're not hesitating in what you're writing," Headmaster Jean commented.

"Well... This is not that difficult so I wanted to skip this class and spend my time on something more valuable." Vale replied while still writing.

"More valuable? Are you planning to look for more corpses?"

"Ughh... Not really but that's also possible. Do you have a suggestion, Headmaster?" Vale asked as he flipped his paper. He already finished answering one side first paper.

There were 6 pages more.

"Well, if you use the favor I gave you... I can bring you to a very good place... It's my basement. I have a collection there that I want you to see as a fellow enthusiast."

Gulp...

Vale felt a bit nervous after being invited to someone's basement.

Of course, he can tell that there is a great opportunity there but he couldn't help but think that it could be very dangerous as well.

For now, he decided to switch the topic...

"I will think about it, Headmaster. Right, may I know what happened to his Spirit?" Vale asked.

He was referring to Wilfred's spirit.

"What do you think?" The Headmaster returned the question.

Vale felt helpless about this but he still guessed.

"Did you refine it to make a Mystical Item? Perhaps it was used to feed an Evil Creature? Oh, you can probably use it to put a soul on a puppet. I heard that the Dark Alchemy is trying to achieve a living puppet. I think I've read about it in the Academy's paper, am I right?" Vale answered while still writing on his paper.

At this time, the Headmaster felt amused as he didn't expect that Vale would have so many ideas.

"That's possible indeed... You have grasped the Darkness Path really well... However, I didn't do any of those. I sold his spirit back to the Moontomb Family. I earned quite a lot so I gave you that corpse a while ago."

Chapter 143 The Twelve Arcane Paths

"..."

Vale finally stopped writing after hearing the Headmaster's words. He shifted his gaze to the Headmaster who was looking at him all this time.

The headmaster's smile was something that Vale would never forget. After all, this is the smile that tore a part of his shadow when he first came here.

That was such a traumatizing experience. Although he already recovered from it, recalling how his shadow was ripped apart in front of his eyes wasn't a good memory.

Anyway, he couldn't tell whether the Headmaster is really in a good mood with this smile or this is just his normal 'business face'.

"Headmaster, you sold the spirit? Can the Moontomb family revive him with that? I mean, perhaps they can give him a new body or maybe put his spirit inside a fetus to be reborn?" Vale asked with a hint of concern.

The headmaster was stunned once again as he looked at Vale amusedly.

"You're really imaginative, Vale. Your idea is something that even I haven't thought of... Fusing a spirit inside the fetus to be reborn... That was good. It might be better if you become a member of the Evil Arcane Path! Your disregard for other's life is so perfect for them. I'm sure that your ideas would be more appreciated in that place. Do you want to change your path? I know some of the elders in that place..." The Headmaster said with a hint of excitement on his face.

Cough! Cough!

Vale almost choked at these words. He was being praised but it was definitely not something he would be happy about.

"Headmaster, you must be kidding. There is no Evil Arcane Path. Furthermore, I'm just joking. I just thought of those ideas because of Master Heinz."

Vale said before he silently apologized to his master for putting the blame on him. Those ideas were something he read from various books in his previous life. Since he thought that the world of mysticism is quite dark and ruthless, he thought that these ideas were something they've also considered.

"Haha... Who told you that there's no Evil Arcane Path?" The Headmaster asked.

"Well, even though we are treading the path of the Darkness, it is definitely not the same as being Evil. There's probably some semblance here and there but I believe that our path will not lead us to become the personification of evil."

"Oh? Don't you know about the Forbidden Techniques of this path? Anyway, I want to know what you think is the end of this path?"

Vale smiled and didn't hesitate to answer while writing on his paper.

"The Forbidden Techniques of the Darkness Path can indeed harm many people if practiced but most of these forbidden techniques will harm yourself instead of some other people... Anyway, I've already tried to think about the end of this path but I think that I'll get to learn more about it as I study here. For now, I only think that the Darkness Path is just another Arcane Path where I can learn a different form of mysticism. It depends on the practitioner on how he will use the knowledge of mysticism. If the person has an evil mind, even if he's practicing the Holy Arts, he would be walking the path of evil."

"..."

The Headmaster felt impressed at his words as he couldn't help but tap the desk a couple of times before replying with great satisfaction.

"Indeed, an evil mind will walk the path of evil no matter what Arcane Path he learns. Wise words. I can't believe I'm talking to someone who was barely 15 years old."

Vale smiled as he had already considered this matter ever since he learned about the Ghost Hand. He no longer replied as he only smiled and continued to answer his test paper.

After a while, when Vale finished three pages of the exam papers, the Headmaster spoke.

"I just want to correct you in one thing... You mentioned that there is no Evil Arcane Path. However, among the twelve Arcane Paths, one of them is pure evil..."

Vale paused once more as he felt suddenly confused.

He didn't immediately react as he tried to recall all the twelve paths.

The four paths with the largest number of practitioners are the Knight's Path, the Elemental Arts, the Alchemy Arts, and the Mystic Arts.

These four paths can be said to have the lowest requirement since they'll accept anyone as long as you have a bit of talent in their path. They're also popular since the things you'll learn from them can be very helpful in everyday life.

Then, there were three other paths with unique requirements. They are the Rune Arts, Beast Arts, and the Summoning Arts.

Rune Arts require some sort of compatibility if you want to reach an Intermediate Level. If you can't, your skills will remain at an Elementary Level. The Beast Arts requires an affinity with animals or any other type of creature. As for the Summoning Arts, Vale wasn't sure but they have a thing called Grimoire and you needed to have compatibility with it which isn't an easy thing.

Then, there were the Holy Arts and the Dark Arts... These two paths have very distinguished ways of accepting people. Vale can prove that easily.

Then, there is a special Combat Art. He wasn't really sure about this as well but he only heard that they were adept at making enchantments and possessed a different form of Arcane Ability called Aura.

As for the other two, Vale didn't know much about them aside from their names. Nevertheless, he was sure that none of them were called Evil Arcane Path.

They were the Psychic Arts and the Transformation Arts.

"Headmaster, I don't think there is an Arcane Path that can be called the Evil Path. It depends on the person practicing the path and it can become an Evil Path or even a Virtuous Path." Vale said once more.

However, the Headmaster just laughed at this and said mysteriously.

"You will soon learn about it. However, I can tell you that you're right about one more thing, our Darkness Path is not the Evil Path."

Chapter 144 Travel

A couple of days had passed and Vale still can't forget the Headmaster's words...

One of the twelve Arcane Paths is actually an Evil Path?

He just can't imagine it. He tried guessing it by making some absurd reasons but it's just not working out.

He guessed that it could be the Beast Arts...

The Beast Path might actually lead to people becoming monsters as they practice this Arcane Art... That was quite tragic and evil at the same time.

However, he read from the books that the elites of the Beast Arts Practitioners use the powers of some sort of mythical beast through rituals and blessings instead of integrating their bodies with animals like one would imagine if they heard of the Arcane Path at first. In short, they were borrowing the powers of these mythical beasts instead of turning themselves into beasts.

Of course, his knowledge is limited since they might really be capable of doing that. Nevertheless, it doesn't seem to be an Evil Path in itself. At most, it can be described as a path for people with strange habits.

He can't imagine someone would want to learn the Beast Arts... At most, these people were probably the ones who had no other choices.

Anyway, he also considered the Summoning Arts since they might be capable of summoning some evil incarnation in one of their arts.

However, Vale recalled that the Dark Art's Forbidden Practices of the Unlighted also has a summoning ritual that is equal to that... or even worse.

Vale sighed after recalling this.

To be honest, he was really thinking that the Dark Arts is the Evil Path. He just didn't want to admit it since this is the path he was practicing.

There was no way he would admit that he was practicing the path of becoming evil!

When he said that it depends on the practitioner whether a path is evil or not, it is more to convince himself than to show his wisdom to the Headmaster.

Anyway, he thought of the Psychic Arts and it can certainly become evil but in a way, it can also become extremely useful for fighting against evil.

The Transformation Arts, on the other hand, doesn't seem to be the problem since he can't think of how it could become the Evil Path...

'He's not going to tell me later that the Holy Arts Faction is the Evil Path, right?' Vale mused.

"Vale, are you missing the Academy already?"

At this moment, Priscilla asked curiously as she saw Vale still looking at the clouds listlessly.

They've already boarded the airship heading towards Charville City. They have the mission to purchase Recording Crystals from the Alchemy Branch in that city.

The airship can easily fit 600 to 800 people inside and is a lot bigger than he expected. When he was seeing this airship from the dockyard, he didn't think too much of its size and only realized how big it was after boarding it.

Anyway, Vale looked at Priscilla who was wearing a violet dress and feathered hat matching her outfit.

She looks cute as she tries to imitate the fashion trend he had seen in some magazines...

"I'm just enjoying the view. Why would I miss the Academy?" Vale answered with a helpless smile on his face.

He's currently wearing an overcoat and the chain of his pocketwatch can be seen hanging on his side pocket.

This pocketwatch wasn't the one he was hiding from everyone. It is the pocketwatch that Chad had given him after he helped him with the Spell Recording.

Although he didn't want to accept it, Chad insisted on giving it and he can only accept it after trying to reject it a few times.

This pocket watch wasn't simple either. It actually slightly increases his focus. He was able to concentrate a lot easier with its help.

"Hey, can the two of you get inside now?" Philip asked while still standing at the door.

Vale and Priscilla were on the ship's deck and enjoying the scenery and wind outside.

On the other hand, Philip doesn't feel comfortable seeing the ground below them as he seems to be afraid of heights.

Priscilla looked at her brother helplessly before signaling to Vale that she's about to get inside.

"I'll follow you. Your brother is probably feeling lonely." Vale said as the two went to Philip's side.

Inside the airship, Vale felt like he was in a huge hotel lounge and there were a lot of people inside. They weren't all students in the academy as some of them are professors, security officers, or some academy officials who had missions outside the Academy.

As the three of them found a comfortable couch to sit on and have some snacks, Vale felt someone looking at him with hostility.

He didn't immediately expose the man by looking at him as he decided to enter his Phantasm State to accurately pinpoint their location...

After doing this, Vale felt the vague presence of man and he seems to have tried to hide his presence. Unfortunately for him, Vale didn't have to completely sense the man to know his identity.

He was already familiar with this skill of hiding presence...

'Professor Ravinie? Why is he here? No, why is he even looking at me with hostility? I just passed his Advancement Exam... should he not be happy seeing a capable student not wasting his time on a subject he already knows?' Vale mused to himself.

In any case, he decided not to think too much of it as he probably just felt his pride being hurt. He probably thought he was about to have student assistance for the rest of the year only to fail miserably.

After traveling for about seven hours, Vale's group left their cabin as they got ready to disembark.

They seem to have avoided a storm so they had to take a longer route and arrived really late at the city's dockyard.

"Priscilla and the two boys, follow me and I'll be dropping you off at the shop. I'll leave the transaction to the three of you. Right, make sure you count the crystals before leaving. It shouldn't be that difficult, right?" Professor Stella spoke as she appeared in front of the three young students.

Chapter 145 Antique Shop

Vale and two others naturally agreed as they weren't from this city. Although Charvale City isn't even as big as Melthorn City where Vale grew up, it is still rather large with a complete railway system.

Many factories of various fields can also be seen as the city was actually surrounded by coal mines.

This is also what Vale learned when he asked Lisa about the city. Apparently, she had visited this city once and according to her, this is not a place where you go for a vacation.

Factories emit smoke, steam trains go here and there, and the city gets covered by fog until 10 in the morning.

It is also surrounded by mountains so the city can't really expand even if they wanted to...

"So it's really like this..." Vale muttered as they alighted from the horse carriage.

It's only two in the afternoon but the sun could barely be seen because of the smoke pollution.

It looks terrible and Vale was certainly concerned about the health of the people living here. Nevertheless, he can't do anything about it as he looked at the antique shop...

"It's here... You already know what to do so I'll leave now." Professor Stella said as she left with the horse carriage after dropping off the three students in front of the Alchemy Branch's shop.

The three weren't sure about Stella's mission in the city but it seems really important by the way she looks.

"Alright, it's all up to us now..." Priscilla spoke with excitement.

Although this transaction seems a bit too much for first-year students like them, they were still looking forward to getting involved in these matters.

After all, they weren't sure when will they get another chance of leaving the Academy's land once again.

Vale agreed to her words as he looked at the shop.

It is a three-storey building with a wooden sign on top of its door, Retro Relics Antiques.

Vale has seen a few antique shops in Melthorn City but those shops weren't as grand as this one.

Although this is only a business handled by an Alchemy Faction Branch, Vale can see that it was doing really well in this small city.

As soon as they entered, Priscilla showed an emblem showing her status as a student of the Vermont Academy. It was given to them by Nadine to confirm their identity.

The guard outside swiftly took care of it and allowed them to enter the shop after returning the emblem.

Inside the building, Vale and the other two realized that two more groups of people seem to have business with the Alchemy Branch as well.

'Did we arrive at an inconvenient time?' Vale mused but he then recalled how they were late in their arrival.

He then looked at the first group of people and they seem to act like some thugs of the street as they were bargaining with the clerk about the price of the item they were selling.

"How can you offer such a terrible price for these gems and jewelry?! We found them all in a 500-year-old catacomb! Do you think we're fools?! You should triple the price!" The leader of the group of four people shouted as the veins on his neck bulged out.

"Grave robbers?" Priscilla muttered after hearing them. No wonder these people came to the Antique shop...

The female clerk, on the other hand, didn't show any signs of being intimidated by the customer's loud voice.

She remained calm and showed a business smile to the loud customer before she spoke with her gentle voice.

"Five hundred years? Then I guess someone already came to that catacomb and replaced them with new pieces of jewelry... You see, the necklaces, armbands, circlets, and rings you've found have marks left behind by the Touch of Brilliance jewelry shop in the neighboring city. That's right, the Touch of Brilliance is a jewelry store owned by the same person owning this Antique Shop."

As the female clerk said this, she took out a device from her pocket.

It seems to be a small flashlight but there is a white stone on its end instead.

As she triggered the device, the stone lit up and she turned the light to one of the pieces of jewelry brought by the suspected grave robbers.

Then as expected, hidden marks were showing on the jewelry. It was the logo of the Touch of Brilliance shop making the group of four pale...

"W-we've been cheated..." The leader finally realized what has happened. The man who had given this to them cheated them!

"This... W-We gave up our carriages, horses, and belongings for these things and you're telling me we sold them for a mere 430 zen!"

Just a single horse would cost about 500 zen. They gave a total of four horses for these gems and jewelry!

They couldn't believe they were cheated... Furthermore, now that they think about it, they felt baffled how they easily agreed to sell their belongings when they're not in extreme need of money.

Although the four of them weren't rich, they weren't living in poverty. They also weren't searching for quick money when they decided to visit enter this city.

"It seems you've been cheated. I suggest that you report this to the police and tell them how you were cheated into selling your belongings for cheap jewelry... Ahem, cheap but high-quality jewelry." The clerk corrected herself as the pieces of jewelry are still items made by a store connected to them.

Calling them cheap may seem like she was trying to tarnish their reputation.

Anyway, she decided to give back the gems and jewelry since they were not accepting her offer price.

"No... Just give us the money, we'll chase those bastards now!"

The clerk's eyes lit up after hearing this. It seems she did the right decision. In just a few seconds, she completed the transaction as she carefully placed the pieces of jewelry in a small box before placing them aside to meet with the other customers.

However, before she could entertain them, she heard an argument inside the shop.

"You brats, are you laughing at us?!"

Chapter 146 Elementalists

Vale looked at the other group of customers who were ridiculing the ones who were scammed.

This group seem to be in their late teens and their bearing made him recall the nobles within the academy. However, the difference is that these people seem to be more arrogant like an older version of Neil Sommerhalder.

"Pfft... Getting scammed at such an old age, how embarrassing."

"You said it right... I would be so ashamed and bury myself if that happened to me."

"Who would even believe a stranger carrying various pieces of jewelry on the side of the road? It feels as if they don't know that people can cheat others. Are they so innocent?"

"Haha... They didn't even have it appraised first before accepting it. What a bunch of losers..."

The other group of four ruthlessly spoke with a softer voice. However, since the floor isn't that large, the others easily heard their words as they furiously confronted them.

"You brats, are you laughing at us?!"

The largest man who seems to be in his thirties clenched his fist as he approached the group of teenagers. He was already infuriated because of the baffling way they were cheated and these people didn't even feel sympathy and laughed at them instead!

There is nothing more he wanted to do than to slap the faces of the four and have them kneel and apologize.

He wanted to vent his anger and it's a perfect time for these brats to receive his beating today!

As he approached them, he realized that the four of them didn't get intimidated so he was even more infuriated...

"You think that someone can save you?! Even if there's police outside, my fist would be faster!" As he said this, he pounced at one of the teenagers and as he was thinking how this brat would be sent flying by his punch, he was met with a cold wave of energy stopping him in his tracks...

'W-what's going on?!' The man was so confused including his three companions.

After all, they can see how his friend was in an awkward position but somehow stopped moving as if there is an invisible hand holding him.

They couldn't understand what was going on until the group of teenagers shifted their gaze to the newly arrived people in the store.

The three look like some rich kids and they seem just normal customers who looked interested in some items in the antique shop.

Nevertheless, they looked uncomfortable about the argument going on within the shop.

"Hey, why did you save him? Don't you know who we are?" The leader of the teenagers asked with a cold voice as he waved his hand to ready himself for a battle.

He has short brown hair and dark blue eyes... However, as he observed Vale and the other two, his pupils turned white for a brief moment as he used some sort of ability to gather information about the three.

He didn't expect that these three were actually Arcane Arts Practitioners until one of them summoned those eerie-looking hands... It's definitely a spell from the Dark Arts Faction!

He was looking at Vale solemnly as he also felt alarmed after seeing how fast those Ghost Hands are...

In addition to that, three hands were summoned! It must mean that his mastery has already reached a high level!

Those three Ghost Hands appeared instantaneously and prevented the middle-aged man from being pierced to death by the Wind Arrow he conjured...

Anyway, this is the first time he had seen the Ghost Hands but he knows that is definitely one of the basic spells of the Dark Arts according to the books he read.

'If I'm not mistaken, an elementary realm can only summon one Ghost Hand... Since he can summon three of them simultaneously, does it mean that he had achieved an intermediate or maybe even advanced state?' The man carefully analyzed Vale's capabilities as he also warily looked at the other two.

"We don't know you. However, we're about to conduct business here and we don't want to see any spill of blood while we're here. If you want to kill the man, do it outside." Priscilla answered imposingly as she was also unafraid of the four Elemental Arts Practitioners.

From the Wind Arrow that the man summoned, Priscilla and the two can already guess their identities. They're probably six or seventh-year students of the Rakmiths Academy.

"Hmph! You think you can order us around?!"

Instead of calming down, he decided to test the waters and see how these young practitioners would react if he attacked.

However, before he was able to conjure another spell, they heard the sound bell.

Cling! Cling! Cling!

The sound came from the handbell that the clerk has at the counter. It caught everyone's attention but it wasn't just to interrupt their fight... The clerk has actually called for someone.

Soon, they heard footsteps coming from the upper floor.

At this point, Vale noticed something was off so he swiftly canceled his spell and allowed the middle-aged man that he caught to move once again. In any case, the Elementalist already removed the Wind Arrow aimed at the poor guy...

Thud.

He dropped to the marble floor as he looked at the two groups in horror. Without saying any words to his companions, he swiftly ran out of the shop...

Needless to say, he realized that these young ones are blessed with talent and had been accepted into the Arcane Academies!

His friends also realized this as they swiftly ran off.

No one stopped them as they weren't important.

As they left, a plump middle-aged man descended the stairs.

He looked at the two groups of Arcane Arts Practitioners as he smiled at them kindly.

"Please refrain from fighting inside our poor store... If you don't do so, we will no longer treat you as our customers and will have to send you all out." The man said with a smile as he released a bit of his fiery aura.

Vale can guess that this is a real Alchemist.

Of course, they all nodded and agreed to the man's words as they are indeed here for business.

Nevertheless, the Elementalist didn't want to simply let it go.

After agreeing to the words of the Alchemist, he shifted his gaze back to Vale and sternly spoke.

"I'm Terrence Desmond, a student from Rakmiths Academy... If you're not scared, introduce yourself..."

Chapter 147 Vessel?

Vale was unafraid of giving out his name. However, he didn't want to say it because it feels as if he was being cooperative with the man.

He wanted to defy him for the sake of going against him.

With this thought, Vale just remained smiling as he shifted his gaze to the clerk completely ignoring Terrence.

"We're here to purchase some Recording Crystals. Can you assist us now?" Vale asked.

The Clerk also showed her business smile as she nodded.

"Of course, we can. However, they have arrived first so I'll confirm whether they still want to do business."

The clerk said as she gestured to Terrence's group.

"May I know if you're still here to purchase something from us?" The clerk remained unfazed by Terrence's aggressiveness a while ago as she continued with her job as usual.

Terrence's eyes bulged out as he felt humiliated after being ignored.

As he was about to cast a spell, his companions immediately held his shoulder as they reminded him of the store's Alchemist.

Although the plump middle-aged man seems like a gentle person, they have felt his fiery aura a while ago so they know that he's also an Arcane Arts Practitioner.

"Stop it... Let's just finish our mission and leave. It's not too late to deal with these brats after we're done."

With that said, Terrence looked at Vale one last time and warned him...

"I'm not done with you. We'll meet again..."

Terrence then turned his back as he used a mystical item to isolate their surroundings so no one could listen to their conversation.

In the meantime, the plump middle-aged man looked at Vale's group and spoke with a smile.

"Alright, if you don't want to wait, how about I assist the three of you upstairs?" He offered while gesturing at the stairs. Vale also didn't miss how he glanced at his shadow for a brief moment.

Anyway, Terrence's group including the Clerk, looked at the Alchemist of the store with a surprised look.

The second floor is normally reserved for VIP customers... Since Vale and the other two were treated like one, Terrence was momentarily stunned as he reassessed the status of the three Dark Arts Practitioners.

"Let's go." Philip replied without any hesitation as if he was expecting this to happen.

Priscilla was the same as she thanked the Alchemist before following Philip upstairs.

Vale was the last one to move as he felt Lotus' emotions.

From the looks of it, the Alchemist seems to have noticed the Dark Spirit's presence! Even if it's not, he has certainly realized that there was something in his shadow...

'Are you alright?' Vale asked the Dark Spirit using his unique connection with her.

This Dark Spirit is very important to him right now. Even if Professor Shirley want him to send her back to the Spirit World, he would never do so. After all, she seems to have given him the ability to have prophetic dreams.

Although it had only happened once, he believes that he could experience it once more if he was about to into a terrible situation.

'I'm fine... However, that human can feel my presence. Because your shadow is too weak, I can't properly hide my presence. You have to get stronger.'

"...'

Vale was stunned after hearing Lotus' reply. He wasn't sure if he understood what she just said.

'My shadow is weak? How do I even make it stronger? Is that even possible?' Vale knitted his brows as he had never heard anything about shadow strengthening.

Anyway, he can only assume that Lotus meant that he should become a stronger Dark Arts Practitioner to turn his shadow into something stronger as well.

"Alright, let's talk about business. I assume you three are from the Vermont Academy. Oh, I forgot to introduce myself, I'm Marion Fawns, the manager of this small store." The plump middle-aged man said as he sat down on a couch...

The second floor doesn't just have shelves of various treasures of the past but also a space to meet the guests and discuss business.

As the group sat opposite him, a servant came in a timely matter to serve them snacks and tea.

"You're right, Sir Marion. I'm Philip... This is Priscilla and Vale. We're first-year students and were tasked to confirm the purchase of the Recording Crystals. Have you prepared them?" Philip asked as he lifted the cup of tea that was served to them quite quickly.

'Earl Grey? I don't really like this...' Philip commented in his mind as he watched Vale take a sip of the tea.

"Of course, we have them prepared... We're the ones who offered it to you in the first place. We're happy that you're here to complete the transaction. In the future, we hope that all recording crystals needed by your Academy would be ordered from us." Manager Marion answered.

Vale wryly smiled at this as he knows that the Academy can't fully cut their partnership with the Mystic Arts Faction. They must maintain their neutral stance.

If they really stopped their partnership with the Mystic Arts Faction for the Alchemist Faction, then that would just lead to even more problems.

"I will let the Academy Officials know of this." Priscilla can only say as she can't just tell the truth. She has to let the academy handle such matters.

They're only here to complete their transaction after all.

"Very well. Please wait for a while as I already sent someone to take the crystals. Each of them is worth 300 zen. That is about 35% cheaper than the ones you purchase in the Mystic Arts Faction it can even be reused. Have you been informed about that?" Manager Marion said with a smile.

"Reuse? Are you telling me that we can cleanse the crystal and change its content... I mean, use it again to record?" Philip asked in a surprised tone to which Manager Marion replied proudly...

"Yes."

Priscilla was also surprised as she thought that the content of the Recording Crystals are absolute and can't be changed or removed. It should be a one-time use. If you want to erase the content, you have to destroy it completely.

Reusing them is impossible.

This new product is definitely a useful crystal.

In the meantime, Vale didn't know that the ones in the Archive Room don't have that option at all.

He looked at the Manager who was satisfied with the two's reaction. After all, this shows how better their products are.

It wasn't simply cheaper but it's also better!

Manager Marion then shifted his attention to Vale and politely spoke.

"Alright, while we're waiting for my assistant, can I ask if you're a member of the Evanescent Vessel?"

Chapter 148 Shop

As Philip and Priscilla were still thinking about how they would save a lot of recording crystals because of this new function, they heard the Manager speak to Vale and they almost choked on their saliva.

"..."

Vale was also stunned after hearing these words. Instead of immediately answering no, he probed the manager.

"Why do you think so, Manager Marion?" Vale asked. He doesn't consider himself similar to the members of the Evanescent Vessels so it came as a great surprise to him.

"Well, I thought that the one with you is your Spiritual Guardian. Ahem... If I'm mistaken, then please don't get offended. I've only seen the members of the Vessels a couple of times and you have some semblance with them... Ugh, I'm probably getting old since I'm speaking so much nonsense." Manager Marion said as he waved his hands

"Let's just forget about it if I'm mistaken." He added.

"Mhmm... Well, I'm indeed not part of the Order but you're not completely wrong. I wonder, how did you sense my 'Spiritual Guardian.' I'm sure that not even some of our professors can tell about its presence." Vale asked.

At this moment, Priscilla and Philip were the ones speechless as they didn't expect that Vale would actually confirm the presence of the Spiritual Guardian!

They didn't know of this at all! Right now, they wanted to ask how Vale did it and have him teach it to them...

'What do I do? Can he share how he did it? Should I offer him my movement technique Spell Model? I think he was interested in that the last time I showed it to him...' Priscilla's mind raced as she also wanted to have a Spiritual Guardian.

'So it was true... I thought those students in Class 2 are just exaggerating some things about him. He's really too special. I need to become closer to him.' Philip mused as he felt that being together with Vale would allow him to open more opportunities in his path.

Manager Marion looked at Vale with interest as he realized that Vale is not a part of the Evanescent Vessel. He was really thinking too much, there was no way a person as young as him would be accepted within the Order so quickly.

Anyway, this made him more intrigued about the Spiritual Guardian hiding in his shadow.

He then smiled at Vale after being compared to the professors in the Academy.

"I'm a genuine alchemist... First Class in rank. My sensitivity to precious ingredients is on a different level... So it's no wonder I got better senses than some of your professors." Marion paused for a moment after saying this as if he realized something.

Vale and the other two were also the same.

'Did he just call my Lotus an ingredient?' Vale's alarm went out as he entered his Phantasm State...

He swiftly observed the surroundings and confirmed that there is no one planning to ambush him.

"Cough, cough... Let me explain myself, although Spiritual Beings can be used as ingredients in some precious pills and potions, I'm not thinking of doing that to someone else's Spirit. At most, I'm purchasing them in some legal markets." Marion immediately explained.

Similar to the Dark Arts Faction, the Alchemy Arts Faction also has many prohibitions imposed by the Association of the Harmonious Arcane Paths.

Aside from being prohibited from taking someone else's spirit, they also can't use human lives in their pill and potion concoction due to obvious reasons.

Vale understood this so he accepted his explanation. In any case, the Dark Alchemy of the Dark Arts can be crueler in some cases. It's really all about the practitioner of the Arcane Path.

The group then chatted for ten more minutes as they talk about how the new feature of the crystal works before the Manager's assistant arrive bringing five leather suitcases. The suitcases were quite thin but each of them carries a hundred recording crystals.

"Just like the standard ones made by the Mystic Arts Faction, the crystal needs to be properly maintained and can be quite fragile. Of course, this is not as fragile as the one they made but it's better to be careful."

As the Manager said this, he placed one of the suitcases on the table...

Clack!

With a flip of the lock, he opened the suitcase and revealed the hundred recording crystals. The blue crystals look clean and were even shining a bit.

The Manager then showed how to record and delete its content to the three students.

Finally, Priscilla paid them the 150,000 zen they owed.

After confirming the money on the bag, Manager Marion invited them to look around their shop in case they find something that they want.

"If you found something you want, I can give you a 15% discount. It's only available today so I think you should consider it." He added.

Although the three didn't have an intention of buying here, they still decided to agree and look around. After all, they weren't sure what they'll find in this shop as well.

Vale, on the other hand, checked his wallet. Aside from the 10,000 zen he received from Master Heinz before, he also accumulated a total of 15,000 zen from the corpses he undressed over the past year.

With this money, he believes that he should be able to afford a decent mystical item for himself.

"Do you sell mystical items here, Manager Marion?" Vale asked.

Priscilla and Philip also had the same question as they looked at the Manager.

They were still too young to appreciate the old paintings, sculptures, or pieces of jewelry from ancient times. What they would like to see was something that might be useful for them as practitioners of the Darkness Arcane Path.

Of course, this is what Marion wanted as well when he asked them to look around.

"If that's the case, follow me on the third floor. That is where we keep all our mystical items."

Manager Marion then signaled his assistant as he lead everyone to the top floor.

As they entered the floor, he glanced at his customers once more before asking...

"Right, do you have anything in your mind about the item you're looking for? Is it for offensive purposes? Or perhaps a defensive item? Right, as a student, you might want something that will help you in your study."

Chapter 149 Mystical Artifacts

"Mhmm... A support-type mystical item would be good. Do you have something similar to Rain Feather Anklet or Nymph Scale?" Vale asked before Priscilla and Philip could even think of an answer.

"Oh? Those two can be used to increase your movement speed. They're quite a popular product since their blueprint has been spread out over 50 years ago." Manager Marion nodded as he gestured for them to sit.

"Mark, get the Murloc's Gem and the Nymph Scale that we have." He added as he looked at his assistant.

Mark simply nodded at this instruction and left to take the said items.

The third floor is actually quite empty.

There were only a total of four shelves and only 20 items were displayed on each of them. It means that they only have 80 mystical items in total.

It wasn't a bad number considering that this place isn't a hotspot for Arcane Arts Practitioners.

While the assistant was working, Marion's attention shifted to the other two.

"Do you want to take a look at the shelves or do you have something in mind?" He asked.

"I'll take a look first. I don't really have anything in mind right now." Philip said as he stood up to check the shelves.

On the other hand, Priscilla has already considered what to purchase and asked.

"If you have an Unaging Cream, I would like to have a few of them. I'll give it to my mother as a gift. I won't use it, Vale. So don't look at me like that."

"Cough... Cough... I was simply surprised since the Unaging Cream wasn't taught in class." Vale immediately said.

To be honest, he really thought that Priscilla would want to use it. It baffled him for a brief moment and looked at her suspiciously since she was too young to use such a beauty product.

It seems he was thinking too much...

"Haha... Good timing... I have just made a batch of them. They were quite popular among the ladies here in the city. As I promised, I'll give it to you at a discounted price."

With that said, Manager Marion left his seat to enter his room on the third floor. It seems to be his laboratory as well where he makes his potions or crafts mystical items.

Soon, the Assistant returned with two items in his hands.

One of them is a blue gem with a tiny silver blade of grass frozen inside. On its side is a small green scale that seems like a talisman.

They were the Murloc's Gem and the Nymph's Scale.

"May I ask the difference between the two items?" Vale asked.

Although he already entered his Phantasm State and confirmed that they have both swirling blue energy inside them, he only knows that they both assist in the wearer's speed.

"Of course... While the nymph scale only increases your running speed and stamina, the murloc's gem increases your agility and dexterity." The assistant explained.

If Vale wasn't mistaken, the increase in dexterity means getting better with his hands. It is either through wielding weapons or just by performing tasks using hands.

In a sense, it dictates his attack speed while using a weapon.

As for the agility itself, it increases his body's nimbleness or quickness in his motions.

"In terms of running speed, the gem can probably provide me with a better result..." Vale muttered.

"You're right... There's no doubt about that. It is commonly used by scouts or messengers in the military. However, the gem can provide a more balanced increase in your speed." Mark answered as he pointed out that the Murloc's Gem is the better option.

"May I know about their price?"

"Let's wait for Manager Marion for the price." The assistant replied with a stiff smile...

Vale wryly smiled as he glanced at the shelves. There's no price tag on them.

It means they don't know whether they really received a discount on their items since the Alchemist can simply say the price and tell them that it's discounted as they have no way to prove otherwise.

They can only trust that this shop wouldn't scam them. Anyway, they still have a business partnership with the shop so Vale doubts that they'll want to trick them just for the sake of earning a little money.

It didn't take long before Manager Marion arrived.

He brought three small containers of the Unaging Cream. Vale also noticed that its brand name was Ageless Beauty Cream.

"I only have these three since all the others have been pre-ordered. However, since this cream is only meant for ordinary folks--Ahem... I mean, if aging is caused by mysticism, it may not be helpful. "

"Alright... That should be enough. I will take it." Priscilla replied as she also asked for its price. They were 85 zen each which is quite expensive and perhaps, only rich merchants and nobles can only afford them.

Nevertheless, since this is a product of a genuine alchemist, it can still be considered cheap from another perspective.

Again, no one knows whether this is a discounted price or not.

Manager Marion then focused on Vale's items as he described the items in great detail.

Through this, Vale learned the limitations of the items.

The Murloc's Gem can only be used twice a day and needed to be submerged in water for at least 2 hours every day. If not, the next time he used it, the gem might lose control. Instead of increasing his speed, it might increase his heartbeat speed or his blood flow instead.

As for the Nymph Scale, it can't always be placed on his body as he might grow some scales after some time. It has to leave his body for at least 3 hours before he can wear it once again...

Vale sighed at these effects as he realized that these items were indeed not the same common low-grade mystical items he had seen before.

"With those side effects, I guess that these items are at least Mortal-Class artifacts, right?"

Chapter 150 Purchase

According to Professor Shirley Harrison, Mystical Artifacts have different levels of strength or power. With this difference, the Association of the Harmonious Arcane Paths created a standard ranking system for these artifacts. They were ranked according to their contained powers, effects, limitations, and usage requirement.

There were a total of six ranks and each of them was still divided by three grades. They can still be low-grade, mid-grade, or high-grade.

The lowest rank was called Regular. They are the ones similar to Spirit Pearls that can slightly boost your intelligence. Almost all Regular rank items don't have side effects because their effects are too negligible in most cases.

Perhaps, only some poorly made Regular Rank mystical items can have a bit of side effects on them.

The next rank was called Mortal Rank followed by Noble Rank... These items were the ones that are commonly seen in stores meant for Arcane Arts Practitioners. They can either be considered as

However, the Royal rank and Sovereign rank that followed were mystical items that can only be seen in the treasury of the big clans of each Arcane Path...

As for the last rank called Arcana, they were items that Vale had no idea about. Even the Professor didn't say what kind of items they are.

She only mentioned that these items may not even appear in the next hundred years or so and they can only know more about it in the higher years.

"You guessed right... These two items that Mark picked up for you were both high-grade Mortal Rank items... This is the reason why the side effects weren't too much. As you know, the low-grade items of each rank have the worst side effects while the high-grade ones are the most ideal since they would have minimal side effects." Manager Marion paused and looked at Vale seriously before he continued.

"If we provide you with low-grade versions of these, then they might be cheaper but they would have shorter effect duration and the side effects would probably require you a lot of effort to maintain them."

Vale understood his point but still, he hadn't mentioned the price yet.

He simply nodded and waited for the price to be revealed.

"If we include the discount, each of them is worth 2,080 zen." Manager Marion said.

Vale didn't react at that amount as glanced at Philip and Priscilla...

"That's a fair price for a high-grade Mortal Rank..." Priscilla spoke after realizing what Vale wanted to hear.

Philip also nodded at this as he knows that Mortal Rank mystical items can be worth above 1,100 zen from the lowest grade while up to 2,300 zen for the high-grade ones.

Vale wryly smiled at this price as he recalled his Kyle's Father, who was a train operator, only earns a bit over 2,000 zen annually.

In any case, Vale didn't haggle on the price as he took out his small pouch where he kept his money.

After counting the zen notes he brought, he spoke... "I'll be buying both the Murloc's Gem and the Nymph Scale."

Manager Marion brightly smiled after hearing this as he clasped his hands in excitement.

"Very well... It's yours, Sir Vale. Mark, wrap these two items—No, take two of the Calming Pouches instead so our customer can carry them safely. There is no additional price for these pouches."

"Calming Pouches?" Vale repeated as he had never heard of it before.

"It's just a Regular Rank mystical item made from a special fabric... It doesn't have any side effects because of its minimal effects but it's good for storing some items that are emitting mysterious energy."

"I see..."

Assistant Mark quickly went to work and brought two small pouches like a coin purse. He placed the mystical items inside before putting them on the table near Vale.

Manager Marion also confirmed the purchase and even gave Vale a simple receipt for the products.

At this time, Philip finally found an item that he liked.

It is a small mirror so Vale was reminded of Mennena. Priscilla also seemed curious as she knows her brother well. They have a rich family and they have access to many Mystical Items that aren't being sold to the public.

Because of that, they have a higher standard when it comes to owning Mystical Items.

"What kind of mirror is that?" Vale asked.

"I'm also curious..." Priscilla added.

Philip smiled at the two and replied proudly.

"It's called a Scouting Mirror! It says in the description that it can allow the Practitioner to monitor their surroundings twice the size of their Magic Zone. If this is real, then I'm having it. As you know, the ones in the house are too high-quality. I can't use them yet until I'm a genuine 3rd Class... This would do for now."

"What? Are you going to use it to peek at girls? That's disgusting, brother." Priscilla commented.

"Huh? Why do you think I would do that? I'm not that kind of guy. Tsk... Manager, may I know the price for this mirror?"

"I'll give it to you for 2,100 zen... However, I can't give you a Calming Pouch for it since it won't fit inside." Manager Marion replied.

Philip didn't mind this at all as he paid for the item quickly. The mirror has the size of an adult's palm and it has a wooden frame and a handle on it.

"I can only use it thrice a day but I want to try it now."

Philip said as he triggered the mirror by pouring his energy unto the item.

Then, under his control, the mirror showed the image or the reflection of the surroundings that is out of his magic zone's range...

"This is awesome... The coverage is small at the moment but once I increased my Magic Zone's range in a few years, this will be a lot more useful. It's a pity that I have to talk to this thing a few times a day or it'll stop functioning." Philip muttered as he saw the effects of the mystical item.

After they completed their transaction, the three left the store with five suitcases with them. Vale and Philip carried two suitcases each while Priscilla carried one.

They plan to walk to the arranged hotel for their group but as soon as they came out, the three of them felt a group of people watching them with hostility.

"Was that Terrence's group?" Vale asked as he recognize the familiar aura of the man.