

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 101: Legendary Class

By comparing the translations and the original books, Lucien learned more about how to read Sylvanas and could now understand a big part of Astrology and Magic Elements, although still with some difficulties.

Several higher-level methods to meditate were provided in Astrology and Magic Elements. Learning a lesson from what happened to the witch, Lucien decided to stick to his current meditation for now, before he could thoroughly understand how the other methods worked.

One thing in the book captured Lucien's attention. For a long time, Lucien was bothered by a question: If the principle of silent casting could be explained by the change in vibration frequency of spiritual power, then why, according to the book, one could cast a spell without using any magic reagent after successfully constructing the corresponding magic structure in one's soul with the four fundamental elements, Earth, Fire, Wind and Water?

Taking Acid Splash for example, where did the acid come from if no sulphur was used during casting?

Inspired by the book, Lucien made a bold hypotheses that the four fundamental elements in this world could be understood as the four fundamental forces on Earth. There was a reason why Earth, Fire, Wind and Water were being respected as the most important elements, since it seemed they could be able to construct all the magic structures by working together. All of the physical and chemical properties in this world were the external manifestations of the fundamental elements or of the interactions between them. And thus, spellcasting without any material or reagent could make sense.

If the hypotheses was correct, the world might be very similar to Earth on a micro level. In that case, the "magic fairies" that existed in this world that Lucien read about before were probably actually "magic particles".

However, all of these were Lucien's hypotheses right now. He knew that he needed to carry out more experiments to prove whether they were true or not.

Astrology and Magic Elements introduced most of the spells in the school of Astrology and Elements, and some basic spells of other schools, from circles one to five.

In the ancient magic empire, all the magic spells could be divided into two categories: most of them were basic spells, of which the magic structures were recognized by the empire and they could be mastered by all the people; the rest of them were unique spells, which were created by the many great sorcerers and sorceresses in history, on their own.

Luckily, some of the unique spells were introduced in the book.

Turning the page, Lucien saw a chapter titled "Two Legendary Classes", and he suddenly got excited.

However, as he read further, Lucien found that the chapter was way beyond his comprehension. Many words used there were not even Sylvanas, and the two extremely complicated magic structures messed up his brain.

Nevertheless, Lucien still had a rough idea about what the two legendary classes were: one was Elements Dominator and the other was the Prophet, and ascending to either of the two classes

required a lots of extremely precious magic materials and an enormous magic circle. Besides, each magic school had more than one legendary class.

The last chapter of the book provided the formulas for many different potions.

After taking a look at them, Lucien pulled out his spiritual power from the book in his spirit library to take a rest.

After browsing through Astrology and Magic Elements, Lucien chose to analyze the spell Star Shield in order to move forward toward becoming a first circle sorcerer.

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In contrast to all the apprentice level spells, whose inner structures were two-dimensional, first circle spells were way more complicated since they were three-dimensional. Lucien progressed in a very slow way, trying to understand the constitution based on his own hypotheses.

Reading and thinking too much exhausted Lucien's brain. In the late evening, he lay awake in his nice bed, unable to sleep at all.

So he got up and walked into his practicing room. Sitting in front of his piano, Lucien put his hands on the keyboard.

He had been learning music for more than four months now, and became used to relaxing with the aid of music. In the world of music, Lucien had nothing to worry about. In the world of music, he felt safe.

Lucien's hands were moving freely on the keyboard. After he pressed down the last key, a sudden applause arrived from the window.

Quickly, Lucien turned around in an alert way. It was Natasha, standing on the patio in a black suit.

"Your Grace," Lucien said, "for your information, that's not a front door."

Natasha waved her hand in a casual way and laughed, "Come on, my historian. Don't you remember that almost all the knights in the books you read went to see their beloved girls by sneaking through their windows? Mr. Bake told me that you have a really good memory."

"They're only romantic novels..." Lucien let Natasha come in. "So, why you come here so late, Your Grace?"

"Well...just dropping by. I visited Silvia earlier and she lives in this district as well." Natasha walked into Lucien's practicing room, "Good playing, Lucien. Was that an impromptu? It felt sad."

"Yes, it was an improvisation," answered Lucien. "I was just... thinking of my past."

"I see. I know you suffered a lot before, Lucien." Natasha nodded seriously, "What you just played is very beautiful, beautiful as moonlight. I think you should note it down, so you can develop it into a full sonata in the future."

Lucien was a bit embarrassed, since part of the playing he just did came from the famous Moonlight Sonata written by Ludwig van Beethoven. He was also impressed by Natasha's keen insight into music.

"How's your work going, Your Grace? The serenade for Miss Silvia?" Lucien changed the subject.

"Um... You know what..." Natasha rolled her eyes in a cute way, trying to hide her embarrassment, "I think I just can't make it. I tried... I swear."

Lucien lifted his eyebrows and tilted his head, waiting for Natasha's real intention for coming to his place so late tonight.

"I dropped by to see if you were still up," Natasha continued, "because I want to know how's your serenade going. The one which you already named it, For Silvia."

"Now I see your point, Your Grace." Lucien grinned, "It's almost ready."

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The melody of the serenade was gentle and lively like a brook gurgling. This was definitely a piece of serenade praising a young and beautiful lady. Although the playing did not require any sophisticated fingerings, the serenade seized Natasha's heart instantly.

"Rondo... I see." Natasha nodded slightly and enjoyed the beauty of the song.

Then the serenade entered a lighter section in the submediant. After that part, the piece smoothly ended in the same melody as the beginning, with an authentic cadence.

After removing his hands from the keyboard, Lucien noticed that Natasha was resting her chin in her right hand.

"How do you feel about this serenade, Your Grace?" asked Lucien.

"Very beautiful... very elegant. Actually what I'm thinking is..." Natasha drawled.

"Um?" Lucien looked at her.

"How come you have such a deep understanding in serenade, Lucien?" asked Natasha thoughtfully, "I mean... you never had a girlfriend. Do you rely on your imagination?"

Lucien choked.

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Chapter 102: Silvia's Father

Although Lucien had completed the serenade called For Silvia and had given the music sheet to the princess, he was still allowed to go to Natasha's study to read the books under her permission. She was hoping that the classic literature works might inspire him to produce more excellent music pieces.

Thus, every Tuesday and Thursday Lucien arrived two hours earlier than before, to read some books and then meet the princess.

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"What are you doing here?" Bake was walking around in the study after translating for a long time, and he asked Lucien with curiosity.

"I'm taking notes," answered Lucien briefly, "for future reference."

Actually, there was no need for Lucien to take any notes at all, but Lucien's super outstanding memory surprised Bake a few times in the past two months. Lucien was a bit concerned that Bake might report this to the princess or someone else. In order to attract less suspicions, Lucien needed to do something to justify his great memory.

"Can I take a look at your notes?" Bake asked.

"Sure." Lucien pushed a pile of notes toward the scholar.

Bake picked up a few pages and glanced at them, "Interesting. I've never seen anyone taking notes like this. It looks like you're following a time order, from the Dark Era to the Saint Calendar, but you also wrote down the many stories in a biographic way."

"Yes, to serve my purpose." Lucien nodded, "For me, the stories are more valuable as resources providing me with inspiration than a mere historical timeline, although time's still important."

"I see," Bake said to Lucien. "No wonder you have such good memory. I was very surprised with how fast you can remember all the things. Actually, this method can be a brand new way of recording history."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Bake." Lucien put on a smile on his face, knowing that it was not his credit. He just borrowed this method from somewhere else in his original world.

"It seems like you're becoming a historian now, Lucien." When they were talking, Natasha entered the study.

"Your Grace," Lucien and Bake saluted together.

Natasha pulled Lucien out of the study with a big smile on her face.

"It seems Silvia likes the serenade, doesn't she?" Lucien also grinned.

"Oh my! She likes it? She loves it!" Natasha was excited, "Silvia did not have a party for her birthday last night, but she said the serenade was the best gift."

"I'm very glad that you ladies like it," said Lucien.

"And I did not lie to Silvia. I told her that For Silvia was your work." Natasha's eyes were shining with joy, "Silvia appreciates your effort very much, and she wants to invite you for dinner tonight, at her place."

"I appreciate Silvia's kindness, but it's not necessary..." Lucien was a bit hesitant.

"Come on, Lucien." Natasha insisted, "I don't want to let Silvia down. And it will be a small, personal, family dinner. Only Silvia, her father, lady Camil and I will be there."

"Well, the thing is..." Lucien scratched his head a bit, "I thought Silvia would be mad at me. You know, after all, I was being your ghostwriter."

"No worries. Silvia's always sweet and considerate. That's why I love her so much." Natasha did not give up, "She knows that I'm not good at love-themed music, and she still appreciates my effort of practicing the serenade and playing it for her on her birthday."

"All right." Finally, Lucien nodded.

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At seven in the evening. No. 78, Gesu District.

Silvia lived in a two-storey, light yellow house. There were a few kinds of cold-resistant flowers still blooming in the garden.

"Welcome, Lucien." Silvia and her father were waiting for him.

"The princess and lady Camil are in the living room," said Silvia, who was wearing a long white dress, with her beautiful long hair hanging down her shoulders. Silvia would be like the dream girl for most men.

Lucien handed a small gift to Silvia and said "Happy Birthday" to her, then greeted Silvia's father, Mr. Deroni.

Mr. Deroni was wearing a black suit. Although his black moustache made him look a bit old and gloomy, Lucien still could tell that Mr. Deroni should be pretty good-looking when he was young. However, Lucien felt a bit weird when he saw Silvia's father for the first time, and he did not know why.

"Good evening, Lucien." Deroni greeted him slightly lowering his head. "Although we both live in Gesu, we've never seen each other before. You're even younger than I thought," said Deroni as he led Lucien to the living room.

Before having dinner, the five of them chatted casually. Mr. Deroni started to ask Lucien about the serenade in D. "We're really looking forward to the complete version of it", said Deroni.

"Actually, I already finished it," answered Lucien. "It's a piece of string quartet."

"Awesome." Natasha winked to Lucien, "I hope you can play both the quartet and For Silvia on the new year ball. So I can... you know, that."

Lucien knew what she was talking about. Natasha was still waiting for a chance to reward him with a manor. Unfortunately, Lucien preferred the knight sword than a manor.

"Since For Silvia is a piece of personal music work, I don't think I should play it on the new year ball, though," Lucien stated.

"Why not?" said Silvia in a gentle voice, "It's your music work anyway, and it's very beautiful. People should have a chance to appreciate it. The only thing that you may want to change is the name of the serenade, or people would think that you're pursuing me."

"I don't mind." Natasha shrugged her shoulders and smiled, "After all, most of the musicians in the association who are still single are pursuing you. By the way, Lucien, before you came we were talking about poems and tales from different places in the duchy. I know you're an expert, and maybe you can help us here."

"Expert?" Mr. Deroni looked surprised.

"The princess's just joking." Lucien waved his hands, "I've indeed read a few related books recently, but I'm nowhere close to being an expert."

"Don't be too humble, Lucien." Natasha laughed, "Mr. Deroni's a very successful businessman and also the director of the Association of Accessories. He's been traveling a lot on the continent, and we were discussing about one of the folk poems that he heard before."

"What's this one about?" asked Lucien with a bit of curiosity.

"Well... not many people know this poem." Deroni rested his chin on his hand, "But the scene the poem described was very unique. I wonder where and when the poem originated and what happened at that time."

Then Deroni started to slowly recite the poem:

"When the sun entered Thanos's Palace,

Huge fire balls fell down from the sky.

The earth was crumbling,

And in no time, the city, as well as the magnificent tower, turned into ashes.

...

The ashes covered everything,

From the earth to the sky.

In the dark pit lived the devil.

...

Look, look! The red water was now up to the lips.

....."

"As you can see, Lucien," Natasha commented, "the poem's not rhetorical, but what it described is very weird. As far as I know, Thanos' Palace is the name of a specific position of the sun, where it shows a unique scene."

Besides Natasha's interpretation, Lucien remembered that, according to the literature he read, Thanos was also the name of a previous chief magistrate of the magic empire, who was known as "the King of the Sun".

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Chapter 103: Lucien, The Historian

"Well... although Astrology is totally strange to me," Lucien was pretending that he knew nothing about astrology, while, in fact, astrology was his speciality and he clearly knew that there was a constellation named Thanos in memory of the King of the Sun, "I read some similar poems before in the princess' study. So, I'm guessing it might be a prophecy poem."

"I don't think so. The folks told me that what the poem described really happened many, many years ago." Deroni denied Lucien's first guessing.

"I see." Lucien nodded, "Dramatic as the poem seems to be, if it's not a prophecy, then I think it is a poem describing a catastrophe or something similar to that."

"Umm... that makes more sense." Mr. Deroni nodded.

"The War of Dawn lasted for more than four hundred years, and before that, there were also countless horrible disasters and many great wars happened on this continent. Huge meteorites, earthquakes, landslides and even battles could lead to the same scene. I read about them before in Heroes' Epic, The War of Syracuse, Saint City, Confession, Saint Continent Chronicles, and many more."

"Interesting. I think Lucien makes a good point here." Natasha nodded, "War or natural disaster, that's our direction. What I can contribute here is that a good fight between two legendary masters could easily cause this damage to the whole continent."

"That's why I'm this curious. I want to know what eventually caused this catastrophe," Deroni said to them.

"The red water was now up to the lips...', this part is kind of unique." Lucien was still thinking, "Has any of you ever heard about the significant topographical change that happened several hundred years ago in the northwest of Aalto?"

Silvia and her father slightly shook their heads and were waiting for Lucien's further explanation. At this time, Natasha said to Lucien with a bit hesitance, "Are you talking about how Elsinore Lake was formed, the lake that lies in the northwest of Aalto?"

"That's right, Your Grace. A book from your study named Marius' Manuscript described a similar scene." Lucien nodded, "A hundred and fifteen years before the implement of the Saint Calendar, one day Aalto's sky suddenly turned dark, although it was still day time, and huge stones fell down from the sky. These meteorites destroyed the city called Elsinore and even part of the mountain range in the northwest. The lake was named after the destroyed city."

"Oh my..." exclaimed Silvia. "Was it a natural disaster?"

"The book didn't mention." Lucien slightly shrugged, "However, the book did mention that, at that time, the ground cracked all over, and a weird red liquid surged up through the cracks."

"Lava?" asked Deroni.

"No. It was mentioned that the liquid was not hot, and it inundated the whole area. But the blood-like liquid ebbed very fast as well."

"Then what about this Thanos' Palace?" asked Deroni eagerly, "How do you explain this?"

"It is said that when Thanos, King of the Sun, reached the legendary level, the capital of the magic empire was covered by pure darkness for three entire days." Natasha expressed her own understanding.

"I see..." Deroni slightly nodded, "Anything else can be found in this poem, Your Grace? Lucien?"

They both shook their heads. That was as far as they could go.

Looking rather disappointed for a second, Deroni then smiled, "I think that's enough information for my curiosity. Thank you, Your Grace. Thank you, Lucien. It is amazing that you know this much about the remote history. Actually, even Mr. Bake doesn't know it."

"I told you, Mr. Deroni," said Natasha with pride. "Lucien's not only a musician, but also a historian."

While Lucien was trying to explain, "I'm nowhere close to being a historian. I just happened to read a few books. That's all."

Then, dinner was served.

"You have to try all the dishes tonight, Lucien," Natasha said to him. "One of the cooks here comes from Tria, who makes awesome Syracuse dishes. Way better than our food in Aalto... Ours is all about beef and potato, potato and beef..." As a big fan of different cuisines, Natasha complained.

All of a sudden, Lucien felt very hungry. The princess felt the food here in Aalto was no good, and of course, he felt the same way. The cook Lucien had now was not very impressive. Like what Natasha just said, the cook always provided the same food.

"You know what? Food in Holm and Rentate is even worse. I went there before when I was a kid, and I've never wanted to go back." Natasha got a bit excited.

Lucien never heard the name of these countries before, and thus he wondered if they might be two of the countries across the strait.

The dinner was indeed impressive. Following the appetizer, foie gras, and the soup made of a special kind of Tria fish, the main courses were roasted lamb and white wine stewed tripe, accompanied by vegetable salad. There was also Syracuse special pudding cake for dessert.

Both Natasha and Lucien ate a lot.

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The freezing wind was whistling on the street in the Month of Ice(December). Natasha, Lucien and Camil were taking a walk after dinner. Silvia wanted to walk with them, but it was too cold outside for a gentle lady like her.

"If it were in the north, it should be snowing now." Reaching out her beautiful hand, Natasha somehow looked a bit sad.

"It doesn't snow much in Aalto." Lucien looked up at the silver moon.

"If you're ready, Lucien, I want to recommend you to hold a concert in the Psalm Hall during Aalto Music Festival." Natasha turned to Lucien, "During that period, lots of musicians from all over the continent will come to Aalto and celebrate the festival with us."

Aalto Music Festival was the most important music festival across the continent. During the festival, the Psalm Hall would hold a concert every day.

"My concerto is almost ready." Lucien considered a bit and answered seriously. Facing the fact that he was leaving soon, all of a sudden, Lucien felt a bit sad.

"I trust you, Lucien. I'll talk to Mr. Christopher about it." Natasha smiled, then she switched the topic, "You know what, after I played the serenade you wrote for Silvia last night, I did not know what to say to her. I was nervous and a bit embarrassed."

"Um...?" Lucien's mind was still occupied by the slight sadness. He would be leaving Aalto soon after the concert, if everything went well.

"I'm thinking... what I could have said to Silvia to touch her heart the most," said Natasha with a smile.

"Well, you know I'm not experienced," answered Lucien.

"I know... but you're still a man, Lucien." Natasha slanted her head and looked at him.

"Then, I guess... Marry me." Lucien was thinking.

"Umm...That's still a problem between Silvia and me, but I'll work on it." Natasha paused a bit,
"You gotta work on finding someone you like as well, Lucien. Music is not all you need."

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On the first Sunday of the Month of Beginning(January), a piece of news on Music Criticism caused quite a stir in Aalto:

"A Bagatelle Worth a Manor.

At the New Year Ball, the princess played a piece of bagatelle named For Silvia, which was composed by the young talented musician Lucien Evans. This elegant, pure, gentle and also joyful

music piece won Her Grace's great affection. Thus, Princess Natasha awarded this young musician, who just recently gained popularity in Aalto, with a beautiful manor in the suburbs.

People are saying that For Silvia might be the most expensive piece of bagatelle ever in the history of music."

Another thing about Lucien is that somehow many musicians from the association started to call Lucien a "historian". They started to ask Lucien questions about history and poetry, and Lucien always tried his best to answer the questions for them.

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Chapter 104: The Young Visitors

The last week of the Month of Life, the third month of the year.

As the weather was getting warmer, Aalto, the city of Psalm, quickly recovered from the bitter winter and burst out great vigor, welcoming all the guests coming from different places all over the continent to join the Aalto Music Festival, which was held every three years.

Musicians, instrumentalists, bards and nobles from other countries flocked to the biggest city close to the Dark Mountain Range.

Even in the afternoon, there was still huge traffic in front of the city gate in Nolan District.

Lilith, a pink-haired girl, was pulling her elder brother's arm to make him walk faster,

"Stop looking around like that, Sala!"

Saying that in a low voice, the girl seemed to be a bit pissed off with her elder brother, but clearly she did not want to draw attention from anyone.

This sixteen-year-old girl was very lively and beautiful. A slight feeling of melancholy even added more charm to her. Lilith was very popular in her hometown. A young noble almost gave up his title in order to pursue her.

Sala looked way more excited than his sister, "Look, Lilith! They are Moon Elves! Oh my... they're so beautiful! Like the tales said, their ears are slightly wagging... how adorable!"

Out of curiosity, Lilith stood on tiptoe and looked at the elves. Indeed, the several elf maidens who were walking together were absolute beauties. Their skin was as fair as the full silver moon; their faces were well-defined; and their pointy ears were cute.

Falling back on her heels, Lilith murmured, "Just a bit better-looking than me..."

Then she pinched Sala's arm and complained, "Mind your behavior, Sala! This is Aalto. God is watching you!"

When she mentioned "God", she lowered her voice even more.

"Relax, Lilith." Sala looked a bit similar to his sister, who his pink hair. "Being too nervous is even more suspicious."

Entering the city, the brother and sister changed their direction and came to a quiet corner where there was no one.

"But we're... apprentices." Lilith looked around and finally said the word.

"So what? You know how many sorcerer apprentices are there in Aalto?" Sala shrugged. "After finding the scholar who can answer our questions, we shall leave."

"No music festival?" Lilith looked a bit disappointed.

"No." Sala looked serious, "Aalto Music Festival is held every three years, but we probably only have one chance to become a real sorcerer. You know which is more important."

Lilith nodded. She understood how horrible it would be if they got caught by the Church. The brother and sister had been living in fear for a long time, since they were kids.

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Copper Coronet.

This was, for sure, not a decent place. Adventurers, mercenaries and hookers were drinking and laughing aloud.

Pushing through the people, Sala carefully protected his younger sister from the many nasty hands in the bar, and finally they jostled through the crowd to the counter.

"Drink?" As usual, Cohn, the dwarf, was drunk.

"Two ales," answered Lilith shortly.

Emitting a sound like a bubbling spring, Cohn let out a big hiccup, "Interesting girl! One free ale on me!"

Grabbing the mug on the bar, Sala took a sip of the ale and nodded, "Pretty good."

"For sure!" Cohn answered with pride, "I drink them all the time. I would not drink shitty ale!"

"As the owner of such a busy bar, you must know a lot of people in the city." Lilith asked with a bit hesitation, "Can you tell us who is the most profound scholar in Aalto? We got an ancient script by accident, but we can't understand it."

"Common tongue?" After another hiccup, Cohn asked, "Or elven, dwarven, draconic..."

"Common tongue. It has been translated by someone." Sala directly cut Cohn off, in case he would keep listing all the languages existing on the continent.

"Well... if the script is about a big treasure," Cohn put on a mysterious smile, "you pupils will be in trouble. Sometimes, it can bring misfortune."

"We have no idea what it is about. We come from a small town." Lilith looked innocent.

"Anyway, the only reason I'm still alive is because I never ask too much." Cohn gulped his ale, "Historians should be helpful... Bake, Alfonso..."

"Which one would you recommend?" asked Lilith with caution.

"None of them," Cohn answered directly. "All those people who know about ancient history... they're all nobles and pastors. You think you guys can just visit their places and ask them questions?"

Both Lilith and Sala looked a bit disappointed. They knew that they could not take the risk of seeing a noble, not to mention a pastor.

"Wait... I know a person who might help," said Cohn. "He was a pauper."

"Really? A pauper turning into a historian? Who is it!?" exclaimed Lilith.

"Lucien Evans," said Cohn with pride. "A genius musician, and also a historian!"

"The composer of For Silvia and Symphony of Fate?" Lilith looked very surprised, "How come he's a historian? That's impossible!"

Sala looked very skeptical.

"I knew you guys wouldn't believe it." Cohn laughed and waved his big palms, "I know Lucien! I've watched him grow up... a very talented young guy. Genius! I heard that he got the access to the princess' study since he's her personal music consultant."

"That's it?" Sala still could not believe, "A bunch of books make a historian?"

"Great talent! Great memory! That's Lucien's blessing!" Cohn seemed to be a bit unhappy with Sala's comment, "Believe it or not!"

Lilith pulled her elder brother's elbow a bit and said to Cohn politely, "Do you know where Mr. Evans lives? Can you tell us?"

"Everyone in Aalto knows that the princess has just awarded him a manor in the suburb. He might be living there to prepare for his upcoming concert," said Cohn proudly. "But you guys gotta wait until tomorrow, or the gate will be closed by the time you come back."

"You mentioned that you've watched Mr. Evans grow up... Is he... elegant and good-looking?" Lilith asked a bit shyly.

"For sure." Cohn laughed aloud.

Lilith grabbed Sala's arm and said to him, "We are visiting Mr. Evans right now."

"What? But the dwarf just said we should go there tomorrow! What if the city gate is closed later?" asked Sala.

"Then we hope Mr. Evans is kind enough to let us stay in his manor for the night." Lilith looked very resolute.

"..."

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By the time they reached Lucien's manor, whose name was Brons, the dark night had already fallen upon them.

Sitting in front of a forest, the manor looked a bit creepy.

After negotiating with the manor guards, Lilith and Sala got to see the steward of the manor, Mr. Lopez.

Lopez was in his fifties, and he was also the previous steward of the manor, so Lucien kept him. The brother and sister were invited to come into the hall and waited in the couch.

They waited patiently for several minutes. Then, Lilith and Sala saw a young man wearing a black suit and a white shirt walking downstairs. He looked rather mysterious and elegant.

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Chapter 105: Magic Lock

Staring at the young musician walking out of the darkness of the second floor, for a moment, an idea flashed through both Lilith's and Sala's mind: Mr. Evans was a sorcerer.

However, a second later, they felt a bit amused for having such silly thoughts. How could this young, talented musician who gained such vast popularity in Aalto be a mysterious sorcerer? That was ridiculous.

At this time, Lopez came into the living room followed by a bunch of servants who were holding candles. The whole space was immediately lit up.

"I'm Lucien Evans." Lucien walked downstairs and smiled in a polite way, "I was told that you two came here because of an ancient manuscript?"

"Mr.... Mr. Evans! I'm Lilith. I... I like your music very much!" Due to her nervousness, Lilith failed to answer Lucien's question properly, "For Silvia is my favorite! I'm... I'm very glad to meet you."

Facing this talented and good-looking young musician, the young girl's face flushed.

"Me too, Mr. Evans. I'm Sala." Sala was calmer than his sister, "Symphony of Fate gives me a lot of encouragement, sir."

Lucien smiled and nodded, "Thank you for your support. But can we talk about the manuscript first?"

Hoping that he could find more information about the Continental Congress of Magic, Lucien read lots of literatures and ancient manuscripts. He would not let any possible chance slip from his hands.

"Yes... Sorry, Mr. Evans." Sala sniffed a bit and took out a pile of paper, "Here it is, sir."

Lucien took the manuscript over and said to them, "Not a problem. Please sit down, so we can discuss together."

Lilith sat back on the couch, still blushing. From time to time, she peeked at Lucien, who was absorbed in reading. Her heart was beating fast.

As usual, Lucien read very fast in order to have a complete copy in his spiritual library. However, a familiar sentence in the manuscript immediately seized his attention!

"When the sun entered Thanos' Palace..."

Lucien was astonished.

Why did he see the same weird sentence twice within just a couple of months? What did the manuscript have to do with the poem that Mr. Deroni mentioned?

Thus, Lucien slowed himself down and started to reread the whole manuscript. The further he read it, the more shocked he was. Combining what he read before, in the princess' study, Lucien gradually realized what that manuscript was about.

It was about the ruins of a magic site!

Calm as Lucien looked, there was a great turmoil in his mind:

"Floating mountains", "grand cross"... Lucien remembered these words. He saw them when he was reading Astrology and Magic Elements. Opening that book in his spiritual library, Lucien turned the page to the last chapter, magic circles.

Just as he expected, Lucien found out that the manuscript described a wide and powerful magic veil called "Magic Lock", which was mainly constituted by a series of Astrology spells.

Compared with the folk poem, the manuscript offered a more detailed description about how the city was destroyed by the falling meteors and how the weird, red liquid surged up from under the ground. Unfortunately, the manuscript was not complete. No explanation could be found on it regarding why there was a magic site built underground, or why a Magic Lock was placed around it.

The witch's ancestors lived in Aalto many years ago. According to the witch's notes, one of her ancestors was the student of a very powerful legendary sorcerer who was the lord of the city. Therefore, Lucien guessed that the magic site might have something to do with this legendary sorcerer, but he had no real evidence about it.

It had been more than half an hour since Lucien started to read the manuscript. During this time, Lucien did not say even a single word. Both Lilith and Sala felt a bit nervous.

Shocked as Lucien was, he pretended to be quite calm, "It's not complete. Do you have the rest?"

"No." Lilith shook her head, "This is not the original manuscript. As you can see, Mr. Evans, it has been translated into the common tongue."

"I see." Lucien put the manuscript on the table, then he said to Lilith and Sala, "I have a rough idea... This manuscript is about some underground magic ruins, and I can do a rough calculation to locate where the ruins were, based on the geographic and constellation features the manuscript provides."

"Awesome!" Sala and Lilith exclaimed at the same time with great surprise.

After Lucien finished his explanation, Lilith was even more excited, "Thank you so much, Mr. Evans! This will help..."

"Li... Lilith," Sala directly cut his sister off with a couple of fake coughs. Then, he stood up and said to Lucien with respect, "Mr. Evans, thank you for telling us the story behind the manuscript. How much we shall pay you for this?"

"One Thale." Lucien smiled. Since he was about to leave Aalto after the music festival, he wanted to save more right now, although he already had saved thirty Thales from working for the princess and all the rewards he received. That was already more than what a commoner could earn for their whole life.

"For sure." Sala slightly bowed to Lucien. Then, he pulled out the money bag and handed Lucien a Thale with great respect.

"As the city gate has been closed, " Lucien smiled to them and invited, "if you don't mind, Lilith and Sala, you are welcome to stay in my manor tonight."

.....

After having dinner, Lucien asked Mr. Lopez to take Lilith and Sala to their guest rooms.

Standing in the center of the living room, Lucien watched the two young visitors leave. His shadow was shivering on the floor because of the candlelight.

Lucien was very concerned with this great coincidence. He just heard the folk poem from Mr. Deroni a couple of months ago, and now he had guests finding him on their own and bringing that precious manuscript. That was too big a coincidence in his eyes.

Lucien thought it might be a trap from the night watchers. However, he had to admit that he was also greedy.

Lucien's spiritual power had reached a peak within the level of senior apprentice. Up to a couple of weeks later, Lucien should be able to make a breakthrough to become a first circle sorcerer. Right now, all he needed was several kinds of magic materials for his advancement.

Lucien once read from another book that, around most of the magic veils, there would often be magic gardens, since the plants and other materials there would be exposed to magic power all the time. Many of them should be on Lucien's list.

Also, he didn't need to step into this Magic Lock. The magic garden should be just outside of the veil.

According to the sentence "when the sun entered Thanos' Palace...", the best time to approach the Lock should be on the tenth day of the following month, the equivalent to April on his original world. Actually, one should approach the magic veil at midnight of April ninth, when the silver moon swung to the summit of her travels. At that time, the sun should be close enough to the constellation called Thanos' Palace. Obviously, though, people would not be able to see the sun from the magic ruins, since it would be night time.

After a long time of struggling, Lucien finally restrained himself from being impulsive and greedy. After all, exploring the ruins of the magic site would require a lot of preparation from him. At the very least, he would need to collect more related books and notes to get a better understanding of this "Magic Lock".

Obviously, right now Lucien was not prepared for it. He decided to be more cautious and to wait for a future chance.

...

Lilith and Sala did not sleep well last night, half because of the excitement, and half because of the manor, which made them feel a bit creepy.

As the revelation of the secret of their manuscript took way less time than they thought, when Lilith and Sala went back to Aalto, they decided to stay in the city for the music festival and then head for the small town named Bonn, which was close to Elsinore Lake.

Although Sala still felt a bit concerned about the fact that staying in Aalto any longer might bring them unnecessary trouble, facing his younger sister's eager request, Sala yielded. After all, he did not want to miss the great musical festival himself as well.

After Lilith and Sala left, Lucien also left his manor and went back to the Musicians' Association to rehearse with the symphony orchestra.

Chapter 106: The Dream City of Music

Chapter 106: The Dream City of Music

Sitting in the coach, which moved rather smoothly, Lucien looked out the window and found that Aalto became way busier than usual, because of the music festival.

Lots of coaches with strange coats of arms all of a sudden appeared on the streets, but they were familiar to Lucien, since he once read several books in Natasha's study introducing the stories behind the coats of arms of different families on the continent.

Also, there were way more street artists and bards out there today. Among those people, Lucien noticed a familiar figure. It was uncle Joel.

Joel was playing lyre. It seemed the loss of two fingers of his left hand did not bother him too much. Surrounded by a bunch of people, Joel looked rather cheerful and excited.

Lucien asked the coachman to stop. Then, he left the coach and walked close to Joel. Standing behind the crowd, Lucien listened to his playing, smiling.

The crowd burst out a warm applause when Joel finished his playing and bowed to them. A few of the listeners took out their moneybags and put some coins in Joel's hat to show their appreciation.

When Joel straightened up his body, he saw Lucien. Joel's eyes were lit up with surprise.

"How come you're here, Lucien!" When the crowd dispersed, Joel walked with Lucien to a quieter corner, "I thought you were still in the manor."

"I was." Lucien smiled. "I'm going to the association. How're you doing, uncle Joel?"

"I'm doing great!" Joel's eyes were shining with pride, "You saw it. They love my music!"

Lucien nodded and said to Joel, "For sure." Then he pointed at Joel's hat, which was filled with small change.

"I don't need this money. You've been taking care of my family all the time, and because of you and John, we're now living a decent life." Joel weighed the hat a bit with his hand, "As long as they like my playing, that's enough."

"I know," Lucien agreed. "Music itself is beautiful enough."

"I just play because of my dream now, not for a living." Joel nodded, "It feels like those days when I just came to Aalto are back again. I'm passionate and motivated. Aalto Music Festival makes turns me into a spring chicken again... hahaha..."

Later, Lucien wandered around on the street to enjoy the different styles of playing. Street music had its unique charm, which also inspired Lucien quite a bit. Staying in his manor in the suburbs for too long, Lucien missed the bustling atmosphere.

As he was walking, Lucien was trying to construct a rough idea about how to recompose the third movement of Violin Sonata in G Minor, which was a very challenging piece of music in this world. Lucien wanted to present the beauty of this piece of sonata with piano, and he also wanted to show the audience his skills.

Lucien decided to recompose it on his own, rather than referring to the masterpieces in his original world like what he always did before. This concert would be the first and also might be the last music concert in Lucien's life. He wanted to leave something that really belonged to him.

Watching people's smiling and cheerful faces on the street, listening to the melodious music, Lucien sighed and murmured, "I wish there was no Church here."

"Sir, come and join our free concert!" Suddenly, a young man popped out in front of Lucien. "Free!" His green eyes were full of hope.

"Ah?" Lucien was a bit confused.

"We rented a house for hosting our concert, sir!" explained the young man. "By the way, I'm Piola, the first violin in our orchestra!"

It was still early. Lucien was not in a rush, so he nodded with a smile, "Where is it then?"

"Over there!" Piola cheered, "The thirtieth!"

Then he led Lucien to a two-storey house on the other side of the street.

The center of the living room was their simple and temporary stage, on which there were two violins, one viola and one cello. A black-haired girl of ample proportions was sitting in front of a harpsichord.

"Sorry, sir. We need to have more friends here before we start." Piola apologized, "Grace will play harpsichord for our guests during the waiting time."

Lucien realized what was going on here. They should be a band coming from another country. They came here for Aalto Music Festival to pursue their music dream, but renting a formal music hall here in Aalto was unaffordable to them. Therefore, they were hoping that more people here would get to know them by providing their audience with free performances.

What the girl played for the audience after Piola left happened to be For Silvia.

Although Grace played it pretty well, some shortcomings of harpsichord compared with piano could not be hidden from Lucien's eyes.

After a while, more people entered the house. The spacious living room now became quite crowded.

"Dear ladies and gentlemen, " Piola jumped on the stage and picked up his violin, "We come from Sturk, the Bright Pearl of the Sea. It's our great honor to play for you today. Welcome!"

Then he turned around and introduced the band members to the audience, "I'm the first violin, Piola, this is the second violin, Sharon. And our violist, Green. This is our cellist, Leslie. And our beautiful Grace who was playing harpsichord for us."

The small concert took about an hour. Lucien could tell that they were quite experienced from their repertoire, their infectious enthusiasm and their playing skills. Even in Aalto, they could be regarded as qualified instrumentalists.

At the end of the concert, they received warm applause from the audience. The band members were very excited and started to talk to the guests.

"How do you feel about our Fantasia in C Minor, sir?" Piola smiled to Lucien.

"Pretty good," answered Lucien sincerely. "At the same time, you guys can probably pay more attention to how to unfold your music and the technique that uses a series of values to manipulate different musical elements... as we call it serialism."

"Wow..." Piola was very impressed. He did not expect that he would receive such a professional comment from this young listener. Then Piola started to exchange his ideas with Lucien with great passion.

Their heated discussion drew the attention of the other band members. Gradually, they joined Piola and Lucien's conversation after most of the audience left the house.

...

"Thank you very much, sir. We learned a lot from your suggestions." Grace nodded to Lucien.

"Have a lovely stay in Aalto." Lucien smiled and was about to leave.

"I'm sure we will," answered Piola. "Sir, you know that the schedule of the many concerts that will be held in the Psalm Hall has been released."

"Already?" Lucien was a bit surprised.

"Yes!" Piola looked rather excited, "You know which ones I'm most looking forward to?"

"We all know." smiled Sharon, "Mr. Christopher's and Mr. Evans'."

"Exactly!" Piola clapped his hands, "Seven months traveling! We came all the way here from the shore, just for Mr. Christopher's and Mr. Evans' concerts!"

During Aalto Music Festival, even commoners, who could not afford the tickets, could listen to all the concerts held in the Psalm Hall indirectly by means of a divine power circle, which functioned like a broadcaster on the central square.

Seven months... The shore... Something flashed through Lucien's mind. Then, he started to chat with them about their trip for about another ten minutes.

After Lucien left, Grace said to the other band members, "I still can't believe that a random sir in Aalto can have such profound knowledge of music. This city's amazing."

"Oh my!" exclaimed Piola, "We didn't ask his name!" He patted on his forehead in a regretful way.

...

As soon as Lucien arrived his own office in the association, he heard a knock at the door behind him.

Surprisingly, it was Natasha and Camil.

After Camil closed the door, Natasha said to Lucien in a serious manner, "Argent Horn was detected in some remote towns again. You have to be careful, Lucien. Don't go out at night."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 107: Lucien's Repertoire

"Are they back?" Lucien was very surprised. He never expected that Argent Horn, after such a great loss, would bounce back so quickly.

"Yes. The Church has sent a Night Watch team out, as well as a bunch of pastors, even some bishops." Natasha nodded, "I wish I could go, too. Those heretics are just crazy..."

Lucien did not answer. He felt that some enthusiastic followers of the God of Truth were crazy as well.

Natasha sat down on the couch, "Aalto is super busy right now. Our security check can't be perfect, especially when we are actually short-handed. Please be careful, Lucien. I'm still eager to attend your concert."

"I will. Thank you for reminding me, Your Grace," answered Lucien. "Also, I have Alert. Unless they send someone who's of a grand knight level or above, they cannot get the jump on me that easily. Still, I'm just a nobody."

"Come on, you're not a nobody." Natasha waved her hand, "Your concert draws a lot of attention. We're all looking forward to it."

"I'm flattered, Your Grace." Lucien paused a bit, "I think I'll be fine. But uncle Joel and his family..."

"No worries. I can take care of them." Natasha immediately understood.

"Thank you so much, Your Grace," said Lucien gratefully.

"How's your preparation for the concert going, Lucien?" Natasha changed the subject and asked Lucien casually, as if they were close friends, "I'm curious."

"Well... not bad," answered Lucien honestly. "I Just need more time to practice with the orchestra. After all, it will be my first time as a conductor. I'm feeling a bit concerned about that, but that's my only concern."

"You have a really good understanding of music, and your Blessing has been awakened. I don't think that will be a problem." Natasha looked at Lucien with her beautiful purple eyes, "What about the repertoire of the concert?"

Lucien happened to be going to meet Mr. Othello later to have his concert repertoire registered, so he answered directly, "Symphony of Fate. Serenade for strings in G major. Piano Canon in D major. A piano solo recomposed from Violin Sonata in G minor. A piano sonata in C minor named Pathetique, which is a piece of theme music."

"Quite different than I thought," said Natasha with a bit hesitation, "The whole concert is dominated by piano and piano only. I'm afraid that the lack of symphony might make your concert less solemn and grand."

However, before Lucien made any explanation, Natasha smiled and said to Lucien, "But anyway, it's your own concert. You know what you're doing, Lucien. I trust you."

Lucien was encouraged. With the support of the princess, he believed that even Mr. Othello would not be able to say too much about his repertoire.

"By the way, Your Grace," somehow Lucien's mind was dragged back to the previous topic, "Argent Horn happened to be detected around the time of Aalto Music Festival... It seems to be too big a coincidence."

"I know your concern, Lucien." Natasha did not seem to be worried, "We'll handle it."

Lucien simply nodded without making any further comment on that. He clearly knew that he was not the only smart guy in Aalto.

...

After Natasha and Camil left, Lucien ran into Othello, the director of the association, on the stairs.

This time Othello's student, Mekanzi, was not with him. He had been receiving lots of negative comments since last time, when he accused Lucien of being a demon follower and failed. Thus, Mekanzi has not showed up in the association that often recently.

"Lucien, are you ready for the concert?" Othello looked a bit tired, "Is your repertoire ready?"

"Oh Yes, Mr. Othello. Actually, I was about to hand in the repertoire list to you later," said Lucien. Then, he took out the list and handed it to Othello.

Othello read the list with his brows wrinkling, "Too many piano solo. They are not enough for a grand concert, I would say. I know a genius always has a lot of novel ideas, but Lucien, are you sure about it?"

Lucien nodded, "I'm confident, and Her Grace agreed on the repertoire as well."

"Well, I see... I hope you don't feel too stressed." Othello was still a bit worried. In his heart, Natasha's decision to directly assign the last and most important concert to Lucien was not really wise. Othello believed that the final concert for the music festival required a musician who was way more authoritative and experienced than Lucien.

Later, when Lucien was walking upstairs to the practicing room, he met a few of his colleagues, who greeted him in a concerned manner. They were also worrying that Lucien might be under too much pressure for hosting the final concert.

As soon as Lucien stepped on the fourth floor, he saw a lady rushing toward him. Luckily, he was agile enough and made a sudden dodge to the side.

"Silvia? Why are you in such a hurry?" Lucien was a bit surprised.

"Oh hi, Lucien! Nothing really important, actually." Wearing a light yellow dress, Silvia's cheeks slightly flushed from rushing, "I heard that your concert is on the last day. Good for you and... don't stress yourself out."

"I'm fine. Thank you, Silvia." nodded Lucien, "You're not the first one today telling me I should not feel stressed. I appreciate it, though."

"I bet." Silvia smiled, "You handle pressure pretty well. And Natasha trusts you very much."

...

Rhine and the orchestra were already waiting there when Lucien arrived.

Picking up the baton, he said to them, "Ladies and gentlemen, let's start."

After the first round rehearsal, Lucien felt pretty good. When he was about to continue, Othello and another two young men entered the practicing room.

Lucien knew one of them, Count Verdi, having seen him twice in Ratacia Palace. The other, a grey-haired young man wearing a fine bright red jacket, was totally strange to Lucien.

"This is the prince of the Kingdom of Syracuse, Prince Michelle. The prince's very interested in our association." Othello introduced politely.

After Lucien and the other musicians saluted, Prince Michelle said to them a bit shyly, "Am I disturbing you? Don't mind me. I'm just looking around." When he was introduced to Lucien, Michelle looked quite excited, "Mr. Lucien Evans! It's a pleasure to meet you." Then, the prince reached out both of his hands and gripped Lucien's hands regardless of the royal etiquette.

Lucien could feel the young prince's strength when he was shaking hands with him. Obviously, Michelle had awakened his Blessing. Lucien bowed slightly to him and said politely, "It's my great pleasure, Your Grace."

...

On Lucien's way home, he came across Silvia's father, Mr. Deroni, who was talking to a middle-aged man that Lucien had never seen before.

The man was in his forties. He had tall nose, brown hair and dark blue eyes. Wearing a decent suit, the man was well-mannered.

Deroni nodded to Lucien and introduced, "This is Rogerio, my relative and also my business partner. And this is Mr. Lucien Evans."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Rogerio," greeted Lucien politely while reaching out his hand.

"Nice to meet you, too, Mr. Evans." Rogerio shook Lucien's hand, "You're famous even in Sturk. I've been hearing your name all the time."

"I happened to meet a band from Sturk earlier today." Lucien smiled and shared with them some of the interesting stories that he heard from the band.

...

Several days later, the most exciting music event on the continent, Aalto Music Festival, finally kicked off.

Chapter 108: Warm Up for the Festival

Chapter 108: Warm Up for the Festival

April third, Aalto Music Festival.

Music was everywhere on the streets. Today, Lucien was dressing less formally, with a simple brown coat, white shirt and black trousers. Wandering on the streets, he was accompanied by Iven, who also dressed like a little gentleman, since Joel and Alisa decided to go out on a date to revive the passion and love that they had when they were young.

Victor was busy with meeting different musicians and nobles from other cities and countries, and so were Felicia, Lott and Herodotus. Natasha was feeling overwhelmed by the royal guests coming from all over the continent, and she spent all her spare time supporting Silvia's upcoming concert. Rhine was invited to be the first violin for several concerts, and Lucien heard that he didn't even have time to eat.

Even John could not find any time to hang out with Lucien. He needed to maintain the order on the festival.

"Hey, John!" Lucien waved to his buddy, who was patrolling on the streets.

"Hey, Lucien!" John grinned, "How's everything going?"

"Well... Can't be any better." Lucien shrugged his shoulders, "Is there anything better in the world than being a babysitter during the music festival?" Lucien pointed at Iven, who was focused on chewing the huge hotdog in his hand.

John laughed so loud that several pedestrians on the street turned to look at them.

"Come on! I'm taking care of your younger brother!" Lucien complained in a joking way.

"Well... I heard that several noble ladies invited you to their manors during the festival." John patted on Lucien's shoulder, "Say... Miss Yvette Hill."

"I prefer to take care of your brother," answered Lucien honestly.

After talking to John, Lucien continued to stroll around the streets. Since he might be leaving soon after the music festival, Lucien wanted to feel Aalto more and cherish the time when he was still here.

While Lucien was quite interested in listening to the street artists playing, Iven paid more attention to the assorted food trucks which were selling grilled cheese, fruit pie, fried potatoes, desserts and so on.

Finishing his hotdog, Iven started to stare at the candy store on the other side of the street.

Lucien and Iven easily spent the whole morning walking around to enjoy the festival atmosphere, and walking into some random small music halls to appreciate the music that the bands played.

During the music festival, except for the Psalm Hall, tickets for any music performance were very cheap, and some of them were even free. Thus, Aalto Music Festival was genuinely a music feast for everyone.

It was close to lunch time. Lucien took Iven to a restaurant.

"Look!" Iven was pointing at the sign standing in front of the restaurant, "Play music and earn your free meal!"

Iven could already read some words under Lucien and John's teaching.

"This restaurant seems to be quite awesome." Lucien smiled.

The restaurant was super busy. When Lucien and Iven were waiting to be seated, they saw an old gentleman who was playing piano in the front. The old gentleman was not playing really well, and every of his key-pressing movement seemed to be a big challenging for him.

But he played in a very devoted way, as if he was having his own concert.

When the old gentleman finished playing, the whole restaurant bursted out a warm applause for him. The guests were applauding for his courage and passion.

"Free lunch for this gentleman!" cheered the owner of the restaurant, "Who wants to be the next!?"

Lucien and Iven were led to a small table for two, close to the window. They ordered two steaks for lunch.

A few more guests performed. The atmosphere of the restaurant was very nice. Everyone here was enjoying their time.

More and more people came into the restaurant. Some of them could not find any seat, so they just stood beside the bar section, holding their food, and that included Piola, Sharon and the other band members.

After playing for the whole morning, they were starving. A free lunch was definitely great.

Piola's playing seized everyone's attention. The festive atmosphere in the restaurant climaxed.

"Free lunch for this young lad!" the owner of the restaurant announced, "And for his friends!"

Lilith and Sala were attracted by the restaurant as well.

...

Putting down his knife and fork, Lucien smiled at Iven, who was too full to sit up straight on his seat, "Told you. Don't eat too much."

"I can't control myself..." Iven was still staring at the rest of the steak on the plate and then he ask the waiter to take it to go. Then he turned to Lucien, "If you're willing to play, Lucien, for sure we don't need to pay!"

Being touched by the friendly, warm atmosphere, Lucien wanted to give it a shot as well. Lucien wanted to see whether his own music, the one he didn't copy from any masterpieces, could receive some appreciation among the people.

So he nodded to Iven and walked toward the piano.

"Another young lad!" said the restaurant owner.

"Mr. Evans!?" Lilith could not believe her eyes.

"Yes, it is Mr. Evans." Sala looked a bit confused but also excited, "I thought he was preparing for his concert."

"We're so lucky!" Lilith's face flushed, "We can listen to Mr. Evans' playing here, in a random restaurant!"

Piola recognized Lucien as well, and he turned to his friends, "That's the gentleman we talked to the other day. I wonder how well he can play!"

Placing his hands on the keyboard, Lucien quickly went through the small piece of serenade he wrote before in his mind, without referring to any music books in his spirit library.

Lucien's playing was like a cool breeze coming in through the window, gentling touching every listener's heart. The busy restaurant slowly calmed down. Everyone stopped talking and listened to the music carefully.

Moving his hands smoothly on the keyboard, Lucien closed his eyes and started to enjoy.

In sharp contrast to the bustling atmosphere just now, the beautiful melody refreshed people's mind like a limpid brook.

The piece of melody was very short. When Lucien left the small stage and came back to Iven, the whole restaurant remained very quiet, since the guests were still immersed in the beauty of the melody.

Lucien was satisfied. Leaving a Nar on the table, Lucien and Iven quickly left.

As soon as Lucien stepped out of the restaurant, he heard a great mix of people cheering and applauding.

...

"He left!" Piola looked disappointed, "We didn't ask his name! Again!"

"I wonder why we never heard the melody before. Full of music surprises, Aalto is such an amazing place!" said Sharon. She did not know that it was that gentleman himself who composed the melody.

...

"Mr. Evans!" Lucien heard someone calling him from behind.

Turning around, he saw that it was the brother and sister who visited him the other day.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 109: Marcus

Seeing Lucien, Lilith was both excited and shy, "Your performance in that restaurant was awesome!"

Lucien somehow asked subconsciously, "Why are you two still in Aalto?"

"We still have time until..." Before Lilith finished her phrase, Sala cut her off directly, since he realized that his younger sister might spill the beans inadvertently.

"Mr. Evans, why did you think we wouldn't stay here for the music festival?" As soon as he asked, Sala regretted that he asked the question in such a harsh defensive way, which could make he and Lilith even more suspicious.

Lucien got a bit nervous too. He did not want Lilith and Sala to realize that he actually knew more about the ruins of a magic site than they thought.

"You two were in quite a hurry when you visited me," Lucien's mind was working fast, "and I thought you had something urgent. That's why."

"Oh... I see." Sala relaxed a bit and switched to a safer topic, "Like Lilith said, your playing was very impressive."

After chatting a bit more, Sala left with his younger sister, although the latter was a bit reluctant to stop the conversation with Lucien.

Watching Sara and Lilith leaving, Lucien slightly frowned his brows, feeling a bit concerned. He was not sure whether today's meeting with the brother and sister was just a coincidence or something else.

However, Lucien would not let his concern ruin his beautiful day. He still spent a very pleasant afternoon with Iven hanging around and enjoying the festive atmosphere.

...

In the evening, Lucien took Iven to Joel and Alisa and had dinner with them. Then, they walked toward the central square. Tonight, the square was way busier than usual, and the whole place was literally packed. People gathered here to enjoy tonight's concert in the Psalm Hall through the divine power circle.

The divine power circle was actually visible, which seemed to be more like a transparent crystal dome floating in the air than a commonly-imaged mysterious magic circle. Through this huge dome screen, people on the square could watch the spectacular performance and enjoy the wonderful music simultaneously.

"Wow..." Iven drawled with surprise.

"It looks like we cannot go anywhere closer," said Joel. "Let's just stay here."

"We're not staying here!" refused Alisa, "What can we see from here?"

As she was talking, Alisa was about to take advantage of her weight to open a path for them.

"Auntie Alisa," Lucien smiled and stopped her, "I actually know a better place than the square."

...

The town hall of Aalto was a five-storey building, sitting on the other side of the central square.

"Felicia's father, Mr. Urbain, is the chief clerk here," Lucien explained. "He invited us to enjoy the concert on the top floor."

When they got closer, Lucien saw that Felicia was already waiting there at the back gate of the town hall.

Due to the limited amount of seat that the Psalm Hall could provide and the large number of distinguished guests coming from other countries, even Mr. Urbain was not invited for tonight's concert. As for the musicians' association, only the most well-known musicians would be invited, like Mr. Victor, whose concert just achieved a great success in the Psalm Hall.

Actually, Lucien, as the princess's personal music consultant, got invited as well, but he didn't dare to go, since a great number of grand cardinals and bishops would be there that night. Lucien did not want to take any unnecessary risk.

...

The concert started at eight o'clock sharp.

Sacred light appeared above the central square, covering everyone present.

All of the people present lowered their heads, praying and praising. This was the love of God, the power of God.

Lucien also lowered his head, but he was thinking about something else. As the power of magic originated from nature, Lucien wondered where did divine power come from.

The light became brighter and brighter, then it gradually covered the crystal dome. The spectacular main stage of the Psalm Hall slowly appeared in the sky.

The Golden Cathedral Choir was ready.

"Pious followers..."

The hymn was so wonderful, as if it was being sung by angels.

All the choristers were men, and all of them got castrated before they entered their adolescence. Thus, their voices were even purer and beautiful than that of women.

"Lucien... are you all right?" Felicia asked him with concern.

"Yes? I'm fine, Felicia," Lucien said to her. "Why do you ask?"

"Sorry, I was just thinking that the first concert's grand beginning might have put lots of pressure on you." Felicia slightly shook her head, "It looks like I'm even more nervous than you are."

Lucien grinned, "Thanks, Felicia. I'm fine."

...

At the adamant demand of Mr. Victor, Lucien attended the second concert in the Psalm Hall, held by Christopher, the president of the association.

"You can't miss it," Victor said to Lucien. "It might be Mr. Christopher's last concert. You have to cherish this opportunity."

"Oh yeah... can't miss the opportunity to attend a music master's concert in order to make myself anxious." Lucien joked.

"If you were really that stressed, you wouldn't say something like that." Victor knew Lucien's personality pretty well, "And I trust you, Lucien. I read the music sheet of Pathetique. Challenging as it is, I believe this piece of sonata can lead to a revolution in the history of music."

"Thank you, Mr. Victor." Lucien smiled. "Your support means a lot to me."

At this time, a young man in his early twenties with black hair and brown eyes approached them.

"Mr. Victor, good evening," greeted the young man. "Is this Lucien Evans?"

Victor stood up and introduced with a big smile on his face, "This is my previous student, Marcus. He is now the music consultant of the Kingdom of Shaq. He came back several days ago, just because of the music festival."

Chapter 110: The Last and the First

Chapter 110: The Last and the First

Lucien reached out his hand, "Nice to meet you, Mr. Marcus."

Holding Lucien's hand, Marcus put on a sort of arrogant smile, "Likewise, Lucien. I heard your name when I was in Shaq. When I had just arrived in Aalto, a couple of days ago, I was about to visit you, but Mr. Victor asked me not to distract you from the preparation of your first concert."

Marcus put some extra emphasis on the word "first". In his mind, Lucien should not be respected as a musician until his first concert achieved great success.

"Mr. Victor often mentioned your name, saying that you're one of his most outstanding students." Lucien remained polite, "In terms of concert experience, I'm not even close to you."

"Well... It's my great pleasure to be invited by the many countries." Marcus put on a big smile when they came to the topic that he felt the most proud of. He sat down beside Lucien and started to spout his concert experience in different countries: the passion of the Kingdom of Syracuse, the rigidity and conservatism of the Holy Heilz Empire, the boldness of the Kingdom of Shaq...

Lucien did not mind knowing more about these countries. So he nodded and asked a couple of questions from time to time when Marcus was talking.

Marcus did not stop himself until the concert was about to start. In his mind, Marcus felt that Lucien was pretty easy-going, rather than arrogant as he assumed.

Marcus' hostility did not come from nowhere. At first he felt truly happy that his teacher, Mr. Victor, noticed this talented young man, and he was proud that his peer could make achievements like him, until more and more news about Lucien Evans came to Shaq like snowflakes. Even the nobles in Shaq were talking about the young man and making comparison between them. All of a sudden, Marcus felt that his achievement was worth nothing compared with Lucien's success, but Lucien hadn't even had his own concert yet!

The audience gave Christopher a very warm applause as soon as he appeared on the stage. Dressing in black, Christopher looked rather hale and solemn tonight.

That would probably be Christopher's last concert for his music career, the last concert of the president of Aalto Musicians' Association, the most authoritative and the greatest musician across the continent, the "living music legend".

"Ladies and gentlemen," Christopher turned to the audience, "thank you for coming."

Straightening his back, Lucien listened carefully.

"I've been devoted to music for fifty-nine years, and now I'm seventy," said Christopher with deep emotion. "I'm still standing here because of all your support, and because of the stimulus I received from a young lad. We, as human beings, we age and die, but music never!"

Then Christopher turned around and raised the button.

The first three symphonies were Christopher's most well-known music pieces. One was elaborate and ebullient, one was elegant and sublime, and the third one was passionate and graceful. The intoxicating and familiar melodies seized every listener's mind, no matter if they were inside or outside of the Psalm Hall.

Christopher's achievement in music was the milestone in the history of music. Together with the music, the listeners' remote memories were brought back.

During every interval, the audience applauded like never before, as if the whole continent was applauding the respectable, senior musician.

After the third piece of symphony, Christopher looked a bit tired, "Now, please enjoy my student Silvia's piano sonata, while I'm going to prepare for the next symphony."

In his last concert, Christopher wanted to support his student, and he knew that he must take a rest before the upcoming symphony.

"This is the 'living music legend'! His concert is strikingly awesome!" said Piola with great excitement on the square.

"I know..." Sharon nodded earnestly, "It's my greatest pleasure to be here right now and listen to Mr. Christopher's concert."

Dressing in white, Silvia walked onto the stage like an angel.

Lucien closed his eyes and listened to Silvia's playing carefully. Generally speaking, her playing was pretty good, and Silvia's progress was already very impressive to Lucien, but he knew she could still make some improvement on her piano fingerings and her understanding of the many features of the new instrument.

The ten-minute long sonata also received a warm applause. Silvia slightly lifted her dress and bent her knees to thank the audience, feeling quite excited.

When Lucien was applauding Silvia, he felt someone was looking at him. It was Natasha. Her beautiful purple eyes were shining as she smiled.

She nodded to Lucien, and Lucien knew that she was thanking him for providing Silvia with some tips for playing piano and recomposing the sonata.

Then Christopher's returning immediately seized everyone's attention again. They were all looking forward to the last symphony.

As Christopher lifted the baton and waved, the first two music notes struck every listener's mind.

Christopher took them to a great battlefield.

Horns blowing, flags waving, and the brave soldiers howled and charged like lions against the enemy, with their blood burning out of the great determination and the will of fighting. Under the guidance of the many heroes, pastors and knights fought side by side and devoured their enemies like an overwhelming flood. They beheaded the titans and smashed the tall towers of the evil sorcerers. To protect their homeland, they killed all the demons who were trying to destroy the world.

The following movement had a more restrained style, as if the army was mourning the heroes, but hope came with sadness, and even greater determination followed grief. Then, an exciting and passionate movement changed the music tone. In the name of justice and light, the soldiers wiped off their tears and marched again with irresistible momentum.

The whole Psalm Hall remained silent for a moment after the symphony finished, then the audience burst into thunderous applause.

This was not only an applause for the symphony, but also for Christopher's great spirit of innovation and perseverance in his seventies! Apparently, this piece of symphony was influenced by Lucien's Symphony of Fate. It was astonishing that the greatest musician ever would learn from the younger generation and always seek to reach new levels even in his late years!

"Master. Mr. Christopher, master!" Piola was too excited to form a complete sentence.

"Yes... Yes!" answered Piola's friends. Their voice was trembling.

The grand duke, the princess, the prince from the Kingdom of Syracuse, Count Verdi and all the people in the Psalm Hall stood up while they were applauding to show their great respect toward that great musician.

"Ladies and gentleman, my last concert has ended tonight." Christopher bowed to the audience and said with emotion, "Tomorrow, our young, talented musician, Lucien Evans, will bring us his first concert ever here in the Psalm Hall. The last concert and the first concert... What God is telling us here is that... music never ends!"

"Music never ends!" The audience followed Christopher and repeated his words. And then many of them turned to look at Lucien.

Lucien bowed deeply to this great musician, with great respect.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 111: Pressure

The crystal dome in the air created by divine power had disappeared, but people still remained on the square, lingering over the last piece of symphony named The War of Dawn.

Following the trend of theme music created by Symphony of Fate, Mr. Christopher's latest music piece was definitely great.

"Comparatively speaking..." Sala was a bit hesitant, "magnificent as The War of Dawn is, Symphony of Fate, to me, is still more impressive."

Lilith nodded, "Yes, I feel that the determination that Symphony of Fate carries is still stronger." Then she frowned her brows and looked worried, "But Mr. Christopher's concert is still a great success. The concert tonight must have put even more pressure on Mr. Evans."

"Mr. Evans will be fine..." Sala did not really know what to say, "He won't let us down."

"Then what if he does?" Lilith raised her head, "After all, Mr. Evans is competing with the president of the Musicians' Association."

Sala looked at his sister and sighed.

At the same time, on the top floor of the town hall Felicia released a long sigh, as if she was trying to drive away the worry and nervousness in her mind.

However, not everyone was feeling concerned about Lucien's concert. Mekanzi was one of the exceptions, who was very excited after tonight's concert, not really because of the great breakthrough that Mr. Christopher made in his late years, but because Mekanzi believed that the president's awesome concert would absolutely pale Lucien's performance on the following day by comparison.

...

The grand duke, the princess and other high-ranked nobles stayed in the Psalm Hall after the concert and right now they were talking to Mr. Christopher in a separate box, congratulating him for his great music achievement and regretting that he would hold no more concerts in the future.

The other nobles and musicians remained in their seats, exchanging their ideas about the concert.

"You're now almost an expert in the field of theme music, Lucien." Victor was impressed by Lucien's interpretation of the first movement of The War of Dawn, "I can tell you are shaping your own music style and ideas."

"Thank you, Mr. Victor. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that I still have a long way to go before achieving that level," answered Lucien humbly. "What I was talking about was basically from Music Criticism and Symphony News. They produced a few quite insightful music reviews in the field of theme music in the past couple of months."

In fact, all the music knowledge that Lucien was exchanging with Victor and Marcus was from his spirit library.

"Oh... I read those articles as well. Yes, they're great as means of instruction," agreed Marcus, but then he changed the subject, "Do you feel stressed that your concert tomorrow will be compared with this perfect concert, Lucien?"

When Lucien was about to answer, Victor patted Marcus' arm to stop him. Then, Victor said to Lucien, "Never compare yourself with others. Do what you want to do."

In fact, Victor himself was pretty worried that the piano solos tomorrow might not be able to provide enough music appeal to the audience, but he chose to trust his student.

Lucien was not as stressed as other people thought. Although he knew that his arrangement and repertoire of the concert was quite ahead of the mainstream, and the several pieces of piano solos might be a great risk, Lucien believed that only himself knew what he wanted.

"I'll just try my best." He nodded.

Then minutes later, the nobles started to leave the concert hall, followed by the musicians. Some nobles and musicians greeted Lucien in a sort of weird manner. Clearly, they were trying to avoid mentioning his concert tomorrow.

...

It was April fifth, the last day of Aalto Music Festival.

At seven thirty in the evening, almost all the people in Aalto were gathering around the central square and on the streets nearby, waiting for the last concert.

Piola, Sharon and other band members arrived at the square in the early afternoon to secure a relatively good spot. Now they were surrounded by more and more people and more and more heated discussion.

Staring at the crystal dome, Piola murmured as if he was dreaming, "I wish I could hold a concert here. I'd be willing to die for that."

"Not really possible, unfortunately." Green, the violist, shook his head and sighed, although he had the same dream in his mind.

"We're only in our twenties. We're still young. Don't be this pessimistic, Green," said Sharon, "Mr. Christopher is still seeking for music breakthroughs in his seventies, and we shall carry our dreams all the way until we accomplish them."

"Speaking of being young..." Grace said to them, "Mr. Evans' coming-of-age ceremony is still a couple of months away from now."

Sharon, who was born in a music family, replied, "The youngest musician held his concert in the Psalm Hall when he was fifteen, but by the time he performed here, he had already hosted several concerts in different places. Mr. Evans is now having his first concert here during Aalto Music Festival, that's something that will definitely be recorded in the history of music."

Christopher held his first concert in the Psalm Hall during a previous Aalto Music Festival when he was twenty-six. The eldest musician who held his concert at the age of a hundred and twelve in the Psalm Hall was also a grand knight, which is considered an almost unbreakable record.

"Everyone is looking forward to Mr. Evans' performance tonight," said Grace. "I feel that... as long as his concert is half as impressive as Mr. Christopher's, we shall call it a success."

"I agree..." Piola nodded, "After all, Mr. Evans has been learning music for less than a year. He's already a genius for going this far, and he's still very young."

"I don't think that other people will agree with us, unfortunately." Sharon sighed, "There must be people who're hoping for Mr. Evans' failure."

...

Outside of the Psalm Hall, Lucien, dressing a black tailcoat, was welcoming the distinguished guests together with Rhine and some other orchestra members.

Many nobles and musicians trickled in the hall. Among them were Count Hayne, Count Rafati, Count Hill, Mr. Othello, and other foreign nobles and musicians that Lucien did not know.

Then, Christopher showed up with his student Silvia. He nodded to Lucien with a kind smile and asked him to relax. Silvia smiled to Lucien to show her encouragement.

Lucien also specially invited his "family" in Aalto to come. John, Joel, Alisa, Iven and Elena were all invited. They arrived with Victor and Felicia, and some of them looked even more nervous than Lucien. He grinned to them, telling them he was feeling great.

Finally, the coach of the grand duke arrived. The grand duke and Princess Natasha were surrounded by many nobles, and so was Michelle, the Prince of the Kingdom of Syracuse, and Sard, the Saint Cardinal of the Church.

Natasha lifted her purple eyebrows a bit to Lucien and smiled, "I trust you, my music consultant."

...

In the box, the Grand Duke Orvarit said to his daughter, "Natasha, I think that you were quite inconsiderate when you arranged Lucien's first concert to be held after Mr. Christopher's and as the closing concert of Aalto Music Festival. You don't want him to mess it up, do you?"

"Of course I don't, father." Natasha laughed. "I just have faith in him. I know he can do it."

"Well... your faith doesn't make him a qualified musician for this occasion." Verdi said to Natasha, "All he had was Symphony of Fate, and... probably For Silvia."

"I think this is a proper occasion for a young and talented musician to grow." Christopher agreed with Natasha, "The most valuable concert for a musician is one that can help him break through his limits."

Sard also nodded, "I can tell from that symphony that this young man is very persistent. He has a heart that won't yield to difficulties. God will bless him."

Having the support of Christopher and Sard, Natasha smiled to Verdi, "Now, what do you think?"

"Well... we'll see." Verdi did not bicker too much with Natasha tonight. His mind seemed to be a bit pre-occupied right now.

...

When Lucien appeared on the stage, Piola's pointed at the crystal dome and exclaimed, "He... he's Mr. Evans?!"

Piola's mouth opened wide. He could not believe his eyes.

It took Sharon a few seconds to organize what to say, "Yes, I think so. The young man we talked to before... is Lucien Evans."

"No wonder..." Grace murmured to herself.

Standing in front of the orchestra, Lucien smiled to Rhine and nodded.

Then, Lucien waved his baton.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 112: The Art of Conducting

What was out of expectation was that the music did not start as soon as Lucien waved his baton. Standing in the front of the stage, he raised both of his arms up high. His whole body was shaking slightly, as if there was a great momentum of power coming out of his body.

Before the audience realized what happened, Lucien quickly swung his arms backwards and lifted the baton again. Here came Serenade for strings in G major.

Short and direct, the music notes impacted every listener's mind. The confusion and nervousness of the audience suddenly disappeared, and they were now immersed in the joy brought by the serenade.

Lucien was smiling. His whole body was rocking in a pleasant way together with the music. The happiness that was being delivered to the audience was so infectious that many of them started to nod and shake their bodies, synchronizing with the development of the music.

Christopher and Natasha never watched Lucien's rehearsal before. Now, they were both very surprised by Lucien's new way of conducting, which was totally different from the traditional style.

Usually the simple function of conducting in the past, due to the conservative style of music, was only to direct a musical performance to ensure correct entries by various members of the ensemble, thus, neither the emotion of the composer of a music piece nor that of the conductor was conveyed. For example, although both Victor's and Christopher's range of movement when they were conducting was wide, they never really tried to show their own feelings to relate to the orchestra members, or to provoke the audience's emotion.

Following the development of theme music, Lucien also changed his way of conducting to fit in the trend of moving from classicism to romanticism. Lucien spent a lot of time on learning from the great conductors in his original world, such as Arturo Toscanini and Herbert von Karajan, in order to form his own style of conducting.

Under Lucien's direction, the orchestra perfectly captured the joyful, lively spirit of the first movement of the serenade.

Then, Lucien's waving of the baton became more gentle when the serenade entered the second movement. The melody was like a piece of veil-like, rosy dream, floating in the air and then slowly falling on everyone's mind.

The dream was about love and romance, about beautiful girls and handsome boys, about the endless wild flower field and the cool breeze in summer, about one's youth, the most sweet years in one's life.

Transiting smoothly, the rondo form of the third movement made many of the listeners feel like dancing. They even wished it was an evening party, instead of a formal concert.

In its ending part, the music returned to the lively, youthful and pleasant style again. When Lucien finished his conducting and turned around, the audience pause a bit and broke into a sudden, warm applause during the short break, as they just realized that the serenade was over.

"A serenade in the Psalm Hall!" Piola exclaimed to his friends, greatly surprised.

In the past, serenade, as an informal music genre, was usually not qualified to be played on an elegant and decent music stage. Very rarely was serenade put on this kind of occasion in the past, and people never really liked it. Today, Lucien broke the stereotype and made a piece of serenade as impressive as a symphony.

"Graceful and gorgeous, exquisite and balanced," Sharon commented. Even the aftertaste of the serenade was fascinating.

In the box, Christopher smiled and said to the grand duke and the Saint Cardinal, "Again, a surprise from Lucien."

The grand duke nodded, "His conducting's definitely a bonus for the serenade."

Before the concert started, although Natasha looked very confident, she was still a bit worried about Lucien. Now, she was totally relaxed, leaning against the back of the seat and listening to her father and the Saint Cardinal talking about Lucien's new style of conducting. She was curious about what would be the next surprise from Lucien, and so were all of the other listeners.

...

After the short break, when Lucien came back to the stage and passed by the concert members, Rhine smiled and said to him in a low voice, "It seems that your conducting received a pretty good feedback, and I believe Symphony of Fate will just shock them."

Lucien smiled and nodded to Rhine, looking rather confident. Then, he stood in front of the orchestra and closed his eyes.

The entire Psalm Hall and the whole square quieted down.

Slightly lowering his head, Lucien raised up his arms again, but he did not immediately wave his hands.

The audience held their breath, waiting.

Standing there still like a statue and with his eyes closed, Lucien thought about his parents' faces, so familiar but also very far away from him. The plain days in his original world came back to him, but, unfortunately, Lucien did not realize how valuable these days were and thus he never cherished them.

Now, he was here, in this strange world, all by himself. He had to live in great risk almost everyday. He could die easily because of his dream of learning magic. The faces of gangsters, the night watchers and the heretics showed up in Lucien's mind, mocking him, threatening him, telling him that everything was the arrangement of fate.

Was he supposed to accept his fate?

Was he supposed to give up fighting?

Was he supposed to abandon his goals and yield to all the difficulties?

No! Never!

He would fight against the so-called fate with his last breath!

Lucien's face was twisted with his great determination. Gnashing his teeth, he fiercely dropped both of his arms downward.

The familiar opening of Symphony of Fate again seized every listener's heart.

It looked like Lucien's body almost lost balance from his wild waving. Every piece of muscle in Lucien's body was shivering from his great excitement!

As if their hearts were gripped by a powerful, big hand, many of the listeners felt out of breath.

Even Sard opened his eyes. He was looking at Lucien, who was conducting the orchestra in an almost crazy manner.

With the baton in his right hand, Lucien's left hand sometimes clenched into a fist, and sometimes tightened like the claw of eagle. His arms sometimes stretched wide out and sometimes stayed tightly close to his body.

Lucien's face was twisted with hatred and anger, as if he was biting off a piece of flesh from his enemy alive. Occasionally, the muscles in his face relaxed a bit, but soon his face looked even crazier, as if he would be struck by a heart attack at any moment.

Compared with Victor's conducting of Symphony of Fate, Lucien's version was even more striking and intensive. Every member in the orchestra was influenced and motivated by Lucien, and the whole orchestra seemed to be crazier and crazier!

The power and the momentum of the symphony was unprecedented!

Grabbing the arms of her seat, Natasha's back was tightly straightened up, while some of the other elder nobles seemed to be about to pass out at any moment due to the great intensity of the playing.

Finally, with all his power, both physical and mental, Lucien brought out the last movement of Symphony of Fate. The great joy of victory and triumphant return suddenly bursted out and immediately inspired everyone!

When the symphony ended, even with his Blessing power, Lucien still felt quite tired.

The whole Psalm Hall was very quiet.

Then Lucien turned around and bowed to the audience. By the time he straightened up his back, Lucien heard the warmest applause ever in his life.

The whole city was applauding him for Symphony of Fate, for Lucien's art of conducting!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 113: Piano Solo

The whole city was applauding Lucien's performance. In this world, people were not used to this kind of strong sensory stimulus. They were shocked.

"I almost can't breathe," said Lilith. "Mr. Evans' conducting gives the symphony a new life."

"No one knows a music piece better than its composer!" Sala was still applauding, his eyes were shining with excitement.

Compared with those traditional conductors' conservative style, people who did not have too much knowledge about music absolutely preferred Lucien's way of presenting the music.

...

"He's crazy." Verdi was first impressed, but soon he felt that it was too much for him, "Lucien simply has no idea about what is elegance!"

Verdi was not alone there. Many other conservative musicians who adhered to past practices nodded as Verdi was commenting.

It could be foreseen that a bunch of critic reviews of Lucien's conducting would be found on tomorrow's Music Criticism and Symphony News.

"I don't think so, Verdi." Natasha shook her head, looking quite excited, "This way of conducting was born for Symphony of Fate! Don't you think?"

"I agree with Her Grace." Christopher, the authority, was on Natasha's side, "Lucien's conducting style lit the great passion of the whole orchestra, and together they presented us with an even more exciting version of Symphony of Fate. This conducting style, I would say, suits theme music very well."

"But Mr. Christopher..." Verdi looked at him.

"I know what you want to say, Count Verdi." Christopher smiled, "Indeed, Lucien was pushing a bit too hard. He was being too direct when he was presenting Symphony of Fate, and that left the audience less space for further imagination."

Even Natasha had to admit that what Christopher said was true.

"However, I think we should not be too tough with a young musician and his first concert ever." Fingers crossing, Christopher looked at the grand duke, "We need a creative younger generation, and being tolerant and open-minded is the first step."

The grand duke smiled and nodded. What Christopher said was exactly what he was thinking.

Both what Natasha and Verdi wanted to say was pretty much all covered by Christopher. Verdi turned his face to the other side.

"I'm wondering, please forgive my interruption, Your Grace, why Lucien chose to put Symphony of Fate in the second place of tonight's concert." Michelle, the prince of the Kingdom of Syracuse, asked in confusion, "I mean... the remaining part of the concert is pretty much composed of piano solos only. That seems quite imbalanced to me."

"Um?" The grand duke picked up the repertoire card beside him and took a quick look, "That's right... Michelle, you made a good point here. What do you think, Christopher?"

"Well... Lucien's best-known music work is Symphony of Fate. Using Symphony of Fate as the ending piece of the concert might be the most ideal arrangement." Christopher gently rubbed his chin a bit, "For now, like prince Michelle said, the repertoire card does look quite imbalanced to me, and I didn't notice this earlier."

Taking a short rest, Sard's eyes were half closed. He smiled and said to them, "I believe that Lucien's not an idiot. Maybe he's very confident in his piano solo, or maybe he prepared something new. It's interesting to wait and see, isn't it?"

By the time they got to that conclusion, the whole orchestra had left. Now, there was only a piano on the stage.

Instead of facing toward the audience, the piano was facing a different angle.

...

Seeing Lucien appear on the stage through the crystal dome again, Piola asked his friends, "Why isn't the piano in the right position?"

That was what many people were wondering right now as well.

On the stage, Lucien bowed to his audience and sat down in front of the piano.

Pressing the keys, Lucien's hands started moving smoothly on the keyboard.

"It was Canon in D major, played in the piano!" Sharon recognized the familiar, beautiful melody immediately.

Simple as it was, Canon in D major might be the most classic music piece in this world. By playing one or more imitations of the music notes after a given duration, the repetition of the soft and gentle melody soothed every listener's mind like a cool breeze. The audience gradually recovered from the impact brought by Symphony of Fate, and now many of them stretched their bodies in their seats a bit and enjoyed the music in a very relaxed way.

Sitting in front of the piano and playing with his heart and soul, Lucien's handsome profile and his long, nimble fingers left the audience with a deep impression as well.

About seven minutes later, warm applause burst out again. This time the applause was less furious and crazy, but more gentle.

This time, the audience felt the beauty and the joy of peace from Lucien's playing.

"Small changes made a bit difference." The melody of Canon was still lingering in Piola's mind, "It's very different from the versions played by violin or harp."

"That's the sound feature of piano, pure and crispy." There was a sweet smile on Grace's face, "Mr. Evans looked so charming when he was playing... His face... His hands..."

"Now I know why you wanted to place the piano in a certain angle, Lucien!" On the other side in the box of the Psalm Hall, Natasha smiled and thought to herself, looking quite amused, "You want the audience to directly see your movement. But why didn't you tell me this earlier when I was about to play piano in front of Silvia?" Natasha also blamed Lucien a bit.

"He definitely put a lot of thought in his concert. We can tell that from the way he placed the piano," said Christopher, "Simple but fascinating. This piece of Canon will become quite popular."

Lucien did not move after playing. He was still sitting on the piano bench, as if he was preparing and waiting for something.

There was only a very short interval between the two compositions. A while later, Lucien's hands started to move again. Here came the piano solo recomposed from Violin Sonata in G minor.

After the heading part of playing which gave priority to terseness and fluency, Lucien started to play the very short notes in a fast way. His fingers were like two dancers spinning on the piano keyboard.

"Violin Sonata in G minor?" Some listeners whispered to each other, "It's for violin. It's impossible for piano..."

As the solo consisted mainly of semi-quaver runs, Lucien's hands were moving faster and faster. Double-stops, ostinato, scales and arpeggios, big crossovers... Lucien combined almost all the playing techniques together and that dazzled the audience's eyes.

They almost could not believe that it was a human-being that was playing.

Lucien's extremely fancy fingerings fully showed the potential of piano. This piece of music was more than just showing off the player's remarkable playing skills, but also a praise for the great potential of piano as a new musical instrument in this world.

As the pitch got higher and higher, the melody became more and more exciting.

The audience was trying hard to hold back their exclamation. The playing was not finished yet.

As Lucien ended his playing with a very challenging finger technique and a pitch accent, the listeners on the square erupted with cheers and shouts, while the nobles and musicians in the music hall also applauded vigorously.

Lucien's playing renewed everyone's idea of how much potential the piano had!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 114: Pathetique

Looking at Lucien bowing to the audience, Christopher seemed to be a bit emotional, "When Victor and Rhine first introduced piano to me, although I could sort of see the potential of this new musical instrument, I never tried to compose anything specially for piano, not to mention to adapt any harpsichord or violin piece for it. The skills Lucian applied just now during his playing were very challenging. What he was trying to do was to learn from the playing skills for string instruments, which is remarkable."

"Practice makes perfect." Although Verdi was very impressed as well, he did not want to make a too favorable comment about Lucien, "Especially after awakening his Blessing, the practice can't take long for him."

"Fingering is not everything." Natasha took a glance at Verdi, "For other musicians, what is hard is to really get to know piano... I mean... like Lucien, who has this profound understanding of the unique features of this musical instrument. Without the knowledge, there's no way that one can produce such a fabulous piano piece."

"Well, maybe I'm too old... Although Lucien's playing is very impressive, I did not get as excited as you young people with his fancy fingerings." The grand duke smiled, "I'm more looking forward to Pathetique."

On the other side, Lucien's friends were a bit more relieved now seeing that Lucien's concert was going great so far. That made the last piece of the concert, a sonata, even more significant.

...

Pierre was also on the square. Gawking at the crystal dome, hearing the thunder-like applause, he felt shame of himself because, when Lucien was playing, his heart was completely seized by Lucien's bold and unrestrained fingerings, which he once condemned as a horrible betrayal of legitimate playing skills founded by his father.

"No... It's not right." Pierre murmured to himself, "His playing was merely fancy fingerings piling up! That's unacceptable! That's... not right."

Pierre got too distracted to notice that Lucien had come back to the stage again.

Everyone was waiting for the last piece of piano solo of the night, Pathetique.

...

Sitting in front of the piano, Lucien did not start playing immediately. He knew that although the playing skills required for this solo were not challenging for him at all, if he could not devote all he had to the playing, Pathetique could never show its breathtaking charm.

Lucien closed his eyes. All those painful moments came back to him:

The great nostalgia that tortured him in those sleepless nights when he was missing the smile of his parents;

The fear he suffered when he was forced to go into the sewers by the pastor, Benjamin;

The feeling of helplessness when he was beaten by the gangsters;

The horrible feeling of guilt he bore when Joel and his family got kidnapped;

The great anger that was burning his guts when he saw the three fingers sent by the heretics...

All those emotions gathered together and infused Lucien's heart.

What made Lucien feel the most depressive was the fact that he was trapped in this city, the City of Psalm!

He was hiding like a filthy rat in the sewers to do his magic experiments;

He was like a spy who could not fully trust anyone;

He was worried all the time that he might bring doom to uncle Joel and his family;

Every time he saw gallows, he couldn't stop imagining that he would be burnt to death one day.

Fear, grief, helplessness, anger, cowardliness...Lucien did not even realized that to what extent the negative emotion was piling up deep in his mind.

Stamping down on the piano pedal, Lucien pounded the keyboard with both of his arms using the great strength coming from his strong mixed feelings.

Even the heavy piano trembled from the pounding!

Then deep and gloomy melody came out, with a strong sense of grief and loss.

Orvarit, the grand duke, immediately felt the tragic atmosphere brought by the music. The melody was like the dark clouds threatening to develop into a big storm, pressuring heavily on his mind.

The grand duke was not the only one with that impression. All the listeners, no matter old or young, male or female, rich or poor, as long as they had experienced the bitter side of life, felt the deep emotion conveyed by the song.

Natasha's mind went back to that winter, when the sky of Aalto was shaded with heavy dark clouds, as if something horrible was about to come...

Christopher was missing his deceased wife who accompanied him for almost fifty years, and his son who would rather spend all his life on the road as a businessman than as a musician because of the great pressure brought by the reputation of his father.

Victor closed his eyes and murmured, "Life is tough, Winnie, but I still remember your smile."

Everyone's heart was seized by their own sorrow.

Among them all, Lilith and Sala's feeling might be the closest to that of Lucien, since they were also tasting the great bitter frustration of having to hide, of knowing that everyday was a struggle between life and death.

The introduction part ended with a smooth run of notes, then Lucien's playing became quicker and with much vigor. The music style became exciting, as if the music was encouraging people to bravely face all the difficulties and sufferings in life and to believe that life would always turn better.

However, with the repetition of the introductory part, the solemnity lingered on the listeners' mind. The mixed feelings of hope and desperation almost drove them nuts.

The grand duke was almost out of breath. The great pain came back to him, reminding him of when he heard his eldest son died on the battlefield in the far north, and when he was looking into his wife's beautiful eyes in her final days.

Natasha's eyes were darker than usual. She remembered what she promised her mother in front of her bed, "I'll become a knight, mom, to protect House Violet." She remembered how soft and weak her mom's hand was.

Verdi's face looked rather gloomy. Obviously, he had his own suffering.

On the square, the shock of the music numbed Pierre, and after a while, he burst into crying. He finally realized that Lucien's piano fingering would replace the playing skill created by his father. He blamed himself for being so useless that he was not able to carry on his father's achievement.

Marcus, Silvia, Felicia... their hearts were all occupied with their own thoughts.

By the end of the first movement, the audience noticed that the tone of the music became a bit more rousing, as if the young man who was playing piano right now was trying to show them his great faith in life, to encourage them to face the pain and move on.

Because light was in front of them, victory was in front of them, as long as they could hang on one more second.

The Continental Congress of Magic, the wonderland for sorcerers and sorceresses... that was what Lucien was thinking about. He believed that after tonight, after he found where the congress was, there would be no need for him to hide anymore!

The higher pitch was very uplifting. Many of the listeners took a deep breath and then released a long sigh as if they were driving all the negative emotion away.

The second movement was of a singing style. The gentle melody was like warm sunlight lighting up people's mind. Then the chorus joined in, curing people's hearts.

Then, there came the finishing rondo. Lucien quickly pressed down a run of keys in a stunning speed, as if rain drops were falling down onto the ground. The speed showed Lucien's renewed spirit and lit up people's great passion.

Lucien's movement was so fast that the audience's eyes even could not follow. Everyone got excited again, people started to applaud amidst Lucien's playing.

They were enjoying the music, and they were enjoying more than just music. The audience's mood was completely led by Lucien, the young man who was showing his astonishing skills on the stage. At this moment, it did not matter whether they were nobles or commoners. They were cheering for this young music genius, cheering for Lucien's never-ending fight against fate, cheering for their shared emotions as human beings.

Lucien's playing reached the perfection with the cut time movement in C minor. After another full run of notes, he heavily pressed down the last key and finished the sonata in great enthusiasm.

All of the audience in the Psalm Hall, including the grand duke, stood up from their seats and applauded for Lucien. The crowd on the square just went wild, and they were shouting and cheering.

The whole city was conquered by Lucien's concert!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 115: Let the Curtain Fall

Lucien bowed to the audience over and over again. And the thunder-like applause was still going on. And the people on the square were still shouting at the top of their lungs.

Those nobles and famous musicians in the hall were touched, and they, especially the nobles, had not been touched so deeply for a long time. They tended to forget their own feelings, joy, sorrow, love, anger, just to be less vulnerable.

However, no one could resist the power of music. Nobles were still human beings. Even though many of them had awakened their Blessings, being physically strong could not turn their hearts into rocks.

The beauty of music was shared by all, regardless of social status, gender or age.

Only a few religious zealots remained relatively calm.

Lucien had no idea how many times he bowed to the audience. After a long time, they slowly calmed down, feeling both tired and peaceful.

"The best piano sonata I've ever heard!" Staring at the crystal dome, Piola exclaimed, "Similar to Symphony of Fate, but also different. The emotion is deeper... more conservative."

Sharon nodded and smiled, "I can image that Pathetique will become the classic sonata in terms of musical expressiveness."

"Aalto Music Festival was definitely worthy of our seven-month traveling." Grace looked serious, "After seeing Mr. Evans's playing, I want to stay in Aalto to learn piano."

"Get real, Grace." Green said to her, "Mr. Evans already gave us some suggestions for our fantasia. Come back with us and let's focus on our own music work. We will become famous in Sturk pretty soon, I believe."

"I agree. If you stay, Grace," Sharon added, "you won't be able to afford a music instructor here in Aalto. And since Aalto is filled with great musicians, how long do you think it will take you to stand out here?"

Finally Grace nodded and sighed, "I guess you guys are right. Don't forget to buy the latest Music Criticism and Symphony News. They will be very helpful for the future of our music."

The other band members nodded. They would definitely buy a lot of them in Aalto so they could take the newspapers back and make some money from the big price difference.

After standing on the square silently for a while, Lilith and Sala exchanged a look and turned around to head for the city gate.

"After we become real..." Sala paused a bit and gently patted on his younger sister's shoulder, "we will travel across the continent and find a safe place where we don't have to live in fear anymore."

Lilith nodded seriously, "Yes, then we'll be hiding no more."

...

In the backstage of the Psalm Hall, Lucien unbuttoned his suit jacket and then hugged Rhine, "Thank you, Mr. Rhine. The concert wouldn't be this successful without your help."

Then Lucien asked Rhine in a low voice, "And can you tell me where's it now?"

Rhine smiled and whispered, "You're so impatient, Lucien. I'll visit you tomorrow night."

Then Rhine raised up his voice, "Congratulations, Lucien!"

After meeting the orchestra members, Lucien saw a knight squire waiting there to invite him to the theater box in the front.

Lucien was a bit nervous of getting too close to Sard. After all, he had no idea how sensitive a Saint Cardinal would be about sorcerers around him.

"No worries. Your Blessing will conceal your identity." Pretending that he was wrapping up stuff, Rhine said to Lucien in a very low voice from behind, "Unless he already feels you're suspicious."

Lucien calmed down a bit from Rhine's words and left the backstage following the squire.

...

Although Lucien was still a couple of steps away from Sard, Lucien could feel the warm saint light that was surrounding the elder.

Since Lucien had awakened his Blessing, he could better sense the great power Sard owned. Fortunately, Lucien's Blessing was not a dark one, and he did not specialize in Necromantic spells, or his soul might be seriously injured just from standing close to the Saint Cardinal.

After saluting the nobles, Lucien walked in front of the grand duke. Orvarit nodded to Lucien approvingly, "You're young and talented, Lucien. I like your soul-touching music and I appreciate your never-ending spirit fighting against the sufferings in life. Keep working hard, Lucien, and you'll become the next music master in Aalto."

Natasha directly gave Lucien a hug like a friend and said to him in a joking way, "What else are you hiding from me, Lucien? Friends are about to share, but you did not tell me that a small adjustment in positioning piano could make a big difference!"

"Nothing else, really..." Lucien put on an awkward smile. Actually, he had way more secrets than that.

"What I want to say is that... thank you for your playing, Lucien." Natasha's smile was slightly sad, "Your music reminds me of the past. The past is painful, but also valuable."

Christopher also hugged Lucien, "My era's over, but your era's just arrived, Lucien."

"Thank you, Mr. President. I hope I can get a new start, too," answered Lucien in a meaningful way, since his life was about to set off a new journey soon.

Then Lucien finally came in front of Sard, and he tried his best to stay calm.

"I've heard your story before." Sard looked at Lucien with his turbid eyes, "I understand your pain, and I also see your strong heart. All the difficulties are tests from God. If you pass them, you become stronger."

Following Verdi, Michelle hugged Lucien a bit shyly, "Congratulations, Mr. Evans. On behalf of Syracuse, I want to invite you to Tria. Any time you come to my country, you'll receive the warmest welcome."

"Thank you, Your Grace." Lucien nodded.

Then Lucien received many other invitations offered by the rest of the guests coming from different countries across the continent.

Lucien knew that these invitations would become his excuse to leave Aalto when he got to know where the Continental Congress of Magic was.

When Lucien left the box, he saw that the last few people were leaving the Psalm Hall.

People on the square were also leaving.

Soon, the whole city became very quiet.

Lucien stepped out of the Psalm Hall and said to himself, "It's time to let the curtain fall, Lucien."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 116: Moonlight Sonata

After changing his clothes, Lucien left the Psalm Hall through the side door.

Not far away from it, he saw a couple of coaches, in front of which stood Victor, Joel and his family.

All of a sudden, Lucien felt quite emotional. Taking a deep breath, he walked toward them.

"Congratulations, Lucien. I'm so proud of you." Victor walked to Lucien and gave him a big hug, "Are you a bit depressed, Lucien?" Victor was very sensitive.

"Thank you, Mr. Victor." Lucien forced a smile on his face, "I'm fine... just a bit exhausted."

"I see." Victor showed his understanding, "Playing three piano solos at a time is exhausting for any pianist."

Then, Victor gently patted Lucien's back, "Have a good rest tonight. Tomorrow night we'll celebrate your success."

"Tomorrow?" To Lucien, the celebration party seemed to be quite in a hurry.

"Yes," answered Victor, "since a couple of days later, I'll be leaving Aalto."

"Where are you going, Mr. Victor?" Lucien did not expect that it was Victor who first bid them farewell.

"After last year's concert, " Victor smiled, "I've been receiving lots of invitations from other countries. I stayed in Aalto because, at that time, you were during your critical period of music learning. Since now you're a well-qualified musician and you just held your first concert, it's time for me to start my music tour and gather some new ideas about music."

"And Lott and I are leaving with Mr. Victor." Felicia nodded, "We are all Mr. Victor's students, but now you're a great musician, and, of course, we can't fall too far behind." Felicia put on a sweet smile.

Lucien felt that it was a good chance to announce his leaving as well.

"A music tour... That's what I've been thinking about, too." Lucien said to them seriously, "Honestly, this concert exhausted all my ideas about music, and I feel that I need to travel out of Aalto to see more, to experience more."

"I'm very proud of you." Victor looked at Lucien's eyes approvingly, "Your serious attitude toward music will make you one of the greatest musicians, if you stick to it. I wish you all the best, my student."

"Me, too." Lucien hugged Victor again with deep emotion, "Wish you a wonderful tour, my teacher."

Then Lucien turned around and hugged Joel and Alisa, "I'm sorry... I'm afraid I won't have my coming-of-age ceremony in Aalto now."

Lucien's birthday was on July, 26th.

"Don't say sorry, Lucien. We understand, although we'll miss you a lot." Joel laughed and patted Lucien's shoulder, "Alisa and I..." his voice trembled a bit.

"We're very proud of you, all the time." Alisa finished Joel's words, "Come on... don't be this dramatic, Joel. Little Evans will come back again soon."

Alisa looked at Lucien with hope in her eyes, "You will, right?"

Lucien opened his mouth a bit but did not know how to answer Alisa's question. He hurriedly nodded and turned to Felicia to hug her, in order to hide his awkwardness and sadness.

"Your playing and your understanding of music is awesome, Lucien!" Felicia was very excited, "Piano is the king of all the musical instruments!"

Lucien still remembered his promise to Felicia and Elena, "I'll organize and write down my knowledge about piano before I leave."

"Thank you, our great musician." Elena's face shone with excitement.

Then Lucien hugged his buddy, John, "I hope you will already be a knight when I see you again."

John answered decisively, "I will. Good luck, my friend."

The conversation between best friends was always simple, but the emotion was always deep.

Then, Lucien slightly bowed to all of them with his left hand on his chest and said to them sincerely, "Wish you all the best in my absence."

...

On the next day, Lucien spent most of day meeting his many visitors and at night he celebrated the success of his concert with all the guests.

When it was close to the early morning, all the guests started to leave Lucien's place. The great silence was in sharp contrast to the faded jollification. Lucien went back to his bedroom and waited for Rhine, who had promised Lucien that he would come after the party.

After a long time waiting, Lucien almost lost his patience. At this time, he heard a knock at the bedroom window.

Lucien hurriedly stood up from his bed and turned to look at the the window.

However, it was Natasha and Camil who were standing on the patio. Being a bit amused by himself, Lucien opened the window.

Wearing a long dress, Natasha looked a bit shy until she started to talk, "Haha, were you waiting for me, Lucien? You looked in such a hurry."

"Yes, I was," he joked. "After all, you did not show up on my party tonight."

"I'm sorry, Lucien." Natasha apologized sincerely, "I wanted to, but I had to host the party in Ratacia for sending off the nobles from other countries. Now I'm here, you see, to congratulate the great success achieved by my music consultant."

"I appreciate it very much, Your Grace." Lucien grinned.

"Well... Besides saying congratulations to you tonight," Natasha smiled, "I also want to invite you to visit Cartier Palace with me. I'm leaving tomorrow. Silvia and her father will go as well."

Cartier Palace belonged to House Violet, sitting on the broad land owned by the family in the suburb of Aalto.

"Sorry, Your Grace. I'm afraid I can't make it," replied Lucien. Then, he told Natasha his plan of leaving.

Natasha looked quite excited, "What an enviable trip! I wish I could travel around as well!"

After a brief exchange with Lucien about the unique features of different countries on the continent, Natasha switched the topic and asked Lucien, looking a bit embarrassed, "Lucien... did you complete the melody that you were playing the other night... the melody that you were playing in the moonlight? I want to play it for Silvia..."

"I only finished the first movement..." Lucien was a bit hesitant, "I'm thinking about naming it Moonlight Sonata."

"Can I listen to it?" requested Natasha eagerly.

"Sure." Lucien sat down in front of his piano, Lucien placed his hands on the keyboard again.

The introduction was slow and peaceful, picturing a glittering lake at a moonlit night. The soft breeze rippled the water like a pair of young lady's hands.

A mixed feelings of joy and sorrow rose in Natasha's heart. Everything under the moonlight depicted in the sonata was as beautiful as a dream.

The first movement was rather short, only about a few minutes. Natasha's nodded and looked at Lucien with approval, "Adagio as the first movement, impressive! I'm sure Silvia would love it!"

Then she slightly leaned forward, "What do you think I should say to Silvia after playing the first movement of Moonlight Sonata for her?"

"Remember me whenever you see the moon*." Somehow Lucien blurted out.

"Wow..." Natasha looked very impressed. "That's really something."

Then, the princess stood up and said to him, "I'm glad to have you as my music consultant and friend, Lucien. I'm not sure when you're coming back, but I'm sure we'll see each other again sooner or later."

Lucien sighed in his heart but did not say anything special, "It's my great pleasure to be your friend. Please take care, Your Grace."

After Natasha and Camil left, Lucien continued to wait for Rhine.

About ten minutes later, Rhine finally showed up at the front gate of Lucien's house. Lucien went downstairs to open the door for him.

"Wanna go out and take a walk under the moonlight, Lucien?"

Rhine still dressed in black and red tonight.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 117: The Congress of Magic

Under the moonlight, the many beautiful flowers in the garden looked a bit hazy.

Lucien and Rhine were walking through the flowers side by side, both of them remaining silent.

A while later, Lucien could not hold himself back anymore, "Can you tell me where the headquarter of the Congress of Magic is now, Mr. Rhine?"

Rhine looked at Lucien and smiled, "What do you think? Take a guess."

"I thought about it." Lucien nodded, "I thought it was on the other side of the Dark Mountain Range, or at least deep in the mountains. After all, the Church failed to march further westward across the range. Does it make sense?"

"A good guess," Rhine grinned, "but if you go there, what you can find deep in the mountains will be a bunch of crazy and gloomy sorcerers and sorceresses who survived the violent suppression, or say, slaughter, done by the Church. People call them 'ancient sorcerers'."

"Really? How come they live that long?" Lucien was a bit surprised.

"They are survivors." Rhine explained, "They managed to survive because they are powerful. Many of them are archmages and even legendary archmages. They're cruel and crazy. You can easily become their subject for experiment if you piss them off and die from their brutal torture."

"Then... is the headquarter in a certain country? I mean... in one of the countries which doesn't follow the God of Truth?" Lucien made another guess.

"Nope..." Rhine shook his head again and again, "Have you ever heard of the Kingdom of Holm?"

"Yes, I did..." Lucien did not quite get it.

"The headquarter of the Congress of Magic is in the Kingdom of Holm," said Rhine, "or, to be more specific, in the floating city called Allyn, close to the kingdom's capital, Rentato."

"Allyn... in Sylvanas it means sky." Lucien murmured. Then his eyes suddenly opened wide, and he said, "Wait... it's impossible! The princess' mom came from Holm, and this is a country that follows the God of Truth! The grand duke even visited it many years ago! How come..."

"I knew the answer would shock you, Lucien." Rhine slowly explained, as if he was telling a rather interesting story, "Among all these poems and stories and music works that praised the romantic love between the grand duke and the princess' mom, neither of them specified why and who was trying to separate them. Don't you feel strange?"

"I never thought about it..." Lucien was confused, "Was it the congress? But why?"

"If you had ever learned about the philosophy of ruling," the corner of Rhine's lips curled up, "you'd understand that it's all about the balance between nobles."

"Can you explain it a bit more, Mr. Rhine?" Lucien had some thoughts but was not quite sure.

Rhine walked slowly, "In the last two hundred years of the War of Dawn, the power of the Church reached its peak. Even the emperor needed to kneel down in front of the pope and kiss the pope's shoes. At that time, the Church could easily dethrone an emperor, not to mention deposing those dukes, counts and viscounts."

"So, those nobles..." Lucien rubbed his chin a bit with his fingers, "they decided to support the cardinals who wanted to separate from the Church?"

"Good point." Rhine turned his face toward Lucien, "Although we still don't know why those cardinals back in the days decided to betray the pope, what we know is that some local nobles in

the north were more than willing to support them. However, these nobles were clearly aware of the fact that, if these cardinals that they supported gained the core power and overthrew the pope, a new pope would come out among the cardinals on their side and the whole situation of the nobles would not be changed at all."

"So the nobles leaked the secret plan on purpose to let the pope be relatively prepared!" Lucien's brows frowned slightly, "Thus, the north and the south became two sides on a balanced scale. And the balanced situation made the nobles' power rather important. The side that gained the support of more nobles would obviously have the advantage."

"You're really smart, Lucien. The first half part of your reasoning is correct, but the second half was not really what happened." Rhine smiled, "The fact was that, after the division of the Church, the southern Church was still way stronger than the northern. However, the north Church gained the support from the elves, dwarves, many magic creatures and even the ancient sorcerers in the northwest of the Dark Mountain Range. Like the old saying goes, 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. When they were involved, the northern Church finally managed to withstand the violent attack launched by the south."

"Then, the situation on the whole continent looked more balanced. The south was not in such a dominant position anymore." Lucien contemplated, "Something else must have happened afterwards in the south... say, another division."

"Impressive, Lucien." Rhine looked a bit surprised with Lucien's insight, "Yes, there was another division in the south later. Since the nobles in the south saw the great improvement of the status of the nobles in the north, while most of them decided to negotiate with the Church, a small part of them chose to secretly support the mages, in order to turn the sorcerers and sorceresses into a new trouble for the Church, while they stood in the middle and benefited from their confrontation."

"Who were the 'small part' of the nobles? What they were doing was very risky." Lucien murmured.

"Yes, it was." Rhine shrugged, "They were the nobles from the four kingdoms across Storm Strait. And what they did not expect was that a great mage named Douglas evolved the ancient magic system and initiated a huge revolution in studying the laws of the universe. Hence, the power of the magic congress started to soar, and countless great archmages came out. About a hundred years ago, the congress integrated several scattered major magic organizations and became the second most powerful institution in the world."

"Douglas..." he still remembered the name. Lucien was pretty sure that Douglas was still alive, since such a great sorcerer like him must have many ways to prolong his lifespan. For example, there was a magic ritual mentioned in Astrology and Magic Elements that could prolong one's lifespan to a thousand and five hundred years.

"Mr. Douglas, one of the most powerful men in the world, the greatest arcanist ever in history, the chairman of the Continental Congress of Magic, and the founder of the journal called Arcana." Mentioning his name, even Rhine looked a bit awed, "So now, in the Kingdom of Holm, the existence of the magic congress is almost a half-revealed secret, and the power of the congress is way stronger than that of the southern Church. Without the support of the local nobles, the Church might have been rooted out long time ago."

"That's why the Church here made the grand duke visit Holm many years ago. The purpose of the grand duke's trip was to rebuild a solid relationship with the nobles there to fight against the congress' power," Lucien nodded. "So, the grand duke married the princess in Holm, good for him."

"Well... I bet that was out of the grand duke's expectation." Rhine smiled. "The marriage caused a stir across the continent. Many nobles opposed it and tried to obstruct the marriage in every possible way, since the union of the two young people might easily change the tripartite power relations among nobles, the Church and the congress. The congress, obviously, would not easily allow the marriage to happen as well."

Seeing Lucien's eyebrows frowned tightly, Rhine paused a bit and waved his hand casually, "Anyway... you don't have to understand all the complicated stories in history. What you should think about is how to get to Holm. Storm Strait has been blocked by the Church for a long time, and only the nobles and businessmen with a special permit can pass. Or you can pass the confrontation border of the northern and the southern branches of the Church, traverse Schachran Empire and reach the lands to the far north, after which you can enter Holm from its northern border."

"I don't think I can even make the first step, passing the confrontation border..." Lucien shook his head, "I wonder if the congress has its own special path. After all, I know there was a sorcerer from the congress who came to Aalto before."

Rhine nodded, "Yes, I was just about to mention this. It is said that the congress has a liaison in Sturk, the Bright Pearl of the Sea, but I don't know who is it, and you would still have to sneak through the confrontation border, which is very dangerous. So what I suggest is that you first become a real sorcerer and then set off for your destination, to have a better chance at protecting yourself."

"A real sorcerer..." Lucien's brain was working fast. He could not take the risk to use the Professor identity again right now to go back to the apprentice meeting, and the only way that he could become a first circle sorcerer as soon as possible would be to visit the magic lock, "But isn't it a trap set by the Church?" Lucien murmured.

"If you become a middle-rank mage and learn how to fly, you basically won't have to worry about all this stuff." Rhine continued, "The Church can block the water and the border, but it can never completely control the sky. Smart as you are, with the help of the potion called Silver Moon, I believe you can soon make a breakthrough, Lucien. By the way, the Church has been pretty busy recently and they're less likely to pick on you, I think."

"You seem to know everything, Mr. Rhine." Lucien was surprised, "Who are you? Why did you want to help me?"

"I'm only an observer, an outsider." Rhine's smile was mysterious, "You're an interesting person, Lucien. Getting you involved makes the whole thing even more interesting. Of course, when the game becomes attractive enough for me, I'll join it as well."

Then Rhine directly turned around and left the garden through the small gate, leaving Lucien standing alone in the darkness.

Unexpectedly, Lucien now felt more relaxed than excited, as if Rhine just removed the heavy rock that had been sitting for so long on his heart.

At this time, Lucien suddenly felt his soul swelled a bit and started to approach his power limit.

Chapter 118: The End and the Beginning

Chapter 118: The End and the Beginning

The light fragrance of the flowers and the unique smell of earth were intoxicating, and the cool breeze was nice and gentle. When Lucien was standing in the garden alone, all of a sudden, the surroundings disappeared, and instead, a broad starry sky with a beautiful silver moon enveloped him.

Lucien once again entered the world inside his soul.

The shining string connecting Lucien's actual host star of destiny far away in the universe and the star's inverted reflection in his soul appeared in the air, and the string, as a channel, was eagerly absorbing the power of the host star in order to nurture Lucien's soul.

Gradually, certain changes happened in the soul, and Lucien felt that his soul was slowly "substantialized".

A while later, when Lucien reopened his eyes, there were countless stars in his dark pupils.

He blinked again, and then his eyes went back to normal.

Feeling super refreshed, Lucien sensed that his soul was stronger than ever. The most amazing difference he noticed was that some crystal powder was solidified and produced from his soul, just like the fine dust of the revenant.

"How a person's soul is constituted? Is it constituted of certain special elements, or soul itself is nothing else but a special wave field? Why meditation can improve one's power?" Lucien murmured, having too many questions in his mind that interested him a lot. He was guessing that the substantiation, or say, the solidification of the soul was the premise to construct a magic model.

Right now, becoming a first circle sorcerer was Lucien's main goal. For a senior apprentice, this breakthrough to become a real sorcerer was of great significance, since there was a huge difference in power between the two levels, just like moving from being a knight squire to being a real knight.

...

It only took Lucien half a day to finish all the procedures to collect the documents required to travel through the continent, both because of the princess' special order in advance and his own social status as a well-known musician. For common people, however, it would take at least seven days.

Although many adventurers were also traveling across the continent without any paperwork, it was illegal, technically speaking, and it could put them in big trouble, such as being suspected of being heretics or spies.

Then, Lucien stayed in Aalto for a few more days to plan his trip and also to wait for the upcoming April tenth.

In the morning of April ninth, Lucien's coach set out for Tiran, a province in northwest of the duchy. Since the coach was hired by the association, Lucien told the coachman to go to the north first and then head toward the Kingdom of Syracuse in the east to hide his real destination.

...

The magnificent city gradually disappeared behind the coach. Lucien stopped looking back from the window and started to casually leaf through some paper works. Then, he noticed that there was a pile of newspapers in the corner of the coach.

Taking a closer look, it was the latest Music Criticism and Symphony News.

The front page of the latest Music Criticism was divided in two. The black and white painting on the left side depicted the scene where Christopher was acknowledging the applause at the end of his concert, while on the right side, there was a colored picture of Lucien playing piano.

On the top of the front page, there was a line of bold letters, "The end of the old era, the beginning of a new era."

The full passage was on the second page:

"Mr. Christopher bid his farewell to the stages with his magnificent concert. His symphony the War of Dawn shocked every listener and showed us a great musician's never-ending spirit for further exploration in the world of music.

"In the past seventy years, we have witnessed a tremendous growth of symphony, and the contribution made by Mr. Christopher to the art of composing is more than remarkable. He is a real music master, the representative of the last seventy years. Let us salute Mr. Christopher with our greatest respect."

...

"Following Mr. Christopher, the great master of music, Mr. Lucien Evans showed us a brand-new direction for the further development of music in his concert. Young and inexperienced as he is, Mr. Evans already launched a few revolutions with his fingerings, composing and conducting. The next era of music has arrived.

"Although not everyone likes revolution, the momentum of innovation can not be stopped. Thanks to Mr. Evans, the colorful future of music has been partly revealed.

"Let us send this young music genius our best wishes! Let us wish that Mr. Evans would follow Mr. Christopher's footstep and lead us further in this new music era!"

...

"The end of Mr. Christopher's playing was followed by the beginning of Mr. Evans' performance, and we shall cheer with heart and soul, 'music lives forever'!"

The passage was co-written by a couple of musicians from the association in Aalto.

Some of the other passages in the newspaper gave high comments on piano, and some of them analyzed the formats of Christopher's symphony and Lucien's sonata. Only a few short articles were criticizing Lucien's fingerings and his style of conducting as "lunatic and totally not decent", and one of them was contributed by Wolf.

Lucien sneered a bit and folded the newspapers.

Staring at the bold title on the front page, "The end of the old era, the beginning of a new era", Lucien sat in the coach and lost himself in thoughts.

...

Around six in the evening, Lucien arrived at the small town called Massawa.

The town was located at an intersection, one heading toward the province named Tiran, which belonged to House Violet, and the other that led to Bonn, the small town sitting beside Elsinore Lake, which was very close to Massawa.

"It's pretty late now, Mr. Evans." The leader of Lucien's guards, Joyce, said to him, "I suggest we stay here for the night and set off tomorrow morning."

Although nowadays vicious monsters and creatures were rarely seen around big cities, towns and villages, from time to time people could still encounter robbers and small beasts. Therefore, if the common people needed to travel through the continent, they had to pay mercenaries to protect themselves.

Lucien's mercenary team had six people in total. The team leader and the vice leader were high level knight squires and the other team members were low level ones. Every month Lucien needed to pay them three hundred Nars, excluding meal and accommodation.

Although it was totally unaffordable for common people, money was not a big problem for Lucien anymore. The income of his concert was very decent, and now he had a hundred and five Thales in total with him.

"Sure. You know more about this place than I do, Joyce." Lucien nodded, "Can you find us a hotel? I want a very quiet room."

Joyce was tall and strong. At the age of thirty-two, he was still saving money to awaken his Blessing. Joyce was sort of grateful that such a celebrity would show respect to him, since many other wealthy guys who he safeguarded before were pretty much bastards.

Very soon Joyce booked a decent hotel sitting beside a small lake in the town. Lucien selected the leftmost room on the second floor, which was very quiet.

A bunch of tourists were in Massawa at that time. They had just left Aalto after the music festival.

Lucien entered his room from the side door and avoided them. He ordered dinner and ate it inside his room, after which he told Joyce that he did not want anyone to disturb him. Then, he quietly waited for the darkness of the night to come.

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Chapter 119: Unlock

The silver moon was not there tonight. Only a couple of stars could be seen.

Standing in front of the window, Lucien looked out of the curtain and felt a bit disappointed, since his Blessing couldn't be fully activated without the silver moon. Tonight only his speed and agility could reach a knight level, but his physical strength would not be as good as when the moon was out.

"At least I can still see some stars, or I wouldn't even be able to calculate the coordinate of the entrance of the magic lock." Lucien comforted himself, "And it's safer to hide in the dark without the moonlight."

According to the ancient script he had read before, the entrance of the magic lock called Grand Cross kept changing its location every ten minutes together with the continuously moving stars, until the sun rose up.

Around eleven at night, Lucien put on his hooded black robe.

Pulling up the hood, when he was about to sneak out of the room through the window, he suddenly felt a bit hesitant: the poem, the script and the two visitors all came to him together, almost at the same time, which was such a coincidence that made him suppose this might actually be a trap.

At first Lucien thought that the brother and sister were sent by the Church to test him, however, after knowing from Rhine that the Church was too busy recently to deal with matters such as those, and after seeing the dozen mysterious visitors in this small town, he felt the story about the magic ruins was quite suspicious.

"Should I take the risk?" Lucien asked himself silently in his mind. After all, it would take him six to seven months to get to Sturk, therefore, he still had enough time to find another way to get the Silver Moon potion and, obviously, the magic ruins was not Lucien's only chance to collect the materials he needed.

However, very soon Lucien made up his mind. He had a foreboding through his host star when Rhine was talking to him the other night. He had a feeling that something significant was going to happen, and if he could not be powerful enough to protect himself before that happened, he would probably die.

Also, Lucien had so many questions in his mind: who was the author of the poem? Who was the original owner of the script? Was it possible that the legendary archmage known as "the Prophet" who wrote Astrology and Magic Elements left anything special in the lock because he forecast something important?

Lucien's curiosity became dominant over his concerns. He gently jumped out of the window and landed agilely outside.

...

In order to save his strength, Lucien moved a bit slower. It took him an hour to get to the small town close to Massawa, called Bonn.

Bonn was a remote town sitting beside the Dark Mountain Range. Occasionally, a few musicians and painters would visit it, but most of the time it had no visitors.

Lucien was quite surprised to find that, when he secretly arrived at the small town, the only tavern there was still busy. He could hear that lots of people were still chatting in many different accents.

...

In one of the rooms on the second floor of the tavern, Sala and Lilith were looking at each other with their eyebrows frowned.

"What shall we do now?" Lilith asked, "I thought only Mr. Evans figured out the secret of the manuscript, but why are there so many visitors here in Bonn?"

"I'm guessing..." Sala sighed, "the manuscript we have is not complete, and it might not be the only one. They might have the complete version."

"That makes sense, after all, we got the manuscript from..." Lilith nodded and switched the topic, "What if there're sorcerers and knights among them?"

"I'm not sure." Sala looked downwards, as if he was trying to see the people downstairs through the floor, "At least I know these macular guys bragging just now are no more than a bunch of adventurers."

"Then, are we still going tomorrow?" Lilith looked hesitant.

Sala did not answer her question immediately. After a while he sighed, "We'll wait and see. I mean, we don't have to, and we also can't compete with them. I feel there's something wrong going on here." Although Sala sensed something wrong, his desire forced him to stay.

"All right." Lilith nodded. "The entrance of the ruins will exist for twelve hours anyway."

...

At the same time, Lucien was standing under the window of Sala and Lilith's room, leaning against the wall and calculating the coordinates of the entrance.

Because that was a magic lock of legendary level, lots of parameters were required. It took Lucien more than half an hour to figure out the numbers.

The calculation consumed Lucien so much energy that made him dizzy. Luckily, there was still a while before the magic lock started to be activated, so Lucien just sat on the ground quietly in the dark to recover.

...

By around three in the morning, Lucien had been fully revitalized. With great caution, he moved toward a plain-looking bungalow.

In the darkness, his black robe made him almost invisible.

Opening the door with a simple spell, he sneaked into the place and then locked the door again from inside.

In the bedroom, a couple was sleeping soundly, completely unaware that someone had just entered their place.

Lucien sat down on a wooden chair in the living room, looking rather relaxed and calm. However, he was counting the time silently in his mind.

Around ten minutes later, Lucien suddenly stood up and threw himself on the dark vortex in the corner of the living room, which was definitely not there a second before.

As if Lucien was sucked in the swirl, his figure completely disappeared from the place.

Ten seconds later, the dark vortex disappeared as well.

...

Lucien felt a great dizziness when he jumped in the swirl, as if his head hit a heavy, thick curtain.

However, when he opened his eyes, he was still standing in the same living room.

Lucien was confused and thought that maybe he had missed the chance. However, soon he noticed the difference: This place had no colors, made purely with black, white and gray, as if he entered the world of a black-and-white movie.

Taking a glance at the bedroom, Lucien saw that the couple who was sleeping in the bed disappeared as well.

Carefully, he pushed the door open and came to the street - It was the same town, but it was empty, and black and white.

"That's creepy," Lucien said to himself, but he could not hear his voice.

Thus, he finally noticed another difference: this whole world was completely silent, as if the world was dead.

This was the lock. Lucien was in the magic lock now.

Looking up at the grey sky, he saw no stars, no silver moon or sun.

Luckily, he could still sense his connection with his host star, which meant he could still use magic, and he was still connected to the real world, so he wouldn't get completely lost inside the lock.

No people, no cats and dogs, no birds, bugs, breeze, color or even sound... Lucien was sweating while he walked through the gray streets.

According to the manuscript he read, Lucien located a few magic gardens. Keeping the locations in mind, he headed toward Elsinore Lake on the other side of this gray town.

Grabbing his sword named Alert, all of a sudden, Lucien's arms were covered with goose bumps. Something was coming!

Quickly turning his head around, Lucien saw the door of a small house on the street slowly open.

A little girl around seven or eight was standing behind the door. She had no color either, and her big eyes stared at nothing.

Then she started to smile, with her big eyes without any focus.

...

"My lord," kneeling on the ground, a person in black robe reported to the man standing on the altar, "following your order, we found out a guy with the Moonlight Blessing arrived in Bonn, but we lost track of him all of a sudden. He disappeared."

In his silver robe, Ilia sneered, "There he is."

Then, he turned around and commanded, "Do not rush. Our plan is always our priority. But we'll give this Moonlight guy a warm welcome as well."

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Chapter 120: Silence

Staring at the street outside of the window, Lilith and Sala couldn't and dared not sleep.

"I heard that, from time to time, there were people missing in this small town, and it has been happening more and more often in recent years." Lilith asked her elder brother, "Do you think it's because of the magic lock?"

Sala shook his head, "I'm not sure. After all, I don't even know what kind of magic lock this is. I know the Church once sent several pastors here before, but they found nothing suspicious. In the end, they guessed that some monsters or creatures in the mountain took them."

Then, Sala pointed at the small house on the other side of the street, "That house once belonged to one of the few literate country gentlemen here in Bonn. Ten years ago, on April tenth, his seven-year-old daughter was missing, and he never found her. Finally, he moved eastwards with his wife, away from Bonn, because they were too sad to keep living here."

"April tenth..." Lilith murmured thoughtfully.

...

The girl, who seemed to be a figure coming out of a black-and-white photo, smiled to Lucien. Slowly, she raised up her arms and then started to run toward Lucien, as if an innocent and lively daughter was running toward her dad.

However, the scenario was very creepy in Lucien's eyes: The little girl's body was floating in the air, and her eyes were hollow.

Lucien started to cast a spell, but he couldn't even hear his own voice. The air surrounding the little girl began to stir and turned into several invisible robes trying to constrain her.

Apprentice spell, Wraith Shackle.

As soon as the little girl realized what was going on around her, her face contorted with hatred and viciousness. She opened her mouth and started to scream.

Lucien was prepared, since he had some experience with the revenants before during his experiments. Right after he cast Wraith Shackle, Lucien activated Silence Wall to protect himself from the attack of sound waves.

In a real fight, knowledge still mattered a lot.

Lucien could see the ripples crashing against the invisible wall surrounding him. Even before he had a second to be proud of his foresight, the wall suddenly collapsed into small transparent pieces!

The rest of the sound waves, although they had been weakened to some extent by the invisible wall, hit Lucien right in his chest.

Feeling the sky and earth were spinning, he fell on the ground and almost threw up right away. Lucien's guts were trembling inside of his body.

Fortunately, a layer of gray light instantly covered Lucien's skin when he was attacked. His Moonlight Blessing was activated on its own in order to protect him. Without the ability of dematerializing into moonlight, Lucien might be dead already.

Lucien realized that this was a revenant as powerful as a real knight!

Quickly analyzing what kind of revenant and how powerful the little girl was, Lucien swiftly shifted to the other side of the revenant, then his lips moved.

Lucien cast Illumination.

Even the weakest revenant was immune to most of the Element spells. Only light, fire and sound waves could hurt them.

However, Illumination did not work very well in this world. The grayish light ball in the sky looked rather dim and faint.

The little girl paused a bit and then directly jumped onto Lucien.

With his Moonlight Blessing, Lucien barely dodged away, like a gray shadow. At the same time, he grabbed his sword and hacked toward the little girl, after which he started running.

Lucien knew the attack was in vain, but he did not have another choice, since he was still during the buffering time for casting.

Seeing the sword did not hurt her, the little girl tipped her head a little bit and smiled.

Then, she suddenly disappeared, and several seconds later, she showed up right in front of Lucien, with her arms wide open.

Lucien reacted fast. Pressing his foot against the ground, he changed his direction and started to cast Homan's Oscillation.

This time, the little girl was injured. Lucien saw her etherious body rippling like disturbed water.

The great anger appeared on her face again, and it became more and more vicious. She raised her head, screamed silently, and then directly rushed at him.

Once again, although Lucien avoided the frontal attack of the sound waves with Moonlight, his ankles suddenly felt weak and his movement paused for a second.

The revenant had reached him. For a second, Lucien's consciousness faded, and then he felt extremely tired and flimsy. The heat in his body was escaping. He felt cold.

The little girl went directly through Lucien's body and stopped on the other side. Raising her hands, she looked shocked and confused.

The ring Lucien was wearing, Ice Revenger, helped him to stay focused. Without any hesitance, Lucien cast a spell again.

A blast of cold wind blew around them. A revenant was summoned by Lucien.

He decided to use a revenant to fight against the other revenant, since he noticed that, in the weird dimension, while light magic was largely weakened, the undead creatures were strengthened by a lot.

Being controlled by Lucien, the summoned revenant launched its attack toward the little girl.

Wrestling together, their arms pierced each other's "body". However, it seemed like the revenant Lucien just summoned was weaker than the little girl, since within a couple of seconds, it already started to get less and less visible.

It would not even take the little girl ten seconds to completely wipe it out.

However, it was enough time for Lucien to turn the tables.

Lucien took a few steps backward, reached his hand into his pocket and threw out a handful of reagents toward the two revenants who were wrestling, and a white fire wall enveloped them as Lucien finished casting the spell.

This was Lucien's invented spell, Sulphur-fire Wall, which was just an inspirational flash when he was facing the aquatic zombie, and within the past couple of months, Lucien turned it into one of his regular spells.

The only problem with Sulphur-fire Wall now was that the structure of its magic model was not simplified enough, so it took Lucien more time and spiritual power to activate it.

Being burned by the sulphur fire, the revenant Lucien summoned immediately disappeared, and a couple of seconds later, the little girl started to show signs of being in pain.

However, the apprentice spell could not cause a great damage to her, but only contain her within the fire wall. It seemed she was very afraid of fire, and instead of trying to force her way through the fire, she stayed in the center.

Lucien was a bit relieved and was about to run away from the little girl. Facing a revenant as powerful as a knight, the top priority for Lucien was to stay away from her, instead of attempting to eliminate it.

As soon as he turned around, Lucien took a glance at the place where the little girl showed up. Through the open door Lucien saw a small skeleton with thin bones bending over a wooden table.

The scene reminded him of what he had read about revenants. All of a sudden, Lucien changed his direction and ran toward the house as fast as a shadow.

Watching him approach the house, the little girl suddenly panicked. Without any hesitance, she rushed toward Lucien through the fire wall.

By the time the little girl broke through the fire wall, Lucien was already standing in front of the small skeleton. Sprinkling a handful of sulphur powder on it, Lucien lit the skeleton on fire.

The white fire immediately covered the bones.

In the fire, Lucien saw a drawing on the wooden table, carved by something sharp, like nails. It was an awkward drawing of a family of three, but then, like an illusion, it shifted into a little girl waiting beside a door.

Under the drawing, there were a few crooked letters: Daddy... Mommy... Home...

The little girl slowly stopped when she saw the skeleton on fire. She was a bit surprised at first, but then lowered her eyes, looking rather sad.

Then, her body became more and more transparent. She started to gradually disappear.

From the pictures, the letters and the ever-changing entrance of the magic lock, Lucien had a rough idea of why the little girl was here in this world. His sympathy instantly took over his fear.

"Daddy... Mommy... Home," Lucien silently murmured.

His heart was softened. Lucien turned to the little girl, who was almost gone, and said to her, "I'll take you home."

In this world of black and white, the world of silence, the little girl had tears falling down her face, but she smiled sweetly, as if she read the movement of Lucien's lips and understood what he said.

In the last second before she disappeared completely, the little girl nodded to Lucien gratefully.

When the skeleton was burned into ashes by the magic fire, the little girl also disappeared. The wooden table was gone together with the burning skeleton.

Lucien carefully collected the ashes and put it into his pocket.

Now he was even more confused with this world, since it seemed less and less likely to be the Grand Cross he was looking for. The whole place was just too creepy.

Lucien started to feel very uncomfortable with the great silence in this world. He felt himself dumb and deaf. Grabbing his sword tight, he started to walk toward Elsinore Lake.

When he was about to leave the small town, he noticed that the cemetery that he saw when he arrived in Bonn disappeared, and instead, a piece of wasteland was in front of him.

"The magic lock world is actually not a copy of the original world?" Lucien asked himself in his mind with great surprise.

Picking up the pace, Lucien turned around the corner with overgrown weeds. Then, what he saw instantly shocked him.

The scarlet Elsinore Lake in this world was like a huge pool of blood, and it reflected the inverted image of a grand cross consisting of nine bright stars shining in the sky, whose light lit up the whole lake.

That was the first time Lucien saw another color except black, white and gray since he came into this world.

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Chapter 121: The Magic Garden

There was no wind and no rain. The sky was gray and the stars were absent. Lucien felt that the magic lock world was dead.

However, there were waves on the surface of the red-colored lake under the Grand Cross, as if the lake was alive. The creepy and sharp color contrast also made Lucien very nervous, even though he was a senior apprentice who stayed relatively calm and focused all the time.

Carefully observing the bright and shining Grand Cross in the sky again, and comparing it with the stellar map of Astrology and Magic Elements in his spirit library, Lucien found that the arrangement of the magic lock was quite unique. Unlike most magic locks, that aimed to protecting something, this one was more like a lock gathering power in order to keep something sealed.

If Lucien's feeling was correct, he did not want to stay here any longer. Lucien looked up in the sky and quickly recalculated the coordination of the closest magic garden according to the Grand Cross. Then, without any hesitation, he turned around and ran toward the edge of the black forest in the west along the lakeside path.

Curious as Lucien was, he was clearly aware that it would be too stupid for him to approach this legendary-level magic lock. He knew that he needed to stick to his original purpose for coming here.

Lucien's body recovered quickly thanks to his Moonlight Blessing. By the time he entered the black forest, the pain in his chest caused by the revenant had already disappeared.

The black forest was immersed in the same silence. Even the leaves on the branches were not moving at all. Everything stayed still. No life could be seen.

Lucien tried to keep calm as much as possible when he was walking through the huge trees. A bit more than ten minutes later, he saw a tall and big building covered with shadow sitting in front of him, some distance away. From time to time, there were strange lights coming out of the building and flying towards Elsinore Lake.

He slowed down his pace when he approached the building and grabbing his sword tight. Lucien was slightly sweating.

Reaching into his pocket, Lucien pulled out a small black stone. It was a bat pituitary gland.

Holding it in his left hand, his lips moved silently and then invisible waves started to spread out like ripples. Standing in the center of them, he was waiting for the back echo reflection after the waves hit certain obstacles.

The tall and big firs appeared one by one in Lucien's mind. Different things sitting within a radius of several hundreds of meters became more and more clear. However, some of the objects that made the waves ricochet remained rather blurry, and Lucien could only use their shapes to guess what they were.

Still, no life was detected. Lucien was not sure whether he should feel relieved or even more nervous.

As he was searching for possible magic traps, he kept slowly moving closer to his destination. All of the obstacles that he could not identify turned out to be just big stones.

When Lucien forced his way through the thick bushes, he saw a gray gravestone, behind which there was a small coffin chamber.

Approaching the gravestone a bit, he saw the white letters carved on it, "Here lies the previous mayor of Bonn, Mr. David Terrian, whose greatest exploit was killing the hundreds of people who did not follow the God of Truth.

And this man died because he fell in love with another man, who was very powerful."

Lucien's face twitched a bit when facing the inscription, not because of its absurdity, but because he saw the gravestone before, when he first sneaked into Bonn. He remembered clearly that this gravestone was in the town's cemetery, not in a forest.

"The cemetery moved into the black forest in this magic lock world?" Lucien thought to himself.

He looked around and found more graves. In the world of black and white, they looked even more horrific.

Obviously, a cemetery was not a very pleasant place to stay. So, Lucien decided to leave here and take another way around this place to get to the magic garden, even though that would take a bit more time.

However, by the time he turned around, Lucien's scalp tingled from the same feeling of coldness that he sensed when he encountered the little girl.

Without any hesitance, Lucien launched a backhand hack with his sword.

Although it felt like he just chopped a random piece of rotten wood, a certain strange power shook Lucien's arm along with the sword in his hand. Turning into a grey shadow, Lucien quickly dodged to the side and knelt down on one knee with his back against a gravestone.

In the corner of his eye, there was a short line of words on the gravestone,

"I was fat, but now I'm skinny."

Lucien was a bit amused for a second. However, just within that second, a rotten arm stretched out of the barrow beside him.

The body in the barrow came back to life!

Most of the skin of the body was rotten, although some small skin pieces were still hanging onto the white bones. The stench of a dead body was horrible.

Turning around, Lucien saw another zombie standing behind him, and the lid of David Terrian's coffin chamber was open!

Lucien turned himself into a shadow again to keep a distance away from the two filthy undead creatures. From their sharp teeth and the way they were moving, Lucien realized that they were not common zombies or skeletons, instead, they were ghouls.

And in this strange magic lock world, their power was strengthened. Lucien could tell that they were almost as agile and fast as him, and probably a bit stronger.

With the characteristics of the undead, ghouls were covered with plagues and a depressing aura. A person who got hurt by a ghoul would feel extremely weak and numb, and would go down with the plague.

If a person was killed by a ghoul, he would later turn into a new ghoul.

Recognizing what they were, Lucien changed his strategy. He tried to avoid any face-to-face confrontation with the ghouls and to launch his attack from behind.

Luckily, the ghouls were not intelligent at all, and the second ghoul seemed to be weaker than the other one. Gradually, Lucien gained the upper hand of the fight and his sword hacked at the ghouls several times. However, the bones of the ghouls were harder than he thought. The two ghouls were still moving, and they got even crazier when their rotten skin and flesh started coming off because of Lucien's attack.

When Lucien was preparing the Sulphur-fire Wall, he saw more ghouls coming out of the barrows. Their rotten arms were like the dark branches of a dead tree.

Without any hesitance, Lucien cast the spell. As soon as the fire wall appeared in front of him, he turned around and started to escape as fast as he could.

The strong smell of sulphur burning came into Lucien's nose from behind. Knowing that this might be his only chance to get away, he did not even take a look back.

Another ghoul got in Lucien's way from the other side of the fire wall. Lucien just wielded his sword and directly hacked toward it.

The horrible smell of rotten flesh became stronger and stronger, and Lucien saw more ghouls were crawling out of the barrows.

Holding the sword in his right hand, Lucien shot three frost blades shining with cold light out of his left hand. He just cast Palmeira's Frost Blades.

The blades cut the the ghoul's throat deep, that is, if the combination of rotten flesh and spine bones could still be called as "throat". Lucien did not expect the blades would end the filthy creature, but only to freeze it temporarily.

Within his expectations, the cold air coming out of the blades quickly covered the ghoul with a thin layer of ice, and the ghoul was frozen still instantly.

At the same time, Lucien activated Disarming Loop and changed the gravity within the small area where the ghoul was. The iced ghoul lost its balance and fell on the ground.

Then, he quickly passed by it like a faint shadow and noticed that the ice was already cracking.

Lucien was running for his life with all his strength, and a herd of stinky ghouls was chasing after him. However, he still knew clearly which direction he should go.

When Lucien distanced himself a bit from the ghouls, he changed his direction and ran toward the magic garden.

Some of the ghouls were stronger and some were weaker. By the time Lucien saw the black gate of the magic garden, only two were still following him.

The whole garden was covered with gray shadows, and only the black gate could be seen clearly. Behind the gate there was a low, pointed building, looking rather creepy.

When Lucien got closer, he noticed that the magic circle carved on the gate was very familiar to him, but the pattern missed a small piece.

The thought that this magic garden was actually left by an archmage on purpose for his inheritor quickly flashed across Lucien's mind, since he remembered the pattern when he was reading Astrology and Magic Elements.

Lucien pulled out a tube of mercury from his robe and grabbed it in his hand. As soon as he arrived in front of the magic circle and opened the tube, drops of mercury flew from the tube to the gate on their own.

He took a deep breath to stay focused. Using his spiritual power, Lucien controlled the fine stream of mercury to complete the magic circle pattern.

He knew that he really got lucky here. Although it was out of his expectation that the magic garden actually used a puzzle as a lock, thankfully he carefully read the book left by the archmage who created this dimension.

When the pattern of the magic circle was completed, the two ghouls also arrived. The horrible smell made Lucien feel weak and dizzy.

The magic circle on the gate suddenly glowed brightly. With all of his strength, Lucien decisively threw himself toward the magic portal with a whirling storm of light in it.

The moment when he entered the portal, Lucien could feel the cold air from the ghouls trying to scratch his back with their sharp claws behind him.

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Chapter 122: Sun's Corona

As if he just passed through a heavy curtain, Lucien felt a bit cold, and then his body hit something hard.

He heard himself let out a moan and then joy seized his heart for a second: it had been quite a while since he last heard any sound. Then, in the next second, he took a few quick steps back and held up his sword again.

Lucien was now standing in a spacious corridor. His feet felt the soft and thick carpet on the ground. Although everything was still black and white, this place felt more gentle and kind to Lucien.

Then, within Lucien's expectations, the two filthy ghouls followed him through the portal and also spoiled the beauty of the place. However, they were struggling to stand up from the ground, making it seem they were not used to the environment at all.

"Maybe they're not that strong here." The thought flashed across Lucien's mind, and then he immediately wielded Alert toward one of the ghouls, targeting the deep wound on its neck which was caused by Lucien's frost blade.

The second hack almost took the ghoul's head off. Its head slanted to one side, hanging on through just a small piece of skin.

Throwing a handful of sulphur powder toward the second ghoul, Lucien made a fire wall to stop its attack. Then, he turned around, firmly held his sword again and directly chopped the first ghoul's head off.

Black sticky liquid spilled out of the filthy creature's head. The horrible smell made Lucien feel very nauseous and he almost threw up.

A few seconds later, Lucien ended the other ghoul.

Leaning against his sword, he let out a long sigh. He felt lucky that the ghouls were not intelligent at all, or he would now be the one lying on the ground with his brain spread everywhere.

Walking a bit away from the bodies and slowly sitting down, Lucien gave himself some time to recover. Then, he came back to the bodies and disgustedly removed the skin of their palms, or say, claws, with his sword, putting it into a special small bag.

The skin could be used as the reagent for a second circle spell, Ghoul Touch. Lucien definitely would not waste it.

After burning down the remains of the ghouls with his sulphur fire, Lucien cautiously walked along the corridor with his sword at the ready in his hand.

The corridor with the white carpet and dark gray walls seemed to be endlessly long. Lucien felt he was walking in a tomb. The only good thing was that he sensed nothing dangerous.

Finally, in the end of the corridor, he saw a black gate, on which there was another special dodecagon magic circle, that Lucien had already seen before in Astrology and Magic Elements, and the pattern also missed a piece.

He got a bit excited. Taking out another small tube of mercury, he completed the magic circle using the same method.

Then, the magic circle started to shine brightly and the gate slowly opened on its own. Behind the gate there was a luxuriously-decorated lobby.

Lucien first saw the fireplace in the lobby. The flame jumping and wavering in the fireplace was also white, but it felt quite warm.

Beside the fireplace, there was a gray desk, on which a black book lay. Out of the window behind the desk, Lucien saw many bizarrely-looking magic plants: some of them had baby faces, some of them had big mouths, and some were shining like precious gem. The door to the magic garden was right beside the desk.

Surprisingly, no magic trap was detected when Lucien was approaching the desk. He did not directly touch the book with his hand, but used the sword to turn the pages.

On the first page of the book, Lucien saw an inventory written in Sylvanas:

"Moonlight Rose: Room 1, Shelf No. 25;

Jade Green Mycin: Room 1, Shelf No. 72;

The root of Thorn Tree: Room 1, No. 99; Its sap in Room 2, No. 3;

Vampire blood: Room 3, No. 21;

Enchantress teeth: Room 3, No. 46;

...

Ghost-faced leaves: Room 7, No. 17;

The feather of Stone Snake: Room 7, No. 92;

Goatherd's Moon Flower: Room 8, No. 8;

Murloc's lymph: Room 9, No. 1."

...

The following pages were all inventories. Lucien first thought that it was simply a book for registering the assorted materials stored here, but soon he realized that he actually needed all the materials that he just read, as if the book was specially written for him!

Lucien turned the pages back and forth several times and made sure his guessing was correct. Some of the materials were for Silver Moon, some for Magic Gate, and some for Crying Soul...

He was thrilled, but also felt creepy. When he removed his eyes from the book and looked up, he saw that a white-haired old man was sitting on the chair beside the desk, writing something on the book.

Lucien was stunned for a second, but then he realized that this was just an eidolon, or say, a piece of memory left by someone. Looking at the date that the old man wrote down on his paper, Lucien realized that this image was left almost a thousand years ago.

Soon, the image disappeared. Then Lucien turned the book to its final pages. The long diary-like notes left by the owner shocked him, "When I was doing the experiment, I found this world by accident. It is like a copy of the real world, or say, a projection of the main world, but some parts of it are in quite a chaos. Furthermore, no life in the real world is projected. Interesting.

...

"Now, I'm certain that this world is very suitable for the undead creatures like revenants and ghosts, but the black-and-white world is just too boring for a living person.

"Compared to the Skeleton Land located on the 123rd layer of the Pit, a land consisting of fire and ice, this place is almost too silent to be called as 'hell'. This is a world for the dead to enjoy their eternal sleep. Let me name it 'the World of Souls'

"It seems like I'm not the only one who knows about this place now...

...

"Deep in this world, I found a very dangerous but interesting place, which has an astonishing connection with our experiment. I shall invite my buddies to explore there again with me to see if we can find out what the secret is.

...

"We're about to leave now... In fact, I made a prophecy a couple of days ago, at a great cost, and thus I know what I will face, but I'm still going. And you, the one who is reading my notes now, may I call you 'the nonbeliever who walks in light and darkness'. You must have my book, Astrology and Magic Elements, and you have come here because of the poem and the manuscript.

"I might be still trapped there when someday you enter the legendary dimension. I do not expect that you'll come specially for me, but if you find me, please free me. Don't go there when you're not prepared. The legendary dimension is dangerous even for senior-rank mages and archmages."

Lucien's body was covered with goose bumps. He felt the author of Astrology and Magic Elements was communicating with him across time and space through the notes.

Lucien quickly turned the pages and wanted to know more about this world. The fragmented description and explanation was more than confusing to him.

"There is a crystal ball called Morning Light in the left drawer of the desk, and in the right drawer I left my self-made magic item for you. Its name's Sun's Corona. It can help you sense the gaps existing between the World of Souls and the main world late at night. Gaps exist throughout the whole continent.

"The seal on Sun's Corona is made of five layers. Each time when you reach a new level, say, junior-rank mage, middle-rank mage, senior-rank mage, archmage and legendary archmage, one layer of the seal will be unlocked, and you will be able to use the magic of that level. When the last layer of the seal is unlocked, you'll be able to find the dangerous but interesting place I mentioned before.

"All right, my friend, from the moment when you first saw my notes, you'd have an hour to explore this place safely. An hour later, the lock will be collapsing and at that moment you can leave this place through the small door of the magic garden.

"Remember, walk forward and do not look back. And my prophecy showed that you'd be facing a great danger soon, so seize your chance to improve your power here before you leave. Room No. 10 is the alchemy room.

Your friend,

The Prophet

Waldo · K · Maskelyne."

That was a lot of information for Lucien, and the notes left by Waldo confused him quite a bit. However, Lucien was very impressed by how accurate his prophecy was.

Following the Prophet's guidance, Lucien found a fist-sized fine crystal ball in the left drawer, which was definitely a necessity for sorcerers specializing in the school of Astrology.

As he opened the drawer on the right side, Lucien saw a round amulet the size of a regular badge. It was the Sun's Corona that Waldo had mentioned. The light golden amulet was carved with rays of light, as if it were a crown, and at the center of the amulet, there was a cross which was very familiar to Lucien.

Beside Sun's Corona, there was a roll of parchment, which showed the inner magic structure of this magic item and explained how Lucien was supposed to leave his individual spirit imprint on the structure, to become its owner.

"Sun's Corona. Level nine medium rank. Five layers of seal to be unlocked.

Spells that can be used once a day are the following:

1st circle, Holy Strike (sealed); 2nd circle, Death Resistance (sealed); 3rd circle, Burning Radiance (sealed); 4th circle, Death Ward (sealed); 5th circle, Flame Strike (sealed); 6th circle, Exorcist Halo (sealed); 7th circle, Ashes (sealed); 8th circle, Sunburst (sealed); 9th circle, Undeath's Eternal Foe (sealed).

Depending on to what extent the seals have been unlocked, the person who wears Sun's Corona is capable of praying for the undead and freeing them, and the person can also sense the gaps connecting the main world and the World of Souls.

Sun's Corona is the eternal foe of the undead.

Waldo · K · Maskelyne."

Staring at the piece of parchment, Lucien was totally shocked.

The cross pattern at the center of Sun's Corona, the Grand Cross in the sky and the spells...

Different ideas flashed across his mind like films. That night when Lucien went down into the sewers came back to him.

The Saint Truth Badge owned by Benjamin...

The spells Benjamin used...

Lucien's brows frowned, and his eyes opened wide.

All that magic belonged to the category of divine spells!

Furthermore, the pattern at the center of Sun's Corona was a cross, the symbol of the Saint Truth!

How would all that make sense?!

Chapter 123: The Experiment of An Hour

Chapter 123: The Experiment of An Hour

Lucien felt that what he had just found out was ridiculous and even funny. Obviously, Maskelyne had no reason to lie to him about Sun's Corona, and the cross at the center of Sun's Corona looked identical to the one he once saw on Benjamin's Saint Truth Badge.

Everything was getting more and more mysterious. Lucien wondered how the Saint Truth started to develop and grow at the very beginning.

Putting aside his many concerns, Lucien first followed the instruction left by Maskelyne and built a strange-shaped model with his spiritual power, then carefully sent the model into the magic item.

As soon as Lucien's spiritual power connected to Sun's Corona, he felt himself bathed in the sacred and pure light. This magic item was filled with the purest light.

Without any difficulty, Lucien left his spirit imprint on Sun's Corona and became its owner. He also took a look at the seals inside the magic item, which were very complex.

Now, Lucien was a hundred percent certain that the power of Sun's Corona came from divine power, which felt totally different from his magic power. He hung the amulet around his neck underneath his clothes and felt the warmth of it. The power could also be spread out by Lucien using his spiritual power to pray for the undead and free them.

Lucien lit the parchment and the notes on fire and burned them down completely, since they had already been stored in his spirit library. Staring at the fire, he was really worried because he might

be unconsciously approaching the biggest secret ever in this world, which involved the Church, the Congress of Magic, and even Argent Horn.

He believed that Argent Horn was involved as well because he remembered that the so-called "the Great Master of Argent" used "the forever lasting silence" as the title. Lucien already had the feeling before that the strange title did not come from nowhere, and now he came to this world of forever lasting silence himself.

Maybe the great danger foreseen by the Prophet was related to Argent Horn... maybe the revelation of the manuscripts was the heresy's carefully planned conspiracy...

Lucien had no idea what he was going to face, but he knew that all he could do right now was to make the best use of the one hour he had, and that was to gather the ingredients to increase his power.

Taking a deep breath, Lucien left the lobby and walked toward Room No. 1.

There were lots of shelving units and waist-high glass cabinets in that room. All of them looked black and white.

Lucien saw some weird-looking eyeballs soaked with black liquid, flowers that looked like spiders under glass covers, gray stones floating in the air, and dried bodies wrapped by shrouds...There were different magic circles carved on the shelves and cabinets for different means of storage.

Lucien did not have time to go through them one by one. He followed his memory and directly found the No. 72 shelf for Jade Green Mycin.

Although the powder was supposed to be jade green, in this world, it looked plain gray. Lucien held his breath when he was scooping the powder from the jar, because breathing it in could corrode human being's organs.

Then, Lucien went to the other rooms and collected the feather of Stone Snake, which actually looked like scales, Goatherd's Moon Flower and some Ghost-faced Leaves. Lucien felt quite disgusted when he touched the leaves, since each of the leaves had a face on it: some were laughing, and some looked vicious.

Goatherd's Moon Flower + Ghost-faced Leave + the feather of Stone Snake + Jade Green Mycin = Silver Moon.

Lucien was not going to work on the Magic Gate potion right now. Although he tried to analyze Magic Gate before, the process was still too challenging, especially when he was in a rush.

...

In the spacious alchemy room, lots of professional equipment were totally strange to Lucien. There was a metal hand hanging on the top, some mysterious gray liquid running in transparent tubes, an operation table, tall stoves, and dazzling three-dimensional magic circles almost everywhere.

Lucien walked directly to the operation table and activated the magic circles on it. He put a tube of Jade Green Mycin into a container and, half minute later, the gray powder within had been turned into a turbid liquid by the magic circle.

Following the same steps, Lucien processed the Moon Flower and the feather of Snake Stone. When he put the creepy leaves on one of the magic circles, the faces on the leaves started to cry and shout like babies who were crying for their toys, but the scream was completely blocked.

Lucien was very impressed. Compared with his previous underground lab, this place was like heaven for him, after all, this lab had belonged to a legendary archmage.

When all the ingredients were ready, Lucien started to mix them together. Here, the temperature of the fire was the key point, and the most challenging steps for Lucien were to build a model with his spiritual power and to integrate the model into the liquid.

Five minutes later, Lucien's semi-finished potion started to smoke.

"Too early... I integrated the model into the liquid too early." Lucien calmly drew a conclusion from his first failure.

...

Another five minutes later, Lucien stared at the gray gel in the container with his eyebrows frowned, "I dropped the Jade Green liquid too slow..."

...

Looking at the small ball bouncing everywhere in the container, Lucien felt a bit frustrated. This was his sixth failure.

After wiping his forehead with the back of his hand, he started his seventh experiment.

This time everything finally seemed to be fine. Lucien half closed his eyes and tried to keep his spiritual power stable while he was building the model.

When the gray liquid slowly turned white, Lucien quickly sent out the model and integrated the model into the liquid.

Gathering power from the model, the liquid in the container instantly condensed into small drops like beads, and within each drop there was a small moon.

Lucien put Silver Moon into a glass tube and returned to the lobby. Sitting down on the ground, Lucien had to recover his power, even though there was only twenty minutes left before the magic lock collapsed.

...

Six minutes later, Lucien felt he was ready.

Looking at the "beads" in the tube, he thought for a second whether he should chew them well. He was a bit amused by this funny idea.

Then, he decisively raised his head and swallowed the whole tube of potion, and the next second Lucien entered his meditative dimension.

The lobby and the black-and-white world were gone. All Lucien could see now was a starry sky, and he could feel the furiousness of the Fire element, the lightness of Wind, and the softness of Water.

For the first time, Lucien saw his own soul from an outsider's perspective. Lucien noticed his own soul was glowing brightly like the silver moon, and within his soul there was also an inverted image of the countless stars in the sky.

This outsider's perspective was indispensable for constructing more complicated models. Unfortunately, Lucien's spiritual power level was not enough to provide him with this perspective yet, and the reason that Lucien could experience it now was because of the potion.

He started to calmly build a magic model inside his own soul. His spiritual power started to be substantialized into fine shining lines floating in the sky, and, being controlled by Lucien, they slowly started to gather together.

The construction of a magic model required accurate length of every line and angle. Only a person who was capable of understanding mathematical and geometry knowledge could manage to build it. Countless magic apprentices were stuck at that point for their whole lives and never had a chance to become a real sorcerer.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 124: Lucien, the Sorcerer

The magic model that Lucien needed to build was called Star Shield. Thankfully, Lucien already practiced constructing the model multiple times in the past, so he remembered clearly how the model was divided, how long the lines were, and how the lines were connected to each other. All he needed to do now was stay calm.

When he was concentrating on the magic model, Lucien noticed that his spiritual power was being consumed very fast. By the time he finished one-third of the work, he found that there was only half of his spiritual power remaining.

"You gotta make the best use of your spiritual power." Lucien talked to himself in his mind. Building a magic model was like drawing a complicated pattern on a piece of paper using a pen, but with a very limited amount of ink. To save the resource, the person drawing the picture needed to stay very calm, to prevent the hand holding the pen from trembling too much.

Thanks to Lucien's throughout knowledge of Star Shield, he could allow himself to be partly distracted and absorb the power of the four Elements surrounding him, in order to slowly recover his own spiritual power.

For most sorcerer apprentices, since they did not have such a profound knowledge of their magic models, they would often turn to the potion called Magic Gate as their short-term supplement for boosting spiritual power, in order to make this great breakthrough.

Time passed, and Lucien started to feel weaker and weaker, and his spiritual power was very close to running dry. Fortunately, the magic model of Star Shield was almost ready. Now, it looked like a transparent small pyramid floating in the air, made up of many sophisticated lines inside.

Just one more line to go.

Although Lucien's whole body was slightly shaking from his weakness, there was no chance that he would give up in the last second. Clenching his teeth, Lucien summoned his last reserves of spiritual power like squeezing out the last bit of toothpaste from the tube and finished the last touch.

The moment the last line was finally linked to the small "pyramid", the whole model suddenly collapsed inwards and at the same time started to frantically suck in the power of the stars.

Lucien's soul was racked by a sudden great pain, caused by the enormous power of stars impacting his awareness. Even from the outsider's perspective, he almost passed out because of the mystic energy.

At this time, a gentle and pure ray of light came out of Lucien's soul, and the great pain was gone. Lucien's outsider's perspective also became more stable.

When the light disappeared, Lucien saw something like a crystal, the size of a thumbnail, shining and revolving around the inverted reflection of his Host Star of Destiny. Taking a closer look, it was the very magic model that he built just now, the Star Shield.

At the same time, Lucien noticed that his own soul had become more stable and denser, as if the power of stars magically changed the soul's texture.

Opening his eyes, he felt more refreshed than ever, and his soul was overflowing with spiritual power. Lucien knew that whenever there was any danger, he could instantly activate the Star Shield.

A smile appeared on his face, and he said to himself with pride, "Nice to meet you, Mr. Lucien, the sorcerer."

His smile came out from his heart, since he believed that, compared with the great success that he had with his concert, this breakthrough was accomplished all because of his own efforts, and nothing could satisfy him more than that.

Lucien looked at the magic hourglass on the table and found that there was only three more minutes left, so he gave up the plan of building one more magic model in his soul.

With his brimming spiritual power, he was confident that he could cast apprentice spells two to three hundred times and almost twenty spells of first circle as well, without pause. That was the sweet gain from becoming a real sorcerer. What was even better was that, as long as one's soul was strong enough to handle it, the person could build more magic models every few minutes.

However, Lucien did not have enough time right now. He must leave soon.

"Remember, keep walking forward and do not look back..."

According to the message left by Maskelyne, it seemed the trip leaving the lobby through the small door of the magic garden would not be a peaceful and sweet one.

Lucien walked toward the door and tried to open it, but he failed. He could not leave this place until the magic lock started to collapse.

Then, following Maskelyne's instruction, Lucien spent only a minute unlocking the first layer of the seal. Now, he could cast the two divine spells, Holy Strike and Death Resistance.

Unwilling to waste any time, Lucien ran into the rooms like a shadow to collect some more magic materials for future use.

"Not the too dangerous ones... nor materials that I don't know about..." Lucien reminded himself not to be greedy. After all, he only had less than two minutes now.

By the end, he had picked a tube of Vampire's blood, two tubes of aether, two handful of goblin's hair, three tubes of Snownia's Burning Power and a box of magic oil. Some of them were magic materials and some were catalysts.

When there were only fifteen seconds left, Lucien came back to the lobby. Standing in front of the small door, he was waiting for the moment that the world started to collapse.

Ten seconds, nine seconds... three... two... one.

The whole lobby started to shake slightly, and the small door opened by itself as if it sensed the change in this world. Behind the door there was a long, long corridor, and along both sides there were all kinds of weird-shaped magic plants.

All of a sudden there were cracks on everything Lucien could see, the desk, the chair, and even the white and gray fire in the fireplace.

Without any hesitance, Lucien rushed through the corridor.

He heard babies crying, but he did not look back.

Lucien walked faster and faster, and then he started to run. The magic plants along both sides started to wield their branches crazily and some of them almost hit Lucien's face.

Some other magic plants were floating in the air; some were jumping forward like frogs; some wrung their own necks and threw their heads away... Everything in the world started to get crazy.

The plants were laughing, moaning and crying. Their voices were very loud, but they seemed to disappear after Lucien passed them, as if a monster with a huge mouth was devouring them while following Lucien.

He forced himself to stay focused on his own footsteps and kept running forward. He swiftly avoided the black vines that seemed to attack him like snakes.

Then, he heard a sharp screaming, which was miserable and vicious. In front of Lucien, a lot of revenants appeared in his way. Countless maggots covered the whole floor, and each of them had a baby crying face.

Lucien did not slow down at all. He directly activated Star Shield.

Before becoming a real sorcerer, Lucien could not cast any spell when he activated the Moonlight, the status in which his body was partially dematerialized into moonlight, but now it was not a problem anymore.

This shield was like a round glass cover that seamlessly protected Lucien from all directions. Being badly burned by the shield, the revenants were screaming even bitterer, but they were still trying to grab Lucien's body with their arms until they turned into smoke and ashes. There so many white maggots covering Lucien's shield that he almost could not see the road in front of him.

Finally, Lucien saw a narrow gap at the end of the corridor, and through it he could see a touch of green.

"It's dangerous! Come back, Xiafeng! Don't go there!"

Lucien heard his parents calling his name.

"Lucien, stop! You'll die!"

That was the mixed voices of Joel, John, Victor and all the people Lucien cared about in this world.

They sounded so real that Lucien's heart missed a beat for a second.

"Do not look back!" Lucien yelled to himself.

In the last second, he jumped right into the gap.

...

The soul maggots all turned into ashes. The night wind felt cool and gentle.

This was a world full of life.

"Lucien?" It was a familiar voice, and the person sounded very surprised.

Raising up his head with surprise, Lucien saw Natasha, who was wearing her Dragon Blood Armor and riding on a black Dragon Scale horse. However, the armor she was wearing was severely damaged, and there were only a few knights, squires and guards following her. All of them looked tired, and some of them were even injured.

Furthermore, Lady Camil was not with the princess, neither were Silvia and her father.

A thin layer of haze settled over the small town named Bonn.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 125: Ambuscade

The people downstairs gradually quieted down, which finally gave the brother and sister a break.

"Bragging and bragging... useless adventurers..." sneered Lilith. "All they have is muscles, but unfortunately no brain."

"Don't underestimate them." Sala shook his head, "Many of them have been dealing with the many horrific monsters in the black forest and the Dark Mountain Range for a long time. They can't be taken lightly."

When he was talking, his eyes suddenly opened wide. The color of the candle was fading, and so was the color of the wall. Little by little, everything started to lose color. A thin layer of haze slowly descended.

Sala's hand touched the table in the room when he took a step back, and he felt the moist of the wood, as if the table had been sitting there for over a thousand years.

"Run!" Sala took his sister's hand and shouted, "Something's wrong!"

However, his voice sounded so far away, as if it came from another world. Lilith looked very afraid and also confused. Grabbing Sala's hand, she followed him and they started to run downstairs.

When the two magic apprentices were running, they took out some of their magic reagents and held the materials tightly in their hands in order to cast the spells for self-defense, if needed.

By the time they got to the ground floor, the tavern was already in a great mess. All those people, including the adventurers who had bragged about their strength for the whole night, were pushing each other fiercely in order to leave that place as soon as possible.

Seeing that there was no chance for them to get access to the door immediately, Sala pulled his sister's arm and they ran together toward the tavern's back door.

Directly kicking the back door open, Sala and Lilith found that the whole town was being affected and was turning gray. However, most people living there had already fallen asleep in their houses, so they did not notice anything unusual, and the town was actually very quiet.

Sala and Lilith started to run toward the exit to Massawa, the city close to Bonn. They had no idea what was going on there.

When they were about to leave the town, Sala and Lilith bumped into a few adventurers who were running toward the same direction.

"Something's wrong with Elsinore Lake!" an adventurer talked aloud to the other people, "It must be the magic lock... The magic lock is... it's collapsing!"

Before the other people responded, Lilith cried out and pointed at the adventures with her shaking hand, "You..."

Their skin started to turn gray as well, and some parts looked rotten already. However, the adventurers themselves looked very confused, as if they had no idea what was happening to their bodies.

Seeing that their eyes slowly lost focus, Sala pulled his sister's arm and shouted, "Run! Don't look back!"

Sala and Lilith were running so fast that they almost couldn't breathe. A slight taste of blood rose from their throats.

The town behind them had turned into hell.

Finally, Sala and Lilith felt a bit warmer after the weird feeling of running through a thick curtain. However, they didn't dare to take a rest. They kept running toward Massawa to stay away from that horrific town named Bonn.

...

"The magic lock...?!" Ilia, the silver-robed great priest, immediately noticed the unusual change when the color of everything started to fade away. "This is not what the Great Master told us!"

Then, he decisively commanded the high and common priests and the dark knights, "There is no more time for the blood sacrifice! The magic lock is changing. Cancel the sacrifice and gather all the people! We shall activate the summoning circle immediately to greet our true God!"

Receiving the order, six high priests flew up in the sky surrounding Bonn and Elsinore Lake, and twelve priests and dark knights were standing on the ground in a corresponding way. These people was all Argent Horn had now in the Duchy of Orvarit, and some of them, following the will of God, came all the way from other countries or even the Dark Mountain Range to support them.

Ilia also flew above Elsinore Lake and what he saw stunned him:

The surface of the lake turned solid within a few seconds and suddenly broke into small pieces, like a mirror being shattered by some great power. The Grand Cross was shining brightly at the bottom of the lake, surrounded by some kind of blood-red liquid which was wriggling as if it was alive.

Lots of ghosts, revenants and black shadows were howling and screaming while they were swiftly flying back and forth above the lake. As they were shouting toward the same direction, the sound waves joined together and gave shape to a translucent, huge ghost, who was wearing a long, black robe with a huge scythe in its hand, standing above the blood-red liquid. Underneath its hood, two black holes could be seen on its skull-like face.

Although being protected by his many spells, Ilia still shivered a bit from the scene, as if the warmth of his life was leaving his body.

The Grand Cross was slowly collapsing. The main world and the black-and-white world were overlapping.

Ilia took out a huge pale hand, and every knuckle of it had sharp bony spurs, shining with some faint light.

Raising up the hand high in the air, Ilia started to chant a long mantra which could drive people crazy. Many silver lines came out of the priests and dark knights, were they in the air or on the ground, and joined together around Ilia to shape a complicated magic circle.

When Ilia finished casting, he directly threw the huge hand into the center of the magic circle. Countless silver lines jumped up and devoured the hand like a monster's huge mouth.

As a silver gate slowly appeared in the sky, the Grand Cross underneath was almost completely gone.

All of a sudden, a bright, burning light beam shot the silver gate right in the center, from a higher position in the sky.

The colors of black and gray suddenly disappeared, and the whole area was filled with sacred light.

As soon as the ghosts, revenants and shadows touched the light, they disappeared like vapor, and even the undead creatures in the town all turned into ashes instantly.

This was the eighth circle divine spell, Sunburst!

"Amelton... Gossett!?" Ilia was shocked, "How come..."

Floating high in the air, Vila Amelton was holding a cross-shaped badge carved with a pattern of a sun in the center, and Gossett was right beside her.

Count Hart Rafati, Count Hayward, who was the deputy commander of Violet Knights and also a gold knight, and another two radiant knights were also there.

On the other side, Salvador and Clown were leading the other night watchers to block the whole area.

Half of the most powerful people of the duchy were there tonight.

"How come?" Putting back the level eight divine badge, Vila said to Ilia coldly, "We've been waiting for you here for a long time."

Although Ilia knew that the Church would definitely send some people here to investigate the usual changes happening around the lake recently, he never expected that the ambush would be this powerful.

"Who betrayed us!?" Ilia's fists clenched tightly, but a moment later an evil smile appeared on his face. "If the true God cannot come, all of us will die here tonight by the hands of what's sealed, or even worse, all of us will become its slaves."

...

In the wilderness at the junction of Melzer Black Forest and the Dark Mountain Range.

"Lucien, why are you here?" Natasha asked Lucien with confusion. Her voice was slightly trembling.

Lucien looked down at the black robe he was wearing and realized that he needed to tell Natasha at least part of the truth, "I found the secret of the magic lock from the poem provided by Mr. Deroni and a roll of manuscript brought to me by two strangers who visited me the other day." Lucien paused a bit and continued, "You know me, Your Grace. I always want to be stronger and more powerful to protect my friends and family, so I decided to take a risk to see if I could find any useful potion in this magic lock."

Natasha's eyebrows frowned a bit.

"As soon as I arrived in Bonn, I was sucked into a creepy hole. The world inside of the hole was all black and white and I almost died there. When I was being chased by a bunch of horrific undead creatures and plants, I found a gap and I jumped in it. Now I'm here... it's very weird."

"I see... some benefits from being a historian, uh?" Natasha put on an exhausted smile. Although she did not really trust Lucien's words, her mind told her that asking too much right now would benefit no one in such a situation.

"What happened to you, Your Grace? And where's Lady Camil?" asked Lucien.

Natasha's eyes dimmed and she looked down, "I got some information about the magic lock the day before yesterday. Out of curiosity, I decided to go to Elsinore Lake to take a look. But we were ambushed. My curiosity led my team into a horrible trap..."

"What?!" Lucien was shocked.

"In order to make time for me to leave, Camil stayed to cover me. She was confronting a radiant knight and a senior-rank mage..."

Natasha's voice became lower and lower.

"Who attacked you?" Lucien's eyes opened wide.

Natasha looked very depressed, and by the time she could answer Lucien, an army arrived and surrounded Natasha's people and Lucien.

Lucien looked up and saw Verdi sitting on a weird-looking horse with two goat horns. Silvia was right beside Verdi, looking rather sad. However, Silvia's father was not there.

"My dear cousin, please give up." Verdi was covered with a suit of dark-purple armor, "It's too late for the Church or the Violet Knights to come and save you."

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Chapter 126: The Mutiny

Natasha ignored Verdi's words and just stared at Silvia. The princess' eyes were slightly squinted, and with a trembling voice Natasha asked the girl she loved, "Was it you, Silvia?"

Verdi did not act rashly, since Natasha still had a level four grand knight, two level two knights, two level one knights and more than twenty knight squires and around eighty soldiers to protect her.

Silvia took a few deep breaths and she gradually calmed down. "I appreciate your love toward me, Natasha, but unfortunately, I care more about my father. My father spent so many years trying to find a chance to go to the Magic Congress in order to live a peaceful life, and his wish is my wish."

"So?" Natasha asked gently, "That's why you wanted me to die?"

"I didn't expect this!" Silvia suddenly lost control and her voice became sharp, "I didn't know that their real purpose in gathering information about you was to actually kill you! But... but my father was killed by you, Natasha, and the only thing I care for now is my revenge."

Lucien was shocked to learn that both Deroni and Silvia were sorcerers. When he thought about it, and after taking a careful look at Silvia's height and figure, Lucien suddenly linked White Honey to Silvia.

"Silvia... White Honey... and Deroni... the master of the raven named Ashley..." Lucien murmured to himself in a very low voice.

"So you've been lying to me all this time? I don't believe it." Natasha's voice became cold, "I killed your father because he wanted to kill all of us!"

"You think I'm really that happy with fine clothes, spacious houses, endless cuisine and the bright future of being a musician, Natasha? No! None of them can compete with the great satisfaction that

I felt from learning a new spell, from a successful magic experiment, and from seeing the hope in my father's eyes." Silvia tried her best to stay calm, "You think I only want to be your nightingale in a gold cage?"

"Did I ever treat you like my pet?" Natasha questioned Silvia desperately.

Before Silvia managed to say anything, Verdi suddenly reached out his hand and wrapped Silvia's waist with his arm. "Although I admit that you're very outstanding as a woman, my dear cousin, do you think you can give Silvia the same love as that of a man?"

Natasha closed her eyes and a sad smile appeared on her face. "Silvia, I never knew before that you could be this persistent and firm. I thought that I should be always protecting you, and I was wrong. Maybe I was never... never in your heart."

"You were, Natasha." Silvia lowered her head, "But we're like two intersecting lines. We were very close to each other, and now we are heading for totally different directions."

"So you're heading toward him? Is that what you're doing?" asked Natasha. Then, she turned to Verdi and sneered, "You're much more stupid than I thought, my cousin. You think Sard, the Saint Cardinal, would just crown you as the next grand duke after my death? Do you think he would just let you live a happy life after you colluded with Argent Horn and the Congress of Magic? That's not going to happen... you'll end up being tied to the gallows!"

Natasha decided to put her personal feeling aside first, in order to deal with this situation more wisely, which was a basic quality of a grand knight.

Since Verdi already showed his true intention, every confusion within Natasha's mind was solved. The connection between the intelligence department and Argent Horn, the reason that Rosan Aaron

could always escape the careful search of the Church... All those things were related to her cousin, Count Verdi.

Lucien also realized that it was Verdi who betrayed the grand duke family and the Church. Taking a closer look at the high-rank knights following Verdi, it did not take Lucien too much time to recognize Rosan Aaron, who was in a suit of knight armor. After all, Lucien was familiar with Rosan Aaron's picture as a criminal wanted by the Church.

"How stern and just your words are, Natasha!" Verdi laughed, "I knew you'd think I was tempted by the demon, but do you think your father is really that honest and straightforward? It was because of my father's death that he became the grand duke, and I'm not that stupid to believe my father's death was just an accident! I should be the next grand duke, not you, Natasha."

"Then wish your dream come true when you're being burned to ashes." Natasha held her head high.

"If you die tonight, Natasha, no one here will tell the grand duke and Sard what I did." Verdi shrugged easily, "I'd be the biggest hero who provided the important information to Sard and Count Hayward and helped them stop Argent Horn's horrible conspiracy. Unfortunately, while they are busy dealing with the heretics, they don't know that the princess is facing this great trouble, ha!"

"Yeah... smart." The corner of Natasha's lips was slightly lifted. "Somehow the princess would just die here out of no reason. And no one would care afterwards."

"No worries, my dear cousin." Verdi waved his hand causally, "After you die, Mr. Rogerio, from the Congress of Magic, will come to wrap up everything. He will leave the clues which will all lead to the sorcerers, and the Congress of Magic will claim responsibility as well."

"I see. You're neither on the side of Argent Horn, nor that of the Congress. You just betrayed Argent Horn to please the Church." Natasha's eyes looked rather cold, "Impressive."

"My plan went wrong several times, though." Verdi lifted his right hand and pointed at Lucien. "This guy, Lucien Evans... he betrayed Argent Horn, or you'd be dead a long time ago."

Lucien finally realized what was his big trouble predicted by Maskelyne. Because of Silvia's betrayal, his Blessing and what he did to Argent Horn was no more a secret since long ago. The only reason that Lucien and Joel's family stayed safe until now was because the enemies needed to focus on their bigger plan. However, it seemed that Argent Horn still did not know that Lucien was actually the "Professor".

"Lucien, thank you for coming here tonight," Verdi said to him with an evil smile. "So I don't have to bother killing you later, after our plan is done. But don't think you have bad luck, since your death would come to you sooner or later. "

"I bet you're very happy that you can kill two birds with one stone tonight." Lucien put on a calm smile while facing that serious situation. "The poem and the manuscript... they were really good traps to get me, a person who desires power so much."

Although Lucien was acting like he already gave up, he was trying to sense the gaps connecting the world of soul and the main world, which would be the best way to save them. Unfortunately, the gap through which he came back had disappeared completely with the collapse of the magic lock, and he sensed no more around the area.

"Your calmness is impressive. Unfortunately, your loyalty will not bring you anything but death." Verdi lifted his chin a bit and looked at Lucien. Then, he turned to the knights on Natasha's side, "What about you guys? The Hayne and Hill families, as well as the two gold knights in the fortress, they're all taking a neutral standpoint right now. As long as I can kill the princess, I'll be the next grand duke."

All the knights, squires and soldiers standing behind Natasha were shocked, and not even the princess could believe her ears. She never expected that Verdi had actually gained acquiescence from the big families and the most powerful people in the duchy.

"Why would you guys still want to follow her? Why would you guys want to sacrifice your lives for a woman who likes women?" Verdi got more and more vicious. "Shame on her, because she betrayed our honored tradition and she can't even continue her family's bloodline! Do you really think she could bring you guys glory?"

Some people who were on Natasha's side started to murmur at each other.

Natasha forced herself to raise her head. As a knight of pride, she could not flinch even a bit from this situation.

"I have two level five grand knights, one level four knight, three level three knights... and also a couple of hundred of knight squires," Verdi threatened them. "You bend your knees toward me, or you die."

After a short period of time, many soldiers and squires started to run toward Verdi's side, and among them there was even a knight.

Tightly grabbing her lance, Natasha looked at them with an expressionless face. Sitting on the horse, her back was as straight as a longsword.

After a while, when she looked around, there were only less than ten people who were still with her, and a couple of horses without their riders.

There was a sad smile on Natasha's face.

"Knight Wyon, why you're still with me?" she asked.

Wyon was the level four knight, who had blond hair and blue eyes. He answered the princess solemnly, "I made my vow to serve you, Your Grace, and I'll serve you until the last second of my life."

Natasha nodded with great resolve, and then turned to Lucien.

"What about you, Lucien?"

"I'm on your side, Your Grace." Lucien answered shortly but firmly.

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Chapter 127: Natasha's Fighting Will

Hearing Lucien's words, somehow Natasha felt like making a joke, "I'm sorry that you have to face this dangerous fighting because of me. After all, you have never even touched a girl's hand! If we can survive tonight, I'll introduce you to a decent young lady."

Lucien released a sigh, "Your Grace..." At the same time, Lucien was glad to see that Natasha was still in a joking mood. Since she was the only level five grand knight on their side, the princess herself was the key factor determining whether they would have at least a bit of hope to survive tonight.

"Then, Knight Cacharel, Daniel, and Borscht, why?" Natasha turned to the three knights who decided to stay.

"My heart is beating firmly right now." Cacharel pointed at his chest, "This is the heart of a knight, not a coward."

Daniel was a middle-aged knight, who looked intimidating and cold. "I was a pauper, and now I'm a knight. I did many bad things, but my will to fight against the forces of evil never changes." Then he crossed himself, "Maybe I'll die tonight, and before that I want to show my repentance for the horrible things I did before."

Borscht had recently become a knight, and he still looked pretty young. Scratching his head a bit, his green eyes were shining with the light of determination, "This is my first fight as a knight, and I don't want to be a deserter in my first fight, or Vivian would be laughing at me."

Mentioning his Vivian, Borscht looked affectionate and shy.

Natasha nodded to them and then turned to the two knight squires, "Bright, Tiana... The other squires and soldiers are all gone. Why did you choose to stay?"

"Your Grace... You, you remember my name!" Bright was very excited. "That's enough reason for me to fight for you, Your Grace!"

In contrast, Tiana, a half-elf and half-human girl, looked a bit hesitant, "Your Grace... my, my reason is not that lofty. I... I just feel that he would kill the people who surrendered anyway."

The reason that Verdi did not launch his attack right away was that he was waiting for the radiant knight and the senior-rank mage to come and join him after they killed Camil. After all, as a level five grand knight, Natasha's power could not be underestimated.

Hearing what Tiana just said, Verdi retorted, "If I want to kill the people who know about all my plan, I would have to kill all the knights, squires and soldiers following me right now. That's impossible, and more importantly, there is absolutely no reason for me to kill them. There won't be any hard evidence proving that I had ever colluded with Argent Horn and the sorcerers, and what I am doing now is under the acquiescence of most of the big families in the duchy. As for the Church, they're even happy to see that we nobles can have some civil wars from time to time in order to counterbalance our power. And when I become the next grand duke, all people following me will be rewarded."

Natasha listened to Verdi quietly. After he listed all those reasons trying to justify his behavior and assure his people that Tiana's words would never be true, Natasha slightly shook her head and smiled, "My dear cousin, have you ever wondered why the Congress of Magic wanted me dead so desperately that they even took the risk to seek your help? If you never thought about it, you wouldn't understand how much special attention the Church paid to me. And, by the way, even if you killed me, you wouldn't be the only legitimate heir to the grand duke title within the Violet family."

When Verdi remained silent within his confusion, Natasha turned around and said lowly to her people with great determination, "My knights, my warriors, although they outnumber us, they have to disperse their people to encircle us. And that means the number of the enemies in front of us is actually only a bit more than us."

"So we still have a chance?!" The knights' and squires' eyes lit up.

"As long as we can defeat the enemies in front of us before more of them start to attack us from behind." Natasha nodded with great determination.

This would be a quick attack. The speed would determine their life or death.

Sitting on her Dragon Scale horse named Agatha, Natasha turned around and stared at Verdi, who had two level five grand knights and four other knights behind him.

Then, curling the corner of her lips, Natasha smiled, as if something she had been dreaming for was finally realized tonight. Her eyes were shining with great excitement, shining because of her heroic dream.

Although Verdi did not hear what Natasha told her people, from Natasha's posture sitting on her horse, Verdi could tell that she was ready for the fight. There was no time for him to wait any longer.

Securing her long lance named "Slayer" under her armpit, Natasha's pulled out her knight sword named "Natasha's Thunder".

"March forward! Forward forever! In the name of Violet!" shouted the princess.

"Violet! Violet!" The knights and squires following Natasha got excited as well.

Lucien was very surprised and impressed, since he never expected that Natasha would choose this attitude to face the extreme danger. What he was watching was the true spirit of a knight.

"For the glory of Violet! Charge!" Natasha shouted aloud again and shot forward like an arrow to lead the charge.

"For the glory of Violet!" Cacharel, Lucien and Wyon, as well as Daniel, Tiana, Bright and Borscht all followed Natasha close and charged toward their enemies with their proud war cry.

Among them all, Lucien was the only one who remained relatively calm. After all, he was a sorcerer, not a knight. Holding his sword Alert, Lucien was ready to activate Sun's Corona at any time.

The tall mare named Agatha snorted loudly as it was running with great speed. There was black smoke coming out of her nostrils, and her dragon-like scales bulged greatly. As its hooves hit the floor there was loud and thunderous noises and the earth trembled slightly, as if a real dragon was coming for its enemies.

Lucien was riding on a dark red horse left by the knight who surrendered to follow the princess. Cacharel was on his left, and Wyon was on his right. Although there were only eight people on their side, they were charging toward their enemies as if they were a great army!

As they were charging faster and faster, the sharp tip of Slayer changed the air flow and created a big shield covering Natasha and all her knights and knight squires.

Verdi was well prepared. Raising up his left hand, he frowned his eyebrows and then made a gesture. Instantly, hundreds of arrows were shot out targeting the princess and the seven people following her.

However, the shield created by Natasha's lance perfectly protected them from being hurt by the arrows. All of the arrows were broken and fell down to the ground as soon as they touched the air flow.

Verdi was not very surprised. As he waved his hand again, the knight squires who were waiting for his command instantly started to approach the people following Natasha. At the same time, Verdi rushed at Natasha with a huge black iron shield in his left hand, and a fire sword in his right hand.

Another level five grand knight on Verdi's side named Tod also charged toward them. With his Blessing "Iron Blood", Tod was very confident that they could crush them within ten seconds.

Natasha's purple eyes turned into a completely silver color. Staring at Verdi and Tod, her eyes became colder and colder.

Tod's silver lance grazed Natasha's Slayer. Being protected by Verdi's huge shield, Tod focused all his strength on attacking. The shield Verdi was using was called "The Shield of Truth".

Natasha did not try to defend at all, instead, she made a direct thrust at Verdi's shield. As her speed increased, her long lance was surrounded by some visible black lines, coming straight from Natasha's own Blessing, whose name was "Cleaving", or more commonly known as "The Sword of Truth".

This was a fight between the Sword and the Shield.

The whole world seemed to pause for a bit, as everything happened very fast. Verdi heard a tiny sound of crack from his shield a moment after the impact.

When Verdi fully activated his Blessing in order to repair the Shield of Truth, Tod's lance directly pierced through Natasha's abdomen!

Even Tod himself was very surprised. He was expecting was that, facing his attack, Natasha would use her knight sword to defend herself and at the same time change her direction of charging. After all, the purpose of his attack was to disturb Natasha's fighting pace.

At the same time, a bunch of silver arrows pierced her body. Since the armor called Dragon Blood that Natasha was wearing was badly damaged already, it could not protect Natasha properly.

Although Natasha's facial expression showed that she was in pain, her gray pupils were still cold and calm. She used neither her lance nor her sword, but with her bare left hand she grabbed Tod's lance and pushed him backward forcefully with great strength.

She did not stop. Grabbing the lance, Natasha was still charging forward.

Her face looked over-excited, almost crazy.

Then, with a crispy "crack", Natasha's Slayer directly pierced through Verdi's Shield of Truth this time, with her even greater momentum! The shield rapidly broke into pieces.

Verdi could not believe what he just saw. Suddenly, he realized that Natasha actually had a kind of mutant power based on her Blessing, since the Blessing called the Sword of Truth was a combination of the power of the two greatest families over the continent, the Violet and the Holm families. Her mutant power worked simply: the more serious she was injured, the more powerful she would be!

Verdi was not a rookie on the battlefield. Facing the lance coming directly toward him, he activated his magic item without any hesitance. Suddenly, he disappeared from where he was, and in the next second he showed up again, around twenty meters away.

"Is she really gonna make it?" A ridiculous idea flashed across Verdi's mind for a second.

Natasha did not stop. Carrying her Slayer under her armpit, and tightly grabbing Tod's lance which pierced through her abdomen with her hand, Natasha pushed Tod back and they were rushing at Verdi at the same time.

While Natasha was fighting with great momentum, the people following her were not in a very good condition because of the attack from both sides.

Although those knights and squires were nothing for Wyon, who was a level four grand knight, Cacharel was facing a knight of the same level as him. As Cacharel was using all his power to fight against the knight, he was badly injured by the the spears of the knight squires.

After hearing two short and sharp screams from Bright and Tiana, Lucien never heard them again. He could hear Borscht's heavy breaths behind him, and Daniel's few muffled groans.

When Lucien was helping Cacharel with his Alert, he saw countless silver arrows coming toward them like rain drops.

Without any hesitance, Lucien activated Star Shield. If they survived, Lucien might still have a chance to find some excuses to explain, but if they died there, every effort he made would be pointless.

Covering Lucien and the other people, the Star Shield was shining brightly at night. Multiple arrows hit the cover and fell down on the ground without doing any damage to it.

On the other side, Tod discarded his lance and an iron shield appeared in his left hand, conjured by his Blessing. Wielding his longsword in his right hand, Tod started to fight back. The other grand knights on Verdi's side who were encircling Natasha and her people were now only half the original distance away from them!

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Chapter 128: Piercing

Tod's sword was covered with a thin layer of red light. From an angle, Tod started an attack with his sword aiming straight at Natasha's neck. No matter how powerful Natasha's Blessing was, losing her head would still mean the end of her life. Also, Tod's sword had a special kind of power. When the sword cut a target, the wound would bleed continuously, regardless of how great the person's self-healing ability was.

At the same time, Tod's skin turned into a silver color and his body was covered with a layer of metal, as if he were a real Steel Golem. That blessing power could at the same time enhance his defense capabilities and his strength.

Natasha finished pulling out Tod's lance from her abdomen with one hand, throwing it away. In the other hand, her sword, covered with small flashes of lightning, parried the incoming attack, but she wouldn't be able to continue after Verdi if she had to deal with Tod.

"Wyon!" shouted Natasha, "Cover me!"

As Natasha called his name, Wyon immediately activated his Blessing. His body started emitting a bright white light and four pairs of big white wings appeared on his back. His size grew to almost twice that of common people.

This was Wyon's Blessing, the Angel of Strength!

Catching up with Tod, Wyon wielded his huge sword with both hands and directly hacked at Tod's red sword. Riding on his horse, Tod swiftly changed his direction and blocked Wyon's attack. Both of them were using their full strength, trying to defeat each other's sword. The power of collision of the swords summoned forth gusts of wind. Both of their gauntlets started to crack from the great power of the impacts.

While many of the white and shining feathers of Wyon's wings were falling, Tod remained relatively calm. Obviously, Tod was in a more favorable position in that confrontation.

Facing those terrible odds, Wyon knew that he could not yield. As the princess' main knight in that battle, it was his duty to fight for Natasha until the last second of his life. Spurring his horse with his boots, Wyon followed right behind her and prevented the princess from being attacked by Tod.

Not far behind them, Borscht couldn't stand his wounds anymore and fell from his horse, moaning in his last breath, "Vivian..."

After knocking Borscht over, the other knights and squires switched their target to Lucien, who looked relatively weak among the other warriors on his team.

Thanks to his Ice Revenger, Lucien had stayed relatively calm so far, although his arm was already numb from hacking and blocking the attacks. After all, strength was not his forte.

When another smite struck Lucien's back, his Star Shield finally reached its limit and shattered into small shining pieces.

Lucien was gathering his spiritual power in order to recast Star Shield, but a second smite came at him. Luckily, he was still charging forward, or he would be dead already. He was certain that the one attacking him was a level two knight, since his Star Shield was capable of handling three or four attacks of a level one knight, and unless his spiritual power was drained, his shield would always be there protecting him.

That was why a sorcerer was, to some extent, stronger than a knight of the same level.

However, facing a level two knight, Lucien, a first circle sorcerer, was being pushed.

At that moment, Natasha was again only a few meters away from Verdi. To the side, there were only several knight squires who were protecting Silvia. Behind Verdi there was a broad open field and Melzer Black Forest further ahead.

If Natasha could break out their siege and make it to the black forest, Verdi would lose his precious chance to kill the princess tonight, which he would probably not have again in this life.

If Natasha made it through the night, Verdi himself would be the one who was going to be sentenced to death, and all efforts he made would become useless.

Even without his shield, Verdi lowered his head and looked rather determined. Although he was a narrow-minded man, as a knight, Verdi still had strong willpower and a bold heart.

Being clearly aware of the fact that, in terms of experience in fighting, he might be slightly inferior to his cousin, Verdi knew that what he needed at that moment was a perfect defense, to stop Natasha.

Crossing his arms in front of his chest, he roared and activated his Blessing again. The roaring was so powerful that even his horse was stunned a bit. The ground started to shake vigorously, and then multiple thick walls suddenly rose up from the black soil, blocking the path between Verdi and Natasha.

A few stars in the night sky suddenly started to shine brightly. Their light seemed to cover Verdi's armor, and a translucent force shield showed up in front of him.

The Shield of Truth was actually a Blessing that combined the Blessings called Earth and another one called Stars.

That demanded all the power Verdi had. His Blessing had showed its true power.

Natasha's eyebrows frowned a bit, but then she started to charge forward with an even greater speed. Soon, her black lance directly pierced through the first few walls. Although the rest of the walls were destroyed by Slayer as well, they made her charging speed decrease considerably.

When the tip of Natasha's lance hit Verdi's force shield, the transparent shield shook with ever-widening ripples on the surface surrounding the lance tip. Verdi took a step back, but in the next second he successfully withstood the powerful momentum of Natasha's blow and stabilized the shield.

One second, two seconds... Natasha's was pushing her Slayer forward with all her might, but it only penetrated a few centimeters into the shield.

A cold smile appeared on Verdi's face as he saw that the other grand knights were finally about to catch up with Natasha, readying their swords to strike at her.

However, at that moment, a white light beam came down from the sky and hit his shield with a tremendous power.

The light was burning hot, as if it was the righteous flames of God.

It was the Holy Strike!

Although the level one divine spell did not actually do any damage to the Shield of Truth, Verdi was badly distracted.

"The Church!" Verdi blurted out. Knowing that all of Natasha's and her knights' divine and magic items had been used up and reached their limit, this divine spell was totally out of Verdi's expectation and only one possibility crossed his mind. If the Church found out what he was doing there right now, that would be the end of him!

As the Blessings were affected by the owner's willpower, Verdi's Shield of Truth trembled a bit when he got distracted for that second.

However, that one single second was already enough for Natasha, a grand knight, to completely turn the tables.

Using all her strength and power, Natasha grabbed her black lance and pierced Verdi's force field like a drill. The translucent shield instantly cracked and broke into thousands of shining pieces. Slayer continued moving forward and pierced through Verdi's left shoulder, near the joint, directly knocking him off his horse.

Being nailed by Natasha's lance, Verdi got crazy. To prevent the lance from completely drained his strength and life, he pulled out his sword with his right hand and directly chopped off his left arm together with his left shoulder. Then, free from Natasha's lance, he rolled to the other side. His purple blood burst out and sprinkled everywhere on the ground.

It was Lucien who cast the spell Holy Strike just now. He activated Sun's Corona at the very crucial moment.

In order to become a powerful sorcerer, staying calm and focused was of great significance to adjust the tactics for fighting based on the different situations.

Facing the several enemies who just arrived and were trying to stop Natasha, Cacharel suddenly swooped down on one of them with his body weight. Then, his whole body stretched like a piece of rubber, tightly tying the grand knight and his sword like a rubber rope, but at the same time, several horrible wounds appeared on Cacharel's body.

This was Cacharel's Blessing. He could stretch his body and strongly constrict the enemies!

On the other side, Daniel, who had already been seriously injured, jumped from his horse and over some enemies, knocking down a couple of the knights.

They were willing to use suicide tactics so that their princess could stand a chance!

Natasha followed Verdi's roll and used the lightning power on her sword, Thunder, to paralyze him. Her next attack was seeking Verdi's throat, but a strong air wave hit her hand mid-swing, pushing her hand and the sword slightly to the side. Thus, Natasha's sword missed Verdi's neck by an inch.

It was Silvia who cast the spell with her magic item.

Natasha's turned her horse around to try again and quickly adjusted her wrist to strike down at Verdi once again.

However, at that time, Silvia suddenly jumped out, standing between her and Verdi. She was staring at Natasha with her beautiful black eyes.

Silvia was protecting Verdi with her own body, hoping her former lover would not dare to hurt her!

Great pain could be found in Natasha's gray eyes as she hacked at her lover without any hesitance. She clearly knew that, at this point, any hesitance could get her killed, along with the knights who were loyal to her, the friends that had supported her in that dire moment.

Until she felt the coldness of the sword and the great pain, Silvia could not believe her eyes. With unwavering determination, Natasha's sword split Silvia's body in two.

The princess did not stop, though, and rode her horse forward to do the same to Verdi.

At that very moment, all of Verdi's knights immediately turned around to try to stop Natasha, regardless of the great risk they would face when they showed Lucien and Wyon their backs.

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Chapter 129: Breakout

"Bang!" A loud and crispy sound of metals colliding with each other was heard. It was from Wyon's heavy sword fiercely hacking Tod's metalized face when the latter stopped attacking him and turned around in order to help his lord Verdi.

A deep, horrible wound appeared in the center of Tod's face, starting from his forehead all the way to his chin, and even his nose was split into two. However, instead of blood, it was liquid metal that was slowly coming out of the wound. At the same time, the liquid metal was trying to heal the scary wound.

Although Tod was seriously injured, the sword in his hand did not stop, and it went directly to the princess, whose blade was a few centimeters away from Verdi. Although Natasha swiftly leaned to the side, Tod's sword left a terrible cut on Natasha's back, from which her spine and internal organs were almost visible.

The already badly damaged armor could not protect her very well anymore. With a muffled moan, Natasha bit her lips to bear the great pain and, without pause, wielded her Thunder toward Verdi again!

She knew that she could not lose her momentum at this time, or it would be the end of all of them, and her knights and squires would die for nothing.

Beside Silvia's hacked body, Verdi thought he got a chance to use his magic item again and thus escape away from Natasha. However, a powerful lightning struck him directly from the sky.

As an extraordinary magic sword, Natasha's Thunder had a certain chance to summon real lightning.

Verdi's broken, dark purple armor was instantly burned black. Although luckily part of the remaining power of his Blessing saved his life from the lightning, the powerful strike fully paralyzed his body again.

He was angry and desperate. Verdi could not understand why everything turned out to be so bitter, when he thought a great success was definitely upon his hands. However, he would not easily reconcile himself to the situation!

At that moment, Natasha's sharp blade was coming directly toward Verdi's neck, but he summoned forth all his remaining willpower to overcome the paralyzing feeling in his right arm. With it, he suddenly tried to block Thunder with his bare right hand. Lots of small rays of lightning instantly covered his hand and his forearm, snapping part of his right arm right off. However, the sacrifice of his right arm also reduced Thunder's speed and, by the time the blade reached his neck, a piece of the Shield of Truth was formed around it. At the same time, his feet pushed against the ground and his body rolled backwards.

Natasha hacked her sword at Verdi's neck with all her anger, pain and hatred. Although the small piece of shield did not fully stop her attack, when the shield broke into pieces, her momentum had been weakened enough. Thunder cut a deep wound in Verdi's neck, but the blade did not really touch his carotid arteries. Verdi passed out, but he was not dead, yet.

When Natasha was about to lift her sword again to end her cousin's sinful life, a few of Verdi's grand knights arrived and blocked her path to their lord, who had completely lost his consciousness.

Natasha quickly made an estimation of their power and instantly decided to leave. She was already seriously injured, and the extra power her Blessing created due to her injuries would not last much longer. She knew that this was not the right time for her to be a hero.

"Let's go!" shouted Natasha to her people, and then she spurred Agatha and rushed out of the encirclement.

Verdi's knights were occupied with saving their lord, and more importantly, they also felt intimidated when they saw their lord lying on the ground like a torn sack.

Therefore, it was not hard for Lucien, Cacharel and Wyon to break the siege and follow Natasha. Unfortunately, facing too many knights on his own, Daniel did not make it.

"You f**king idiots! What are you f**king waiting for?!" When Tod approached Verdi, he yelled at the rest of the knights with great anger, "Go and get them, or we will all die!"

Leaving some knight squires to take care of Verdi, Tod spurred his horse and led the rest of the knights to chase the princess.

The four Dragon Scale horses were very fast, and soon they were close to the edge of the black forest. At that time, Natasha suddenly turned around and threw her black lance, Slayer, toward Tod, with all her strength and power.

Flying with great speed in the air, the lance stirred the air flow and created a loud and unique noise.

As Tod subconsciously rolled down from his horse and fell on the ground, Slayer pierced right through another level four knight's chest, who was behind Tod and did not even have time to raise his shield to defend. When Slayer flew right through the knight's chest, it immediately turned the body into something brittle, that shattered into thousands of shining pieces in the next second.

When Tod stood up again, the princess and her people had already disappeared in the forest.

Natasha's final burst of power shocked everyone present.

After a short period of time, Tod said to the rest of the knights in a cold voice, "We have to find and kill them tonight, and we have no second choice. If the princess survives, we will all die, and our families will die with us."

The other knights nodded and followed Tod into the deep woods.

...

As the big and tall trees grew in the number the deeper they went into the woods, the horses were not suitable for moving forward anymore. Thus, Wyon suggested that they should leave the horses and go on foot.

When Natasha was about to get off from her horse, she fell to the ground.

Both Lucien and Wyon rushed toward her, and found that the princess was already in a coma. Her face was abnormally flushed, and her body was covered with gashes, especially the terrible hole on her abdomen and the deep cut in her back.

"The princess has reached her limit," Wyon was trying to stop some of the wounds from bleeding, "but Her Grace should be fine. After all, the self-healing power of a grand knight should be able to let her recover relatively fast."

Lucien carefully touched Natasha's forehead and the tip of her nose. He found that there were small particles swelling underneath her burning hot skin, and, thankfully, she was still breathing relatively smoothly.

As the least injured among them all, Lucien carried Natasha on his back and took her sword with him. At the same time, Wyon put Cacharel on his back, since he was already too weak to stand still.

Then, they resumed their escape through the forest.

"Baron Wyon," Lucien paused a bit and said to him seriously, "you're the strongest and the most powerful one among us all. I think you should take the princess back to Aalto, and I can cover you."

"Impressive, Lucien. I heard your name before and I never expected that a musician could be brave and powerful like you are." A bitter smile appeared on Wyon's face, "I appreciate your suggestion, but I don't think I should be the one to take the princess out of here, since Tod knows me pretty well, and honestly speaking, I don't think I can get rid of them that easily... I'm badly injured already. Right now, even the running is pretty much a stretch for me..."

"Baron Wyon..." Lucien did not know what to say.

"Listen to me, Lucien." Wyon nodded, "As you said, I'm the strongest among us all, and I bet Tod would believe that I would be the one with the princess. So you should be the one sending the princess back to Aalto, and Cacharel and I will cover you."

"I agree..." Cacharel nodded and said to Lucien in a weak voice.

"Even if you meet them on your way, they won't be Verdi's main force. And besides, you have the princess' sword," Wyon added.

"I see." Lucien nodded. There was no time for him to try to act like a great hero.

"Take off the princess's armor and give it to us." Wyon stopped running and said to Lucien. "The grand knights can smell the scent blood in the air."

After Lucien handed Natasha's damaged Dragon Blood to them, both Wyon and Cacharel tied some pieces to their own armors.

"All our hope is on you now, Lucien." Cacharel smiled peacefully, "If we die, remember to bring some flowers to our graves."

Lucien nodded, and then Wyon and Cacharel left toward the other side of the forest.

...

Lucien was still running. He had no idea how long he had been fleeing. He was gasping loudly, and his own gasping was the only thing that he could hear in the deep forest.

Honestly speaking, the idea of just leaving Natasha somewhere in the forest and running for his own life did cross Lucien's mind. After all, he still had his dreams that hadn't been fulfilled yet.

However, Lucien just couldn't do that. Leaving a friend here just like that, in great danger, would destroy the rest of his life.

After recovering a bit, Lucien activated his Star Shield again, covering both Natasha and himself, just in case.

"Lucien... you really got some good stuff in the magic lock..." At this time, Natasha's voice came from behind him. Lucien had no idea when she came back to consciousness.

"Am I that heavy?" Natasha was still joking, and after a few seconds, she murmured, "You're my only friend now, Lucien."

Lucien was not sure if she was sobbing.

...

Deep in the sewers in Aalto, countless rats surged forward out of nowhere, like a black tide, and all of them had terrifying red eyes.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 130: Tiphotidis

When Elsinore Lake got rid of the restriction of the Grand Cross in the black and white world, the space inverted and the magic lock was shattered, and its remaining pieces were still floating deeper into the World of Souls.

As the remains of the magic lock floated throughout that world, countless magic circles started to silently collapse, until a magnificent city appeared in the front, devoid of colors.

The shadow city was like the inverted reflection of Aalto, while the arrangement of the city was a total mess. Above this shadow city, there was a Grand Cross consisting of nine mysterious stars that were shining brightly.

Being influenced by the collapse of the magic lock around Elsinore Lake, this Grand Cross started to break down as well. Some kind of silver-colored fog slowly rose from beneath the shadow city, which was cold and quiet, as if it was turning this shadow Aalto into a hell where coldness and death dominated everything.

Suddenly, a pale and huge palm reached out of the ground, and each knuckle of the hand had horrifying, sharp bone spurs. Somehow, the terrifying hand broke the boundary existing between the World of Souls and the main material world and directly showed up deep in the sewers in the real Aalto.

The hand was shining with silver light. Any creature in the sewers affected by the light went crazy, like the red-eyed rats. The silver light was turning all the creatures there into filthy monsters. The ground was shaking fiercely. Lots of residents above the ground escaped from their places, screaming and crying. They thought it was a horrible earthquake.

However, it was way more terrible than an earthquake. In the sewers, when the huge, pale palm pressed itself against the ceiling, countless deep and wide gaps appeared on the ground above. Then, a humanoid monster with pale skin, red eyes, and silver goat horns on its head jumped out of

the ground and landed heavily above the surface. The whole city fiercely shook again because of this horrible monster, which was tens of meters tall.

The monster's whole body was covered with silver light, and the light was spreading like waves. Everything covered by the light turned cold.

"Stupid..." This manlike monster sneered and murmured in Infernal, the language of demons. "What was sealed was never the previous duke. No one should trust a demon."

...

Leading two level three grand knights, four level two knights, and four level one knights, Tod entered Melzer Black Forest. Following the smell of blood, they went all the way deep into the woods.

At the place where Lucien and Wyon went separate ways, Tod stopped, "They took different ways. The smell of the princess' blood is in both directions."

"Wyon went this way." Worns, a level three knight, could detect the smell of Wyon's blood.

"Wyon is a level four grand knight. Anatole and I will go after him." Tod was very resolute, "Worns, you take the other way. If you find the princess, send us a signal."

"Please wait," Rosan Aaron stopped Tod.

Although Tod disliked dark knights a lot, he never underestimated their special abilities. "What do you want to say?"

Pointing at the direction where Lucien went, Aaron answered seriously, "They can confuse us with the smell of blood, but they cannot lie to the shadow. The dark shadow told me Natasha went this way."

"Very well." Tod nodded, "Then, Anatole and Worns, you to go after Wyon, and Aaron and I will follow this path."

...

Hearing Natasha's words, Lucien did not know what to say. He sighed in his heart. If Natasha knew that he was a sorcerer, she would no longer have that impression.

After a moment, Lucien comforted her, "Your Grace, besides me, you still have the grand duke, Lady Camil, Felicia... You still have many friends who will always support you and care for you."

As soon as he mentioned Camil, Lucien knew he said something stupid.

"Auntie..." Natasha sounded even more depressed now, "I was so stupid... All of these... all of it... is because of me."

"That was an oversight... Your Grace." Lucien tried to sound more objective, "But it's not all your fault."

"It is," Natasha answered in a low voice. "I found out Silvia was a sorcerer apprentice a long time ago."

"What?!" Carrying Natasha, Lucien was still running as fast as he could. Hearing what the princess just said, Lucien almost ran into a tree.

"My love... no, my greed blinded me." Natasha released a long sigh, "Since it is said that the origin of Blessing has something to do with the ancient sorcerers, I was hoping that she could figure out a way which would enable two girls together to have babies that are born with the power of Blessing, then no one could disturb our love anymore using this as an excuse."

"Your Grace, you're... you're..." Lucien was trying to find a proper word, "ambitious."

"Ambitious..." Natasha was a bit confused at first and then she cheered herself up, "Anyway, since now we're running for our lives, well... now you're running for our lives, it is not really a good time to feel regretful and sad. It will take me about two to three hours to recover to a certain extent, and during this period of time, my life will be on your hands."

Then, she paused a bit and said to him, "Actually... You didn't have to do this for me. Thank you, Lucien. I'll always keep this in mind."

"I witnessed the whole thing." Lucien tried to make the princess feel less guilty, "Verdi would try to kill me either way. I'd rather help my friend."

"You just don't want to show how nice you are, Lucien." Natasha slightly shook her head, "I'll temporarily free Thunder from my control and let you leave your spiritual power on it. Thunder is a level five perfect rank sword. With the sword, you will have a chance against anyone who's under the rank of grand knight."

Lucien left his spiritual power mark on Thunder following Natasha's directions, and during the process, he got more information on that sword.

"Natasha's Thunder. Level five perfect rank sword. Made from precious aerolite and the blood of a Storm Titan. Can cause damage close to the power of a radiant knight. The owner's strength can be improved to the level of a common Storm Titan, which equals to the peak of a grand knight's strength.

"Besides, Thunder comes with the enchantment of small lightnings, which can paralyze its target and make it lose the hearing for a while. There is a five percent chance that Thunder can summon real lightning from the sky, which equals to a fifth circle sorcerer casting the magic spell Thunder. There is about 0.1% chance that the summoned lightning will be super powerful. In stormy weather, the chances will be increased, but also the owner should be more careful as well.

"This is a coming-of-age gift for my little Natasha. This is the Scepter of Thunder.

"By: Yaroran Hathaway Hoffenberg."

Grabbing Thunder, Lucien felt the power of lightning nurturing his body. Although his hand felt a bit numb, he could tell that his strength was being greatly improved. A thick piece of tree root cracked as Lucien stepped on it purposefully.

"Try to get used to it, Lucien," Natasha said to him. "This is a weapon, not a magic item. Using any weapon or armor that is too powerful for the user can bring some side effects. And it takes longer for someone to get used to it. Comparatively speaking, magic items are much better at this point."

"Are you saying that a normal person can actually use some powerful magic items, Your Grace?" asked Lucien. He wondered if he could beat a senior-rank mage if he had a dozen of magic rings enchanted with ninth circle spells.

"Well..." Natasha nodded, but then shook her head, "It really depends. High level magic items are precious. And most of the magic items above level five usually have strict requirement for their owners, such as the level of spiritual power, strength, knowledge, willpower and so on. But before that level, if your enemy who's more powerful than you is not prepared, yes, you might have some chance to win. In contrast, extraordinary weapons and armors usually don't work in this way."

Lucien did not have much knowledge of extraordinary weapons and armors. After hearing Natasha's words, Lucien started to have a rough idea with regard to this topic and sort of understood why Sun's Corona would have five layers' of seals.

Gently wielding the sword, Lucien felt that his speed was slightly improved as well.

"Ummm... You know what, " Natasha looked around and said to him easily, "you left a lot of clues for those bad people to trace us."

"Did I?!" Lucien was surprised, "I thought I had been very careful already. Well... after all, I'm just a musician, Your Grace."

"I bet you were, Lucien, but I don't feel you're just a musician..." Natasha laughed and quickly switched the topic, "When I received my knight training, I learned a lot about these matters, and I can teach you."

Under Natasha's instruction, Lucien learned a couple of ways to hide his trails by using different plants, minerals and even small creatures.

"Smart. You learned very fast, Lucien." Natasha nodded, "By the way, I'm pretty sure there are Ghost Aloes around this area... maybe close to the water. If you can find some, the aloes can remove the blood smell on us."

...

As soon as the gigantic, manlike monster started to move, beams of holy light appeared in the city, one after another, and layers of divine power circles rose and connected to each other.

"Welcome to Aalto, the Great Master of Argent," the person who was speaking to the monster sounded rather old, "or should I call you, Mr. Tiphotidis, the Ice duke."

It was Sard, the Saint Cardinal, who was floating in the air. Wearing a plain, white robe, Sard was holding a magic staff embedded with shining gems and a big cross. His eyes were bright and sharp.

"Why are you here, Sard?!" The Great Master of Argent shouted with anger, "You should be at Elsinore Lake right now! You don't care about the princess?!"

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Chapter 131: The Joint Effort

Holding the Sun Scepter in his hand, Sard expanded the divine power circles and let them fully cover the city. By doing this, Sard actually brought the battle field into another dimension, in order to avoid the horrible destruction of the city that could be expected from such a battle.

Then, Sard answered in a slow pace, "Someone's handling the troubles there for me. No worries."

"There's only one person who can deal with it." Tiphotidis surrounded itself with a fiend circle and blocked the divine power circles from affecting it without much effort, "You worked with the grand arcanist, Yaroran Hathaway?! How dare you! You helped her come back from the secret dimension?!"

"Well... There is no everlasting friend, and no everlasting enemy." Sard smiled.

Looking around, Tiphotidis saw no other cardinals present, not to mention the pope.

"As you might notice, I'm the only grand cardinal here," Sard was still talking in a very calm tone, "because I'm very interested in the legendary archmage called Maskelyne, and the secret of the dimension called the World of Souls. You and Apsis must know about that."

"Risk... That's a big risk." Tiphotidis burst into a raucous laughter, "You greedy human beings. You think you can stop me on your own with a bunch of stupid shining magic circles? Tell me... would you dare tell Yaroran the complete truth?"

Sard was definitely well prepared. He shrugged easily, "Oh, I'm sorry... I'm not really on my own."

Rhine, in his black shirt and red long jacket, showed up behind the Great Master of Argent.

Without even looking back, Tiphotidis sneered, "Little filthy vampire."

Two pairs of huge, black bat wings bulged out of Rhine's back. And the aura of Rhine's darkness and evilness somehow matched the holy light surrounding Sard perfectly well. His eyes, instead of being the usual scarlet eyes a vampire had, were still silver.

"Long time no see, Tiphotidis. For your information, there are different kinds of vampires, but it seems that you've already forgotten me," greeted Rhine casually.

"Count Silver Eye, the Observer. It's you." Tiphotidis got serious.

...

Above Elsinore lake, the cardinals, gold knights, and night watchers floating in the sky besieged their enemies.

Within the circle, there was a male and a female.

The man in the black robe with brown hair and dark blue eyes was Rogerio, Mr. Deroni's business partner that Lucien actually met once before. According to Verdi's words, Rogerio and a radiant knight were supposed to be fighting against Camil at that moment.

The woman was very beautiful, and her silver gray eyes were very impressive. Wearing a dark purple robe, she looked rather cold. Slowly lifting up her hand, she pointed her finger at Ilia, his priests and the dark knights, who were very confused right now, and slightly moved her lips,

"Elements Resolve."

Immediately, Ilia, the level seven grand priest, was turned into a variety of different substances: black particles, smoke, small clusters of green wildfire, pungent sulphur powder, and even his great fiend power was being swiftly disintegrated.

Very soon, the level seven grand priest, plus his six great priests, twelve priests and all the dark knights were completely turned into colorful small particles floating the air. Soon afterwards, nothing was left of them.

Although the horrifying wraith wearing black robe was resolving as well, the colorful particles in the air did not disappear. A moment later, the particles reunited together and the monster appeared again.

"Apsis, go back to your Skeleton Land," the woman said shortly.

A shining gate suddenly emerged in front of the monster. After silently staring at the woman for a moment, the black-robed monster obediently stepped into the gate.

Then, the lake became peaceful again. Thanks to the timely arrival of the Church, the residents of the small town were saved.

"Now, you can go." The lady was still very cold. She commanded the powerful cardinals and knights to leave as if she was giving an order to her minions.

Amelton, Hayward and Rafati turned around silently and left submissively. Although they had no idea why she was there, they were more than grateful that she did not bother killing them.

After all, the lady was an arcanist. She was one of the greatest arcanists ever in history, Yaroran Hathaway, the Lord of Elements, who ranked the sixteenth place on the Church's Cleansing List.

After the Church and the people of the duchy left, Rogerio came in front of Hathaway and questioned her with a slight bit of anger, "Your Excellency, how can you violate the decision made by the lords of the congress?"

Taking a glance at Rogerio, Hathaway's silver gray eyes remained cold. "Did I agree to it? Without my consent, no decision is valid."

"But..." Rogerio tried to insist.

However, Hathaway cut him off directly, "Every grand arcanist has the power of veto, and you'd better keep this in mind. By the way, I don't want that there's anyone trying to poke their nose into the internal affairs of the Holm family."

After finishing her phrase, she disappeared in the air.

When Hathaway was gone, Rogerio's face suddenly became more relaxed, as if the anger he showed earlier was just something fake. Facing an internal power struggle among the grand arcanists, even an archmage needed to be very careful.

...

On the wildlands outside of Melzer Black Forest, bodies were overlapping each other.

Grabbing Verdi's neck with her right hand, Camil directly lifted him up, "Where's the princess?"

Verdi knew that he was totally hopeless now, and he sneered, "In the black forest. Maybe my knights have already found and killed her."

Camil grabbed his neck even tighter.

"Tell... tell me, Camil..." Verdi could not breathe and the words were squeezed out of his throat, "Did the grand duke... ask you... to kill my father?"

"Go to hell." Camil directly exploded Verdi's body into pieces with extremely powerful water spouts.

Until the last second of Verdi's life, he felt no regret.

Entering the black forest, Camil started to trace the smell of Natasha's blood. At some point ahead, she was a bit hesitant, since both directions had the smell.

...

Ghost Aloe looked completely different from common aloes. It had five long white leaves, as if its color had faded a long time ago. With transparent, long thorns growing on their tips, the leaves were very wrinkly, looking just like the skinny, wizened fingers of an old witch with long and sharp nails.

Natasha was feeling much better. She plucked the aloes and crumpled the leaves up. Some aloe sap came out.

"Lucien, you help me put them on my wounds, and I help you with the blood on your back."
Natasha did not feel shy at all.

Lucien knew that this was not a proper time to talk about proper manners between a man and a woman. He nodded and followed Natasha's request. When he was rubbing the small aloe balls on Natasha's wounds, he witnessed the great self-healing power of a grand knight: the wounds on her body were healing in a visible way.

"How do you feel?" Natasha joked, "First time seeing a girl's lower abdomen?"

Lucien thought silently in his mind that girls wearing bikini in his own world were a very common sight, and he should have seen way more girls' lower abdomen than Natasha, but he still answered seriously, "Horrible... many parts of your inner organs are damaged. I feel I'll have a nightmare."

"You should be grateful if we manage to survive the night and you can still have a chance to sleep in a bed while having a nightmare." Natasha laughed, "As long as my inner organs are not destroyed completely, for a grand knight such as me, whose power is close to that of a radiant knight and with a special Blessing, the situation is not too bad."

"We'll see..." Lucien frowned his eyebrows while he was still rubbing the aloe balls on Natasha's wounds.

"You don't believe me?" Natasha giggled, "I'll be alright, Lucien. Seriously, if we got lost in the forest and we needed to eat, you could cut piece of my heart, livers or kidneys off and roast them for food. Isn't that great?"

"Not really... Your Grace." Lucien released a long sigh. Sometimes he really had no idea how to deal with Natasha's sense of humor.

"Well..." Natasha added, "If I didn't get enough food, my body would stop recovering, and I would die, too, just like common people."

"I won't let it happen," answered Lucien calmly. "In ten minutes, we should be close to Massol River."

...

Aalto.

Tiphotidis, the Great Master of Argent, was tightly constrained by the many divine power circles controlled by Sard with all of his power.

In front of Tiphotidis, Rhine lifted up his right hand, and the huge bat wings were fully stretched open. Suddenly, the night sky lit up due to a full moon that appeared with its bright silver radiance.

The moon was becoming bigger and bigger, and also brighter and brighter.

Tiphotidis saw a blurry figure with blond hair inside the silver moon, and only the figure's scarlet eyes could be seen clearly. Slowly, the figure lifted up a sword.

The Great Master of Argent was shocked, "You can borrow the power?!"

With an evil smile, Rhine tilted his head slightly to one side, and he suddenly dropped his right hand with great speed. Simultaneously, the blond-haired figure hacked the sword downwards.

The silver moonlight blinded Tiphotidis's eyes when it heard Rhine's words, "Remember me whenever you see the moon."

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Chapter 132: The Place

Leading the night watchers, the several cardinals of the Church came back to Aalto. The city was still sleeping peacefully in the darkness, as tranquil as they left it earlier.

At this time, the red-robed cardinal, Vila Amelton, who was also one of the actual leaders of the Inquisition, suddenly stopped flying. A moment later, she turned to the Canon Holder, "Salvador, go back and find Lady Camil right now. She's searching for the princess in Melzer Black Forest."

Before Salvador responded to the command, Count Hayward, the vice commander of Violet Knights, burst out, "What happened to the princess?"

"In collusion with the Congress of Magic, Verdi ambushed the princess and tried to kill her. Natasha broke out of their siege and is now hiding in the black forest."

"What?! Verdi!" Rafati and Hayward looked shocked. They could not believe their ears.

The several other noble knights present also looked very shocked. However, the reason that they were astounded was because of the fact Verdi failed.

"Yes. Sard just informed me," Amelton answered shortly.

"I'll go with them." Hayward's brows knitted together tightly. Although he looked just like a twenty-something young man, he was actually more than a hundred and sixty years old. Hayward had witnessed countless conspiracies in his life, and now he had a sense of suspicion crawling into his mind. Hayward's intuition was telling him that the reason that they were sent to Elsinore Lake earlier tonight was much more sophisticated than he thought.

Salvador crossed himself, "Yes, my lord."

"Only truth lives forever." Amelton also crossed on her chest.

.....

Following Aaron's special ability of communicating with the shadows, Tod soon noticed a cluster of Ghost Aloe missing a few leaves.

"I knew they were going to use Ghost Aloe... We arrived just a bit too late." Tod was a bit pissed off, but then he turned to Aaron, "Any idea which direction they went?"

"The shadow told me..." Aaron scrutinized the surroundings carefully, "they're still around."

"That doesn't make any sense." Tod fiercely hacked the plant with his sword.

"There's only one explanation for this." Aaron said to Tod, "They jumped into the river."

Ghost Aloe often grew very close to water, and this cluster was not an exception. Not far away from the Ghost Aloe, there was a running creek connecting to Massol River.

"Then we just have to follow the water." Tod nodded, "They were injured way more seriously than us. We can catch them."

"What if they left the river and went back into the forest again?" asked Aaron, "I'm not a grand knight. I cannot get information from the shadows in the water."

"Well... then just pay close attention to the possible wet plants on both sides of the river. If they left the river, there must be a trail." Tod looked very confident, and the horrible, long wound on his face had almost recovered.

"All right." Although Aaron thought this strategy was relatively time-consuming, he could not think of a better solution.

Then they started to search along both sides of the river.

.....

After floating in the river for a short period of time, Lucien and Natasha left the water and went deep into the woods again.

When Lucien carried Natasha on his back again and was about to run away, Natasha reminded him, "Remember to hide our trail."

Natasha's wet hair was dripping water, and so was his black robe.

"Yes, you're right." Lucien nodded. He carefully put Natasha behind a tall and thick tree and then started to collect a kind of weird-looking bush that looked like hay to dry them out a bit.

"I'm afraid they can still trace us." Grabbing the plant, Lucien was worried, "This is not enough." Lucien was quite regretful that he never really paid attention to some of the first circle spells which were used for cleaning all kinds of trails when he was doing his magic structure analysis. At that time, he never thought they might be very useful one day.

"They're powerful knights. I wouldn't expect that we could completely get rid of them with a bunch of plants." Natasha was analyzing with her clear mind, "I know all the knights who were on Verdi's side and I know all their Blessings. Neither of them is really good at tracing, however, I can feel they're getting closer and closer."

"You can feel it?" Lucien got nervous, "I thought I did a good job..."

"You did, Lucien." Natasha slightly patted his shoulders, "I guess that, very possibly, there's a dark knight tracing us. And I'm thinking... when I recover a bit more, maybe we can try to fight back in order to kill this dark knight."

"I don't agree." Lucien shook his head, "What if it is Tod who's chasing us, instead of some random knights? Or what if the dark knight is also very powerful? What if they're using some magic items to trace us?"

Lucien knew very well that Natasha was a great risk taker, but he was not.

"Well... I hear your many 'what if', Lucien." Natasha slightly lifted her purple eyebrows, "I know that any of your 'what if' can easily kill us, but do we have another choice? Sooner or later, they'll find us."

Lucien lowered his head. He knew that what Natasha just said was correct.

"All right... we still have to be more prepared." Lucien looked up at the several faint stars in the sky and roughly estimated their location, "At least we'll wait until your power reaches the level of an ordinary knight."

"I'm afraid we don't have this much time." Natasha carefully checked herself and said to Lucien, "Although the worst impact on my body caused by my Blessing is gone, I still need a couple of hours to recover to the level that you just said."

Lucien's eyes slightly opened bigger as he suddenly remembered something important. Reaching his hand into his wet robe, Lucien took out a bunch of magic ingredients for making potions that he got from the archmage's storeroom and put them on the ground.

"Can any of these help you?" Lucien was a bit hesitant, "I... I got these from the archmage's place, to... to sell them for some money."

Lucien was a bit nervous.

Natasha did not really notice Lucien's awkwardness, and when she lowered her head, a surprised smile appeared on her face, "Aether... and vampire's blood! Awesome!"

Both Aether and vampire blood were ingredients for a very effective healing potion named Water Song. However, they were just raw materials, so Lucien felt quite worried. "Any side effect?" he asked.

Natasha already grabbed the tube of vampire's blood in her hand.

"Vampire's blood... After taking it, I might be bit afraid of sunlight for up to six months, and my blood might feel burning," answered Natasha casually. Then she pulled out the cork of the tube and smelled the blood, "Wow... It's a high grade vampire's blood! Good for the archmage!"

"Can you recover completely by taking it then?" asked Lucien.

"Well..." Natasha took a deep breath, "Not really... but if I push myself a bit harder and activated my Blessing again, I might get... probably up to three minutes with the power of a level five knight. After that... I'm done."

"Done!?" Lucien was shocked.

"No no no..." Natasha laughed, "I'm not going to die. I mean I won't be able to walk at all afterwards, and you will need to carry me all the way home."

"You'd better explain things a bit clearer in situations like that, you know." Lucien almost rolled his eyes.

"Lucien," Natasha became serious, "If Tod was not among them, three minutes would be enough for me to kill the rest of the knights."

"Then, what if Tod is the one coming after us..." Lucien needed to have a backup plan.

"Then I'd cover you by distracting Tod and the other grand knights, if there was any." Natasha said to Lucien, "Meanwhile, you handle the rest of them."

Natasha leaned her head against Lucien's shoulder to take a rest. Her purple eyes were bright, and her lips were pressing together in a thin line.

"You want to sacrifice yourself to let me survive?" Lucien asked her.

"Of course not!" Natasha suddenly straightened up her back as if she got scared, "I cherish my life a lot. Without Thunder, you wouldn't be able to face the knights on your own. Besides, I'm not gonna really fight against Tod. My duty will be to distract him. That's all. And you gotta lend me your sword, Alert."

"That's too dangerous for you. I don't agree." Lucien refused Natasha's suggestion, "You keep Thunder. I have a plan which can possibly kill them all, as long as they have no more than five knights chasing after us, and we can get to the place before they find us."

"What plan? What place?" Natasha was very surprised.

"You'll see when we get there." Lucien looked at Natasha's eyes seriously, "I cherish my life a lot as well. Trust me, Natasha."

Natasha confounded a moment, then she smiled, "I trust you, Lucien."

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Chapter 133: Lucien's Identity

"My Lord, the shadows say they're close." Rosan Aaron reported to Tod in a very low voice.

Grabbing his sword tight, Tod looked around with great caution.

He saw tall firs, assorted kinds of bushes... and there was a unique smell of earth in Tod's nose. Everything here looked identical to the rest of the black forest, except for a strange-shaped huge stone.

"There's no river here... and the shadow doesn't lie... Where are they?" Aaron murmured.

"Watch out!" In the next second, Tod fiercely pushed Aaron away, knocking him down, and at the same time he lifted up his left hand and produced a square-shaped iron shield with his Blessing.

When Aaron was slammed to the ground, Natasha had already jumped down from a big tall fir and attacked with her Thunder with all her strength.

Tod's shield cracked instantly, and he could not believe his eyes.

However, Natasha's sword, whose momentum was greatly reduced by the iron shield, also did not go as far as she intended. A big dent appeared in Tod's armor, but he was not hurt.

"Damn it! My power's not full yet!" Natasha swore a bit in her mind. She was very confident that she could kill the dark knight Aaron with that one strike, but she failed.

Although he felt rather confused, Tod immediately produced a new iron shield out of the pieces of the previous broken one.

Knowing that she had lost her chance, Natasha turned around and ran away at her full speed toward the other side of the black forest.

Tod soon realized that it must be a potion that was boosting Natasha's remaining strength. He knew that this kind of boosting would not last long. Pulling out his sword, he started to chase after her.

He did not care about Aaron. As soon as Natasha showed up, Aaron's job was done.

With one running in the front and the other chasing after, soon they both disappeared among the tall trees.

Using the momentum of the movement that knocked him down, Aaron quickly rolled backwards to get on his feet. He was also very surprised that Natasha could burst out that kind of power after being injured so seriously. When Aaron was about to follow Tod, a second black figure fiercely jumped down from the tree, and the sword lifted by him was shining with a terrifying light.

...

After a bit more than ten seconds, the distance between Tod and Natasha became smaller and smaller. Tod could tell that Natasha's power hadn't recovered to level five, since Natasha was definitely faster than him in the past, but right now he would be able to catch her!

When Tod was only a few steps away from Natasha, the princess turned around and started to fight back.

Easily blocking her strike with his sword named Blood, Tod sneered, "This is not going to be enough, Your Grace."

Natasha's eyes turned into light gray again as she kept hacking, thrusting, blocking and dodging.

The loud bangs from the metals colliding with each other slightly shook the ground, and the strong airflow caused by that overthrew the nearby bushes, stones and some rotten branches of the firs.

"I thought the more seriously injured you were, the more powerful you would be." Tod was good at disturbing his enemy's mental state, "It looks like your potion doesn't really help you that much, uh?"

"Are you a knight? Or you're just a talker, Tod?" Natasha's Thunder never stopped attacking. Her eyes were full of determination.

After blocking all of the princess's fierce attacks, Tod started to fight back following the formal knight training he received, "There's nothing wrong with talking while fighting, Your Grace. After all, it is good that I can still spare the effort to talk, isn't it?"

Natasha could not deny that. She felt that her boosted power had started to fade slowly.

"Were it not for the annoying sword you're using, you'd be dead already!" Tod continued talking to distract Natasha.

Thunder was a perfect counter to his Iron Blood since Tod's iron skin was an ideal conductor.

"However, your power is not gonna last long, Your Grace. I'm not in a hurry," said Tod sarcastically.

Natasha did not bother bickering back, instead, she stayed even more focused on her movement, attack and defense. She was a very well-trained knight, and she was also one of the most talented knights ever of the Church. She believed that her hard training was worth a lot, even without her Blessing.

Her powerful Blessing enabled her to manage almost every one of her breakthroughs relatively easily, and in her previous fights she had always been in a more advantageous position. However, the battle she experienced earlier tonight and the one she was facing right now gave Natasha the first chance to learn more about her own power.

The power of her Blessing and her physical strength started to blend together in perfect harmony. If it could be commented that she usually fought using the power given by God, now Natasha was fighting as a human being, relying on her own willpower and the lessons that she learned before in her tough training.

Tod noticed the difference in the way that Natasha positioned herself in this fight. Although she did not burst out any astonishing power, and neither her strength or speed were improved, Tod knew that he needed to be more cautious.

...

Grabbing Alert with both of his hands, Lucien jumped down toward Aaron from above, hacking with his sword.

Aaron's reaction was fast. He raises the black dagger in his right hand to block the fierce attack, summoned his black fire on his left fist and aimed a punch at Lucien's abdomen.

"Clang!"

When the weapons touched, Lucien's sword left a small gap on the edge of Aaron's weapon. In the next moment, Lucien pulled back his sword and dematerialized his body into moonlight to avoid Aaron's fist.

"Not even of a real knight's power!" Aaron sneered. When he recognized Lucien, he became more confident.

As a dark knight, Aaron was even faster than Lucien, not to mention his reaction speed and strength.

Lucien kept a distance away from Aaron by using his sword, which was longer than the enemy's weapon. However, Lucien noticed that the black fire covering the dagger could slowly corrode the Alert's blade.

Aaron chose not to launch his attack in the front, instead, he tried to approach Lucien from different angles, and his movements were not meant to actually damage, but more to probe.

It was not a waste of time for Aaron, and he was actually very smart. Since Aaron was much more powerful, there must be a reason why Lucien would be confident enough to ambush him like that. The only possible explanation, based on what just happened to Verdi, was that Lucien had some magic items.

Aaron needed to keep moving around, in case any of Lucien's magic item could lock him as the target.

Lucien was not as fast as Aaron, and soon his body was covered by wounds left by Aaron's dagger. Although these wounds were small and not deep, they were covered with small clusters of black fire. As if they were alive, the clusters of fire were trying to enter into Lucien's body through the small wounds to suck his strength.

With another quick attack, Aaron's dagger tore down a piece of cloth in front of Lucien's chest, revealing the amulet Sun's Corona, that Lucien was wearing on his neck.

"Look at you." As he was swiftly moving around, it sounded like Aaron's voice was coming from all directions, "You're nobody, but you have a fine sword, a nice magic ring, and even a badge from the Church. I wonder if you are Natasha's secret lover, haha."

Lucien was still wielding his sword to block Aaron's attack as much as possible.

"But that's okay," said Aaron. "Soon, they will all be mine."

As Aaron was talking, he was trying to recall and calculate how many times Lucien had activated his magic items. Then, Aaron's attack became fiercer and fiercer, since he wanted to force Lucien into using the two items in case there was still any power left in them.

Lucien seemed to be pretty weak, and all he could do was stand there and wield his sword. For a couple of times, he could not even stand on his feet since the black fire was eating up his strength.

After testing Lucien by pushing him into his limit countless times, Aaron believed that the young man had already used all the power in his magic items for that night.

Before Aaron launched his new round of attacks, Lucien's legs were already too weak to support his weight. With a twist in his ankles, Lucien fell over in front of the strange-shaped stone.

Aaron almost felt amused by this scene, "Are you kidding me? Jumping toward me from the tree was all that you had prepared? Very touching... you want to die for your beloved princess?"

Lifting his dagger again, this time Aaron targeted Lucien's back neck!

Suddenly, a thin, arc-shaped shield appeared above Lucien and stopped Aaron's dagger.

Neither of his magic items was shining. It was Lucien's own power.

"A sorcerer?!"

Lots of memories and thoughts flashed across Aaron's mind, his eyes suddenly opened wide,

"You're... Professor?!"

"Am I?" Lucien turned around and a mysterious smile appeared on Lucien's face. At the same time, Lucien pulled out his right hand from the dirt, in which there was a dark red bracelet.

Before Aaron managed to turn himself into a shadow and back away from Lucien, a powerful fire ball suddenly burst out from the bracelet and pushed Aaron backward fiercely.

"Farewell, Mr. Aaron." Lucien nodded, smiling.

Level three high rank magic item, Fire Weaver Bracelet, previously owned by Fire Wolf, which was enchanted with two magic spells: Flame Shield, a second circle spell, twice a day; and Fireball, third circle spell, twice a day.

The fireball covering Aaron's upper body blazed. When Aaron's body hit the ground a second later, only the lower part was left.

When Lucien stood up holding the bracelet, he heard Natasha's familiar voice, "Professor...?!"

Turning around, Lucien saw Natasha standing on the other side with Thunder in her hand, looking rather shocked.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 134: The Ring

This idea occurred to Lucien when the surroundings in the black forest became more and more familiar to him. He remembered that, after he found Fire Wolf dead, he buried his two magic items there.

During the past couple of months, Lucien had gained a better understanding of the inner structures of the two magic items, Fire Weaver Bracelet, and the black iron dagger, called Grimsteel Dagger, and had also become capable of properly using them.

That was why Lucien was being that confident when he was talking to the princess. What was out of his expectation was that, although Aaron was only a level two knight, he was surprisingly cautious, and his carefulness forced Lucien to spend more time on killing him. Also, Lucien did not expect that Natasha would come back within such a short period of time.

Although Lucien was not sure whether Natasha witnessed everything or just a part, he clearly heard Natasha repeat the word "Professor".

...

A little while before Lucien pull out the bracelet.

Natasha gradually started to get an upper hand in this fighting. Although Tod's body was fully materialized into iron, he felt the great power in each of Natasha's attacks, and he could tell that the aura surrounding her had changed.

The princess' movement was becoming more and more aggressive, and her whole will was dedicated to this fight. Her attacks were as fast as raindrops hitting the ground. Even Natasha herself had no idea how many times she wielded her sword.

She did not feel tired anymore. She could not feel it.

The color of her eyes switched back and forth from silver gray to purple, and finally the two colors blended. At the same time, Natasha's soul and body integrated.

With a sudden shout, the princess burst out great power. Her legs were bent slightly and then fiercely pushed off the ground with her maximum force.

She bounced up high and, at the same time, lifted up her sword with both of her hands.

Tod looked up and decided to fight back, since it seemed his tactic of attrition was not going to work anyway.

He lifted the square shield in front of him and adjusted the angle of his wrist a bit, so his sword would target Natasha's waist.

However, by the time Tod lifted his sword, Natasha's figure suddenly became transparent, and the great power of her sword was like from another world, which directly hacked his shield into two halves.

As a matter of fact, what was hacked into halves was more than Tod's iron shield, but also his own body. The iron shield did not manage to reduce the great momentum of the sword at all.

The astonished look on his face suddenly froze when he was split into halves.

"Bang!"

Tod's iron skin was still covered by metal when his body fell on the ground, colliding with his sword and making a loud metallic sound.

Natasha landed heavily and quickly rolled over to the side. After gasping a few times for air, she stood up and started to rush back for Lucien.

When she arrived, Natasha ran into the scene where Lucien was kneeling on the ground, looking rather weak, and the dark knight was about to stab his dagger toward Lucien's back.

At that moment when Natasha was about to jump out to rescue Lucien, she saw that Lucien activated his magic shield again, and then, Lucien pulled out a scarlet bracelet from the dirt.

She heard the dark knight calling Lucien... Professor.

Natasha's mind suddenly buzzed.

She recalled that the Church did mention a dark red bracelet missing in the case related to Professor.

The potion that helped Lucien with activating his Blessing... the missing heretic who was following Lucien from Argent Horn... Lucien's great interest in the ancient books... and his great memory... and the fact that Lucien suddenly showed up tonight from the magic lock.

"Professor...?!"

Natasha could not find any excuse to lie to herself.

...

Lucien could tell the mixed emotions in Natasha's beautiful eyes, in which there was astonishment, pain, sadness and anger.

Grabbing the bracelet tightly in his hand, Lucien was ready to activate it at any time, although he clearly knew that, facing a level five grand knight, these spells would not really work.

At the same time, there was a voice in Lucien's mind telling him that he might still be able to lie to the princess again, to make another garbled story.

When Lucien was about to talk, Natasha said to him first, in a deep and low voice, "Go to Holm, then."

"...?" Lucien did not really get it. And he noticed that the color of Natasha's eyes had changed. Instead of dream-like purple or silver gray, now her eyes looked purplish gray, which was a mysterious but also pure color.

"You should go to Holm. The headquarter of the Congress of Magic is there. If you want to become a great sorcerer like Silvia, you should go there, Lucien." Natasha repeated, then she squinted her eyes a bit and slightly lifted her chin, "Or should I call you Professor... No one is a better actor than you, do you know that?"

"I never meant to hurt you." Lucien relaxed a bit seeing that Natasha was not planning on killing him, "I admit that I lied to you many times, but I had no other choice."

"You're not the only one who was lying to me all the time, and I'm used to it already." The corner of Natasha's lips slightly curled up in a sad way, "But I could tell, when you were playing Pathetique... I could tell the pain and stress that you were suffering. After all, Aalto is not a good place to study magic."

"You don't hate me... as a sorcerer?" asked Lucien. Although he knew that in the past, Natasha's attitude toward sorcerers was actually relatively mild compared with the Church and other nobles, after Silvia's betrayal, Lucien was not sure about the princess's standpoint now.

Looking at Lucien, Natasha answered seriously, "My mom was a very talented sorceress, and she was the most beautiful and nice lady in the world. To me, one being a sorcerer does not mean they must be a vicious person. I don't judge a person based on his or her identity, but on the person's behavior."

Then, she smiled gently, "Of course, I'm very angry and sad knowing that you were lying to me all the time, but like you said, you never tried to take advantage of me, or hurt me, instead, you've been helping me all the time, and you saved my life tonight, carrying me on your back all the way here."

"I regarded you as my friend all this time, although you're the honorable princess, and although there were lies between us," said Lucien sincerely.

"I know," said Natasha, and then she slightly shook her head, "Honestly, the moment when I heard that you were the notorious Professor, lots of details flashed across my mind... those details about you that I felt suspicious, but refused to dig into them. Even when I met you earlier, when we were besieged, I was almost certain that you were a sorcerer, and I still believed that you'd be on my side and fight for me. I would never link you to Professor, though, who killed so many night watchers. I think I trusted you even more than I knew."

"I killed them because they wanted to kill me," Lucien confessed sincerely. "I never wished to kill, never, but, again, like I said, I did not have another choice."

Then both of them fell silent.

After a long time, Natasha released a long sigh.

"You know what?" said Natasha, "Although your hands are covered with blood, I still want to be your friend."

Lucien suddenly became speechless.

"Thankfully, you never hurt my royal knights, or I wouldn't be able to have you as my friend anymore." Natasha started to walk toward Lucien, "But you never, and you never tried to hurt me, so why shall I care?"

A sweet smile appeared on Natasha's face, as if she had got rid of the negative emotions from the shock. As she stopped in front of Lucien, the princess asked, "Dear Mr. Professor, except your

identity, did you ever lie to me about something else...? Say... your love experience? I've always felt you're pretty experienced."

"No... I'm totally not experienced..." Lucien's face flushed.

Then, Natasha took a small step backward and started to look at Lucien up and down, "Actually your face is quite good-looking. You would be a very beautiful girl if you were a girl."

"Uh?" Lucien was confused. He could not really follow the way Natasha changed the topic.

"I mean... magic is sure wonderful and powerful. Although it's hard, it's not impossible to change your gender. I heard that a grand arcanist once made a girdle that could help people do that, and maybe you want to give it a shot?"

Lucien rolled his eyes and said seriously, "That's not gonna happen. I'm a man."

Noticing that Lucien did not like this kind of joke, Natasha's sense of propriety made her stop. Then, she said to Lucien seriously, "I have something to give you."

She took off an old ring from her right hand and handed it to Lucien.

"This is..." Lucien took it over.

"You don't know anything about Holm Crown prize?" said Natasha, "It looks like you never received any formal sorcerer training following a mentor from the congress. If you did, you would certainly recognize this ring."

"I'm pretty much on my own... when it comes to studying magic, unfortunately," Lucien answered.

"Well... I told you that my mom was a very talented sorcerer, and this ring was the award she received for winning the Holm Crown prize in her early twenties... should be twenty three." Natasha explained.

Honestly speaking, Lucien felt this ring was very ordinary, which looked just like a common iron ring people wore for practicing archery.

"I know... it doesn't look any different, right?" Looking at the ring, Natasha's voice became softer, and there was a gentle smile on her face, "The ring was a very powerful level seven magic item back in the days, but now it is damaged and is beyond repair. It was once called the finest ring across this continent."

Lucien turned the ring around, and he noticed that there was a small word "Mo" on the surface of the ring, and a small line of letters carved on its inner side, "Year 781. Holm Crown. To Ms. Meredith Hoffenberg."

"Holm Crown prize is the award co-established by Holm Royal Magic Academy and the organization named the Will of Element from the Congress of Magic. The purpose of setting up Holm Crown prize is to acknowledge the great contribution made by the great sorcerers and sorceresses in the Element School."

"So, your mom won the prize at the age of twenty three? That's... that's brilliant." Lucien gently rubbed the ring with respect.

"She was really a genius!" said Natasha with great pride, "She was awarded the prize for her finding of a metallic element which is lighter than water by introducing electromagnetics to the field of element study. She named the metallic element 'Mo', and so the ring was also named 'Mo'."

"I never realized that you had this profound knowledge of the world of magic," said Lucien, "You never mentioned."

"We are in Aalto, and I'm the princess. I can't mention anything about it. Besides, what I just introduced was not profound at all. When you get to Holm, you'll see a completely different world," said Natasha. "Since the prize was set up, within the past two hundred and seventy years or so, only twenty four sorcerers and sorceresses were qualified for this prize. Now I'm giving this unique ring to you as a keepsake, and also a proof of your identity when you get to the congress."

Chapter 135: Life is More than Just Magic (The End of the First Volume)

Chapter 135: Life is More than Just Magic (The End of the First Volume)

Holding the ring in his hand, Lucien said to Natasha sincerely, "Thank you, Natasha. Your mother was a real genius. I hope one day I will be able to make such a contribution as well."

"Yes, she was, and I believe you will as well." Looking at the distance, Natasha was immersed in the memory of her mother, "When my mom won the award, she was only a junior-rank mage, but later she left the best place for studying magic and came to the city, a city which was notorious for its way of treating sorcerers and sorceresses, all for her love."

"For the grand duke... Your parents' love story is probably the most romantic story across this continent." Lucien smiled.

"My mom was clearly aware of what she wanted." Natasha nodded, "After she tried many times to use different potions to awaken her Blessing, but failed because of her fragile health, she found her own path in the world of magic, which matched her perfectly well."

"Each person has his or her own value." Admiring the grand duchess very much, Lucien asked out of curiosity, "May I know what happened later to your mom?"

"I've mentioned my mother's health was fragile, and it was not getting any better after my mother and father got married. Her body and soul had been corroded by many magic elements over the years, and when my elder brother died in battle, her health condition took a sudden downwards turn and since then she never really managed to recover from it."

"I'm very sorry, Natasha. I believe she must be very proud seeing her daughter becoming such an outstanding knight in heaven," said Lucien sincerely.

Natasha slightly shook her head and grinned, "You're a sorcerer. Do you really believe in heaven?"

"... I'm not sure." Lucien was speechless for a while before replying, since this question never occurred to him.

"I wonder if my mom believed in heaven, as a sorceress." Natasha looked up in the sky, "But I know that after she got married with my father, she was still secretly studying magic."

"Really?" Lucien was very surprised, "What about the Church?"

"She missed Holm so much, the wonderland for learning magic, and my father loved her too much to forbid my mom from doing her magic experiments. Besides, her health condition didn't really allow her to do something else too much. And the Church..."

She put on an ambiguous smile.

"This ring must mean a lot to you, Natasha." Knowing that Natasha somehow could not explain the reason for him, Lucien switched the topic, "I don't know if I should accept it."

"It's okay, Lucien." Natasha also lowered her head and looked at the ring, "The object is not important. What's really important is my love for my mom. Whether the ring is with me or not, my love for her is life-long."

Lucien nodded and put the ring back into one of the pockets of his robe.

"By the way," Natasha reminded him, "don't casually just show this ring around. Sometimes an extra help can also bring you trouble, you know."

"I understand," said Lucien seriously, "Is the vampire's blood affecting you right now? Let me carry you back to Aalto."

"I appreciate it, but look at me... I'm fine now." Natasha waved her hands, "You'd better leave as soon as possible. People from the Church might be on their way here right now."

"Then... Natasha, you take care." Lucien suddenly had no idea how to say farewell, especially he was not sure if they would see each other again.

In contrast, Natasha remained relatively calm, and something just occurred to her, "Lucien, you want to keep using your current identity, Lucien Evans, the musician, after you leave?"

"Can I?" Lucien was very surprised. He was planning on changing to another brand new identity when he arrived at Holm, in case the people he knew would get into any trouble because of him.

"I believe it's fine. After all, your name's not unique at all, even in Aalto. Just don't tell people in Holm that you are a musician." Natasha shrugged, "I suggest that you continue to publish some new music pieces, if you can send any to me, which will be a pretty good disguise for you."

"I'll try my best." Lucien also did not want to just give up his music completely after leaving Aalto.

After agreeing on how to send letters, Lucien took the Fire Weaver Bracelet, Aaron's Asthenia Dagger, Grimsteel Dagger and Alert with him, and left the triple-headed flail to Natasha, since it was too clumsy for him to carry.

"I'll take care of your friends. No worries, Lucien." Natasha smiled.

"Thank you. I'm so lucky to have you as my friend, Natasha." Lucien expressed his heartfelt thanks, then he turned around.

"Lucien..." Natasha called his name from behind.

"Yes?" Lucien looked back.

"Remember, life is more than just magic. You have music, and you have friends." Natasha waved her hand.

"I'll keep that in mind." Lucien grinned.

...

After a while, when Lucien had completely disappeared in the woods, the smile on Natasha's face faded, and she commanded seriously,

"Show yourself. You've been listening for quite a while."

"As you wish, Your Grace." Salvador, the leader of the night watchers, slowly appeared in the sky and landed in front of Natasha. His hand was tied with a piece of white handkerchief.

"Why didn't you take any action right away?" asked Natasha directly.

"Apparently, you care for this guy a lot, Your Grace. I wouldn't have any chance of killing him in front of you, although, yes, I wanted it very much... This damned Professor."

"I see," said Natasha coldly. "Then why did you choose to stay? You want to talk to me?"

"Yes, Your Grace." Salvador answered, "I want a deal for keeping this secret for you, Your Grace."

"Ah?" Natasha was almost amused, "You don't want to take revenge for the dead night watchers anymore? I thought you were pretty determined."

"I was and I still am," said Salvador calmly. "But I cannot miss this chance... the chance of climbing up towards a higher status in the Church, and cooperating with the princess. I already gave up so many things and now I'm walking in the darkness... all because..."

"Not interested." Natasha cut him off directly.

"All right..." Salvador paused a bit, "Let's get to the main point. To be more specific, I want...!!!"

Before the next word jumped out from Salvador's mouth, Natasha rushed and hacked her sword directly toward him, without any hesitation.

In the next second, Salvador was split into two halves by the sword.

"No one dare threaten me," said Natasha coldly.

There was no blood coming out of Salvador's body, and his body was dissolving into small shining pieces in the air. Before his body completely disappeared, his last remaining awareness turned into his voice, "Radiant... knight?"

After another ten minutes, Camil showed up from the other side of the forest, carrying Wyon and Cacharel under her arms, who were both unconscious.

"Natasha, you're a radiant knight now." Camil recognized Natasha's change right away, "It seems like this bitter fight turned out to be your great chance to make this breakthrough. Congratulations, Natasha. I'm very proud of you."

Natasha smiled, but in a sad way.

...

When Natasha and Camil came back to Aalto, the sun was rising above the horizon. After comforting the grand duke who had been tortured by his worry and anger for the whole night, Natasha went directly to the Golden Cathedral.

In a confessional, Natasha found Sard, who was praying silently there.

"Grand cardinal, I need to confess," said Natasha in a low voice.

"God's here." Slowly, Sard opened his eyes.

"I killed a night watcher... I killed Mr. Salvador." Natasha crossed herself.

"I don't see your penitence." Hearing that the leader of the night watchers was killed, Sard showed no emotion.

"I feel no regret. This was my choice, and I'm willing to accept the punishment for the choice I made," answered Natasha seriously.

"Why did you kill him?" Sard asked.

Natasha did not answer.

Sard slowly stood up. Compared with yesterday, he looked much older, "I'll report to the pope. He will be deciding the punishment to your sin. You stay here, Natasha."

After Sard left, veins in Natasha's face and her hands started to swell and burn. Her beautiful face contorted out of the great pain. However, she kept kneeling on the ground in front of the big cross without giving out a single groan.

...

In a bright, simple study, there was a white-haired elder sitting in front of the desk.

He said to the cardinal gently, "Natasha confessed her sin, and God forgives anyone who's willing to confess. Natasha's honest, and now she's a radiant knight. The punishment shall not be too harsh. Send her to the lowest abbey in Aalto for three years."

"Yes, my pope." The cardinal slowly left the room.

The pope picked up a small pile of paper in front of him, on which there were a bunch of fractions of words which did not really make sense,

"He seemed to be okay with my speech..."

"He often looked confused..."

"Maybe he started to vacillate now..."

...

Following the instruction for anti-tracking given by Natasha, Lucien came back to Massawa around nine in the morning. The sun was already shining brightly in the air.

Before entering the small town, Lucien took out all the stuff from the pockets and burned down his black sorcerer robe.

Lucien did not see Joyce and his coachman around. After talking to the owner of the hotel, Lucien got to know that they all fled away because of the chaos happened in Bonn last night.

Putting on a worried look, Lucien was actually cheering in his mind. He said to the hotel owner, "That's too bad then. I gotta hire another coach and some guards on my own. Can you please send word to the association that it was me who terminated the contract with them on my own? This way, the association won't trouble them. After all, I understand their fear."

"What a kind gentleman you are!" The owner of the hotel took out a pen and paper and praised Lucien, "And it won't be too difficult for you to hire some new people, sir, since lots of adventurers and residents from Bonn are right now staying in our town."

After signing his name on the letter written by the hotel owner, Lucien went back to his room and started to prepare for his new journey.

(The End of the First Volume)

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 136: Dragon Tooth Tavern

The Second Volume: The Feast of Death

"Bang!" The heavy door of the tavern named Dragon Tooth hit the wall as it was suddenly opened by someone with brute force. The grumbling drunkards, bragging adventures and shouting mercenaries who were enjoying the well-known roasted beef of the tavern suddenly quieted down.

A black-haired young man walked in, dressing in light blue, with a fancy sword at his side. The midday sunlight came in behind him and outlined the young man's silhouette.

"Wow... wow! A young lord! Is your fancy sword able to kill a wild dog?" A drunkard shouted and whistled.

"Another young man got deceived by those bestselling knight novels," an adventurer whispered in the ear of his buddy, "...seeking those exciting stories with a ritual sword."

However, he dared not speak too loud. What if this young man was someone important? After all, he dressed very decently.

Lucien did not care. With a stable pace, he walked directly to the tavern counter.

After two-months of traveling, Lucien arrived at this small border town named Dragon Tooth in the duchy of Djibouti, located in the middle south of the continent.

"Look at his arm! No big muscles!" A robust adventurer lifted and bent his right arm. Under the skin there were lean and big chunks of muscles, "Look at his build! I bet he's not even a of a knight squire level! Young and stupid lad!"

"You think everyone can awaken the Blessing? You have to be kidding me..." A stout man, probably with the blood of dwarf, said in an arrogant way, "I've been traveling across the continent for more than ten years, and I'm still only about... high-level knight squire level. But, but... if this young guy can have a chance to receive my instruction, maybe he can still awaken his Blessing. After all, it was because of my training that lord Newville in Eero finally awakened his Blessing..."

Some guys sitting around him gave him an admiring look, although Chris had boasted about that many times in the past, which made him even happier.

Lucien just ignored them, came to the counter and sat down on a stool.

The owner of the tavern did not look young. Seeing this decently dressed young man in this small tavern, the owner did not behave any different.

"My friend, what do you want today? Wine or meat? Or both?" friendly asked the owner.

"Water, roast beef, and a salad." Lucien slightly nodded to greet him back. "And I want to ask some questions."

The middle south of the continent was surrounded by mountains and canyons. The isolated land produced no resource except wood, and it was the poorest and the least developed area across the continent. Often, there wouldn't be even a single person who was literate in a village.

For the people who were striving to awaken their Blessings there, the effort they had to make was way higher than people in Aalto. It had been a lot of years since the last war broke out here, and therefore, even if one manage to awaken his or her Blessing, the person still couldn't obtain a title and would not be given land and field, unless they could save enough money to buy the land on their own.

"Hahaha! Water... You heard that? Water!" A drunkard nearby laughed aloud, "Innocent, naive young boy!"

And all the people in the tavern started to laugh.

Lucien remained very calm as if nothing was going on there. He was just looking at the owner.

"No problem, my friend. Information is not free, though." The owner poured a cup of water for Lucien, and asked the kitchen to prepare the food.

"I know. It's fine." Lucien took a sip of the water.

Before he entered here, Lucien had found out that the town's Adventurers' Association was just in this very tavern, and the owner was also the person in charge of it.

"Then, go ahead." The owner nodded.

"I want to know where is Mr. Taylor Hunt living right now. He was an official in Bonn from the Duchy of Orvarit, and nine years ago, he was invited by Baron Eric to come to Djibouti to be the civil servant here."

Taylor Hunt was the father of the little revenant girl that Lucien encountered in the World of Souls. Lucien rerouted his trip in order to fulfill his words, and also, since he was not in a rush, he also appreciated the unique and exotic cities he visited on his new route.

"We don't charge for something like this. It's not called intelligence..." The owner waved his hand a bit, "I'll just tell you for free. The civil servant on Baron Eric's land is not Mr. Hunt. I'm guessing the person you're looking for might have accepted another offer. If you want, you can go to the nearby city, Korsor, to see if there is any record in the town hall, since Korsor belongs to Baron Eric's lord, Viscount Stanley. And if you can't find it there, you might need to go to Baron Eric's land and ask for local information."

"Thanks. Any news across the continent recently?" It took Lucien ten days sitting in a coach and going through mountains and hills to arrive here, and he felt he was as isolated as this place right now, maybe even more.

"One news for one Nar. Is it okay?" The owner smiled.

"Ten, please." Lucien directly took out a Thale and placed it on the counter.

The adventurers and mercenaries were very surprised, and their eyes were staring at the shining coin. After all, they had to spend two to three months to make one single Thale, and this young noble man was just using it for buying some random news!

A few of them were even considering if they should just rob this young man.

The beef was ready. Lucien picked up the fork and took a bite. The meat was juicy and tender, which was surprisingly as good as the dishes produced in those fancy restaurants in Aalto.

The tavern owner pulled out a piece of crumpled paper and read it slowly to Lucien, "Two months ago, Aalto..." The owner paused a bit and looked at Lucien, "a small town in Aalto, Bonn, was attacked by a necromancer. The famous musician, known as the Most Beautiful Musician, Silvia, as well as her father, died in the battle in which the princess of the duchy, Natasha, finally beat the evil necromancer with all her effort. Unfortunately, the princess was severely injured from the fight and now she is recuperating in an abbey. It is said that Natasha also made a breakthrough in this fight and has become a radiant knight."

Lucien did not show any difference after hearing the news, although his heart was cheering for Natasha's achievement. No wonder the side effect of the vampire's blood did not affect her immediately in the forest.

If moving from a squire level to a level one knight was challenging, upgrading from a grand knight to a radiant knight was even more difficult. The great power of a grand knight came from the person's physical strength, in other words, a grand knight would need to boost or overly stimulate his or her body to get the power, and that was why some of the grand knights lived even shorter than the knights of lower ranks. Even with the help of some precious herbs and potions, most of them could only make it to around a hundred years old, while becoming a radiant knight meant that the person already broke the limit of human body, and he or she could at least live for more than two hundred years.

The rest of the intelligence was of nothing really special. Generally speaking, the north and the heresy again had some new conflicts; several major lords in Gusta down in the south were raising

mercenaries for the possible coming civil war; and some adventurers found some ruins in the southern margin of the Dark Mountain Range, where they obtained a great amount of fortune...

After hearing the news and finishing his meal, Lucien wiped his mouth with a white handkerchief and said to the owner, "Sir, can you find me some guards and a coach? I need to go to Korsor."

Although Lucien was already strong enough to travel along the east side of the continent, he did not want to bother dealing with those minions, goblins, and other beasts, which were not even of knight squire level. Lucien would rather spend his time in his coach studying the first circle magic spells.

Within his two-month traveling, Lucien constructed another five first circle spells in his soul, and right now his soul had reached the current limit for that level. For the rest of the first circle spells, if Lucien wished to use them, he needed to rely on some magic reagents and materials, or their special runes.

The five first circle spells were: Magic Missile, Sleep, Grease, Feather Fall and Color Spray.

Because most of the adventurers and mercenaries were not willing to leave their own base of operations for too long, they would only escort their client within a certain range, what also applied to the coachmen. Thus, Lucien had to hire new people every now and again.

"Smart choice. We have lots of dark tales about vampires and black sorcerers." The owner put several glass cups back onto the counter, "I can take care of your coach and coachman, my friend. It will take you 11 days to get to Korsor. As for your guards, I recommend those three adventurers sitting on the other side. Two of them are warriors of the same level as high level knight squires, and the archer is also around knight squire level. All of them have a pretty good reputation. You can talk to them."

Following the direction of the tavern owner, Lucien looked toward the other side. There were two women and one man sitting over there. The short-haired man's arms were masculine. And the two females looked a bit alike, although one was mature and glamorous, and the other was young and pretty. From their appearance, especially their pointy long ears, Lucien guessed that they might be sisters from the half-elf race.

All of the three adventurers were listening carefully to the bard playing in the corner, and from time to time, they were beating out the tune.

Translator's Thoughts

Kris_Liu Kris_Liu

Hello guys! This is WMX, the editor of Throne of Magical Arcana! I'd like to thank you for supporting us up to this point, and that we love the theories you've been coming up with! We're doing our best so you can enjoy this masterpiece, but if there is any suggestion you'd like to make, feel free to talk to me in the Discord. Now, let's start volume two, and may it be as astonishing as the first one!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 137: Strangers as Companions

"The nightingale is singing. In the air, her voice was floating..."

The bard's singing, although in that small border town, was actually pretty beautiful and alluring. Thus, when Lucien came to sit down on the other side of their table, the half-elf girl with light brown hair was a bit surprised and her back straightened up immediately.

When Lucien explained his intention, the elder elf-looking lady was amused, "You want to hire us?"

Her fair hand was gently knocking on the wooden table in a fixed rhythm.

Looking at Lucien sitting in front of her, the sophisticated lady also took him as a young noble lord who had read too many adventure novels and was acting on the impulse to explore the continent.

"Yes," Lucien nodded calmly, "I want to go to Korsor. I wonder if you three are willing to be my guards."

The lady did not answer Lucien directly, instead, she started her introduction, "I'm Joanna, Greatsword Warrior. This is my husband Simon, Sword and shield Warrior. Both of us have the same power of a high level knight squire. This is my younger sister Betty, a well-trained archer. Her rank's a bit lower than ours, but not by much. So, as you can see, my distinguished client, we're a bit pricy, but our reputation is pretty good."

"I heard that from the owner already," said Lucien. "That's why I came to you directly."

"Haha, Hansen really promotes us very well." Joanna laughed aloud.

Lucien could tell that a bunch of the adventurers and mercenaries sitting nearby looked a bit irritated when Joanna was talking. However, they could not deny that they were very good guards and the arrangement of their team was very reasonable — two for the melee, and one for the ranged attacks.

"Joanna... Let's take the job! I'm planning on going to Korsor myself anyway." Betty looked pretty excited, "I heard that the talented musician named Burt from the duchy is gonna host a concert in Korsor these days!"

Joanna rolled her eyes toward her younger sister. Betty simply could never tell when she was supposed to talk, and when she must not. Betty stuck out her tongue toward Joanna for a second and then shut her mouth up tightly. However, her eyes were looking at Lucien, and her pointy ears slightly trembled.

"How much do you want, Joanna?" asked Lucien directly. He did not really care about the price since he still had eight-five Thales with him after the two-month travel.

"Umm..." Joanna squinted her eyes a bit when she was considering the price.

"One Nar for each of us a day." Smiling, Simon represented his wife and stated the price to Lucien.

Staring at her husband, Joanna was a bit choked.

"Simon!" she complained. This price was way lower than what she had thought.

"We shouldn't charge our client more just because the client's wealthy." Simon grinned to Joanna, "It's about our reputation."

"Also, my client," Simon turned to Lucien, "I have a couple of requests."

"Yes?" Lucien nodded.

"You need to pay us on a daily basis." Simon paused a bit, glanced at Betty, and continued, "And give Betty's pay to me. She has no idea how to save, and we're saving for her future knight training in her name."

In some of the countries in the south-central part of the continent, knight training was not free, as it was in Aalto. Many nobles struggling with their financial problems actually were making money out of it, giving knight training, which was not necessarily a bad thing altogether, since more commoners could get a chance at being a knight squire or even reaching a higher social status.

Betty pouted out of dissatisfaction, but she could not deny what Simon just said.

"No problem," agreed Lucien., "Let's get the contract done then."

All the adventurers and mercenaries registered with the Adventurers' Association needed to sign a contract with their clients.

Handing Hansen his own identification and documents, Lucien took a glance at the content and then signed the contract provided by the tavern owner.

"Thank you, sir." Lucien politely nodded toward Hansen.

The moment Hansen looked at Lucien's identification, he became very surprised, but he instantly hid the different look on his face.

"My pleasure, Mr. Evans." Hansen then carefully checked Lucien's documents. The fact that he had a great musician here visiting his tavern was definitely something he could brag in the future in front of his guests and offsprings.

Joanna accepted the three Nar paid in advance and then left her fingerprint on the paper.

"You're very generous, sir." Joanna smiled sweetly, "Can I call you Mr. Evans?"

In contrast, Lucien's three guards weren't really hyped up due to Lucien's identity, since all of them were illiterate.

"Sure." Lucien nodded slightly.

"Another Mr. Evans!" Betty grinned, "You know there's a talented, young and handsome musician in Aalto whose surname is Evans as well! I heard that he's traveling across the continent for his music right now. I wonder if he would come here to Djibouti!"

"Dream on! A great musician visiting this remote and poor country?" Joanna said directly to her, "Just get your feet on the ground and awaken your Blessing. When you join the Violet Knights, we can all move to Aalto."

Lucien laughed, "How do you know this Mr. Evans is good looking, Miss Betty?"

"All the bards say that!" answered Betty cheerfully.

...

Outside the tavern, when Lucien was about to get on the coach, a young man quickly walked toward him.

"Wait! Please wait!" The young man was waving his hand.

The man in a white robe was in his twenties. He had blond hair, and on his angular face there was a pair of blue eyes.

"Hi, Mr. Evans! Can I join you folks?" He grinned, "I'm also heading for Korsor, and I'm willing to afford one third of the guards' pay."

It was not the first time someone else wanted to join Lucien, and he was always very cautious about this.

"You don't look short of money. Why you want to join me?" asked Lucien directly.

Joanna, Simon and Betty did not care. They would not make any extra either way.

"Hansen told me that you just got the best guards in the tavern." The young man shrugged, "As for the rest of the adventurers and mercenaries... They looked more like robbers to me."

"That's really true." Betty laughed.

The young man took out his identification and documents and handed them to Lucien.

"The Musicians' Association... Burt Wise..." reading the document silently, Lucien learned that the young man was also a musician, and thus he lowered his guard a bit.

"Why are you heading for Korsor, then?" Lucien, however, knew that one could never be too cautious on this continent.

"I'm visiting the Musicians' Association there," Burt answered, "to, um, to study."

"All right." Lucien gave the documents back to him, "Mr. Wise. Welcome. We're companions now. One thing I need to remind you is that I'm sort of bothered by psychasthenia, so please be as quiet as possible. I need sleep."

"For sure." Wise nodded.

"Are you a musician, Mr. Wise?" Betty, on the other side, got excited.

"I'm still learning." Wise remained rather polite.

"That's great! Do you know For Silvia? How do you feel about it?" Betty's eyes were shining with excitement. She kept talking and talking until the coach started to leave.

Wise got on the coach and smiled to Lucien, "Very passionate girl. I actually don't really know much about music, though."

"Me neither." Lucien also smiled, and then he closed his eyes, ready to start to analyze his magic structures.

However, at this time, another traveler asked to join them. This was an ordinary lady holding a baby in her arms.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Evans. My name's Lena, and I'm heading for the town named Fog, located between Dragon Tooth and Korsor," the lady said to Lucien gently. "Can I join you? I can afford my own expense."

Seeing that the lady was with a baby, Lucien agreed. The coach was quite spacious anyway.

Then, the coach finally started moving. Simon was in the front, and the coach was followed by Joanna and Betty on each side.

As soon as they left the town, a short but stout man caught up with them.

"Chris, why are you here?" asked Joanna, completely alert.

"I'm also going back to Korsor! That's it!" answered Chris aloud, "When you guys save enough money, you can send Betty to me for knight training. You know, I've trained a knight before!"

As Chris was bragging, his eyes were peeking at the coach. However, the people in the coach remained very silent.

In the hot sunlight, the coach was smoothly heading for Korsor, raising a trail of dust after it.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 138: A Farce at Night

The weather in the second half of the Month of Passion (June) was already very hot. Beads of sweat kept rolling down Joanna's and Betty's faces while they were safeguarding each side of the coach. Not to mention Simon, whose shirt inside the armor was completely wet.

Nevertheless, no one ever made a single complaint. Simon, walking ahead of the coach, had already driven away several beasts rushing down from the mountains. This was obviously his responsibility as a guard, but the fact that he beat off the vicious beasts without startling the horses definitely impressed Lucien.

In contrast, Chris, who was bragging about being a "real man" all the time, was now dragging his feet on the ground with his body slouching from the heat.

Inside of the coach, since Lucien kept his eyes closed all the time, and Lena was not talkative at all, so Mr. Wise had no one to talk to. Finally, he took out a pile of music sheets from his suitcase to kill his time.

The only sounds were made by the baby, who cried from time to time, and then Lena would apologize and try to pacify the baby.

At around seven in the evening, it was getting darker. After talking to Lucien, Simon started to look for a camping site where they could spend the night. Experienced as Simon was, he soon settled on a spot on the lee side of a small hill.

Surrounding the coach, Lucien's three guards quickly build up three tents. One for the three ladies, one for Simon and the coachman, and one for Mr. Wise. The coach, of course, was saved for Lucien.

Watching the busy guards walking around and carrying things, Lucien deeply felt the importance of money. If, in the future, he planned to travel on his own, Lucien had better become a middle-rank mage and learn the third circle spell Sorcerer's Cabin first.

The campfire was lit up, and the smell of food was wafting in the air. While Joanna and Betty were heading for the nearby brook to take a bath, Simon and Mr. Wise sat down around the campfire and started to chat casually.

"It is said that, early in the Dark Era, the land here once belonged to a black sorcerer." After hearing the talk between Simon and Wise about the tale of vampire and black sorcerer in this country, Lucien joined them to listen, "And then he was killed by the Church."

Lucien still remembered what he read in Natasha's study.

Simon, surprisingly, was actually pretty talkative, "People just love exchanging mysterious and scary things. You know, they're always ear-catching and they can be used for frightening kids who're not willing to go to bed at night."

Mr. Wise did not really believe the rumors, "Every town and village has a chapel, but people just like the feeling of thrilling."

While they were talking, Joanna and Betty were coming back. Their wet hair still dripped a little and was a bit messy. The two ladies, while walking back to the campsite, immediately caught the eyes of the two bards who were camping nearby, and Chris was with them as well.

The guys started to heckle Joanna and Betty with loud whistles, and one of them even took out his lap harp and started to play a romantic and flirting folk song, as they were eyeing the two ladies up and down.

It was definitely not the first time that something like that happened to Joanna, and she remained quite calm. However, in contrast, Betty was pissed off.

"Betty, just ignore them. Come here." Joanna sat down beside Simon and lightly stirred the soup in the pot hanging over the campfire.

"But they're not stopping!" Betty's face flushed, and she glared at the bards with anger, which led to another round of guffaw.

"I'll go." Simon stood up and walked toward the other campsite.

When Simon came in front of the two bards, Chris said to him, "Simon, what's wrong with my friends singing and playing music here?" Casting a side glance at Simon, Chris said to him, "They're my friends. You'd better leave us alone."

As he was talking, Chris was wiping his great sword in a pretended casual way.

Simon was a good guard. Knowing that he was still with a commission, Simon knew he should avoid extra trouble at that moment.

"Chris, you'd better watch out next time," Simon said to him in his low voice.

On the other side, Joanna was trying to comfort her younger sister, "Betty, they're just the same as the bastards we met in the tavern before."

Betty, however, rose her pitch high and shouted at the bards, "Awful music! They call themselves a bard, but I don't know how they can make a living with this awful playing!" Betty's voice was crispy.

Then she paused a bit, as if she was trying to figure out a way to make her point more persuasive, "Mr. Wise, the gentleman with us... He can play way better than them!"

When she realized that she was not supposed to involve her employer in it, Betty looked at Wise with an apologetic face.

Mr. Wise, however, did not really mind. He nodded gently to show his understanding.

"Oh, really? A random guy can play music better than me?" The two bards stood up and walked closer to them.

One of them said, "If what you said is true, I'll apologize to you. But if it's not, you have to give me some of your personal... goods... for example..." He looked straight at her body and laughed.

Betty's face flushed again. She looked at Wise again for help. However, he was still sitting there, showing no intention to "fight" for her at all.

Betty felt rather regretful for her own words. Wise might have no idea how to actually play. After all, he mentioned that he was just heading for Korsor to study music.

Then, Betty almost burst into tears.

Lucien looked at Simon on the other side and nodded, giving him a hint with his eyes. Then, Simon's right hand slowly reached to his sword at his hips.

At this time, Wise stood up and smiled, "Although I'm still learning music and learning how to play, I would like to do Miss Betty this favor."

"I'm not gonna lend you my musical instrument," one of the bards said to him coldly.

Wise walked directly back to his tent and took out his own lap-harp from this suitcase.

When he started to play, the beautiful melody instantly caught everyone's ear and heart. Wise's song was full of feelings and every single detail was handled very well.

When his playing ended, Betty was the first one who started to applause. As she was clapping her hands joyfully, her eyes first worshipped Mr. Wise and then shifted to the two bards.

The face of the bard who made the bet with Betty turned grim. He wished he had picked on the black-haired young man who remained silent over the other side, instead of the one known as Wise.

"I apologize, then." After a short while, the bard kept his words and returned to his own campsite with his companion, where Chris was still sitting, looking rather upset.

After seeing Mr. Wise's talent, both Joanna and Simon became more enthusiastic about talking to the young man, not to mention Betty.

"Mr. Wise, can you play Mr. Evans's Canon in D major with your harp?" Betty's face was glowing with anticipation.

Wise gently nodded and started to play the music piece recomposed by Lucien, which reminded Lucien of his friends in Aalto. He decided to send them a letter through the Musicians' Association when he arrived in Korsor.

In those two months, Lucien only sent them one letter.

When Wise's playing ended, dinner was ready. Betty said to Wise directly, "Mr. Wise, if I had not fallen in love with Lucien Evans' music, I would become your music follower!"

"I think you're even better than some of the musicians in Korsor," Joanna agreed.

There was an even bigger smile on Wise's face. After all, Wise regarded the comparison between him and that talented and famous musician as a great honor.

When Wise went past Lucien, he still showed a humble smile.

"You were being really modest, Mr. Wise," Lucien said to him, also with a smile, "You played very well."

...

Deep into the night, almost all of them were sound asleep, except for two people.

The campfire stretched the shadow of a short sneaky figure that approached, making the cast darkness tremble on the background, in the rhythm of the flickering flame in the middle of the camp. Suddenly, the shadow stopped, as if it was waiting for something.

The very moment Betty yawned, the shadowy figure immediately jumped to the back side of the coach. It secretly opened the window and swiftly sneaked into it.

It was Chris, who always bragged about being a real man.

He carefully closed the coach window and stood up. A complacent smile appeared on his face. Everyone thought he was a Greatsword Warrior, whereas in fact Chris was an experienced thief, and his short figure helped him a lot at that matter.

"...Simon, Joanna, and Betty, what will happen if your employer's fancy sword is missing?" thought Chris silently in his mind. "I bet he's gonna be really, really upset."

As he turned around and looked for Lucien's sword, Chris was also excited. He knew that the fancy sword was definitely worth a lot. After selling it, he maybe would have enough money to buy a lord title.

That was what people called 'kill two birds with one stone'.

However, within the next second, Chris found out that both Lucien and his sword were missing.

"What happened?!" He had no idea.

When Chris was about to leave the coach, the fancy sword that he was looking for was pressed against his throat.

Chris shuddered and immediately kneeled down.

"My lord! Please forgive me!" Chris realized that Lucien actually had the level of a real knight, or he would not be able to discover his plot.

"Right or left?" asked Lucien calmly.

"Wh... what?" Chris was sweating.

"Right hand or left hand? Which one do you want me to chop off?" Lucien repeated.

"My... my lord, please forgive me!" Chris burst out a cry, "I have information... information to tell you!!"

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Chapter 139: The Invitation

"What do you have that could interest me?" said Lucien gently with a smile.

"My lord... If you're interested in my information, I beg you pardon me, please." Chris almost burst into tears.

"That depends on how valuable your information is." Lucien held his sword firmly.

"I... I got an invitation the other day," stammered Chris.

"You got?" Lucien tilted his head a bit.

"I stole... I stole the invitation," Chris corrected himself awkwardly, but he then explained hurriedly, "It looks like an invitation for a gathering of black sorcerers."

"..." Lucien did not respond, although his heart suddenly missed a beat.

"My lord... It is a gathering of black sorcerers of low rank, and it's a great chance for any knight to establish a great, heroic feat."

"Show me the invitation." Lucien hid his excitement and commanded sternly.

Under Lucien's watch, Chris took out a small piece of neatly folded paper from his pocket.

"Here it is, my lord. Several days ago, a mysterious traveler came to the town and the way he spent money was pretty indulgent. So I followed him when he left the town and I witnessed that he killed a bunch of beasts which were trying to attack him, using vicious, frightful black magic!"

Lucien took the piece of paper and unfolded it with his left hand. Only with a short glance, he registered the invitation in his spiritual library:

"The second Friday in the Month of Fire, when the silver moon is in the sky, we invite you, sorcerers and sorcerer apprentices, to come to the land previously owned by Wilfred, to attend a feast of death that will be held in Carendia Castle to welcome a mister from the headquarter of the Congress of Magic."

No salutation, no signature. It was a strange invitation. However, it sparked off Lucien's great interest as a sorcerer himself.

Seeing that Lucien did not cut him off immediately, Chris resumed talking to provide more information to please him, "When I was following him, I didn't realize that he was also the target of another group of adventurers. After several rounds of fighting against the beasts, they attacked the traveler. The traveler was not at a disadvantage at the beginning, since his black magic was even more powerful than they thought, until all of them got besieged by a group of robbers when they were exhausted, and both the traveler and the adventures were killed."

Listening to Chris's words, Lucien was quite certain that the traveler was a sorcerer apprentice.

"So you took an advantage of it and got this invitation?" asked Lucien.

"Yes... that's right, my lord," answered Chris obediently.

"Why you did not report to the Church, then?" The name, Wilfred, was not strange to Lucien. Wilfred was one of the several legendary-level necromancers in history, however, he was killed in the siege of the Church performed by the major cardinals, and even his Magic Tower built in a demiplane was destroyed. "And do you know anything about Carendia Castle?"

"I'm a rogue walking in darkness and shadow. If the Church found out, I would be sentenced to death on the gallows," Chris honestly answered. "And I know nothing about this castle. In fact, I mentioned the name of the castle to people a couple of times in Korsor in the Adventurers' Association and the Rogue Guild, but no one ever heard of this place before. I guess... My guess is that it's a code among the black sorcerers. Well... that's how we rogues do it."

Lucien was a bit disappointed, since there was just too few clues for him to locate a place in a country which was totally strange to him.

"I see. Did you ever tell this to anyone else?" A gentle smile appeared on Lucien's face.

"Never. I was still looking for a buyer." Chris gave a sigh of relief. It seemed his hands were safe now. "Serving you is my pleasure, my lord."

Lucien nodded, "Good job."

Then, Lucien directly stabbed the sword at Chris's throat without any hesitance. Chris's eyes opened wide, but he could not make a sound. His blood bubbled from his mouth and throat. Lucien calmly pulled the sword back, "You know too much."

Although Lucien did not think he would be able to find the so-called Carendia Castle, he did not want to leave any risk here for himself, just in case, especially because he did not trust Chris at all. Who knew whether this rogue would sell this information to someone else afterwards.

Although in the beginning he felt bad, Lucien had to admit that now he felt way less guilty about killing someone who could be a great danger to himself, as long as the person was not his friend or not innocent.

Chris's body hit the wood floor of the coach and made a thud.

A small cluster of flame appeared on Lucien's finger tip and quickly burned the piece of paper completely down. Then, without hesitation, Lucien opened the window of the coach and called Betty's name gently, "Betty, can you come over here?"

Although his voice was low, Betty was still taken aback.

"Mr. Evans! You scared me a bit!" Although she was complaining, there was a sweet smile on her face.

Then Betty stood up and walked toward the coach, and at this time, what was mentioned once by Joanna and Simon suddenly occurred to her: it was not uncommon to have some clients who would ask for some "extra" services if his female guard was good-looking or had a nice figure. If the client was generous enough and was not annoying to the guard, some of them, who were quite open-minded about sex, would be willing to have an intimate relationship with their clients. After all, they also had physiological needs, and there would be a decent amount of money for them.

However, Betty regarded herself as quite conservative, and although Mr. Evans was quite handsome and generous, she was still not going to agree.

When Betty was considering how to refuse Mr. Evans, the young lord said to her calmly, "A thief sneaked into the coach."

"What?!" Betty raised her tone and immediately covered her mouth. Luckily, none of the others were woken up because of her shout. She quickly got on the coach and saw a body lying on the floor. "Chris...?! He's a rogue?" Betty's eyes opened wide, "Is he... dead?"

"I think so," Lucien answered in a plain tone.

"Mr. Evans..." Betty turned around and looked at him, "You killed him?"

"Yes." Lucien smiled, "He was trying to steal my sword, and he failed. I woke up during the process and killed him."

Since Betty had always regarded Lucien as just a young noble who wouldn't even dare to kill a chicken, Lucien's reaction after killing a person and the smile on his face sort of scared her, but soon she calmed down.

"Mr. Evans, you're stronger than I thought," said Betty. She now believed that this young noble man sitting in front of her should be about the level of a high level knight squire.

"Can you deal with the body, Betty?" Lucien did not respond to Betty's comment but pointed at the body on the floor.

"Of course, this is my fault... I should apologize for letting a thief sneak into your coach." Betty lowered her head, and then looked at Lucien again with her big eyes, "...Mr. Evans, can you keep this as a secret from my sister and Simon? She would be quite disappointed and mad if she got to know that I was not doing a good job at protecting our client."

Lucien tilted his head and smiled, "I won't tell your sister. Just be careful. Don't wake her up when you're dealing with the body."

"Thank you so much, Mr. Evans!" Betty was very grateful, since this kind of fault could be very bad for their safeguarding record in the Adventurers' Association if the client decided to complain to the organization.

"I promise it won't happen again!" Betty started to pull the body out of the coach. She had disliked Chris for a long time, and no guard would hold sympathy to a thief who was trying to attack his or her client.

"Wait a second, Betty." Lucien asked, "Did you ever hear about a castle named Carendia?"

"Umm..." Betty frowned her eyebrows a bit as she was thinking, but then shook her head, "No, never."

"I see." Lucien nodded with a bit disappointment.

Although Betty was still a young girl, she was relatively experienced as an adventurer in her age. With great caution, she did a great job with the task given by Lucien.

In the following morning, although the other people, including the two bards, were quite surprised that Chris left the campsite without telling anyone, no one really cared. On the other hand, Betty, who felt rather grateful to Lucien for keeping her secret, was now showing more respect and enthusiasm toward him.

In the evening of the third day, the coach came arrived at a fork on the road, whose northward road led deep into the woods to Fogtown, known by people in this area for its lumbering, and the northeastward one to a mining town named Neese.

Both roads could lead them to Korsor, although the northward one was way less busy, but also more bumpy.

Because Lena needed to go to Fogtown, they chose the northward road.

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Chapter 140: Fogtown

Although Fogtown was not very far away from that fork in the road, the bumpiness of the road made Lucien feel very nauseous. When he was just about to get off the coach to walk on his own, they could see the small town in the distance, where there were only two main streets intersecting with each other.

The guards sensed a bit of creepiness when they went deep into the woods heading for Fogtown, not to mention the people in the coach. Even Lucien, a sorcerer who was used to dealing with so many kinds of creepy experiments, could easily notice the changes happening around them. The common oaks and birches were gradually replaced by dark gray cedars, and the cedars were so tall and thick that Lucien almost felt that he was now back in Melzer Black Forest.

Even though they were not far away from the town now, the guards didn't dare to lower their alertness, especially because the trees around them were thick and tall, which were perfect for an ambush.

The roots and the knots of the big trees looked almost like ghost faces. Betty subconsciously grabbed her bow and arrow tighter, and stayed a bit closer to Lucien's coach.

"Wilfred tree..."

Through the window of the coach, Lucien recognized this tree. In fact, nothing else was really special about it except its shape, which was often creepy. It was not named Wilfred at the very beginning, but since the famous necromancer with that name had a special affection for them and planted the trees widely in the Demiplane where his Magic Tower existed, the tree was later directly named Wilfred, after the necromancer, and turned into a symbol of viciousness.

Furthermore, it was precisely because of these dark gray trees that the town looked as if it was covered with a layer of fog, and that was how the small town gained its name.

When the coach entered the town, Lucien saw a bunch of lumbermen heading home after work. Their faces were expressionless and their eyes were dim and glazed, as if all of their passion was erased by their repeated labor day after day.

"I'd rather die if my future was like that." Betty looked back at the lumbermen and murmured to herself in an alert way.

As soon as the coach stopped in front of the only inn of Fogtown, Wise, who had been silent for quite a while, hurriedly jumped out of the coach and started to vomit.

"Are you alright, Mr. Wise?" asked Betty concernedly, "Maybe you can walk with us tomorrow. The coach must be very bumpy."

"I'm okay." Wise straightened his back a bit, "Thanks for asking, Betty."

On the other side, Joanna was helping Lena and her baby get off the coach. She turned to Lucien and said, "You look fine, Mr. Evans." Joanna smiled, "You're actually stronger than I thought."

"I was trying to sleep." Lucien was not feeling really good as well. He was trying to analyze some magic structures to distract himself.

And when Joanna went past Lucien, she said to him in a low voice sweetly, "I'm not only talking about the trip. Thank you, Mr. Evans, for forgiving Betty's negligence."

Lucien was quite surprised, but then he nodded, "I know Betty tried her best."

Simon, who was standing on the other side, also came over and said to Lucien in a low voice, "We wouldn't even be able to know that you killed Chris if Betty did not cry out."

Lucien shrugged casually and thought that Betty would definitely learn her lesson after they fulfilled the commission.

Lena, carrying the sleeping baby, walked to Lucien and handed him a Nar, "Thank you, Mr. Evans, for sharing the coach with me."

"You're welcome." Lucien took the coin.

Lena smiled, "I'll remember your kindness, Mr. Evans. I'm leaving to visit my cousin Kaelyn now."

"May god be with you." Lucien was now used to the phrases used in that world.

Lena slightly bent her knees and turned around. Lucien did not see that, when she turned her back to him, her face suddenly became a bit gloomy.

The direction which Lena was heading for with the baby led to a stone bridge, and behind the bridge there was a tall and big black castle. Its cross vault, pinnacle, and its solemn architectural style instantly revealed itself as a castle built in the later period of the War of Dawn.

"That is the castle of Baron Habearo. He's the lord of Fogtown and the other villages and towns in this area." Simon pointed at the castle and explained to Lucien, having no idea that Lucien might know more than him about the background of the place, "He was an outstanding knight when he was young, and he was known for his heroic deeds of wiping out some notorious robbers and joining the civil war among the lords in Gusta Empire. Lots of stories narrated by bards are based on his true stories, stories of a true hero.

"Unfortunately, Baron Habearo failed to make the breakthrough to become a grand knight, and his health condition declined in his early sixties. After his son left the town to travel, Baron Habearo now rarely leaves his castle. Sometimes he invites some musicians to visit the castle since I heard that he has quite an affection for music."

"Well, heroes also get old." Wise released a sigh, "Except for God, nothing can last forever in this world."

"Maybe music can last long as well," Lucien commented. In his mind, while Betty was a bit upset with Wise's words, Lucien was not affected by the true fact much, after all, if he could become a senior rank mage, Lucien could live way longer than common people.

"Well... does anyone else knows that Mrs. Kaelyn, Lena's cousin, is actually the wife of Baron Habearo's steward? Wow..." Joanna switched the topic.

In Joanna and the other adventurers' eyes, even the steward of a baron was still someone important.

...

Entering the inn, the woman standing behind the counter looked rather cold, and her eyes were also glazed, "Please register your name and date of birth if you want to stay here for the night."

"Mrs. Branka, what happened? We've stayed here before, a couple of months ago. You don't remember us?" asked Joanna, "You don't look good."

The last time when Joanna and Simon were here, Betty was not present, since she hid herself and squandered her commission in Korsor.

"Roy's dead, because of illness," Branka murmured. "He was only ten. He was summoned by God."

"It's just been few months since we saw Roy last time..." Joanna lowered her head, and then explained to Lucien in a low voice, "Roy is Mrs. Branka's youngest son."

Wise crossed himself on the chest, "May he live an eternal life in heaven."

After mourning the deceased boy, Joanna asked the woman carefully, "Mrs. Branka, I don't remember being asked to register our date of birth last time we were here."

Lucien had never heard of such a requirement in any of the countries and cities he had been to.

"This is the command of the baron. I don't know the reason..." Branka answered slowly.

While Lucien felt that this was pretty suspicious, the adventurers and Wise did not really care. All they wanted now was to have a good rest.

"You're only twenty-nine, Simon," Lucien joked. "I thought you were thirty-four or thirty-five..."

Simon indeed looked elder than his age. He scratched his head and looked at Joanna, "I know... When I got married with Joanna when I was twenty, some guests thought I was her father..."

Joanna was twenty-seven, Betty sixteen, and Wise was twenty-two.

Lucien was amused. Then, following Wise, he only left his surname on the booklet, "Evans... June 26th, 798 of the Saint Calendar." For a moment Lucien paused a bit. He was not sure if he should leave his true birthday, the one in his original world.

"Oh my...! Mr. Evans, you're not even eighteen!" Betty was very surprised.

Both Simon and Joanna felt the same way as well.

"I'm almost there, two days to go," Lucien answered casually.

"You're my idol, Mr. Evans! I hope I can become as powerful as a high level knight squire like you before I turn eighteen!" Betty's eyes were shining with excitement.

She just revealed Lucien's strength carelessly in front of other people.

"So, you shall receive formal knight training." Seizing the chance, Joanna educated Betty. Since their parents died, Joanna played a role both as elder sister and mom to Betty.

...

When it was dinner time, a blond lady entered the inn with two guards following behind her. She looked around, and soon noticed Lucien and other people in the not very busy lobby.

"Excuse me, may I ask if you are Mr. Evans?" She walked to Lucien and asked with a polite smile.

"Yes, I am. What can I do for you, madam?" Lucien could sort of guess who was this lady.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Evans." The lady nodded, "I'm Lena's cousin, Kaelyn. I'm here to thank you for taking Lena back."

"You're welcome, madam. It wasn't a big deal," Lucien answered politely, although he felt suspicious again—shouldn't Lena be there as well? Lena's cousin coming here on her own with her guards to thank him was sort of weird to Lucien.

Kaelyn looked at Lucien, then Betty, and then took a step closer to Wise, "Baron Habearo asked Lena about her trip, and my cousin mentioned to the lord that there was a very talented young man who could play harp very well. I think it's you, right? Mr. Wise?"

"I'm more than flattered, madam." Wise slightly bowed to Kaelyn.

"Baron Habearo loves music very much, thus, he wanted to invite Mr. Wise to his castle to exchange ideas regarding music. And, of course, Lord Habearo is very interested in your traveling experience as well, Mr. Evans. I wonder if you two would like to visit the castle and be Baron Habearo's guests?"

Before Lucien said anything, Wise smiled, "Yes, for sure. Lord Habearo is my idol... He's a hero."

Kaelyn nodded and turned to Lucien, "What about you, sir?"

"I just worry about my guards..." Lucien pointed at his three guards.

Since it seemed the baron was more interested in Wise's music, Lucien felt he should be fine if he decided to go, and another important reason was that he might be able to get some information from the baron about the castle named Carendia.

"They can come with you. It's not a problem at all." Kaelyn's smile was polite and sweet, "The baron was an adventurer before, and he would like to listen to some amazing adventure stories from you."

"We can go as well?" Both Betty and Joanna were very excited, and even Simon showed some emotion.

...

"Mrs. Kaelyn, will Lena be here tonight as well?" Betty asked when they were approaching the castle passing the stone bridge.

"She won't. She needs rest," answered Kaelyn shortly.

Betty was a bit disappointed, "I'm kind of missing Lena's cute baby."

Kaelyn did not respond, leading Lucien and other people into the castle after crossing the suspension bridge.

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Chapter 141: Baron Habearo

The baron's castle was a typical representative of the architectural style in the later period of the War of Dawn. The lobby on the first floor was spacious and magnificent, and in contrast, the windows high above were narrow. In general, Lucien felt this place was dark and mysterious.

"Lord Habearo's waiting in the dining room on the second floor." Kaelyn raised her right hand and pointed at the stairs to the upper floor, "The first floor is mostly for parties and sometimes used for court."

While Lucien and Wise were behaving themselves decently, Joanna and Simon were looking around out of curiosity, not to mention Betty. They had never entered a castle before, and this one was even bigger than what castles looked like in their imagination.

After the set of stairs, they came into a long and narrow corridor. Along either side of the corridor, a line of candles partially lit up the space, and beside the candles, there were several portrayals of Lord Habearo.

"This is Lord Habearo I," explained Kaelyn. "Habearo family was first granted fief for the contribution on the War of Dawn. I heard that the Blessing of the family is powerful... something like turning themselves and their enemies into stone. I never witnessed the lord's power, though."

"Is this Blessing for close or ranged combat?" Lucien murmured subconsciously.

Hearing Mr. Evans's question, Simon became more certain that Lucien was a noble young man who received formal knight training before.

"Sorry, I'm not sure, Mr. Evans." Kaelyn smiled, "I don't know how to fight."

Lucien nodded and kept walking toward the dining room following Kaelyn.

Although no one ever mentioned, all of them, including Lucien, felt that those vivid portrayals were staring at them from both sides of the wall.

Kaelyn pushed the door of the dining room open. The door was made of redwood, behind which the dining room was decorated in a very luxury way.

At the center of the dining room, there was a long dining table, on which lay several sets of fine porcelain tablewares. Several servants were lined up beside the table, waiting for order. On the other side of the dining room, a chamber band was playing decent music.

They were asked to hand their weapons to the guards standing beside the door. Lucien untied his sword and left Alert outside of the dining room. He did not feel concerned, since he still had a dagger with him.

The elder noble man sitting at the far end of the table stood up from the chair to welcome them. Although there were some wrinkles on his ruddy face, his hair was still black. If Lucien had not known that baron Habearo was already in his seventies, he would definitely be unable to tell this man's true age.

"Welcome, welcome!" Lord Habearo was wearing a brown robe of old style. "My guests! Your arrival has brought me, an old man, a lot of new energy!" His voice was resonant and his eyes were bright. The big, green jade ring on his right hand was quite eye-catching.

"Baron Habearo." Lucien took the lead and bowed to him.

"You must be Mr. Evans." Habearo's eyes scanned Lucien, "Um... young and elegant. Arms and legs look pretty strong." As he was talking to Lucien, Habearo was glancing at Lucien's face, chest, arms and legs.

"..." Lucien felt very uncomfortable with Habearo's comment, and he wondered if this old lord actually liked men.

Lucien was just about to directly tell the baron to stop looking at him, but Habearo turned around and started to greet other people.

When he was greeting Betty, he started to stare at her in a lascivious manner. Betty almost rolled her eyes. As if he had realized his gaffe, Habearo apologized with an awkward smile, "Sorry for my misbehavior. I'm an old man, weak both physically and mentally. Every time I see young people, I often appreciate their youthfulness. I miss my early years very much, and I wish I could regain the fine skin, strong hands and legs again. We shall toast for youthfulness later."

"You still look very young in your age." Lucien responded, although he still had the impression the baron was very suspicious. After sitting down beside the table, Lucien laid the napkin on his legs and asked, "Lord Habearo, is your steward not around tonight?"

Lucien could not help but ask the question, since he had felt that there was something wrong there, and he was trying to figure out what it was. Without a doubt, if the master was entertaining the guests, the absence of the steward was not normal.

"Yes, Mr. Cork is out for some other business tonight." Habearo's face was partly hidden by the shadows, "If you'd like to stay here tonight, Mr. Evans, you should be able to see him tomorrow morning."

Then the baron introduced the elder man who was playing piano on the other side, "This is my music consultant, Mr. Mars, a famous musician in Korsor."

Although Mars was just in his early sixties, he looked obviously much elder than the baron.

After getting each other, Mars complained to the baron, "My lord, the musical instrument that you just bought... piano, yes, piano... is not even close to harpsichord. The sound quality is not very good."

After being invented about a year ago, now piano was gaining more popularity. Even the baron, a noble in this remote place, started to pursue the trend as well.

"It's the pedals... you did not use the pedals properly." Betty murmured.

She disliked the fact that someone was criticizing the music instrument which her favorite musician, Lucien Evans, was best at.

"Such a young lady, I think you're simply not a professional." Mars frowned, "I did use the pedals."

"I'm not professional, but Mr. Wise is!" Betty disputed, "He's a musician!"

Wise looked rather embarrassed when Mars turned to look at him.

"Well... actually, I don't understand music completely. It just so happens that I've been studying piano recently." Wise waved his hands a bit, then he started to introduce some really professional theories about this new music instrument, which confused all the people present, except Mars and Lucien.

Holding a glass of water, Lucien listened to Wise's thoughts with interest. Some of his concerns were raised by some musicians and critics over the newspapers before, but finally these concerns were all proved unnecessary by Lucien's successful playing.

"Now, the era of traditional symphony has ended. The splendid era has ended." Habearo sighed, "I still remember the thunder-like applause over that Aalto music festival many years ago, when traditional symphony established its supreme status. Mr. Christopher, Mr. Leandrinho, Ms. Rania, Mr. Ionescu and all those other great musicians created a great era, and now, that era has ended, sharing the fate of every human being, who will eventually die."

"I don't think that the passing of this era is something that we shall feel regretful. Now we have brand new music styles, themes, ways of presenting, and countless possibilities lying in the potential of music. Right now music is bursting out more of its energy than ever before! What is passed is passed. We shall look to the future!" As Betty was expressing her idea about music, she totally forgot that the person sitting in front of her was a baron.

Later, all of them joined the music discussion, except Lucien. Finally, someone turned to Lucien and asked, "What's your opinion, Mr. Evans?"

He considered for a bit and said carefully, "I understand both sides. Lord Habearo missed the passing era because he was part of it, and he experienced the glory himself. Likewise, it is also reasonable that Mr. Wise and Betty, as the younger generation, would like to pursue the new trend of music."

Both Habearo and Wise nodded.

"So, I think that, although revolution and change is always unavoidable in any era, as people witnessing the changes right now in the trend, we can hardly comment whether the changes are good or not. Maybe... maybe people who live a few hundreds of years later can have a better perspective talking about the features of different music eras."

Lucien's comment summarized their discussion well. The baron sighed, "Mr. Evans' point of view is really persuasive."

However, Mars still did not want to let the topic go.

"Mr. Wise, can you play the piano for us to show me how am I supposed to utilize the pedals?"

"Yes, please, Mr. Wise!" Betty agreed with excitement.

"I also want to have a chance to appreciate Mr. Wise's playing." Habearo also nodded.

Wise had no choice but to nod, "All right. I'll try."

Lucien recognized the melody immediately when Wise started to play. It was Pathetique. Wise's performance was unexpectedly good, and everyone present was listening to it very carefully.

Lucien took a glance at the baron when Wise was playing, and he noticed that the baron's face was twitching a bit, as if he was suffering from some painful emotion, which made Lucien feel suspicious again.

As if the baron had noticed Lucien's gaze, he forced a smile on his face and leaned forward to talk to him, "Mr. Evans, do you know Mr. Wise's full name?"

"Burt Wise." Lucien disguised his suspicion.

"No wonder... Burt Wise! The talented musician who's gonna hold the concert in Korsor!"

Mars, who was standing beside them, was very surprised as well, "I thought he was just a common young man who was a music fan. It turned out that he's the most professional one among us all!"

"Really!? I... I never thought about asking Mr. Wise's full name!" Betty's eyes were shining with great excitement, "He always said that he did not really understand music, and thus I never expected that he was the famous musician, Burt Wise!"

Lucien was surprised as well.

Wise came back to his seat under warm applause. He shrugged a bit when he sat down beside Lucien.

"I mean, really, I don't really understand music." Wise smiled a little awkwardly.

Lucien was amused. He raised his glass of water to Wise, "Me neither."

...

When the dinner was about to start, the uneasy sense of foreboding in Lucien's mind started to become more and more torturing to him. Thus, Lucien found the excuse to use the bathroom and left the dining room following a servant.

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Chapter 142: Lucien's Decisiveness

The finely decorated bathroom was in the corner of the dining room. Locking the wooden door from inside, Lucien did a careful check around and then took out his Morning Light crystal ball and the Grimsteel Dagger.

Lucien cut his finger with the dagger, making a drop of his blood splash onto the surface of the wash basin.

Dipping the blood with his right index finger, Lucien started to write in the air, leaving scarlet symbols floating in front of him in the shape of a relatively simple magic structure. This structure was meant to hide the magic waves that the crystal ball would cause.

The crystal ball named Morning Light slowly rose, and the strange symbols soon covered it. Lucien reached his hands out close to the crystal ball and started to murmur a mantra.

The center of the crystal ball became darker, and stars showed up all over it, as if there was a starry sky within.

This was one of the most unique spells in the school of Astrology, Horoscope.

After finding the crystal ball, based on the astrology knowledge he had as an apprentice, and also due to his previous understanding of astrophysics, Lucien soon learned Primary Horoscope. That made Lucien feel even more curious about destiny.

Staring at a shooting star in the crystal ball, Lucien frowned, "My Host Star of Destiny is... dimmer than before, which means that I'm still in potential danger. And... and the great danger is coming... it's threatening my star."

That was all the information that Lucien could collect from the crystal ball with his horoscope level. For more specific information Lucien needed a higher level of knowledge, as well as the power to cast it.

Even with a higher level of horoscope, the result wouldn't always be accurate and could still be changed.

Putting the crystal ball back, Lucien took out Fire Weaver's Bracelet and wore it on his wrist, as well as his Ice Revenger. Lucien took them off earlier before he met the baron, just in case Habearo could tell his identity.

The uneasy sense of foreboding was becoming more and more intense, which was burning Lucien's guts.

Although he was still not sure if the danger was actually from the baron, Lucien decided to take the initiative and to be decisive. He could not just wait for the danger to come at him. By then, any action would be too late to be taken.

Opening the wooden door, Lucien walked out of the bathroom as if everything was just fine.

When he came back to the dining table, both Habearo and Kaelyn were not there.

"Where did the baron and Mrs. Kaelyn go?" Lucien tried to ask in a casual tone.

"The baron was not feeling very good, and Mrs. Kaelyn just accompanied him to go back to his bedroom to take some medicine. They'll be back soon," Betty answered.

"Then I shall take a look at the baron to make sure he's fine," Lucien nodded and said coldly.

"But Mr. Evans... the baron will be back soon." Betty and the other guests were a bit surprised.

Without any further explanation, Lucien turned around and walked toward the door of the dining room.

"Mr. Evans... the baron wants us to stay here," Joanna said behind him.

"You shall stay in the dining room, like the lady said." The two guards beside the door crossed their spears in front of Lucien and said in a polite but cold manner.

Lucien slightly nodded and smiled.

However, in the next second, Lucien suddenly pushed one of the guards away, drew his dagger and stabbed it right into the other guard's arm.

"Mr. Evans!!" Betty screamed, "What're you doing!?"

As soon as the dagger was stabbed into the guard's arm, a putrid liquid burst out instead of the expected blood, spreading a horrible smell through the room.

Lucien's movement was very swift. He pulled the dagger out and cut the guard's throat open while he rolled forward on the floor to avoid the spear of the other guard.

Evans... Mr. Evans... killed the baron's guard.

All of the guests were startled.

But soon they found that Mr. Evans was covered with a layer of white light. After Lucien managed to kill the other guard, the two bodies started to rot in a visible speed as if they were dead since long ago.

"This is..." Simon murmured subconsciously.

Lucien took back his Alert and answered calmly, "This is a husk."

And then he turned to Mars, "Mr. Mars, do you know where the baron's bedroom is?"

Mars was already shaking all over from what he just witnessed. He was not able to respond to Lucien properly until Joanna suddenly patted him on his back.

As soon as Mars uttered where the baron's bedroom was, Lucien quickly made the arrangement, "Simon, you deal with the guards from the upper floor. Make sure you take care of Mr. Wise and Mr. Mars. Betty and Joanna, you watch the stair on the other side."

After seeing that they nodded subconsciously, Lucien quickly rushed out of the door and disappeared into the shadows.

"Mr. Evans... He has the power of a knight?" Betty cried out.

"Betty, get your bow and come here!" Simon commanded.

...

Lucien was running at full speed in the dark corridor. After killing several husks, Lucien stopped a few steps away from the baron's bedroom.

Staring at the door, Lucien activated Sun's Corona and released the magic waves which were extremely detrimental to undead creatures. The four husks guarding the bedroom were instantly purified and fell to the ground.

At the same time, Lucien banged the door open with all his strength, tightly holding Alert and the Grimsteel Dagger.

A couple of black magic circles showed up in front of the door but immediately broke into shining pieces.

When the door was knocked open, Lucien quickly stopped the momentum to prevent himself from running into anything by accident, and simultaneously activated a magic structure in his soul and summoned two black magic missiles.

In the bedroom, Baron Harbearo, whose face was covered with deep and horrible wrinkles, was sitting in the center of a black magic triangle. His appearance indicated his condition was worsening and he was about to die at any moment.

On the tips of the triangle, three figures were tied up by black, half-transparent tentacles. A baby, a seven or eight-years-old kid, and a teenager of thirteen or fourteen.

There was white light coming out of their bodies, as if the tentacles were sucking up their vital energy. The light was being infused into a white eyeball that had no pupil. Kaelyn stood beside the baron, enchanting some kind of weird spell. Being driven by her spell, there were two lines of tears of blood coming out of the eyeball and falling into the silver cup in Harbearo's hand.

However, to the baron's great surprise, the two magic missiles flew right toward his silver cup.

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Chapter 143: The Hunts

Completely out of the baron's expectation, the silver cup in his hand was shattered by the magic missiles, and the broken pieces fell onto the thick carpet.

The baron and Kaelyn were totally startled. They did not understand what was going on there.

Seizing the chance, Lucien cast Palmeira's Frost Blades, and three icy blades were shot straight at the baron.

When the blades were about to hit the baron, Habearo released an angry roar and fiercely reached out his fossilized right fist to punch one of the blades, while at the same time he put his left hand on his neck to protect himself, since it had turned into stone as well.

One of the blades was smashed by the baron's stone fist, but by then the other two blades hit him — one in his left arm and one in his leg. Although they did not cause much damage, the ice temporarily froze him on the spot.

When Lucien was about to cast another spell, a black magic ray directly hit the invisible Star Shield covering him. As soon as the shield was hit, the previously invisible shield radiated star light and protected the person within it.

Lucien did not expect that Kaelyn was actually a sorcerer apprentice!

Although Kaelyn's spell was not powerful enough to hurt Lucien, a real sorcerer, it bought time for the baron to get rid of the ice.

In the next moment, the layer of ice covering Habearo collapsed, and then the stone-man rushed straight at Lucien. Although Habearo wanted to get his sword on the desk to the side, he decided to launch the attack immediately, in order to leave the sorcerer no time to cast any spell.

Habearo's dusty and fossilized fist hit Lucien's Star Shield bitterly, and the shield cracked. Being experienced in fighting with sorcerers, Habearo changed the angle of his attack.

Lucien did not panic. Making the best use of the time the shield granted him before shattering to pieces, Lucien cast the first circle spell, Sleep.

Surrounding Lucien, green light waves expanded outward in circles.

As soon as the light waves touched Kaelyn, her eyes became languid, and then, right in the middle of the fighting, she yawned and fell on the floor to start sleeping.

Even strong as Habearo's stone body was, he was heavily struck by a sense of tiredness, as if he was experiencing a sudden process of aging, and his movement also paused a bit.

Within this pause, a bright light showed up above Lucien's left hand, and he threw a head-sized fireball at the baron.

Although Habearo's instinctive reaction freed him from the tiredness instantly, it was still too late for him to fully avoid the fire ball.

Together with the explosion of the fire ball, Habearo's right arm was devoured by the fire. The blast fiercely threw the three dead bodies, the baby, the young boy and the teenager, away to the other side of the room.

Some kind of mix of festered and stinky blood came out of the baron's stone body, and what was even more shocking was that Habearo's face started to age very fast.

Completely mad, Habearo screamed and rushed at Lucien again, with his remaining limbs.

Using Alert to block the baron's attack, Lucien could see that even his sword was surrounded by stone dust as if the sword would turn into stone soon.

Before Habearo's power did any real damage to the sword, Lucien activated Sun's Corona.

A beam of holy light was summoned and directly struck the baron.

"Holy light?!" Habearo cried out.

The light was burning the baron's skin and finally peeled off the stone covering his body. Seeing that his own body was rotting in a visible speed, the baron looked very scared, but then, became calm and relieved.

Bathing in the holy light, aging and dying in the holy light, he murmured as if he was dreaming, "My skin was losing its glory, like dried fruit...

"My face was fully covered with wrinkles, and so did my body...

"My strength and agility were fast declining and could never come back again...

"I couldn't see beautiful sceneries, couldn't taste cuisines...

"My passion was fading... even having a young beautiful woman in my arms was..."

Hearing his words, Lucien frowned, but the baron continued, "Why people age?"

"Why when people age, all the happiness is gone?"

"Where's God's heaven?"

Although Lucien couldn't really understand the pain of aging, he was still sort of shocked. And he was sort of grateful that he chose the sorcerer path, so he could still have a chance to live longer than common people.

After someone became a senior-rank mage, he or she could make it over two hundred years old, and a sorcerer or sorceress could still turn to magic rituals and potions to further prolong their lifespan, such as Lich Conversion, although many of them died during the process.

Even middle or junior mage could also find assorted ways to live longer.

The baron's eyes slowly closed. His sinful life finally ended.

Lucien felt rather lucky that he decisively made up his mind and took action in time, since if the baron had completed his ritual and recovered his power of a level two knight, that would probably be the end of Lucien.

However, after killing the baron, the uneasy sense of foreboding was still lingering above Lucien's mind. What he felt mostly suspicious was the reason why, even toward the end of the fight, Habearo never cast any necromantic spell.

Lucien's brows frowned, since he knew that there was only one possible explanation for this: The baron himself was not a necromancer, and it was someone else who was instigating and enticing Habearo to use young lives to keep his own youthfulness using black magic.

So, after binding Kaelyn's arms, Lucien woke her up.

As soon as Kaelyn opened her eyes, she saw a pair of black pupils in which there was a starry sky. Lucien used his hypnosis on her.

"Mr. Evans, what do you want me to do?" asked Kaelyn, like a little girl speaking to someone she admired. She just completely ignored the loud fighting sound on the other side of the castle.

To be more specific, what Lucien was using right now was the first circle spell called Charm Person, which could control a person's mind whose spiritual power was less strong than the spellcaster's. Unless the given order conflicted greatly with the will of the person being controlled, in most cases, the person who got controlled would just follow the spell caster's orders.

"Tell me, who taught you magic, and who taught the baron the black ritual?" asked Lucien directly.

"My husband, Hunt, or say, the baron's steward, Mr. Cork." Kaelyn smiled, as if she was very glad that she could provide any useful information to Lucien, "Several years ago, when he was invited to be the baron's civil official, Hunt started to teach Habearo to use the power of the death of young lives to extend his own life, and at the same time, he could use the dead bodies for his experiments afterwards. In order to better disguise what they were doing, Hunt became the baron's steward."

"Cork... Hunt... Kaelyn Hunt...?!" Lucien was quite shocked, "Are you the Hunts from Bonn?"

Kaelyn Cork was actually Mrs. Hunt, who Lucien was looking for to fulfill his promise to the revenant girl.

What happened to them, Lucien wondered.

As soon as Lucien mentioned Bonn, Kaelyn's mood started to become very unstable, and her great emotional pain freed her from Lucien's spell, "How do you know we were from Bonn?! Who are you!"

"People in Bonn told me that Mrs. Hunt was a nice and beautiful lady, who was always willing to offer help, especially taking care of kids. Why have you become like this? Why are you helping your husband to kill other kids?" Lucien did not answer her questions directly.

Kaelyn was shocked, as if Lucien's words stabbed her in the heart, and a few seconds later she started to laugh like she was crazy, "I... I was nice and beautiful? I was willing to help people? Hahahaha... You see what I got from my kindness? My daughter got kidnapped and she's been missing for ten years, and my husband turned into a monster. Now, when I see how heartbroken these parents become when they lose their kids, I feel I have companions who can understand my pain!"

"Where is Hunt, then..." Lucien remained calm.

"He's doing an experiment in the cemetery," Kaelyn sneered. "Hunt was too busy, and your sword made the baron decide to be more careful with you, or we'd just have killed you, instead of preparing some stupid dinner."

"Experiment..." Hearing that, Lucien had a really bad feeling about it.

"Hunt's a monster now. He is still as mysterious and powerful as he was, but he's no longer a considerate man, as he once was in Bonn." Kaelyn murmured, as if she was talking to herself.

"Mysterious and powerful..." Lucien suddenly realized that he made a wrong assumption before. He had thought that Hunt turned into a necromancer when he arrived in this land, which was known for the past prevalence of necromancers, however, it seemed like Hunt was already a necromancer when he was in Bonn!

"Knock, knock, knock..." Something was gently knocking at the window.

When Lucien looked back, what he saw shocked him. There was a gray owl standing outside of the bedroom window, or, to be more specific, it was a dead owl, since its whole body was basically rotten and its white bones were exposed to the air.

As Lucien was staring at it, the owl also looked at Lucien and Kaelyn with its cold eyes, but kept knocking at the window with its beak.

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Chapter 144: The Burning Cemetery

Two magic missiles broke the window and flew directly toward that creepy-looking owl.

The gray owl did not move, but some kind of black gas instantly covered it. The magic missiles strongly disturbed the gas surrounding it.

As if the owl just realized that the person who was talking to Kaelyn was an enemy instead of a friend, the owl opened its beak and started to scream, although no sound was produced.

All of a sudden, lots of black tentacles crawled out from the carpet. As soon as they touched Lucien's body, Lucien felt a mix of numbness, weakness and pain.

Lucien had never experienced that before. Among all the apprentice spells and first circle spells, he never found anything that had this mixed effects. Even the second circle spell, Ghoul Touch, could only numb and hurt people at the same time to some extent.

So Lucien guessed that it was a special necromantic magic.

Remaining calm, Lucien activated the bracelet and easily got rid of the tentacles with the spell enchanted within, Flame Shield.

Being surrounded by the flame to defend himself from the countless black tentacles, Lucien saw that they were accumulating by the door, making it impossible for him to escape. Changing his mind, he turned himself into a streak of moonlight and rushed at the gray owl with his sword.

The owl flew up as Lucien directly broke through the window and started to rapidly fall from that floor. However, instead of heavily hitting the ground, Lucien's fall slowed down, like that of a feather.

First circle magic, Feather Fall.

When Lucien was close to land, he heard a crazy laughter coming from the cemetery close by, "Hahaha! I'm almost there! Just one more step! Kaelyn, Kaelyn... where are you?!"

As the laughter was getting closer and closer, Lucien saw the creepiest thing that he had ever encountered: Lucien could barely tell from the creature's face that it had been a human in the past, however, the other parts of its body were just rotten flesh, from which disgusting eyeballs, lips and pale arms were growing out of its body. Furthermore the thing was surrounded by some kind of gray gas that was blighting and killing the plants that it passed by.

As soon as the monster noticed Lucien, it released a bitter scream. Those black tentacles grew out again on the ground and crazily reached toward Lucien.

Seeing this monster, Lucien almost threw up. He immediately activated Death Resistance, a level two divine spell within Sun's Corona, and was quickly surrounded by a layer of white light, which could protect him greatly from necromantic power.

The black tentacles were frightened, as if they were facing their biggest bane, which bought Lucien some time to safely land and adjust his position to hack at the monster. Lucien was pretty much certain that it was Hunt.

What Lucien did not expect was that, as Hunt pointed at his sword Alert, the sword hacked backwards at Lucien and left a deep wound on his shoulder.

It was the first circle necromantic spell, Back Bite.

Taking a deep breath from the pain, Lucien grabbed the sword again and activated the magic structure in his soul. Instantly, a layer of oil covered Hunt and extended to the ground.

First circle spell, Oil.

Taking a step ahead, Hunt almost fell over. So he stopped and started to use some ranged spells to attack Lucien.

Negative Energy Ray, Shriveling, Chill Touch, Enfeeblement Ray... All these spells were attacking Lucien crazily as if there was no buffering time at all. However, Lucien had learned quite a lot from the tactics that Aaron and Habearo used to fight against a sorcerer. He kept moving around, leaving no chance for Hunt to target him. Although a few times he failed to fully avoid them, the level two spell Death Resistance could still protect him to some degree.

Hunt had completely turned into a monster, a monster that did not reason much during a fight. As he was casting the spells one by one without much interval, the eyeballs, lips and arms started to fall from his rotten flesh.

The monster got furious. As Hunt released a deafening scream, black waves burst out surrounding him. Third circle necromantic spell, and also an area spell, Negative Energy Explosion.

Lucien had nowhere to hide from the black waves. So he had no choice but to use the last chance of activating Flame Shield in Fire Weaver's Bracelet to resist.

Although the flame was as bright as the sun, it was soon eliminated by the black waves. Thanks to Lucien's another layer of protection, Death Resistance, inside of the shield of flame, Lucien barely survived that ranged attack.

After casting this powerful spell, Hunt was temporarily still from the overconsumption of his power. He needed some time to recover.

At this time, Lucien cast Oil again, covering Hunt and the place he stood with a second layer of oil.

However, when Lucien was about to attack Hunt again, three magic missiles flew directly at him.

It was the gray owl. While its owner could not cast any spell, Hunt's summoned familiar distracted Lucien.

Dodging aside swiftly, Lucien avoided the missiles, however, he didn't dare to stop moving. Lucien had no idea what spell was useful right now to kill this filthy thing up in the sky except Magic Missile, but as the owl was flying around, it was also not easy for Lucien to target it. Besides, the owl was protected by Death Shield, and Lucien would have to hit it several times with his missiles to break it down.

"I should've learned how to summon a flying familiar as well..." Lucien thought to himself when he was moving around, trying to break the owl's magic shield with magic missiles.

When Lucien was about to throw his dagger toward this filthy evil bird when its shield was almost gone, Hunt started to move again.

"Damn it!" Lucien burst out a swear when he saw that, as the rotten chunks of flesh started to fall from Hunt's body again, on the other side, there were bodies climbing out of the graves. Some of them were skeletons, while others were partially rotten... All of them were waking up and dragging themselves out of the black soil. Furthermore, there were even several revenants floating in the air.

Lucien was their target. Like a tsunami, they were coming at him.

Lucien's heart was beating fiercely. He did not know what to do for a second — should he kill the owl first, or deal with the army of bodies and revenants?

Suddenly, an arrow shining green light shot fiercely out of the castle and directly punched a hole through the owl's eye.

It was Betty, followed by Joanna and Simon. After beating all the husks, they found two precious standard bows in the castle. When they rushed to come to help Lucien, they saw the big crowd of walking corpses surrounding Lucien, and a creepy dead owl flying around and attacking him.

The owl started to scream, and it switched its target to Betty. At the same time, Joanna shot another arrow that went directly through the owl's other eye.

With the owl no longer interrupting him, Lucien cast Oil for the third time and activated Sun's Corona to face the approaching corpses.

White holy light burst out from Lucien's body and extended in all directions. The light was so bright that half of the night sky was lit up.

Like mighty surging waves, the holy light overwhelmed the skeletons, the rotten bodies, and the revenants. Being washed out by the white light, they started to collapse, turning into piles of bones and flesh. The scene was literally shocking.

"Mr. Evans... Mr. Evans is a Saint Knight!" Betty cried out, "That's his power!"

There were only a few zombies and skeletons still struggling and screaming on the ground, but Hunt had already recovered some of his power. The monster opened his mouth again and was ready to cast another Negative Energy Explosion. However, that was too late for Hunt.

"Hunt!!" It was Kaelyn's voice. She was screaming at the top of her lungs.

Simon got her, pretending that he was about to throw her out of the window.

Hearing the familiar voice, Hunt slightly turned his head to the side and stared at Kaelyn, although most of his consciousness was already gone.

Seizing the chance, Lucien threw the big fireball summoned directly toward the monster.

"Bang!!!" The sound of explosion was deafening. Being covered with oil, Hunt instantly blew apart and his rotten flesh, eyeballs, and arms fell all over, making disgusting, sticky, jelly-like sound.

The remaining major part of Hunt was still writhing on the ground like a moving torch. The burning parts that flew out of his body ignited the other bodies and bones on the ground. The whole cemetery ended up in a horrible fire.

Betty, Simon and Joanna were totally shocked.

Turning around, Lucien directly threw his dagger at the owl and the weapon pierced through its head.

The owl fell to the ground and could not move anymore.

"Hunt!!!" Kaelyn screamed her husband's name and struggled to free herself from Simon's control. She jumped right through the window and fell hard on the ground.

Dragging her legs, Kaelyn slowly crawled toward the fire with all her effort.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 145: Hunt's experiment

When the chunks of rotten flesh and limbs covering Hunt on the outside were burned down to ashes, the original look of the man was revealed. Both of his legs and one arm were missing, but his eyes once again looked like that of a human being.

Moaning, Hunt was crawling toward Kaelyn, dragging his remaining body with parts of it still being burned by the fire.

Lucien took out a glass tube filled with white ashes and handed it to Kaelyn, and then he carried Kaelyn closer to her husband.

"This is..." Kaelyn's heart missed a beat. Surprisingly, the ashes in the small glass tube felt familiar to her, and tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Is that... Mary?" Hunt's voice trembled from both pain and shock, "Kaelyn... It's Mary... our daughter..."

"Mary was trapped in a magic lock. Before she died, she asked me to take her home." Lucien explained shortly. He did not mention how Mary spent the last days of her life in the World of Souls, where there was no food, no color and no life at all. That was too much for the parents.

Hunt's lips moved a bit, but made no sound. Then, he burst into tears.

"The magic... lock..." Hunt cried with pain, not from his body, but his heart, "I knew it was the magic lock...it consumed more than twenty years of my life, and also took Mary away from me."

Lucien remained silent. He had the feeling that Hunt knew something about Mary's disappearance, and his guess turned out to be correct.

Kaelyn choked with sobs. Pulling the cork out of the tube, she scattered Mary's ashes on her chest and pulled the rest of it in her mouth. Then she hugged her husband tightly. The fire on Hunt's body was now burning her as well.

"Mr. Evans, thank you. At least we can reunite before we die," said Kaelyn. Then she hugged Hunt's head in her arms and kissed his forehead with her lips covered with Mary's ashes.

Looking at the couple in the fire, Lucien's mood was heavy. He did not know what to say.

"We... we should've taken Mary with us... we shouldn't have stayed in Bonn... We should... should have come back to Djibouti... my hometown." Hunt hugged Kaelyn, clearly dying.

"I've always loved you, all the time," Kaelyn said to him. "I love you and our daughter, no matter where we are," she added in a low voice.

"Me... too." Hunt's consciousness was fading, "I wish... I've never... learned... ma..."

He did not manage to finish his sentence expressing his regret. Kaelyn closed her eyes and hugged him tight, and then ended her own life with a small dagger in her dress.

...

When the two bodies were almost burned into ashes by the fire, a cold wind blew away the smoke. Gleams of white light appeared in the sky, and the light joined together.

The figure of the little girl, Mary, appeared in the night sky, and she was still sweet and cute. Hunt and Kaelyn were standing behind her, although their figures were quite blurry.

Mary's lips were moving silently, and only Lucien could hear her voice, "Thank you. Thank you for taking me home. Finally, I found my mom and dad."

Then, their figures turned into gleams of light again and disappeared in the wind. At the same time, some light lingered around Lucien's left hand and a white tear-shaped mark on it was left on his skin.

Lucien still had the protection from Death Resistance, but he was still surrounded by the rotten gas left by the countless bodies in the area that were affecting him. However, when the mark appeared on Lucien's hand, he immediately felt refreshed.

It was a gift from the family, a constant protection for Lucien to stay away from the detrimental effects brought by the undead, to some extent.

In order to find some more information about necromantic spells, Lucien decided to find Hunt's necromantic lab, which, according to Kaelyn's words, should be right in the cemetery.

"You deal with the rest of the husks in the castle!" Lucien turned around and said to Betty, Joanna and Simon upstairs loudly, "I need to make sure there's nothing evil left in the necromancer's lab!"

"Yes, Mr. Evans!" The three of them answered together, as they all regarded Lucien as a powerful Saint Knight who was responsible for eliminating evil sorcerers across the continent.

Although Lucien was quite sure that none of them could tell the difference between sorcerer spells and divine power, he decided to make sure of it by checking his three guards' mind later using Charm Person.

He could never be too careful when hiding his identity.

...

In the burning cemetery, the door of the lab was open. It seemed that, when his experiment succeeded, Hunt immediately ran outside of the lab to inform Kaelyn of this good news.

Although Lucien was relatively prepared to what he may see inside, when he actually entered the lab, he was still on the verge of throwing up, since the whole lab was like a small slaughterhouse: many human bodies lay around the place, while most of them were babies, young kids and teenagers. The bodies were cut into chunks and the organs were placed in categories on the lab operation table.

Hunt's desk was beside the operation table, on which an upside down tree was carved, and that was one of the most well-known symbols of the school of Necromancy—Reversed Tree of Life. There were ten circles on the top of the ten branches of the tree, but there was nothing in the circles.

Something that Lucien thought was a rectangular box at his first glance turned out to be a small coffin.

After a careful check, Lucien opened the coffin. To his great surprise, it was Mary who was in it. The Mary inside of the coffin looked around seven or eight years old, and her cheeks slightly flushed as if she was just sleeping. Lucien gently touched her face, it was soft and supple.

Being certain that Mary's real body had been burned to ashes by him, Lucien realized what Hunt's experiment was. The purpose of Hunt collecting the bodies of babies and young kids was for making a human body, but clearly he failed.

Rummaging around, Lucien found two books in the corner. One looked like a notes, and the other was pretty thick, on which there were words: Book of Necromancy.

Quickly leafing through both the book and the notes, Lucien first made a copy of them in his spiritual library, and then started to read Hunt's notes carefully,

"According to the info on the magic tower, Bonn, this small town in Orvarit, is part of a mysterious magic ruin which is protected by a magic lock, and it is possibly related to the whereabouts of the several legendary archmages. One of them was the well-known necromancer Wilfred's close friend—the Prophet, Waldo · K · Maskelyne. And I bet there're lots of magic items and treasures!"

...

"Bonn is even more beautiful than I thought. Residents here are friendly and traditional. And the girl named Kaelyn... she is gorgeous."

...

"Why I just can't find the magic lock? What kind of magic lock is it? I wonder if it is one that was designed by Maskelyne in person."

...

"I can't find any clue, even from the background of the missing town residents. Maybe it's time for me to give up, but I also don't want to tear her away from Bonn. Maybe... maybe I shall tell her my true identity."

...

"I have a baby girl now, and I'm a dad now! Kaelyn and I want to name her Mary. I don't really care about necromantic spells, the experiment jointly conducted by Maskelyne and Wilfred, or the magic lock and all those kinds of things anymore. Nothing's more important than my wife and my little girl!"

...

"Mary's been missing for three days. I'm sure that I've killed all the wild beasts in this area. I have no idea where my girl could have gone... I don't know... whether it was because of the magic lock? Impossible... After so many years... That's ridiculous!"

...

"My dear Mary, where are you? We miss you so much. Please... please come back, dad is begging you..."

...

"Kaelyn is crying everyday. I think we need a new environment to live. And I need a better environment for studying necromantic power again to see if we can find Mary. If anything bad really happened to her... I shall try to bring her back to life."

...

"The baron in Fogtown finally killed his own son to prolong his own life! Now both of us get what we want. He can keep his youthfulness for another several years, and I can start my experiment now!"

...

"Why my body start to smell like a corpse? Is this the revenge from the dead? I can hear that bitter crying all the time... I need to hurry... When I become a middle-rank necromancer, the pain in the body will never bother me anymore!"

...

"I can't make it... Third circle necromancer is a target that I can never reach. I can't let my body rot away like this. Maybe I shall try the ritual written in the book named 'Body Sewing', and I shall start to make Mary's body as well."

...

"Making Mary's body is really costly, and I've spent all my money. Although I don't want to, I have to pledge my only magic item to continue the experiment. Anyway... if I can successfully turn myself into a 'Sewed Body', I will be able to use the third circle magic spells directly. I won't need the item anymore."

...

"He sent me an invitation, talking about some Feast of Death... the Congress of Magic. Maybe I should go if my ritual turns out to be successful. But where's Carendia Castle? I need to write a letter to ask."

...

"The baron is getting greedier and greedier. Now he's not only targeting at the kids on his territory, but also seeking for a fresh body of an underage knight to replace his own body. What he's thinking? He thinks it's that easy to find an underage knight? Nonsense... When my experiment is complete, I'll take Kaelyn and Mary away from Fogtown, before what the baron's doing attracts the attention of the Church."

...

"Carendia Castle... I never expected it would be there. Deep in the mountain named Aronne next to Korsor. Interesting. I wonder why they picked such a place."

This information really surprised Lucien. He never expected that he would find the location of the castle in Hunt's notes, and the invitation was also in between the two pages.

The rest of the note was mostly about the Body Sewing ritual and the record of the process of making Mary's body. The statistics and the records were precious to Lucien.

Picking up the other book, Book of Necromancy, Lucien roughly browsed through it. The book was left by one of Wilfred's students, the legendary necromancer, and it recorded most of the necromantic spells and rituals taught by Wilfred, but there was nothing related to how Wilfred made the breakthrough and became the legendary archmage, being respected as the Great Master of Paleness, which was quite unfortunate for Lucien.

Finding no other valuable items in the lab, Lucien took the invitation with him and left the place, and then set the lab on fire, burn it to the ground.

Staring at the great flame burning all the dead bodies, including the Mary's, into ashes, Lucien slowly turned around, and different thoughts filled his mind, "Ancient necromancers believed that the body of a human being who died before coming of age is the best and the purest material for

conducting necromantic rituals and spells, that's why the baron was so obsessed with young human bodies.

"But why Maskelyne, the great legendary Astrology sorcerer, would conduct an experiment with Wilfred, the Great Master of Paleness, from the school of Necromancy? And it seems to be a mysterious and significant one..."

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Chapter 146: After the Fight

As soon as Lucien went back to the baron's castle, in a corridor he saw Joanna walking toward him with a greatsword in her hands.

"Lord Evans," Joanna showed her deep respect to him, "All the husks here have been eliminated."

In fact, she was to some extent upset with Lucien for involving them in this dangerous fighting without even telling them what they should expect. Actually, even Lucien himself did not expect a bitter fight like this.

Lucien nodded to Joanna and asked her calmly, "Anyone else still alive in the castle except Mars? Is everyone all right?"

Joanna would not easily reveal her dissatisfaction toward Lucien, but she answered seriously, "Except Mr. Mars, there's no one alive in the castle. They're all husks. Simon is dealing with some chaos happening in Fogtown right now... It might have been caused by some escaping husks. Mr. Mars and Wise are still hiding in the storage room. Betty is vomiting in the bathroom."

"Is what?" Lucien's left hand grabbed a handful of casting reagent.

Joanna put a look of disgust on her face, "We found something in the kitchen, looking like the dinner we were about to 'enjoy'... There were rotten flesh, eyeballs, tongues, fingers... all covered with maggots."

As she was speaking, she almost threw up as well.

Lucien nodded. It seemed that the baron was about to serve them food with ptomaine to make them sick first before revealing his real intention. Under the disguise of magic, common people could not tell what that food really was, but when the spell casters died, the camouflage was gone as well.

"I see. Thank you, Joanna." Lucien took a step forward to Joanna and said to her in a low voice, "Please don't call me lord. I do not have any title."

Joanna looked up subconsciously and directly caught Lucien's charming eyes. Instantly, Joanna fell into a dream where there were countless shining stars.

"Yes, Mr. Evans," Joanna answered obediently.

Lucien checked her memory about the fight they just had and found nothing that could potentially reveal his identity, but he still made some tiny adjustments with Joanna's memory.

"I'm fine here. Go to find Simon and help him, Joanna... can you?" Lucien dismissed the spell affecting her.

Joanna was suddenly startled and her cheeks immediately flushed. She could not believe that she was just standing there, staring blankly at Mr. Evans' face, and felt that he was so charming that she could not move her eyes away.

"Sure... yes, sure... I'm going right now." Joanna quickly touched her face with her hands and turned around, heading for the gate of the castle.

After Joanna left, Lucien adjusted the memory of the rest of people one by one and erased any evidence of magic in the fight in the baron's room.

...

Under the dim light provided by the candles placed around the living room of the castle, Lucien said to Simon, Betty and Joanna, "Thank you for helping Fogtown, and, of course, thank you for helping me. As a convention, you take one tenth of the baron's wealth, and I shall take one third. The rest of his belongings should be handed to Viscount Stanley and the Church."

Lucien still wanted to maintain his identity in their mind as a knight, and that was why he did not take all the baron's stuff on his own. Besides, he also felt a bit sorry that he involved his guards in far more danger than what they would commonly encounter.

The baron's place was actually not that full of jewelry and gold as most people would think. Except for the castle, the manor and the land that Habearo owned, there was only sixty Thales left in the baron's place and a level two greatsword of extraordinary quality named Rock, since Habearo needed to handle the expenses generated by Hunt's experiments, buy babies and kids, maintain his luxury lifestyle, and pay for different things to hide his sinful behavior.

"That's about... six Thales!" Simon's eyes were full of excitement.

"No, it should be twenty Thales," Lucien corrected him.

"What?! That's... that's too much, Mr. Evans. How does that work?" Simon's pitch rose.

"According to the convention, the value of the greatsword, Rock, should be calculated into the whole value as well. I'll say the sword is about a hundred and forty Thales based on its level." Lucien explained. Although he did consider keeping the sword to himself, it turned out that the sword was too heavy for Lucien.

"Thank you so much! That's so generous of you, my lord!" Joanna cut in with a big smile on her face, "Although I know that we did not really help much, we all need money to receive formal knight training, especially Betty."

Twenty Thales was for sure a lot of money for them. For Joanna, Simon and Betty, their whole year income was not even close to ten Thales.

Lucien smiled and nodded. After they put the money in their own pockets, Lucien said to them, "I can teach Betty some knight training skills before we get to Korsor. You two can watch as well."

On one hand, Lucien appreciated their help, and on the other hand, when the Church questioned them, which was very likely to happen after he killed the baron, the idea that he at least know something about formal knight training could possibly hide his real identity.

"Really!?" Betty was so excited that she almost burst out a scream, "Thank you so much, Mr. Evans!"

Joanna and Simon were very surprised with Lucien's generosity. Except for saying 'thank you' to Lucien over and over again, they did not know how to express their gratefulness.

Lucien waved his hand, "I'm actually not a Saint Knight, and not even a noble. I once served a princess, and my power mostly comes from my divine items and magic items granted by the princess, which is not really my power. I hope you three can keep my power as a secret to avoid unnecessary trouble."

"For sure, Mr. Evans," they answered.

"Very well." Lucien nodded and said to them, "The fight was intense and I need to get some rest now. Do not let anyone disturb me tonight, please, even including you three. I'll try to recover by tomorrow morning, and tomorrow we're heading for Wolftown to report to the Church."

All of the priests here in Fogtown had been turned into husks by Hunt's necromantic power, so they needed to visit the nearby town to find the priests there.

"Yes, Mr. Evans!" The three guards answered cheerfully.

...

The night was getting darker. Lying in the bed in one of the guest rooms in this evil castle, Lucien remained rather calm and thoughtful.

Switching the invitation which Hunt received between his hands back and forth, Lucien was planning something important tonight.

By comparing the invitation in his hand with the one that he saved in his spiritual library provided by Chris, Lucien noticed that the only difference between the two was that there was a small symbol of Reversed Tree of Life on the former invitation, while a black hexagram on the latter one. His guess was that the symbols were corresponding to the identities of the invitees for security concern.

"Black hexagram represents... sorcerer apprentice, and the reversed tree represents a necromancer... Then how can I get in there?" Lucien murmured to himself silently.

In fact, Lucien had a plan in his mind, but the plan was so risky that he could not make up his mind right now.

Also, Lucien was almost certain that the time and location of this gathering would be changed after Hunt's death, after all, he was a level two necromancer who received formal invitation. And this meant that Lucien needed to find the clues as soon as possible, or he would definitely miss the gathering.

Making another divination with his crystal ball, the result was very blurry and of no help at all.

Lucien's brows frowned. He knew that he had to take another risk again.

Although it would take the coach more than seven days to get to Korsor from Fogtown if it followed the rugged mountain road, cutting corners through woods and cliffs using a knight's speed could save a lot of time, and Lucien was confident that he could get to Carendia castle within three hours on his own.

Opening his suitcase, Lucien put on his black robe and then sneaked out of the castle through the window.

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Chapter 147: The Castle

Close to the lake, there was an old castle covered with thick vines standing beside a precipitous cliff, and the high towers of the grand castle were so tall that they almost looked like aged, big cedars in the darkness.

Staring at the castle from afar, Lucien took a deep breath and put both Ice Revenger and Mo, the ring that had once belonged to Natasha's mother, on his left hand. He carefully turned the word, Mo, carved on the ring toward the inside of his hand.

Facing unknown dangers, the powerful and mysterious sorcerers and necromancers, Lucien needed to utilize everything he had to protect himself.

Trying to stay focused, Lucien was ready to cast spells at any time. So, he slowly walked out from behind a big rock where he was hiding and headed for the gloomy castle.

The cool night wind in June drove away the heat in the day, and the surroundings were quiet, except for the crickets' chirping.

Lucien safely came in front of the thick wooden gate of the castle. Raising his arm calmly, Lucien knocked at the gate.

After a while, the great gate slowly opened. Lucien heard the coarse sound from the friction between the wood and the ground. Although the gate appeared to be too heavy for even two to three male adults to open, a senior man wearing a white shirt and black suit easily pulled out the door and said to Lucien in standard continental common tongue, "Who're you, sir? Why are you here?"

Seeing that the person opening the gate did not directly try to kill him, Lucien's nervousness was half relieved. So, he lowered his head and said to the senior man politely, "You must be the steward of the castle, sir. Nice to meet you. I'm a sorcerer traveling through Djibouti right now."

Lucien paused a bit and quickly took a glance at the facial expression of the old steward, and then continued seriously, "A bunch of robbers tried to rob me outside Dragon Tooth town, and I killed all of them. What surprised me was that I found a letter from one of the robbers, inviting all the sorcerers, necromancers and apprentices to gather to join the Feast of Death and to meet a sorcerer from the headquarter of the Congress of Magic."

"..." The old steward's eyebrow rose slightly but did not say anything to respond, as if he was still waiting for Lucien's further explanation.

"I know it's not proper of me to come to visit the castle directly, but I was very lucky because the apprentice who was unfortunately attacked by the robbers actually left the location of Carendia Castle on the invitation, or I would never be able to find my way here. Please forgive my impertinence," Lucien continued politely.

"May I know what's the symbol on the invitation?" The old steward remained polite, as if he was just talking to some random traveler instead of an evil sorcerer.

Although Lucien knew that the old steward might not be able to see his face under the hood, he maintained his smile, "A black hexagram."

The old steward nodded slightly, "I shall report to my lord, guest."

Holding a white candlestick, the old man turned around and disappeared gradually in the darkness.

Lucien kept politely waiting at where he was, without moving a single step. After a while, when the old steward came back, he nodded to Lucien, "Very well. You're very polite, guest. You know what is respect."

Lucien laid his left hand on his chest and bowed slightly, "Thank you for forgiving my precipitance, sir."

"Viscount Carendia wants to meet you in the study. Follow me, please." The steward reminded Lucien, "Follow me close, guest. Do not get lost in the darkness. It's dangerous."

Then, he turned around again to show Lucien the way.

Following the old steward, Lucien was sweating from nervousness. His Host Star of Destiny, his own intuition and also Alert were warning him silently that there were lots of dangerous and mysterious 'things' hiding in the darkness, especially when Lucien just stepped in the castle and when the gate closed behind him.

Lucien felt that the darkness in the castle was somehow 'alive', which gave him goose bump. However, Lucien decided to remain silent and ask no question but just follow the old steward.

When Lucien started to get a bit irritated from walking in the darkness for a relatively long time, the old steward stopped and reached his head into the darkness. He pushed his hand forward and opened a door.

As soon as the door opened, bright yellow light came out and drove the darkness in this area away.

"Please, guest." The old steward bowed slight and politely let Lucien get into the room first.

"Thank you very much, sir." Lucien nodded, and then entered the room without any hesitation.

The dark yellow carpet in the study was thick and luxury. Even the hatstand was gilt. The table, the bookshelf and the armchairs were made from precious rosewood. Based on many details of the decoration of the room, Lucien could tell the pursuit of extravagance of the owner of this place.

In a red couch in front of a coffee table sat a young man wearing a black shirt and red coat. He had blond hair and deep eyes, matched with an attractive smile. The line of his chin was defined, looking handsome and also manly.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Sorcerer." The blond young man greeted without standing up from the couch.

"My lord, please adhere to your noble manner." The manner-oriented old steward walked to the young noble in a fast pace and whispered in his ear to remind him.

"Nice to meet you, Viscount Carendia. Thank you for seeing me." Lucien bowed slightly.

"You see... the guest doesn't mind me sitting." The viscount turned his head to the steward and smiled, "Take it easy, Nied."

"If the count was here, he would be your model of being elegant and noble," The old steward murmured in a low voice and then stood behind the viscount.

"Come on... I don't even really remember my grandpa. How am I supposed to learn from his manner?" The viscount rubbed his forehead a bit. Then he pointed at the couch beside him and said to Lucien, "Please have a seat. Nied told me your intention of coming here, but I have to make sure that you're not a spy from the Church. The Church has a bunch of sorcerers who surrendered to them."

Even while he was talking about Lucien's possible identity as a spy from the Church, the viscount still looked rather relaxed.

"The Church would never have me as their spy." Lucien gave the viscount his answer which was already prepared earlier, "I have a pseudonym, Professor."

"Professor? You're the Professor ranking No. 359 on the Cleansing List?" Carendia stood straight and asked him seriously. The viscount knew clearly that all the names on the list represented powerful beings. Grand arcanists, legendary archmages, the grand cardinals in the north, ancient dragons, the ancestors of vampire, the Prince of Werewolf, Royal family of Kuo-toa, and the leaders of heresies were all included. The reason that he noticed Professor on the list was that this mysterious sorcerer was the only one whose power was below that of a radiant knight.

Lucien gave a sigh of relief in his mind, feeling lucky that the viscount actually knew his alias, which also made sense because, as a noble, he should have access to this list.

"Yes, I'm the Professor." Lucien nodded, "I'm back now, from Aalto."

"How do you prove it?" Carendia had a cunning smile on his face, "Even I am not on the list. Your power must be very impressive."

"How do you want me to prove my power? Breaking one or two of your vases in this room?" Sitting in the couch, Lucien asked in a joking way.

"Ha... I'd rather not." The viscount laughed, "I heard that you created an unique magic that can directly destroy a house. And I know that, even in the headquarter of the Congress of Magic, there was no similar spell registered."

"I can show it to you." Lucien shrugged and pointed at the castle's floor, "But here?"

"Up to you." The viscount sat back in the couch with his eyes slightly squinting.

Lucien walked to the wall and laid both of his hands on it. After spending a bit time on calculating the possible range of vibration frequency of the castle, Lucien sent some magic waves to the wall and felt the feedback of the waves to get the more accurate information about the frequency of vibration of this whole place to adjust the speed of the waves he sent.

Soon, the old castle started to shake. Although the shaking was obviously easy to notice, it was far from destroying the whole place.

Lucien was guessing that this old castle was protected by many powerful magic circles, so The Professor's Oscillation Hand could not really do damage to it.

Before Lucien felt really embarrassed, the viscount clapped his hands behind him, "Enough, enough, Professor. Right now I cannot really afford a new castle like this."

Seizing the chance, Lucien removed his hands from the wall and turned around, "So I'll take it as a pass?"

"Of course." Carendia let Lucien go back to sit, "You already know the time and the location of our gathering, Professor. I can ask Nied to make another invitation for you."

"That'll be great." Lucien nodded, "What if there's any change with regard to the time or location, how can I be informed?"

While Nied, who was standing behind the viscount, walked toward the desk to make a new invitation, Viscount Carendia said to Lucien, "We have two secret sites in Korsor for sorcerers to leave coded marks and messages to exchange information. Any information regarding the changes of this gathering will be available there."

After introducing the location of the two sites and the meaning of the codes to Lucien, Viscount Carendia smiled to him, "I'm looking forward to your presence, Professor. And if you could come one day earlier, although I know you must be very busy, you can have more time to exchange ideas and thoughts with Mr. Felipe, from the headquarter of the Congress of Magic. After all, both of you are young folks. Young people should be given more time to gather and to make joint progress."

"We young folks?" Looking at the viscount, Lucien was confused.

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"Yes... of course. I can feel the energy of youth in your body, Mr. Professor." The corner of the viscount's lips curled up, "The power of life... I never get it wrong. Since Mr. Douglas defined Arcana, the Congress of Magic was revitalized like a young person, full of hope and vitality. Lots of outstanding young sorcerers and arcanists are giving new life to the congress... It's beautiful."

Lucien wondered why the viscount was speaking in the tone of a senior and elder person, after all, Carendia was still very good-looking and energetic, but by the fact that the viscount could sense the young power of life made Lucien guess that the noble might be a powerful vampire, since the

sensitivity toward life power was especially known as an unique advantage of this bloodthirsty race.

"I wish. Although I never heard the name of Mr. Felipe, I'm looking forward to meeting him." Lucien did not show his suspicion toward the viscount's identity, but remained rather conservative and careful, "Unfortunately, I have some of my own business to deal with on the day before the gathering, so I'm afraid I won't be able to meet Mr. Felipe in advance." Lucien was not sure about Felipe's attitude toward him as Professor, so he would rather get some more practical information from the gathering such as getting to know who was the liaison of the Congress of Magic in Sturk.

"Well, that's too bad, but I'm sure that you will definitely enjoy the gathering." The viscount handed him the invitation, "Here's yours, Mr. Professor."

Lucien took a quick glance at the invitation and noticed that his own symbol on it was a black top hat.

"I appreciate it." Lucien stood up and bowed slightly, "I think it's time for me to leave now. It's pretty late. Forgive me for coming over at such a late hour."

"No worries. My day has actually just started." The viscount waved his hand casually.

After Lucien left, the old steward, Nied, asked his lord with a confused look, "My lord, why you allowed him to join the gathering? Forgive me... I mean... can we really be certain that he's the Professor just based on that one single strange spell?"

"The spell was just part of it." Viscount Carendia stood beside the window and stared at the shining lake under the moonlight, "What made me certain about his identity was the ring he was wearing."

"The ring?" asked Nied.

"The plain-looking one... on his left hand." The viscount had a faint smile on his face, "Although the ring already lost its power and no one could tell its original look, I know the material of the ring. It was made by the alloy consisting of the seven elements. Only Holm Royal Magic Academy and the Will of Elements can produce that alloy. So, this Mr. Professor should be on their side, according to my guess."

"Then it's even more confusing to me that you, my lord, allowed him to attend the gathering." The old steward looked surprised, "The Will of Elements and the Hand of Paleness are..."

"Just for fun. And somehow he smelled a bit familiar to me." The viscount frowned his brows a bit and then turned to another direction.

"What do you feel about the spell Professor just showed, Amores?"

A low and hollow voice with echo responded from nowhere in particular, "Something like sound waves... not sure. He kept adjusting the frequency of vibration, and the vibration was quite unique... It made me feel a bit itchy."

...

Using the methods evading possible pursuers taught by Natasha, Lucien spent thirty minutes more to get back to the castle and sneaked into it successfully using the first circle spell, Light of Darkness.

It was a spell which could create a special zone of darkness. People inside the dark zone could see the outside very well, while people outside could not tell what was in the darkness.

In the guest room, Lucien took off the ring given by Natasha and hid it safely. Then, he burned down Hunt's invitation before going to bed.

...

In the morning of the following day, they left the castle, heading for Korsor.

Sitting beside the window of the coach, Lucien was introducing some of the methods of formal knight training, which mostly came from John's sharing and Natasha's teaching.

Unlike what Betty imaged with knight training, the procedures were actually quite boring and painstaking, and even Joanna and Simon who were also listening to Lucien's instruction felt hard to handle it. However, out of their admiration for Mr. Evan's great power, they knew that they should stick to the training.

In the early evening, they were already very close to Wolftown.

"When we report to the Church... " Simon said to Lucien a bit emotionally, "the legend of Baron Habearo will fall."

"I know it must be very disappointing for those people who view the baron as an idol, but those young lives who died because of him deserve justice," said Lucien.

...

Three hours later.

In the confessionary of the local church, after checking all of Lucien's documents, Arnold, a level three bishop from Korsor, smiled to Lucien, "It's hard to imagine that the talented musician, Lucien Evans, is also a powerful knight... very surprising..."

Before that, he even asked Lucien to play Pathetique to prove himself. Now, the bishop had no suspicion toward Lucien at all.

"My Blessing came from the potion that the princess rewarded me, but I don't have any noble title." Lucien slightly shook his head, "And I don't think I could even have survived this time against the baron and the necromancer if I did not have the sword and the powerful items given by the princess, not to mention killing them."

"The princess's generosity makes all people feel jealous," Arnold said in a meaningful way. Two magic items, one divine item, two extraordinary-quality weapons... Those things could almost compete with the collection of Viscount Stanley. The bishop was almost certain that the rumor was true: Lucien Evans, the young talented musician, was the secret lover of the princess of the Duchy of Orvarit.

As soon as the pastors in Wolftown heard Lucien and his guards' report on what happened in Baron Habearo's castle, they were completely shocked and immediately sent their message birds to inform the cathedral in Korsor. Then, by using some kind of divine portal, the level three bishop,

Arnold, together with his two pastors and four night watchers came to Wolftown to meet, or, in other words, to inquire about the baron's case.

The inquiry went separately, and Arnold was the one responsible for questioning Lucien. Lucien's words, after his careful design, were not suspicious to the bishop, and what Lucien said was also verified by his safeguards.

Now, the last part of the bishop's work was to write a report on how Lucien killed the baron and the necromancer to the cardinal of the Duchy of Djibouti.

"Mr. Evans, can I take a look at your magic and divine items that helped you kill the baron and the necromancer?" asked Arnold.

"Sure," answered Lucien. He reached out his left hand and introduced to the bishop, "This is the ring that can shoot frost blades. And this is the bracelet... it is where the fire balls and the fire shield came from."

Before that, Lucien dyed his bracelet and the ring with some kind of special plant, just in case that the Church would recognize them.

Seeing that Lucien was not going to take off the ring and the bracelet, the bishop also did not bother asking. Arnold just checked the two items from a distance with his waves of faith, which was basically the same thing as spiritual power, to see if the power inside was according to Lucien's words.

Then Lucien took out the amulet hiding beneath his shirt.

"Umm... Early stage of the War of Dawn... should be the style from that period of time." Arnold's eyes lit up a bit instantly when he saw the amulet, "I guess only families with long history like the Violet family are able to possess them."

Lucien's eyes squinted a bit from his confusion about the relationship between Maskelyne and the Church, but he knew that this was definitely not a proper time for investigating it. He put on a casual smile and put Alert and Asthenia Dagger on the table, "Alert, rewarded by the princess. And the dagger was from a level two dark knight killed by the princess."

"I see the coat of arms on the sword, yes." Arnold nodded. He checked them again and then said to Lucien, "Well... I think we're all set here. I sense that the night watchers are back, and after our verification, you'll be good to go, Mr. Evans."

Lucien waited patiently in the room for the bishop.

Ten minutes later, the bishop came back with smile, "No problem. Everything's clear now, Mr. Evans, although it's quite a pity that the necromancer's lab had been burned down by your fire balls during the fight, or we could find more information."

Lucien nodded to be polite, but did not say anything.

"And this is a reward from the Church. If it had not been for your brave fight, Mr. Evans, more innocent lives in Fogtown would suffer. You're a great contributor to the purity of the Church. And you're good to go now, Mr. Evans." The bishop handed Lucien a cross-shaped brooch, which was not a real divine item, but just a common gift for acknowledging Lucien's merit.

Lucien was almost amused: the Church was giving a reward to a sorcerer, a sorcerer who was on their Cleansing List... How ironic was that?

...

In the basement of the abbey in Aalto, there was no light and no sound.

Camil opened the door of the basement slowly without making any noise and entered the room. When she saw the princess, who was dressing pure black, kneeling on the floor and praying silently, Camil almost burst out tears.

The princess looked emaciated. Her practice here was to immerse herself in extreme darkness and silence in order to strengthen her will.

"What can I do for you, Your Grace?" Camil took a deep breath and walked to Natasha.

Slowly raising her head, Natasha smiled, "Did you bring paper and quill, auntie Camil?"

"Yes, as you wish." Camil handed the materials to the princess.

Writing something on the paper with effort, it took Natasha quite a bit of time to finish the letter. Then, she carefully folded the paper and gave it back to Camil, "Please, bring it to Mr. Othello."

...

In the afternoon, seven days later, in Korsor.

"We need to head for the Musicians' Association now." Wise and Mars said to Lucien and his guards, "You're welcome to visit us any time you want, Mr. Evans."

"Can I go with you?" Lucien smiled, "I have some personal things to deal with in the association as well. It would be lovely if you two could show me the way."

"Not a problem." Wise and Mars grinned.

Lucien was planning on sending letters to John and Natasha from there.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 149: The Newspaper

"Can I get a ticket to your concert?" Betty also asked Wise with excitement.

"Sure. Not a problem, Betty. Thanks to the protection from all of you, I can still hold the concert." Wise smiled, "Even if you had not asked, I would still invite all of you."

Then, Wise turned to Lucien politely, "May I ask why you're going to the association, Mr. Evans? I mean... If there's anything I can help you with, please feel free to ask."

"Yes, please." Mars also nodded to Lucien out of gratitude. Thinking of the fact that he spent quite a long time with those filthy husks and the evil baron in the castle, sweat would still run from his forehead. Thus, he was very grateful to Lucien, who saved his life.

Betty, Simon and Joanna, while being quite excited about Wise's invitation, also felt a bit surprised that this resourceful Mr. Evans even had some connection in the Musicians' Association.

"Thank you, Mr. Wise, and thank you, Mr. Mars." Lucien slightly shook his head politely, "I'm not heading for the association for anything special, but just sending some letters to my friends. After all, the branches of the Musicians' Association across the continent have the most frequent communication between different countries, and sending letters through them always takes way less time than through a common messenger."

Although there were messengers in that world, no convenient postal system could be found there, especially between different countries. Ordinary people could only rely on caravans and travelers to send letters.

Mars smiled and nodded, "That's really true. Although the association definitely will not refuse the request from a knight serving the princess in the Duchy of Orvarit, they will still charge you a lot. More importantly, they will not send a Hearthmeer to deliver your letters, Mr. Evans."

"Hearthmeer? What is it?" asked Lucien. He had never heard the name before.

"Hearthmeer is a special kind of eagle originated in Djibouti. Those huge, powerful creatures, after training, are the best delivery birds, known for their great sense of direction. It only takes them ten days to do a round trip between Korsor and Aalto. And that's why the Musicians' Association in Djibouti can always receive the latest Music Criticism and Symphony News every month, around the fifth to the seventh day," explained Mars, the old musician. "If you don't mind, I can ask someone I know to help you get your letters sent by the eagles, Mr. Evans."

"Thanks a lot and sure, I'd love to, Mr. Mars. I'm just sending my letters to Aalto." Lucien nodded. He felt sorry that he would miss the latest newspapers to possibly gather some information of Natasha and Victor since he would not stay in Korsor until the newspapers arrived.

"The honor is mine, Mr. Evans." Mars smiled.

When Lucien was about to pay Simon, Joanna and Betty the last day's salary, Betty said to Lucien cheerfully, "I think it's not the time to part ways yet, Mr. Evans."

Then she turned to the two musicians, "Mr. Wise, Mr. Mars, can I have the chance to visit the association as well?"

Although both of Wise and Mars were a bit surprised, they soon smiled and nodded, "Sure, welcome."

"Mr. Simon, Mrs. Joanna... Would you like to come as well?" asked Wise.

"Well... yes, sure." Although Joanna was a bit pissed off with Betty, she was curious about the association as well.

...

Although Korsor was a major city in central-southern part of the continent, it was only about one fifth of the size of Aalto. The architectural style of the four-storey building of the Musicians' Association was older and simpler than the one in Aalto.

Furthermore, the guards there were also more strict than that of the association in Aalto. Standing in front of the iron railings, they would not let any stranger go in unless the visitor was some well-known musicians such as Mars. One of the guards was sent by Mr. Mars to report to the director of the association because Mr. Wise, the invited musician, also came.

A variety of beautiful crystal ornaments, huge pictures of different famous musicians, soft dark-red carpets, and a bright and wide space together constituted the hall of the Musicians' Association in Korsor.

While Betty, Joanna and Simon were looking around out of curiosity, a middle-aged man dressing in black showed up, followed by a couple of his colleagues, to welcome them.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Wise. Thank you so much for having your concert here in Korsor and welcome! I'm the director of the association, and my name's Caspar. These are my colleagues and some of our musicians. Welcome!" Caspar shook hand with Wise with great passion. After all, Wise was known as one of the most talented young musicians in the duchy.

Wise, in contrast, remained quite calm, "Thank you, Mr. Caspar. You already make me feel the passion of the city."

The musicians following Caspar also surrounded him, with the same passion and eagerness to welcome Wise. They even started to exchange their ideas about music directly in the hall and

discuss the repertoire that Wise prepared for the concert. Lucien, Mars, Betty and the rest of them were just ignored.

"Wow... It's so great!" Although being ignored, Betty did not mind that at all. Her eyes were shining, "It feels really good seeing them talking about music like this!"

"When we awaken the Blessing," Joanna murmured to her husband, "we will go back to our hometown. We'll receive this warm welcome as well."

Everyone loved the feeling of being respected, and Simon was not an exception. He nodded seriously, "I'll follow Mr. Evans' words and stick to my practicing."

Lucie exchanged a smile with Mars. "Mr. Mars, I'm going to the counter to write my letters. Can you help me there?"

"I'll go with you to talk to Christie," said Mars, pointing to the seventeen-year-old black-haired girl, who was standing on tiptoes with her neck stretched, trying to see the young and talented musician, Wise, who was surrounded by a bunch of people right now.

"Christie." Mars called the girl's name when they got to the counter.

The girl did not turn around but waved her hands, "Wait. I'm busy here."

"Christie. It's me, Mars." He coughed a couple of times, feeling a bit amused.

"Ah... Sorry, Mr. Mars. Good to see you! Anything I can do for you?" Noticing that it was the well-known musician standing behind her, she quickly stood straight and asked nervously.

Mars had just survived in the fight against the husks and now was in a pretty good mood, so the girl's impoliteness did not bother him. Mar pointed at Lucian, "Provide Mr. Evans with some paper, pen and envelopes. When he finish his letters, send an eagle messenger as soon as possible to the Musicians' Association in Aalto."

"An eagle eats a lot of meat. Sending an eagle is expensive." Christie handed a pen, some paper and envelopes to Lucien, whispering.

"Not your business." Mars' face looked serious.

Christie quickly stuck out her tongue for a second but did not say anything. And then she took out a stack of newspapers, "Mr. Mars, would you like to get the latest issue of Music Criticism and Symphony News?"

"The latest issue?" Lucien, who was just about to write his letters, raised his head and asked together with Mars.

Christie nodded, "This month's issue was published earlier, and they just arrived at Korsor yesterday."

"Can I get one for each as well?" Lucien took out a Thale.

On the other side, Wise also noticed their conversation and walked to them with the the local musicians, "Beautiful lady, can I get the newspapers as well? And I'll buy the newspapers for Mr. Mars and Evans."

Although Betty, Joanna and Simon were not literate, hearing the name of the two most famous newspapers, they also came close to the counter out of curiosity.

"No problem, Mr. Wise," said Christie. She handed the newspapers to Wise, flushing, and then to Mars and Lucien.

Wise took a quick glance at the newspaper and amazedly said, "Mr. Lucien Evans composed another piece of piano sonata!"

"Yes, I read about it yesterday." Caspar nodded and praised, "Although only the first movement was published, it was as beautiful as a sweet dream."

Lucien was very confused. When did he just produce a new piece of piano sonata? Why he himself had no idea about that?

Turning the latest Music Criticism to the second page, Wise started to read the music score and hum the melody in his soft and gentle voice.

Immediately when he heard the familiar melody, Lucien recognized the first movement of Moonlight Sonata, and realized who published the sonata for him.

A smile appeared on Lucien's face.

"This piano sonata was from the famous musician, Mr. Lucien Evans, during his trip. Although only the first movement was published, the combination of wonderful melody, the tranquil atmosphere created by the fingerings and the innovation made in the genre of piano sonata still catches everyone's mind instantly without difficulty. Mr. Lucien Evans's new music piece breaks the fast—slow—fast arrangements of the music genre, and brings us to the peaceful night, where the dream-like moonlight shines on a sparkling lake..."

Below the review article, Lucien saw the familiar name, "Natasha Orvarit."

Although Lucien was glad to have some of his friend's information from the newspaper, he was confused why, all of a sudden, Natasha published the first movement of Moonlight Sonata for him.

"Beautiful... but a bit sad." Listening to Wise's humming, Betty praised sincerely, "Mr. Lucien Evans' music is amazing. No wonder the major newspapers would publish earlier than usual."

"Earlier than usual..." Something occurred to Lucien and he hurriedly turned the newspaper to the front page, and he saw that the publish date of the newspaper at the top was printed red words, that were a bit bigger as well: June 26th, 816.

Lucien grinned. It was the princess's way of saying "Happy Birthday" and "Happy Coming-of-age."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 150: The Letters

Lucien's chuckle did not attract anyone's attention, because they had begun to eagerly discuss the famous musician Lucien Evans' new sonata.

"Mr. Wise, it looks like you are very fond of the first movement of Moonlight, and I suggest that we go to the piano room to try to play it. After all, we've been standing in the hall for quite a long time." Caspar invited Wise to go upstairs.

Wise nodded and laughed, "That's very considerate."

Following Wise and Caspar, the musicians and instrumentalists immediately left for the piano room on the second floor.

Betty said to Lucien, "This is a rare opportunity! Mr. Evans, let's go upstairs together!"

"Yes, Mr. Evans, let's go." Holding hands, both Joanna and Simon were quite excited.

Lucien shook his head and smiled, "For me, writing my letters is more important."

"All right then..." said Betty with a bit disappointment, but soon she cheered up and said to Joanna and Simon, "Hurry up!"

They were guessing that Mr. Evans, as a princess' knight, must have met too many good musicians in Aalto, to the point he wouldn't get easily excited like them.

Seeing Betty, Simon and Joanna going upstairs hurriedly, Mars also apologized to Lucien, "Mr. Evans, excuse me, I don't want to miss this precious opportunity as well. Please just feel yourself at home in the association. When you finish your letters, just give them to Christie, and I'll take care of the rest of the procedure."

"Thank you, Mr. Mars. I will." Lucien slightly nodded and watched Mars leaving. As the hall did not have tables, Lucien just stood next to the counter and began to write.

Looking at the second floor, Christie sighed, "Why do I have to stay here... I'm gonna miss Mr. Wise's playing." Then, she started to walk restlessly behind the counter.

Lucien just ignored Christie and wrote down his two-month traveling experience in detail, mainly about the beautiful scenery along the way, the unique national customs, and the monsters and robbers he had met. Lucien did not stop until he realized that his words had already filled up more than seven pages.

Putting the first letter in the envelop, Lucien carefully wrote down Joel's address on it, and then started to write his second letter.

The second one was for Natasha. On the basis of the first letter, Lucien added lots of knowledge of folk music in different nations that he encounter during his trip. The second letter had more than twenty pages.

Christie slightly frowned her brows and thought to herself, "What a wordy man..."

At the end of the letter, Lucien wrote down the last paragraph with a big smile on his face, "Your birthday is coming, Your Grace. May I send my Happy Birthday to you in advance from afar?"

After the second envelop was loaded, Lucien got himself some more papers to work on the third letter for Christopher, the previous president of the Musicians' Association in Aalto.

Seeing that Lucien was still writing, Christie, who was feeling very bored, started to get curious. She wondered how many more letters this young man was still going to write and where would the letters be sent to.

Taking a glance at the envelopes beside him, Christie noticed an eye-catching name:

"Natasha Orvarit."

"Wait... Is this THE Natasha Orvarit? The princess in Aalto?" thinking about it, Christie almost burst out an exclamation.

Natasha's name often appeared on Music Criticism and Symphony News, so this name was actually very familiar to people from other countries. And, also, Orvarit was a very unique surname, unlike Evans, and that was why Christie directly linked the name to the princess in Aalto.

"What is the relationship between this guy and the princess in Aalto, the countess from the Violet family?" Christie wondered with great curiosity and surprise, "Hold on... just now Mr. Mars called him Mr. Evans... Is he THE Evans? The famous and talented musician, Lucien Evans?!"

Evans, even in Korsor, was not a rare surname. Actually, Christie also had a friend whose surname was Evans. However, there was only one Mr. Evans who she could link to the princess in the Duchy of Orvarit.

She almost released a scream out of excitement!

Christie's careful tiny movements were all caught by Lucien's eyes. He was a bit amused but did not say anything.

At this time, Caspar's voice came from upstairs as they were walking out of the piano room.

"Very impressive!" Caspar praised, "Mr. Wise, you're genuinely a music talent. It only took you a couple of times of practicing to present the complete first movement of Moonlight Sonata to us."

"Moonlight Sonata is definitely beautiful." Wise smiled, "I feel the emotional connection in the movement. Honestly speaking, I did not put too much skills in the playing. The music itself is gorgeous enough, isn't it?"

"What about you trying to compose the following two movements of Moonlight Sonata, Mr. Wise? I bet many big men in Korsor would love to read your work," Caspar suggested. Caspar's family declined many years ago, and with his relatively limited talent in music, regaining the name of his family on his own was a hopeless dream. So, Caspar was working on seizing every opportunity to build connections with major noble families to possibly get his title back, and music was definitely a good way.

"Thank you for your encouragement, Mr. Caspar." Wise smiled and shook his head gently, "But I'm not even close to Mr. Lucien Evans. I would rather not ruin the masterpiece."

"I see. You're just being too humble," said Caspar, and the other people agreed. When they walked downstairs and came to the hall, Caspar said to Wise, "I've found a nice villa for you to take a rest and prepare for the concert."

"Thanks a lot, Mr. Caspar." Wise and the rest of the people walked toward the gate together.

"Lucien Evans! You're Mr. Lucien Evans!" At this time, Christie's high-pitched voice came into their ears.

Christie knew for sure that the young man standing in front of her was the top musician, Lucien Evans, when she saw that he was actually writing a music score in his third letter.

In the quiet hall, Christie's voice was penetrating.

The people walking toward the gate stopped out of surprise. Among them, Mars looked back and asked, "What are you talking about, Christie?"

Christie almost jumped up from the floor. She pointed at the young man standing beside the counter and said to Mars carefully, "He... he is THE Lucien Evans, from Aalto."

She was trying to keep her voice down but her words still sounded very clear.

"What? The Lucien Evans...?" Betty was confused.

"Lucien Evans, the great musician. He's writing a piece of music score right now." Christie tried hard to explain.

"Ahhh...!" Betty first released a scream out of great surprise and then ran toward Lucien. When she saw what Lucien was writing, Betty almost could not speak properly, "Evans... You're Lucien?"

"Yes, I am. And I told you before that I serve the princess." Lucien just smiled while his right hand continued writing.

Hearing Lucien's answer, the two young girls, Betty and Christie, almost passed out due to their great excitement, while Joanna and Simon felt like in a dream—they just could not imagine that the powerful knight and the great musician were actually the same person.

Wise's face flushed. He felt embarrassed that he even played Mr. Evans' music in front of him.

Walking past Wise, Caspar hurriedly rushed to Lucien, "Mr. Evans! If you need any help here in Korsor, just tell me!"

"Well..." Lucien nodded to Caspar for greeting and said to him, "Can I register this in the association before I send it?" He handed the third letter to Caspar.

"Sure! Hold on... this is..." A big smile appeared on Caspar's face, "Is this the second and the third movement of Moonlight Sonata?" Caspar recognized the music style immediately.

"Yes." Lucien added another piece of paper there in the third letter and said to Caspar, "After the registration, I need to send the letter to Mr. Christopher as soon as possible."

The final piece of paper was a note from Lucien to Mr. Christopher:

"Please make sure that the rest of the sonata will be published on the seventh issue of Music Criticism on July 30th. Many thanks, sir."

"We'll take care of the registration immediately." Caspar tried his very best to please Lucien, "Mr. Evans, is it possible that we can invite you to hold a concert in Korsor?"

"Sorry, I got another appointment already, and I'm leaving tomorrow," answered Lucien.

Only Lucien himself knew what the appointment was—the Feast of Death.