

# ***Throne of Magical Arcana***

## Chapter 21: Harpsichord

Victor was glad to see that Lucien did not slow down over the several days' learning. Within fifty minutes he absorbed the rest of the grammar rules. He was smart and gifted in learning language, and had a good memory as well.

Good mood brought him ideas. Victor started humming.

"Ladies and gentlemen, let's have a break. Help yourself to some tea and snack. I gotta jot this down." He was already trotting upstairs when he finished talking.

Picking up the fine white teacup, Lucien took a sip of the weird-tasting tea. Rubbing his eyes, he tried to relax a little bit.

"Felicia, when can we go hunting in your family's manor again? I miss the deers and rabbits there so much, and also the fresh air."

Annie was another noble lady among them. However, except for her beautiful blond hair and gem-like green eyes, her appearance was just around average. Besides, her family was not that distinguished as well. Her father was just one of the many children of a common baron, who failed to inherit anything from the family. No title, no land, no manor. Annie's family had to struggle to live a seemingly decent life with the income from her father work as a court clerk and the annuity from their title.

In comparison, the Hayne family, as one of the biggest families in the Duchy of Orvarit, still enjoyed a high reputation. Although her father did not inherit the title either, he still got a big manor outside of Aalto with its own woods, orchards, and even a granite quarry. They also possessed a property inside of the city.

Among them, Felicia had the most distinguished family background.

On hot summer days, there was nothing better than escaping from the heat enjoying some hunting and some homemade wine in a manor away from the city. Many young nobles who did not have a manor in their families would of course long for it. Lucien could tell Annie was trying to get close to Felicia.

"Is that true, lady Felicia? Are there rabbits and cute deers in your family's manor?" Renee got in the conversation, asking with curiosity.

Since they started studying together, Renee always tried to cotton up to the noble students by talking about music, which worked very well.

She was thus encouraged. Through music, she started joining conversations between noble students more. Somehow she learned a bit on some theories about music. Often she asked Felicia or Annie related questions and became more and more acquainted with the nobles.

Learning from her, Colin and David started doing the same.

Lucien, perhaps because he was too nerdy and reserved, only cared about his own study. And for sure neither the nobles nor the commons would take the initiative to talk to him.

“I miss the place as well.” Felicia was still sitting straight, answering with her standard smile, “But there are only around three months left before Mr. Victor’s performance. Lott, Herodotus and I have to practice a lot. I really have no time to go there.”

For sure, Felicia was happy for being flattered and being the envy of the other students. Who would not?

It would not be true to say that Lucien did not want to have a look at such a fancy manor. But the most urgent thing in his mind was how to borrow the dictionary and finish browsing through it as quickly as possible.

Victor came downstairs with a slight smile hanging on his face. Apparently he was pretty satisfied with his work. The chatting stopped.

Athy, the steward, came in when Victor was about to continue his teaching. He whispered in Victor’s ear, “Your guest is here, my Lord.”

“Oh! I forgot!” Shaking his right hand, he looked a bit annoyed, “Let him in, please.”

Then he turned to his students, apologizing politely.

“I’m so sorry, ladies and gentlemen. I forgot I would have a guest here today. Can we resume the class tomorrow afternoon at two? I’m really sorry.”

The students were happy to have an early end today. When they were preparing to leave, Lucien walked closer to Mr. Victor, ready to ask him to borrow the common tongue dictionary for a few days.

Before Lucien began his request, two guests came in following the steward. One was a silver-haired pretty man in a red shirt and black coat, and the other was a white-haired elderly man with a wooden suitcase in his hands.

“Mr. Rhine...” Lucien and Felicia recognized the guest at the same time.

Felicia’s face turned pink, while Lucien felt even more surprised. He thought Rhine was just a bard living in the tavern. Rhine being Mr. Victor’s important guest was quite unexpected for Lucien.

“Hi, Felicia. And... you’re here, Lucien!” Rhine greeted them gracefully.

Felicia smiled shyly, and a second later she was very surprised: how did Mr. Rhine know Lucien?

“Lucien, you know Mr. Rhine?” Victor smiled.

“Yes, we’ve met before.” Lucien nodded, “I Didn’t expect I’d meet Mr. Rhine again here at your place.”

Rhine’s smile was pretty attractive like an elf.

“Yes, we met once before and Lucien impressed me. At that time he was telling us that he wanted to learn how to read. And look! Here he is! I always appreciate young people striving for their dreams.”

Commended by Rhine, even Lucien felt a bit shy.

“Mr. Rhine is the concertmaster I’m currently working with, who has very unique and excellent understanding towards music. Without his help, I don’t think I could be inspired with my piano concerto.”

“What!? Rhine’s the master now!?” That almost made Lucien’s jaw drop. He had met Rhine in Copper Cornet in the slum several days before.

From his classmates’ conversation, Lucien knew that the structure of a symphony orchestra here was similar to the ones on the earth. The first violinist was the concertmaster, who would also be responsible for conducting the orchestra when the conductor was absent. How could Rhine, a stranger who had never cooperated with the team before, get such an important position?

From Lucien’s expression Rhine could tell he was very surprised. He explained easily, “The previous master fell in love with a noble lady, who eloped with her to Syracuse several days ago. Mr. Victor had no one else to find but me.” He shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

“Mr. Rhine should be the first violinist of the orchestra, even if the previous master was still here.” Felicia cut in with her flushed face, “Mr. Rhine just needs more practice with the others.”

“I agree.” Victor also thought highly of Rhine, “Mr. Rhine’s one of the best violinists I’ve ever met. I was more than lucky to have him here.”

Lucien looked at Rhine, who was smiling politely with his right hand laying on his heart, showing his gratitude. Within a few days, a bard was exiled from Syracuse with his harp, and he happened to become the first violinist of a symphony orchestra in Aalto. It was too strange for Lucien. It could not be a coincidence.

“This is Mr. Shavell, the most excellent harpsichord maker in Aalto.” Rhine started introducing the elderly man beside him, “Mr. Shavell shall be able to help you with the improvement.”

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Shavell. It’s an honour for me to have you here.” Victor shook hands with him enthusiastically and led him upstairs, before Lucien had any chance to talk to him.

Victor was so excited that he forgot to ask Athy to see his students out. Unsure about the relationship between Lucien and Rhine, Athy did not ask him to leave instantly either. Next, Felicia, Annie, Colin and some other students came upstairs quietly, filled with curiosity.

Lucien was not willing to leave without the dictionary, so he also followed upstairs to end up in Mr. Victor's practice room.

"Mr. Shavell, I was hoping the harpsichord could be more sensitive to the pressure of my fingers, so the the control of its volume can be more accurate." Watching Shavell open his harpsichord, Victor made detailed his request, "My music requires a wider range of tones. More resonant and vigorous, but also delicate and clear."

There were lots of different components in it: springs, pivots, plectrums, strings... Since it was invented, many makers and musicians tried to improve the harpsichord, including adding extra pivots, stops, replacing soundboard, etc.

Slightly frowning his eyebrows, Shevell was carefully checking the parts.

"I'm afraid it's impossible, Mr. Victor. Over more than 300 years of upgrades, this kind of instrument has reached its limitation. Even a slight improvement on it would be quite hard."

Both Victor and Rhine lost their words, especially Victor. If the harpsichord could not be improved, his music would definitely not be perfect. In that case, the performance in the Psalm Hall would be a foreseeable failure for him.

Everyone remained silent for a while, until Lucien started asking all of a sudden.

"Can we... can we turn it into a kind of percussion instrument...? Changing it from plucking to hitting."

Lucien noticed that this world had yet to invent the "king of musical instruments", the piano. Musicians were still working on harpsichords and clavichords. He got his own plan: If he could help Mr. Victor with his improvement, probably there would be no more five Nars every month, and, of course, borrowing a dictionary would be a piece of cake.

As early as they started talking about improving the harpsichord, Lucien opened his Piano: Manufacture and Tones and Mechanism of Modern Piano in his spirit library. He got a rough idea from leafing through the first several pages.

"Then what would be the difference between it and a clavichord?" Shevell threw a stern look at Lucien, "Yes you can control the volume with percussion, but the sound's too delicate and the volume too low. It's only suitable for playing at home, not a hall."

It was in Aalto, the City of Psalm, the City of Music. No one suspected the real reason why Lucien understood the difference between a harpsichord and a clavichord.