

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 251: Bitter Fight

When the demon's scarlet eyes looked at Charlie, Lucien noticed that Charlie's face froze immediately, and the symbols on the magic shield started to swell and break into pieces. Then, the whole shield was destroyed. As soon as the shield was gone, Charlie was enveloped by a heavy black fog.

It happened so fast that neither Lucien nor Sandra managed to take any actions.

After a second, the black fog disappeared all of a sudden. A small black pig showed up at the spot where Charlie was, and it looked beyond lost. Turning around in circles, its thin tail kept wagging.

"Baleful Polymorph!" Sandra's voice came to Lucien's mind through their telepathic bond, "We need to kill it before it gets out of the brazier!"

At the same time, dark clouds gathered under the ceiling. Among those clouds, streak lightnings were flashing, turning the whole place into a lightning forest.

The forth-circle spell in the school of Electromagnetics, Lightning Clouds!

A big fireball was created in front of Lucien, and he threw it fiercely at the demon at the center of the magic circle.

The demon might be immune to flame and blast, but the magic circle and the brazier should not. As long as the demon lost its rebirth ability, the sorcerers were confident that they could kill it again.

At the same time, Lucien was being cautious not to cast Elemental Swirl right away before making sure it was effective to do so with the demon, because if the demon was completely spiritual, Elemental Swirl would not only lose its power but also hurt Lucien badly.

The second before the fireball hit the brazier, a dark mist rose, expanded very fast, and devoured the whole room completely, even including the lightning and Lucien's fireball.

However, at the same time, the lightning and fireball also made the mist look quite thinner, as if both sides were fighting for the dominant right of the space.

Sandra's lips were half open, murmuring. The darkness in the space started to be distorted by some kind of invisible power. The lightning showed up again and fused together into a lightning ball. The target of the ball was the center of the room.

The forth-circle spell in Electromagnetics, Distorted Magnetic Field.

Seizing the chance, Lucien pointed his coral staff at the demon and cast the second-circle spell Sadism on it with the assistance of the staff's power. The spell, in the intersection of Astrology, Necromancy and Light-darkness, could build a special connection between a sorcerer and their enemy: when the enemy was hurt, the sorcerer would reach quite a significant improvement on his or her life force, spiritual power, attack and defence, and the enemy would be hurt even further!

At this time, only spells like this could work in this magnetically distorted environment.

When the demon was hit by the lightning ball, it burst out hoarse and terrifying scream.

All of a sudden, Sandra's shadow became alive, and the shadow directly grabbed her ankles and pulled her toward the deeper shadow pit nearby, that looked like a well.

Lucien heard Sandra's scream in his mind, and lots of lightning exploded in the shadow well!

That was totally out of Lucien's expectation. He was about to activate Sun's Corona, and he hesitated for a second—should he save Sandra first or keep attacking the demon?

As soon as Lucien had the two thoughts, he already made the decision. He decided to continue to launch his attack. He had to be prepared for the moment when the demon got rid of the control of Distorted Magnetic Field, so that his spell would not be distorted as well.

The moment when the distortion and lightning completely wore off, the demon covered itself with black fog again, as if it was just prepared for Lucien's attack.

However, somehow, everything suddenly got quiet, silent, more relevant, and the fancy black robe that the demon was wearing cracked. From the crack, rotten flesh covered with white tiny maggots was revealed.

In a corner of the room, Charlie's figure slowly rose. However, the little black pig was still near the room entrance. Charlie looked pale, and his black battle robe was gone. There was a weird-looking book page written with mysterious characters that quickly disappeared in front of the white glove that Charlie was wearing on his right hand.

Lucien recognized it immediately: it was a forth-circle spell in Transformation, Demon Elegy, a exclusive spell from the Congress!

It seemed that Charlie just used some kind of magic buff on his robe or some unique spell and somehow avoided Baleful Polymorph, then he attacked the demon with a totally unexpected strike!

When the demon was screaming out of great pain, Lucien suddenly felt refreshed and activated Sun's Corona immediately. A streak of flame came down onto the demon directly. In the flame's holy light, the demon's fancy black robe was burned into ashes, and most of its body was also burned down together with those maggots crawling over it.

Flame Strike!

Lucien did not stop. When the remaining part of the demon was still writhing from the pain, Lucien's left hand pointed at the brazier. It was his next target!

Seeing Lucien's gesture, the demon was more than scared. Turning itself into black mist, the demon rushed at the brazier, dragging the flame around, to stop Lucien.

The brazier was close to the demon, and it had been improved by magic, so it would not be destroyed by Lucien at one shot easily.

However, as soon as Lucien pointed at the brazier, a cracking sound came from its inside, and colourful light quickly covered it. On the next second, the brazier suddenly swelled and broke down into small pieces of different colors!

The third-circle exclusive spell, Elemental Order!

The demon paused for a second out of great shock and was forced to come back to its previous form, wearing the black robe, because the brazier was already gone. At this time, clusters of flame which smelled like sulphur covered its body, and its rotten flesh and bones started to swell.

Seeing that, Lucien quickly activated Powerful Fire Shield again, and his body was covered with a layer of white and golden flame shield again.

At this time, Sandra, who just got rid of the shadows and came out from the shadow well, instantly cast Palmeira's Power Magic Spheres again on herself as well as on Susan.

On the other side, Charlie also activated Douglas's Absorbing Wall decisively.

The demon exploded. The great explosion sound buzzed Lucien's ears. Through the layer of flame, he saw heavy black smoke mixed with flame billowing, and in the smoke there were chunks of rotten flesh as well.

The flame shield was shaking from the great surge of power created by the explosion. Although Powerful Fire Shield did not work facing attacks targeting the soul or spirit, as a fifth-circle spell, the fire shield could definitely handle it.

When the explosion settled and the heavy smoke started to disappear, everything was a great mess in the summoning room. The floor was covered with chunks of rotten flesh, and the summoning circle was completely destroyed. Even parts of the walls, which were fortified with lots of defensive magic circles, were torn down, so Lucien could see the light mist outside slowly disappearing through the gaps.

"That was tough, uh?" Charlie's magic absorbing wall disappeared, and his white glove now looked ragged. His face still looked pale, and he was coughing from the heavy smoke.

All the magic spheres above Sandra's were gone after absorbing the great explosion power. Fortunately, because of Stone Skin and her purple magic robe, she did not get hurt, and Susan, who hid behind Sandra, was also fine, except that her hair was beyond messy.

Checking her surroundings, Sandra released a long sigh, "We finally sent the damned demon back to hell, at great cost."

"My precious magic robe has been ruined!" Charlie took a glance at the burned little pig body, "I've gotta report this to the Congress for compensation."

If a sorcerer's own magic item or potion was destroyed or used in this kind of forced task, the Congress would compensate the sorcerer.

Lucien also relaxed a bit, but he still felt that something was not right, "The brazier keeps reminding me of the ridiculous summoning rite that we found in the apprentice hall. I wonder if Bertren really tried the rite... And also, don't you guys find it weird that the thing just exploded itself in the end? I mean... it did not have to. The thing at least should try to escape..."

"Maybe it was not able to." Charlie looked at the thin mist outside, still coughing, "Maybe it was trapped within the brazier, and once the brazier was destroyed, the thing could not exist any

longer. When we leave this place, Mr. Evans, please contact Mr. Gaston. It's way safer to let those senior-rank sorcerers investigate this place further."

Charlie leaned his back against the wall and took out a tiny, fine tin box from his pocket. After a click, the lid of the tin box popped up and Charlie took out a cigarette from it.

"Want one?" Charlie puffed out the gray cigarette smoke, and started to feel soothed, "Top tobacco from Tria."

"No, thanks." Lucien shook his head.

"The mist's almost gone now. Mr. Evans, why don't you try contacting Mr. Gaston?" Sandra rubbed her forehead a bit. "And we can check whether Bill is still alive in the apprentice hall."

As she was saying, Sandra looked around at the metal pieces on the floor to see if there was any precious material left.

A metal piece on the floor reflected Sandra's tired-looking face. Suddenly, the face put on a creepy smile, and two white, fat maggots crawled out of the eye and the nose!

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Chapter 252: Hatred

When Lucien activated his monocle, before he could try to contact Mr. Gaston again, he suddenly sensed a great magic power and subconsciously cast Maskelyne's Star. The crystal ball that Lucien had just picked up from the floor rose to the air again above his head, surrounded by twelve shining light spheres.

Charlie was slower than Lucien, but not by much. The giant palm made of force covered him again.

Susan, however, was completely lost. Without Sandra's protection, she had no idea what she could do, but only watched the electric sparks in front of Sandra's chest fighting against the cluster of black smoke. Very quickly, the black smoke was driven away from Sandra.

As soon as the black smoke left Sandra's body, the several metal pieces on the floor in front of Sandra turned burned black.

"The thing's still around!!" Sandra's voice was sharp with fear, "I almost got controlled by it!"

The collar of her magic robe had partly burst from some kind of great power, and a deformed amulet that Sandra was wearing dropped on the floor with a crisp sound.

The sorcerers had killed the demon twice, and they had revealed all their strongest spell, but the demon was still around! Experienced as Sandra was, her back was still covered in cold sweat.

With star-like spheres spinning above his head, Lucien looked around cautiously, and he tried to call Gaston through the monocle. However, it still did not work.

Charlie cast Lesser Mind Connection, connecting the four of them together.

"We should leave this place!" Susan was experiencing another nervous breakdown again, "It never dies!"

Lucien remained calm, and he made a quick analysis, "We thought the demon summoned by Bertren needed the brazier as a medium to keep coming back, and now we know that's not true. Mr. Bertren understood arcana, and it is very unlikely that an arcanist would try such a ridiculous rite. It must be someone else who summoned the demons!"

"Bill..?!" Charlie responded quickly, although he still felt very tired. "He's the only one who's still alive in this castle."

"Impossible," said Sandra. "I've checked him with Charm Person. Wait... unless..."

"What?" asked Charlie.

"Unless the demon helped Bill... Unless the demon erased part of his memory!" Sandra murmured.

Hearing that, Susan suddenly stopped crying. She was shocked.

"Susan mentioned that Bill was often bullied by other apprentices, and the kid's mind was probably filled with anger and hatred. He wanted to take revenge, but he did not know much about arcana, so he decided to try that vicious rite, no matter how ridiculous it was in other apprentices' eyes." Lucien nodded, then he turned to Susan and asked her through their telepathic bond, "Did Bill ever read Pain Fable?"

Susan frowned, trying to search the answer from her memory, and then her eyes suddenly opened wide, "Yes! Bill... Bill told me reading Pain Fable made him more determined to put more effort in learning arcana!"

"Let's go," said Lucien decisively. This time, they must completely kill the demon before it regained its power again from Bill.

Bill just lied. He misled them to the summoning room to buy more time for the demon!

In the battle formation, the three sorcerers headed for the apprentice hall. Susan took all of her courage and followed Sandra.

Lucien, as usual, still felt something suspicious. He wondered why when they entered the summoning room, they indeed saw the demon getting out from the brazier. However, he had no time to figure it out right now.

To leave no time for the demon, they moved really fast. On their way back, there was no creepy, pale arms or disgusting, bloody tongues, which meant that the demon was still recovering!

When they got back to the chamber, they saw the eyes of the copper statue were swelling, and many eyes, with black eyeballs but white pupils, covered the doors and nearby walls.

Seeing the Wall of Evil Eyes was not even completely formed yet, the three sorcerers were slightly relieved, as they knew that they came back in time. Right now, the demon must be very weak!

This was a great opportunity!

Quickly exchanging their thoughts through the telepathic bond, they figured out a battle tactic within a few seconds. Then, Lucien fiercely threw a powerful fireball right at the gate of the chamber.

An instant before that, Charlie had cast Staring in front of the forming Wall of Evil Eyes. As soon as the eyes saw themselves in the mirror, the creepy eye wall collapsed together with the mirror screen.

So, Lucien's great fireball directly hit the chamber gate.

The defensive magic circles on the chamber got destroyed layer by layer from the great explosion, and the stone gate was exploded into pieces and stone dust. Following that, Sandra's purple magic staff illuminated the whole chamber with Arcana Light.

In the light, Bill half knelt on the floor of the chamber, where dust and smoke was everywhere.

Bill's eyes, staring at the sorcerers, were filled with great hatred and anger. However, there was the same creepy smile on his distorted face. His muscles kept bulking and his skin together with his apprentice uniform was torn up. His whole body was covered with swollen muscle and blood, and even his veins could be seen. Among his muscles and veins, white maggots were crawling. Some even came out from his mouth, nose, eyes and ears!

"Bill? You..." Susan was shocked. She thought that it was Bill who summoned the demon, but now, seeing that, she realized that the demon was Bill himself!

A transparent wall showed up in front of Bill, in which countless black, weird magic symbols were floating. He burst out laughing, "They slapped me in my face! They mocked me! But when I saw how terrified and desperate they were when I killed them, I realized that they were just timid, filthy dirty mice! Look, only a strong will can bring you power, and power derives from pain! Pain has awakened me!"

His words were sharp.

Two streaks of white light directly hit the transparent wall, and some magic symbols started to disappear. Neither of them wasted their time having any kind of chicken soup conversation with Bill, but directly used a third-circle Force Field spell called Dispel Magic, which had a chance to remove a magic buff or a defensive force field from the target.

At the same time, three Maskelyne's stars above Lucien's head collided with the other three, and dazzling light burst out, which improved Charlie and Sandra's Luck to maximize the power of Dispel Magic.

"This is not power! This is evil!" Susan cried.

Bill laughed, "No, this is not evil. This is ourselves! Hatred, jealous, greed, anger... We all have it!"

As he was laughing, his lips fell off, revealing his teeth, and his eyes became scarlet.

The transparent wall had been destroyed. Obviously, its power was not back yet, not even a small part of it.

As soon as the wall disappeared, both Charlie and Sandra activated their magic items and recast Dispel Magic again!

The layer of black smoke on Bill disappeared with Charlie's casting, and then clusters of smoke started to come out after Sandra's spell hit him!

Lucien's right hand was now covered with purple light, as if he was holding a small, purple sun. Instantly, colourful light spots in golden, silver, black, white, purple and more, surrounded Bill, and they started spinning at great speed around him, like a crazy swirl. The swirl was tearing Bill's body apart!

The monster might be pure spiritual, but Bill was not! Bill was still made up from elements!

This was the right time for the last strike!

The swirl was getting bigger and bigger, and the light brighter and brighter. The whole place was filled with dazzling light.

Lucien felt great pain in his heart and head. His soul was very weak and his spiritual power was scattered. He could not even open his mouth to speak, but leaned his body against the bookshelf.

At this time, Charlie came to his aid. Using Mage Hand, Charlie made Lucien take the magic potion called Water Song.

Sandra, in the front, stared at Bill intently, protecting Lucien and Charlie.

When the swirl slowly disappeared, the chamber was completely destroyed. Through the several huge holes on the floor, they could see the hall downstairs.

Except for a burned mark on the floor, there was nothing left of Bill.

"Did we... kill it?" Sandra was a bit hesitant. When she looked out of the window, the mist was completely gone, and the sunset was quite nice.

"Not sure, but now that the mist is gone, we should contact Mr. Gaston," said Lucien. He felt much better after the potion, although he could still feel pain in his soul. Trying his best, he activated Electromagnetic Message.

Water Song was definitely the ideal healing potion for middle-rank sorcerers. However, right now Lucien could only activate magic items, but not cast any spells.

"Mr. Gaston?"

After several seconds, Gaston's elderly voice came to them through the monocle, "Any trouble there, Lucien?"

"Yeah. A demon." Lucien briefly told Gaston what happened there. During that time, he relaxed a little bit.

After a moment of silence, Gaston said, "You four find a safe room. Go in there and cast defensive magic circles around it. Stay in the room and wait for the nearby senior-rank sorcerers to get there."

Hearing that, all of them felt a little more relieved. They started to head for the power room through the other corridor of the apprentice hall to wait there.

"Yes, Mr. Evans?" Seeing Lucien frowning, Charlie asked, "Is there anything wrong again?"

Lucien nodded, "Yes, something... I'm just thinking, why the thing attacked Sandra and alerted us before it was fully recovered?"

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Chapter 253: Behind Them

"Maybe the thing knew that we had relaxed our guard after destroying the brazier, and since you still could not get in touch with Mr. Gaston, we would find out very soon that the thing did not die completely. So, controlling one of us and launching an unexpected attack might be the best way in its mind at that time." Charlie tried to analyze what just happened, "Also, according to Bill's words, this kind of demon comes from negative emotions, and very often they can't control themselves, not to mention figuring out the best tactic."

As his body was gradually absorbing the magic potion, Lucien felt much better, although he still could not run or use magic. Listening to Charlie's words, he slightly nodded, "I know what you mean, Charlie, but I just feel the whole thing is quite suspicious..."

The two ladies were walking in the front. Hearing what Lucien just said, Sandra quickly looked around with great caution, while Susan looked very terrified and her voice trembled, "Mr. Evans... Are you saying that the demon's still alive?!"

In this great nightmare, Susan could bare no more.

"I agree. The demons' contradictory behaviour pattern is quite beyond our understanding." Charlie nodded.

Hearing that, Susan almost fell to the floor.

After a moment's pause, Charlie continued, "However, from many ancient notes and legends, we know that demons are indeed disordered. After all, they come from a place of chaos."

"Mr. Charlie... You really scared me there." Susan could not help complaining a bit.

"That's true." Lucien was totally okay with Charlie putting forward his opinion, "Those pit demons are of various kind. Especially on Skeleton Land, new demon species are being created every day, and of course we cannot recognize them all."

Susan let out a long sigh of relief. She trusted Mr. Evans' words.

However, Lucien then changed his tone, "But no matter how disordered the demon was, it would not give up the chance of killing us. The thing got enough power to kill me, either using Baleful Polymorph or Shadow Well, because I had nothing specifically to defend myself at that time. However, what the thing cast on me were spells that targeted the soul or spirit, although the thing knew that I was protected by Death Ward, so the spells could not directly kill me."

As Lucien was saying, he concluded that his study in arcana was too imbalanced. Although he was very dedicated to the school of Element and Astrology, he ignored other schools, so he did not have enough variety of spells to face the demon. When he went back to Allyn, he would need to branch his study in a wise way.

"Maybe, when it was trying to attack us using the mirror reflection, the demon just could not use other spells except those ones targeting at one's spirit or soul." Sandra had her own understanding, and her comment definitely made sense. When the demon was casting other spells, it wasn't inside the mirror.

"Discussion really helps." Lucien smiled, "Thank you for answering my questions, but I've still got some: first, why the summoning room looked just like what the rite instruction described, if Mr. Bertren never tried that ridiculous rite? Bill had no right entering Mr. Bertren's summoning room. Second, why the half-burned parchment was there? Why we happened to find it? Why it is just half-burned?"

"Well..." Charlie found those questions quite hard to explain, "For the first question, maybe Bill went back to the summoning room after Mr. Bertren was dead, in order to make his teacher be blamed for it. And the fact that the summoning room looked like that also distracted us and

directed us to the wrong direction. And the second one... I don't think Bill wanted to burn the instruction. When they were fighting, the parchment was set on fire by accident."

"Yup, and we just found it." Sandra nodded. Then, they came to the corridor that lead to the power room.

"Then I've got no more questions." Lucien took out his pocket watch and said, "Now it's 5:25 p.m.. In fifteen minutes, the senior-rank sorcerer should be here. Let's be patient."

"Okay." The other three nodded.

Although they had found answers for all of Lucien's questions, those questions still made them feel nervous. Therefore, neither of them lowered their guard. The colourful power spheres were still spinning above Susan and Sandra, and a power absorbing wall was protecting Lucien and Charlie.

When they walked down the corridor, Susan looked at one of the rooms of which had its door open, and she looked a bit confused.

Lucien, Sandra and Charlie also looked at the inside of the room. It was empty. There was nothing there.

"Susan?" asked Sandra, "Any problem?"

Susan frowned a bit and answered, "This is Mr. Bertren's vault. He stored all his treasures like gold, silver, and precious materials here, but now they're all gone..."

Knowing that demons and monsters definitely had no interest in those things, instantly, they all got nervous again!

"Let's not panic for nothing." Sandra was being a bit hesitant, "Maybe... maybe that thing needed precious gold, gems and materials to maintain its existence..."

However, although she was saying so, Sandra herself was still quite nervous, checking the surroundings by looking around.

"I don't think so... Bill was not summoning dragons. Those demons do not need treasures to be summoned." Charlie could not agree with Sandra, "Let's stop moving and just stay here. This place is surely weird, but I think it's because of something else, not that thing. There's no way that the thing can come back again."

Then, Charlie and Sandra started to cast defensive spells around them, and Susan also tried to help, while Lucien was still leaning against the wall, feeling quite weak. Right now his spiritual power was only enough for activating magic items.

Soon the magic circles were all ready. They could finally take a rest there. Anyone or anything that were lower than fifth-circle needed to use at least ten minutes to break their defence, and the two fourth-circle sorcerers behind the magic circles were confident that they could easily make it last until the senior-rank sorcerer arrived.

Charlie and Sandra were standing on each side of the gate, Lucien was leaning against the wall, and Susan was hiding in a corner. They could see their blurry figures in the smooth stone wall surface in front of them, including Sandra's ripped collar, Charlie's torn vest and Lucien's monocle.

Lucien said to them seriously, "The demon might have died, but someone, or something, is behind all of this."

When he was saying it, all of a sudden, he saw that his own monocle-wearing figure in the wall grinned. The smile was not creepy, but more like a victor's smile!

Lucien immediately activated Sun's Corona, although his headache was still very bad. A streak of holy light hit the wall.

"What?!" Sandra and Charlie immediately got ready for another battle, but there was nothing there. Only the light from Lucien's Holy Strike was shining on the wall.

Lucien carefully checked the surroundings. Nothing happened.

He told them what he saw, and then said, "I might be too nervous... I don't know. It can be just my illusion..."

"If the demon was really there, it could have attacked you directly, Mr. Evans, instead of revealing itself in front of you for nothing," said Sandra. Both Sandra and Charlie believed that it was just Lucien's mind playing tricks on him.

Lucien adjusted his monocle a bit and said, "I don't know. Anyway, the senior-rank sorcerer should be here in a few minutes. We shall still remain vigilant."

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In the apprentice hall, the black, corrosion marks started to wriggle and then suddenly shot upwards. A giant creature with strong body and long neck showed up in the hall. The creature's head looked like that of lizard, and on its back, there was a pair of transparent wings similar to those of a bat. The creature's body was covered with a layer of big scales. In the light of sunset, its scales were shining in a dream-like manner. As soon as the creature showed up, the whole place was filled with a strong, oppressive aura.

This thing was a giant dragon!

In the corner of the hall, the air suddenly rippled, and a figure slowly showed up.

It was a handsome-looking, middle-aged man wearing a fancy magic robe. There was a notebook and a quill in his hands.

As soon as the dragon saw the man, it leaped forward and put its huge front claws on the force shield surrounding the sorcerer, showing its red tongue. The man's shield was cracking, however, he was not scared at all. Instead, he wrote something down on his notebook and smiled, "You're a good actor."

The dragon's nose made an "uh-huh" sound. Clearly, the dragon was quite cheerful and proud. It kept licking the sorcerer's force shield.

The sorcerer stopped writing and read his notes in a low voice, "Cautious, agile, decisive, calm... Facing danger, the sorcerer outperformed most of his peers. Choice of spells and magic combination can be quite problematic, however. Majors imbalanced... A lot of work shall be done to fix this problem..."

After closing the notebook, the middle-aged sorcerer stared at the dragon seriously, "Atforest, you should know that the treasures belong to the Congress. You cannot have it."

The giant dragon was still licking the force shield happily and directly ignored his words.

Observing the rising number of cracks on his shield, the sorcerer shook his head slightly, "All right, all right... You can take part of it, as your reward."

"Huh!" the giant dragon's nose made a happy noise again. Then, to show its happiness, the dragon licked the shield again. This time, its long red tongue licked it into pieces.

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Chapter 254: In the Library

The middle-aged sorcerer looked around the hall and signed a bit sympathetically, "It's so unlucky of Bertren. He was just summoning a couple of demons for his experiment, having no idea that his youngest apprentice was also secretly conducting a summoning rite in the chamber, or there was no way that an experienced sorcerer like him would fail to notice what was going on in his own castle in time."

"Well... Thompson, I don't see this as just merely bad luck." The dragon pulled out a bulky bag from under its belly satisfactorily, and started to count the gold nuggets, coins and precious magic materials, "According to my experience, when the kid was trying to seek for power from Pain Fable, the hatred demon had already cast its projection in his mind, and started to affect his way of

thinking, behavior, and emotions. The special rite later was only made to reinforce the demon's power."

The dragon's voice was, surprisingly, like that of a kid and also sounded genderless, which was in sharp contrast to its great power.

The sorcerer named Thompson looked at the dragon, who squatted there counting his treasures, smiling, "Atforest, what do you mean by 'your experience'?"

"I mean it. Every time I see shining treasures, a demon projection arises in my mind, and the demon's called Greed," the dragon said innocently. "The demon projection affects me so much that I cannot stop myself from taking all the treasures away. It's not really my fault..."

"Where's the demon from?" Thompson was a bit amused, "Now that you can explain all of this to me, I'm sure that you are in control of your thoughts now. Atforest, why don't you give all the treasure back?"

"But... But you've promised me, Thompson. This is my reward." The dragon shook its head, "And I don't know where it comes from... maybe the ancient hell... I don't know. It's just there."

Atforest's nonsense made Thompson think, "Several grand arcanists have explored hell and even met some dukes and counts there. From their adventures and those ancient legends, the grand arcanists heard that once there were seven powerful and mysterious demons in hell, and each of them represented the seven negative things—arrogance, greed, envy, anger, pain, acolasia and hypocrisy, but unfortunately, there's no solid evidence for this. And there's also another saying—some believe that the seven negative things were symbols from those cunning and evil demons in hell, and each demon had at least one of the traits."

"I see..." Atforest was not interested in Thompson's words. It secretly hid away some small-sized, precious items from the bag for himself. After all, Atforest knew that some of them indeed belonged to the Congress.

Thompson pretended that he did not see what Atforest was doing there but continued, "It is necessary that we pay more attention to the book, Pain Fable, since it might be connected to some secrets of the world. The demon's power and even its existence were so strange and mysterious. Without you, Atforest, I might have failed the mission and the demon could have escaped from me. Your ability of casting those spiritual and soul spells is very important."

The senior-rank sorcerer also felt that the demon was very strange and mysterious.

Then Thompson took out his badges and put them on, in front of this chest.

...

In the corridor, because Lucien all of a sudden attacked the wall, Charlie, Sandra and Susan got very nervous again, especially Susan, who didn't even dare to breathe.

And when all of them heard the solid footstep reverberating through the corridor, the tension peaked. A middle-aged man wearing a flame-like magic robe walked to them. He had black hair and blue eyes, and he was wearing a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. The man was elegant and good-looking.

"Hello, I'm Thompson, from the Affairs Committee. I happened to be around in Caspar, so the Congress sent me to deal with the rest of the stuff here," said Thompson with a kind smile on his face in front of the magic circles and the defence wall. Apparently, the three sorcerers were still very cautious and alert.

Thompson was wearing three badges on his chest: one was a six-star arcana badge; one was an eight-circle magic badge; and the third one was the black-fire badge representing Affairs Committee.

Lucien stopped Susan, who was just about to step out of the magic circles and defensive wall due to her excitement, and he said to the man, "Mr. Thompson, we mean no offence, but to make sure we're safe, we want to check your badges. The demon was very creepy and unpredictable."

Both Charlie and Sandra nodded. They had heard more than once that bad things happened when sorcerers lowered their guard in front of a transformed demon.

Thompson did not mind. Smiling, he took down his badges and let them check it freely.

After making sure the badges were not fake, Charlie walked out of the magic circles and reported to Thompson directly, "Sir, the demon was very weird. When we first entered the castle..."

It was supposed to be Lucien's job reporting to Thompson, however, he was too weak to talk that much right now.

After listening to Charlie carefully, Thompson nodded, "This task turned out to be tougher than we thought, and the correct level of the task should be 'Dangerous'. You will all receive way more arcana points later than what was promised, and all the magic items and potions that were consumed in the task would be compensated by the Congress. Just write them down into a list and submit the list to Task Zone. That will take about a week."

"So good to hear that." Sandra was relieved. Clearly, the amulet she was wearing was precious and must be very important to her.

Charlie was also glad to hear that he would get the same magic robe back as well.

Thompson blocked the whole castle using magic, and he decided to first send the sorcerers back to Fraser town.

...

In the coach heading for the major city of Kapas, after a long time of silence, Sandra said to the rest of the people in the coach a bit hesitantly, "This task was surely creepy and mysterious, and the only thing we could be certain was that an apprentice summoned a terrifying and powerful demon through a ridiculous rite, which could not yet be explained by Summoning arcana. The whole thing has been bothering me a lot..."

Among them, Sandra was the only one who specialized in the school of Summoning. Thus, she was the one who was influenced the most.

Although the School of Summoning, compared to other schools, fell behind in its arcana study, and it was still of the strong style of ancient magic empire, the summoning rite that Bill followed was even ridiculous in the ancient empire's understanding of Summoning.

If an apprentice could summon a demon which was at least of fifth-circle, what should sorcerers from other schools do with themselves? This whole thing was beyond Sandra's understanding, and for most ancient summoners, a summoning rite like this must sound like a joke.

Charlie nodded, "Only part of the summoning instruction was left. We cannot draw any solid conclusion before we see the full version of it. Indeed, the whole thing was very creepy."

"I feel that the demon was Bill himself..." Susan also made a comment. Honestly speaking, if the rite could really improve the power of an apprentice directly to fifth-circle level, it was actually quite alluring, although she would never want to lose control of herself and look that ugly.

Lucien had recovered a lot, and he looked at Susan and Scott through his monocle and asked, "Have you ever read Pain Fable?"

Susan shook her head, while Scott looked very terrified, "Mr. Evans, I was closer to Bill. Once, I saw the book in his room and I did read a couple of stories in it. All the stories I read were more than gloomy and desperate, and they made me feel so angry and dark that I almost wanted to destroy this world of pain. I don't understand why they can be called fables... Someone might use them to terrify children who don't want to go to bed..."

"We need to go to arcana library to get more information, and also I need to expand my magic reserve with two more schools." Lucien nodded. He was planning on borrowing some basic works in Force Field and Necromancy, and he also had a copy of Book of Necromancy.

The school of Force Field had many powerful defence spells, and for Necromancy, its spells were mostly about soul, spirit, blessing and cursing. As for the School of Electromagnetics and Thermodynamics, Lucien believed that his arcana understanding was solid enough so far that he did not need to dig into them right now, thus he might just pick up some useful ones in the two schools and upgrade several spell models in his soul with some new ones, and it was the same with Illusion and Transformation spells.

Selecting and focusing was very important in further progressing in arcana study.

Of course, the major idea that the Congress pursued was that, despite the existence of the different schools, the word could finally be understood with a fundamental as well as ultimate explanation. Thus, most senior-rank sorcerers also studied other fields in addition to what they were good at.

Charlie and Sandra both nodded. As arcanists, they had this consistent impulse to understand all mysterious things.

...

In the basic arcana library, Alex, the djinn librarian, said to Lucien politely, "Hello, Mr. Evans, what can I do for you today?"

Wearing the level-four arcana badge, Lucien could enjoy half price for borrowing a book there, which was one point for forty books.

"Do you have Pain Fable here, Alex?" After submitting the task report and loss-item list, and because the reward arcana points of the task needed to be reevaluated, Lucien, Charlie and Sandra came to the library together.

Alex shook his head, and due to the style of clothes he was wearing his chest was revealed, "Sorry, Mr. Evans, we only have arcana books here. If you're looking for fables, you might want to try Allyn City Library or Rentato Royal Library."

"Then, can you find a book containing the sentence 'special summoning rite of V...' or something like that..." Lucien kept trying, using Alex like a searching engine.

The searching took Alex a while, and then he listed, "There are five qualified books - Special Summoning Rite of Verlam, Special Summoning Rite of Viken, Special Summoning Rites in Vertra..."

Lucien asked for all of them and started leafing through the books with Sandra and Charlie.

"I found it! Mr. Evans, it's Special Summoning Rite of Viken!" Sandra held the book high.

Lucien took over the book and he indeed saw the exact same summoning instruction that he read in the apprentice hall. Furthermore, the whole thing was even more ridiculous compared to the version with missing parts, including crawling and dancing around the brazier, and telling the brazier one's painful past, and so on.

Lucien turned the book back to its first page, and there was a comment left by a sorcerer, "This ridiculous book borrowed Viken, the ancient legendary archmage's name, and other than that, it is totally a joke. The book should be kicked out of the library."

"Viken?" Although Lucien was complimented as a "historian" in Aalto, he was not an expert at all with the history of the land across Storm Strait.

Charlie explained, "Viken was an ancient legendary archmage, and his territory was today's Brianna. He was very cruel. Once, in order to study a spell, he blockaded a city of twenty thousand people, and he let those people kill each other out of desperate and starvation... They ate each other..."

"I've never head his name before. What's his legendary class?" asked Lucien out of curiosity.

Sandra answered in a casual way, "No idea. He disappeared before the War of Dawn."

The book Lucien was holding suddenly dropped from his hand and fell on the floor.

Chapter 255: A New Journey Again (The End of Volume III)

Chapter 255: A New Journey Again (The End of Volume III)

"Mr. Evans?" Sandra looked at Lucien a bit confusedly. She did not understand why what she had just said was surprising at all.

"Uh... My hand just trembled, from the reflected damage from the ring..." Lucien quickly found an excuse and picked up the book.

What Lucien said was not true, and the truth was that he was shocked by Sandra's words, because Viken was not the only sorcerer who disappeared before the War of Dawn. Maskelyne also did.

Although Sandra and Charlie knew part of the story, they did not know those details: Maskelyne, the Prophet, went missing deep into the World of Souls, together with his several friends mentioned in his notes, and at that time, they were all working on some important magic experiment. The whole thing got even more weird with the fact that Maskelyne could make divine items with magic, and his symbol, the Grand Cross, looked very much like the Church's Cross of Truth.

This made Lucien think whether Viken was one of Maskelyne friends and whether he was part of the experiment. Also, did the experiment had anything to do with the special summoning rite? Lucien wondered if the ultimate secret of the world lay deep inside the World of Souls? The place must be very, very dangerous!

"One day if I can become a grand arcanist, or even a legendary archmage, I'm definitely going to explore the World of Souls." Lucien decided to keep this information to himself, but when he was ready, he wanted to invite other legendary archmages or grand arcanists he trusted to go together with him.

Neither Charlie nor Sandra doubted Lucien's words. His words made totally sense.

"No matter how curious we are, the last thing we should do is to try the rite." Sandra reminded them. As a sorcerer who specialized in Summoning, she was very concerned with such a creepy summoning rite and its unpredictable consequences.

Lucien smiled, "I'm not gonna touch it before I become a senior-rank. I don't think I can handle the demon right now, and I believe that the Congress will soon gather more information about the demon."

"The Congress should. If we had had more information, we would not have been so lost when facing the demon." Charlie agreed.

Sandra nodded, "The Congress can take away some pressure, so we don't have to worry about it too much, but I still want to read Pain Fable to see whether it is as desperate as what Scott described."

"Me, too, but I still need to borrow a few other books from here first," said Lucien. Then, he asked Alex to find him some basic arcana books in the schools of Force Field and Necromancy and basic magic books in other schools.

Charlie put on his hat and said, "I've still got some other stuff to deal with, so I have to go now. Nice to meet you, Mr. Evans, Ms. Sandra, and I hope we can work together again in the future."

"I'm heading for Allyn City Library as well, Mr. Evans. You're not that kind of arcanist who can only survive in labs. You're reliable, and you're a good leader." Sandra was also going to leave, and before that, she shook hands with Lucien.

Lucien said to them in a humble manner, "You two are very experienced sorcerers, and I've learned a lot from you two. Without you, Sandra and Charlie, I would certainly have died in the castle already. We should stay in contact with each other to exchange ideas from time to time."

...

At the bottom floor of Aalto Abbey, a female voice was humming an old and solemn tune, as if the sky was being covered with dark clouds before the storm came. The voice was a bit hoarse but sexy.

The pitch got slowly higher, and the voice became softer but sad. Then, the melody got faster and more pressing, like rain drops hitting the ground and wild wind blowing.

After a while, the female eased in a soothing and gentle tune as if an isolated but pure mind was recalling all the memories with emotions in the storm. And in those memories, lightnings were forgotten; thundering was forgotten; harsh raindrops were forgotten; and as well as all the depression and sadness, and even the whole world.

The storm was still lashing her mind, but soon, at the end of the first movement, the melody became warm and nice.

Natasha finished humming the major melody of Storm Sonata, and then she looked at the letter in her hand. It was the one Lucien sent on July 30th. She was very satisfied with the sonata, her birthday gift from Lucien.

"Although Storm Sonata is not as outstanding as Pathetique and Moonlight, it is still impressive, and it shares the same theme and spirit with Symphony of Fate—perseverance and faith. It's a great birthday gift," Natasha murmured in a low voice. Then she looked up and started to read the rest of the letter again. It was all about Lucien's interesting experiences in Allyn, including how he tortured the apprentices with lots of exercises, those apprentices complaints and jokes, the story when he was mistakenly invited to the conference because of his name, and so on.

Natasha was comforted by Lucien's letter. She felt that Lucien, her old friend, was telling her all those stories right in front of her relaxedly.

"Why do I feel those stories are more interesting than the music itself?" Natasha rubbed her chin a bit and asked herself confusedly, "Is it because I haven't talked to other people for too long?"

...

In the Month of Flower, the fifth of the year, the weather was getting hot. However, Allyn, as the city in the sky, still remained relatively cool.

In the magic lab of Lucien's garden villa.

The light white, tear-shaped mark on Lucien's left hand burst out gentle light, and slowly rose up into the sky. Lucien added the powder of Sunstone and some more magic materials into the tear mark and started casting.

After a long and complicated process, the tear looked less transparent but more solid. It's light still looked pure and gentle.

At this time, the light spots in the crystal ball in Lucien's right hand flew out of it one by one. The light spots surrounded the tear and formed a stellar map, and then, the map was absorbed by Lucien's left hand.

When the dazzling starlight disappeared, nothing was left on Lucien's left hand. However, Lucien could control the power anytime he wanted to use it by lighting the tear-shaped mark up.

According to Lucien Blessing Book, with all the materials gathered by Lucien and the mark left by the little girl, Lucien created his first permanent blessing, Innocent Gratefulness. It could help Lucien protect himself in the environment full of dead and rotten bodies, and also improve his defence level against soul attack spells.

In order to build the permanent blessing, Lucien spent his two hundred arcana points that he earned from Bertren Castle. In the recent months, he fully relied on the subsidy from the congress and the Will of Elements to continue his study of Life Force and Necromancy.

Currently, in total, Lucien had a hundred and two arcana points, and he had constructed another five third-circle spells: Dimensional Cage, Protection from Energy, Curse of the Putrid Husk, Secondary Telepathic Bond and Lightning. So far, as for second circle spells, Lucien had twenty of them, and he reconstructed many of the spells to make them work better.

After finishing his work, when Lucien was about to leave the lab, he saw his steward Charles, who was an elegant old gentleman, coming over.

"Mr. Evans, Mr. Gaston, from the Will of Elements, wants to see you in his office," said Charles.

...

In Allyn, the Will of Elements' division.

"Evans, I heard that you've been reading Pain Fable recently, did you find anything in it?" Gaston made Lucien sit down and asked him casually.

"Not really." Lucien shook his head lightly, "I feel that those stories were dark and gloomy for the sake of being depressing. The only purpose of the book was to make people feel painful and discouraged and upset. By the way, Mr. Gaston, has the congress made any progress in investigating the demon? I mean... if it's confidential, you don't have to tell me."

"So far not a single senior-rank sorcerer involved in the study has managed to summon the demon you guys encountered in the castle, and that makes the special summoning rite very suspicious in their eyes, and they wonder if Bill had hidden other parts of his experience..." Gaston directly told Lucien what was going on.

After a bit of a pause, Gaston stared at Lucien with his dark yellow eyes and said, "The reason why I asked you to come over here is that we have a mandatory task for you from the Will of Elements. A gentleman asked the Will of Elements to send a letter for him to Mr. Stanis, the King of Nightmare. Because you're from Violet, Lucien, we want you to take the mission. The reward is a

thousand arcana points. Don't worry, the King of Nightmare would send his people to guide you through the Dark Mountain Range, so you'll not be alone there in the mountains."

Gaston's words brought Lucien's memory about the Duchy of Violet back instantly. Although Lucien had a pretty hard time there, he also had lots of good memories. In Lucien's mind, Aalto was like his hometown.

Seeing Lucien did not say yes immediately, Gaston continued, "Of course I'm not saying that it's gonna be a completely safe and sound trip. If you don't want to accept the task, it's also okay, and you can choose something else. But if you're willing to take it, you can get the one thousand arcana points in advance, as well as enjoy a year long subsidy, so you can go and buy all the materials and potions you need to get prepared."

All his friends' faces showed up in Lucien's mind, giving him mixed feelings. Then, Lucien nodded, smiling, "I'll take this task, Mr. Gaston."

"Be careful, Evans. You'd better take the north route as the Church is strengthening their patrols over Storm Strait." Gaston patted on Lucien's shoulder, "You still take the monocle with you, but because of the electromagnetic interference of Storm Strait, when you get to the other side, it will be hard for you to contact us."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 256: The East Haven

In the Month of Hot Wind, the eighth of the year, the weather would be torturing hot in Allyn or Aalto, as if even the air was on fire. However, in this narrow and busy city across the continent, filled with buildings of mixed styles from different countries, the breeze was still cool and gentle like that of the Month of Life.

This was Segru, deep in the northwest of the far northland, the East Haven surrounded by countless giant, towering trees.

Because the Cabin of Palmeira of the Congress controlled the many busy cities along Storm Strait, and their control extended all the way up to the far northland, the Cabin of Palmeira had driven away lots of orcs, dwarf tribes and trolls and built up many cities. Therefore, in many people's mind, all of the far northland was the Cabin of Palmeira's territory, an area under the control of the Congress of Magic.

However, in fact, because of the vast territory of the far northland—Schachran Empire's northwest province to the west, Mintuck, an ice-free port which was close to the marine outfall of Boundless Ocean to the east, the empire's Flame Fortress and Storm Strait to the south, the polar region where the sun never set for the six months to the north, the congress and the Cabin of Palmeira could only control the southeast part of it, and deep into the land lived horrifying trolls, orcs, snowmen and ancient sorcerers who spent their life in solitude.

Because of the special location of Segru, sitting at the junction of the broad primeval forest in the northeast of the empire and the central part of the far northland's coastal area, where the Church's and the Congress of Magic's power reached a stalemate, Segru became a place that was neither under the control of the former nor the latter. Lots of noble émigré from Schachran Empire and other convicts gradually gathered here and built up the city and the many manors around it. Thus, Segru was called by many people the East Haven.

Although the first people of this place had set up some rough rules and law here while they were fighting against monsters such as trolls and doing smuggling trades, power, which basically came from either magic or sword, was still the ultimate law in the far northland.

There was a saying here, "The law of magic and sword was the law of the far northland!"

Known for its smuggling trades, the city had been attracting countless money-longing merchants and adventures to come here in order to seek for great fortune, thus the city was busy and prosperous. Of course, most merchants here had their own experienced mercenaries, or they could be killed at any time and their bodies would be thrown into the forest to feed the beasts.

At that moment, Lucien was wondering at leisure on the major crossroads of Segru, and his destination was the wood cabin up ahead. According to the information given by the Congress, in the cabin Lucien could find the relatively good intelligence organization in this city.

Lucien was wearing white shirt, a black, double-breasted long suit, top hat and the monocle, which made him look elegant and handsome, but he did not look deterring enough here in this brutal East Haven. On the street, in many people's eyes, Lucien was a perfect target, and they were trying to figure out what kind of perfect chance they could get to kidnap him.

"Look at the way he's dressing... We probably can get a good fortune from him." Two bulky guys were talking, "Even if he's actually poor... Look at his face... We can still sell him to the nobles. They must love this perfect toy!"

"Don't rush. Don't do anything before you know more about the person." The other guy responded, "He dare come here alone, and he must be more or less confident. Lots of idiots have died here because they judge other people only by their appearance."

Those people who were still alive here in this place were not brainless. On the contrary, most of them were very cautious. However, as soon as they could make sure that the target was a really good one, they would show the darkest side of human nature.

Before Lucien left Allyn, he bought some magic potions, materials, gold and the spell, Sorcerer's Cabin, and he also got a bottle of potion called Blood Cleanser, which helped him cure from the soul damage caused by Crying Soul. Now, Lucien was about a real knight's level, so he could hear the conversation between the two guys without even using spiritual power. Lucien lightly shook his head with a smile, "What a place... the East Haven."

However, this was as far as the potions from the Congress could go so far in improving one's Blessing power, since after this level, one's faith as a knight would play a more important role, and that was not Lucien's direction.

Pretending that he did not hear anything, Lucien still walked on the street calmly. Soon, he came in front of the cabin drawn with camellias.

"No child here." When Lucien was about to walk in, a strong and bulky man beside the door reached out his right hand and stopped him.

As he was saying, the man purposefully showed his tanned muscle to reveal his power.

Lucien did not get pissed off but asked, "What kind of people can be here, then?"

The man snorted and then pointed at the doorplate. Beside the camellia patterns, the doorplate read, both in Schachran characters and in common tongue, "Money, or power."

Lucien smiled and nodded, "I see."

All of a sudden, this husky guy bowed deeply towards Lucien and said to him, "Sir, please come in... please come in... I was being stupid just now. Please forgive me."

At the same time, he kept slapping himself in his face.

Watching the guy reverently leading the young man into the cabin, the other guards around the cabin were more than shocked.

"Has... has Tony been possessed?" Another guy murmured, thinking that what he saw was very creepy. A few seconds later, he realized that the young man might be a real sorcerer, so he quickly turned around and ran into the cabin to report.

The two traffickers, who were following Lucien, also saw what happened. They swallowed with great difficulty, and felt lucky that they were not being stupidly reckless. They knew that a sorcerer who could cast spells without producing stirred magic waves was definitely not an ordinary sorcerer. Some ancient senior-rank sorcerers in the East Haven might not even be able to do this!

In fact, the spell, Charm Person, which was improved by Lucien, was known for producing only very limited amount of magic waves. As a third-circle sorcerer, Lucien could cast the spell perfectly, and those people whose power was not even close to that of a real knight had absolutely no way to sense the minor magic waves, not to mention that they did not even have any magic or divine items!

...

The cabin was actually of decent size, and it was divided into many small booths. There were different people selling information in those booths, and the overall environment was quiet and nice.

Tony led Lucien to the stairs in an absent-minded way, and in front of the stairs, there were two beefy guys with long sword.

"Tony, who's this?" The guards stopped Tony with their swords.

Tony's back was still bent. After taking a quick glance at Lucien respectfully, he said to the guards, "This is Mr. Guzon's important guest. Don't stand in his way."

Lucien simply smiled, but did not say anything.

"I never heard of this before. I need to talk to Mr. Guzon first," the guard said to them and was about to walk upstairs.

As soon as he turned around, Tony directly punched the other guard out with his right fist.

When the guard on the stairs was about to hack at Tony with his sword, suddenly he felt great dizziness, and then a big smile appeared on his face, "I'm so sorry sir. He's an idiot. How dare he try to stop you. Please, please, sir, follow me this way. Let me guide you to Mr. Guzon."

Lucien sightly pushed up his monocle and nodded. He knew that his current spiritual power could only control three people at the same time.

"Mr. Guzon, attack!" exclaimed another guard upstairs, who saw what was going on there.

Guzon walked out of his room with a thick cigar in his mouth. Wearing a black long jacket, he looked down with great sense of stateliness, followed by a guard covered in a complete set of black armour.

"Mr. Guzon, I'm here for the intelligence." Lucien looked up and smiled.

"You're not welcome here. You broke into this place." Guzon looked pissed, "Take him!"

Although Guzon had Blessing from the magic potion and he also had a pretty useful magic item, he decided to use the two dark knights that he hired with good money.

Also, the young man downstairs looked skinny and not aggressive at all. He even thought that the young man was probably sent by his competitors to kill him, so he should not let the young man walk any closer to him.

In the corner, a shadow suddenly shot out from the corner and jumped on Lucien. At the same time, the body of the black-armored knight bulged fast, then the knight rushed downstairs toward Lucien with a flaming great hammer.

Other guards also quickly besieged Lucien.

Guzon watched what was going on downstairs with the big cigar in his mouth. However, after a surge of magic waves, his level two knight was now on the floor, trying his best to escape from the young man. The other knight was not doing any better. In fact, he directly ran into the wall to run away and left a big hole on it.

Those guards were all right now on the floor. Around their crotches, it was all suspiciously wet.

The big cigar in Guzon's mouth fell on the ground, but he didn't even notice. Staring at Lucien, he started to step backwards.

After casting the second-circle spell, Scare, Lucien slowly walked upstairs with his hands in the pockets, and he smiled, "Can we talk now, Mr. Guzon?"

"S... sure." Guzon's teeth were chattering.

In the East Haven, Lucien followed their rules—money, or power. It was the best solution.

Although Lucien's magic power was nothing in Allyn, in fact, a middle-rank sorcerer could easily rule a whole small city. Even in a messy place like the East Haven, most of the scoundrels here were still ordinary people.

Lucien's leather shoes were making crisp sounds on the stairs, and he said slowly, "Mr. Guzon, I need a guide. A guide who can lead me to travel through Schachran Empire."

Although it was not hard to fly across the border, flying over the entire empire was of course time-consuming and tough, and if Lucien was not careful enough, the North Church would easily notice and chase after him. Therefore, Lucien needed a fake identity and a guide who played the role of his butler.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 257: A “Good” Introduction

Guzon repeated in a confused way, "Through Schachran Empire?"

Lucien stopped walking closer to Guzon but just stood on the stairs, where those guards were still lying on the floor, with his hands in his pockets. Those guests who came here to buy information were all hiding in the booths, feeling terrified.

"Yes, I want to take the way through the empire and get to the countries following other gods northeast of the Dark Mountain Range." Lucien nodded, "I'm sure that you can tell I'm a sorcerer, Mr. Guzon. I need a guide who really knows well about the country's geography, custom, and powers to help me get to my final destination without being chased after by the North Church."

From Gaston, Lucien knew that the church was tightening their control over Storm Strait, so he decided to take the magic train and to later get to the famous city in the north called Deep Sea Port through the Kingdoms of Holm and Colette. Then Lucien spent another two months traveling through the forests where lived trolls and orcs and finally got to the East Haven, whose primeval forest was right beside the empire's Flame Fortress in its northeast.

During that time, Lucien had constructed another very important third-circle spell, Dispel Magic.

The reason why Lucien wanted to take this way was that the empire bordered the Duchy of Violet in southwest.

After Lucien's half-true explanation, Guzon got a rough idea of Lucien's request. He took a couple of deep breaths and tried to gain his leader's manner back, "Sir, because of the Church, you don't want to fly across the empire, but want to take the land route with the help of a local guide, is that right?"

"Exactly, Mr. Guzon." Although Lucien was smiling, he really wished that he could just fly to the duchy, which would only cost him three to four days, and that was way faster than taking the land route.

Guzon saw that Lucien was not that kind of vicious sorcerer, and after a short pause, he said, "Sir, I'd recommend you Leo, who was the assistant of the biggest smuggler in Schachran Empire, and their business once extended all the way to those countries northeast of the mountains and even Violet, but later he pissed off the smuggler, and the smuggler killed Leo's family. Leo was the only one who survived and escaped here to Segru with a precious magic scroll of his. His strong will of taking revenge and his power that's close to that of a real knight made him survive until here, although in a hard way. Now he's accepting any tasks he can take to save money to buy magic potions in order to be stronger for his revenge. Also, Leo was very good at changing one's appearance using non-magic methods, and he knows the empire very well."

Lucien responded, with the smile still on his face, "He might not be the one I'm looking for. After we get to the empire, if he encounters the smuggler, he might get too emotional."

"No worries, sir. Leo has his knight belief. As long as you two have signed the contract, I'm sure he would not break his words and he would do his best to complete the task," insisted Guzon. "Maybe this was why he pissed off the guy. Sir, Leo is your best choice."

Lucien thought about it for a while and nodded, "Then I should see him first."

"You won't be disappointed," said Guzon. "The only thing is that he's not showing up regularly as usual for some reason. What we know is that, most recently, someone saw him in a bar called Taran."

At this time, Guzon noticed that both of the young man's eyes, the one with the monocle and the bare one, had fast spinning swirls in them, and then his mind got lost.

Lucien cast Charm Person on Guzon and verified all the information he provided. Then, he also cast Hypnotism on Guzon to remove the key parts of his memory about himself. Although Lucien was not able to rewrite his target's memory, and neither completely remove all the person's memory, removing part of the key information was not that difficult, so Guzon would not be able to provide any useful information about Lucien if someone was going to chase after him.

Also, even his memory about Lucien's appearance was not accurate, because Lucien carefully disguised himself before setting off.

As the winner of Holm Crown prize, Lucien was not sure whether the Church, either in the north or south, knew what he looked like. Because cardinals and night watchers could easily tell the first circle spell, Disguise, and also because Lucien was not good at Transformation, he used some physical ways to change his appearance: insoles for increasing height, brown eye contacts made of the pupils of a magic creature to change his eye colour, and even a decent, well-trimmed moustache, together with the monocle. With those gears, Lucien looked quite elegant.

After a long time, Guzon finally slowly came back to his senses, like just waking up from a nightmare.

"Where are the knights?" Guzon tried to recall what happened, but as soon as he tried, his head hurt badly. As the leader of an intelligence organization, he immediately realized what just happened—a powerful man was here, and the man must altered his memory, so he directly gave up thinking about it.

Looking at his men lying on the floor higgledy-piggledy, Guzon was pissed, "Damn, you useless jerks! Get up and change your fu*king pants! And get the stupid knights back!"

...

The board outside of the bar wrote, "Taran, the East Haven's Taran".

Lucien pushed the bar gate open and entered the place. As soon as he stepped into it, he attracted all the people's eyes in the bar, but very quickly, in the next second, all the eyes drew back and the laughing, talking and shouting continued as if they had never stopped.

When Lucien mentally controlled the cabin guard, Tony, right in public, he did it on purpose to show those East Haven people his power. Some guys in the bar knew what kind of power Lucien had, so they tried to stay away from him. Seeing that, the other people who did not know Lucien's power also wanted to be cautious first.

This was how they survived here in the East Haven! Outcomers who came here without power or relationship could only expect one ending: death.

Most people here did not want to spend their whole life here at all. They wanted to make a fortune here and move out. Of course, some of them did enjoy this place. They enjoyed the excitement and freedom here very much.

Obviously, Lucien's calm and elegant manner revealed the fact that he did not belong here. Walking through the chairs, Lucien came to the bar counter, "Hello, I'm looking for someone."

Wiping the cups, the blonde bartender responded without even lifting his head, "You need to buy something first."

"A glass of Lesse, please." This was the first kind of alcoholic drink that Lucien knew in this world.

The blonde young man finally looked up. He was a good-looking young guy, and he had this kind of unruly manner gained from this wild place.

After pulling Lucien a cup of golden drink, he asked, "Looking for who?"

"Leo." Lucien stared at the golden liquor like he was appreciating a piece of artwork, "I'm looking for Leo."

"You're not alone there." The bartender gave Lucien an ambiguous answer.

"I'm here to hire him." Lucien looked at the bartender.

"So were they," said the bartender a bit sarcastically.

Hearing their conversation, several strong, armored men sprang up from the chairs. Their armors were making clacking noises.

Their leader was a man in his thirties. His left eyeball was missing.

Dragging a great sword on the floor, his armoured shoes clacking, the tall and bulky man came in front of Lucien. He slightly bent forward and asked Lucien in a threatening way, "How did you know Leo? When was the last time you saw him? I'm asking you this for a big man here in the East Haven. You'd better not bullshit, or you won't see tomorrow's sunrise."

"I don't know Leo. I just want to hire him to protect me here," Lucien answered calmly. In his mind, he started to feel that looking for Leo might not have been a good idea, since clearly right now he was in some kind of trouble.

The man missing his left eye did not leave Lucien alone, but continued to push him, "Who introduced Leo to you! Protect you for what?"

As soon as he finished his last word, Lucien's left, glove-wearing hand quickly left the cup and grabbed the man's throat.

It was fast, very fast. The man only saw shadows.

Lucien smiled, "Did your mother ever tell you curiosity kills the cat?"

"You... you'd better let go of me, if you want to leave the East Haven alive!! The big man behind me..." The man was still threatening Lucien, however, in the next second, he was choked because Lucien tightened his grabbing on his neck.

"You know what? I'm not sure if I can leave the East Haven alive, but if you continue being stupid, I'm sure you cannot leave the bar alive. And to tell you a secret—I'm a big man, too."

The man's face flushed bright red out of anger, but he could not say a single word. When his people finally realized what was happening here and were about to pull out their swords to save him, a man wearing black armor in the same style as the others yelled at them from the bar's back door,

"Leo's here! In the bar's chamber!"

The bartender's face suddenly turned white. As soon as he was about to rush out from behind the counter, he was stopped by a swordman. Other guys all rushed towards the back of the bar, as if they had all forgotten the existence of their leader.

On the other side of the hall, two guys whose power was close to that of a real knight also jumped up from their chairs and ran toward the back door.

Lucien was a bit amused. Releasing the hand grabbing the man's throat, Lucien slightly shook his head out of sympathy, "Too bad... The big man you were talking about doesn't seem to care about you a lot. Even if I kill you, he would not care. Which suzerain sent you here?"

"How do you know he's a suzerain?" asked the man out of great surprise.

Lucien slightly patted his clothes and stood up from his chair.

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Chapter 258: Warren, The Young Master

Seeing that his guessing was correct, Lucien smiled confidently, "There're only thirty or forty people here in the East Haven who are qualified for being called 'big man', so it's not very difficult to guess. And there's no way that you work for one of the nine city lords, or you wouldn't need to hide his name."

The metal armors were banging against each other from the back of the bar. It seemed that the chamber was underground, since the whole floor of the bar was shaking slightly.

Seeing that, the guests started leaving the bar, not because they were afraid or nervous, but because they were really used to it and they did not want to bother to be part of this at all.

Lucien, with his hands in his pockets, also headed for the bar gate. In the East Haven, countless people were from Schachran Empire, and Leo definitely wasn't his only choice. Also, Lucien did not want any trouble at this time.

Seeing that Lucien was leaving as well, the man missing his left eye looked a bit confused, but he was smart enough to leave Lucien alone, since the young man had shown his great power. Instead, he turned around and ran toward the bar counter to stop the bar owner from getting out and rushing at the chamber.

If one without any backgrounds wanted to survive here in the East Haven, the person must know how to be patient and tolerant, since those who did not all ended up becoming food for the wild animals in the forest, or materials for necromancers...

Here, only the rule of sword and magic worked.

Lucien walked toward the gate casually, looking on the fight between the bar owner and the man missing the left eye. Their ways of using sword were all direct and simple, which was the typical Schachran style.

"How dare you people fight in Taran! The several city lords will make you pay!" shouted the owner. The bar owner had the power close to that of a real knight from the Blessing that he got from the potion many years ago. If he had been younger, he could have beaten the man quickly. However, now he was old, and the fight between them was intense.

In the East Haven, if a person wanted to run a bar like Taran, he or she must need to get the support from those big people.

The man missing the left eye hacked at the bar owner but the momentum of his greatsword was stopped by the bar owner's shield. Quickly, he shifted the position of his greatsword to shove aside the owner's sword. After a loud bang, the two of them took a few steps backwards, and seizing the chance, the left-eye-missing man sneered, "The young master doesn't like Leo, and you hid Leo right down in your bar's chamber! Leo pissed off our young master, and even the city lords cannot say too much about it!"

When most of the guests in the bar had already left, at this time, with a huge bang, the bar gate was broken into pieces by force and the pieces fell backwards. Several drunkards were hurt and their heads started bleeding.

Lucien slightly tilted his head and perfectly avoided a piece of wood from the broken gate. Through the broken gate, a bunch of guys walked in wearing black armors of the same style as the one that the one-eyed man was wearing. A young man with a gray cigar in his mouth looked like their leader, since he was not wearing any armor but, like Lucien, he was wearing a Holm-style white shirt, brown waistcoat, long jacket and a top hat. His face was featured, and his nose was tall and straight. In general, he was a good-looking guy, but he looked very gloomy and cold with his messy, black eyebrows.

Two guys stood beside him, one on the left and one on the right. The one on the left was short, and he was also dressing in Holm style, while the other guy on the right was big and muscular.

The young man looked around at the hall and casually picked a chair that was close to the gate and sat down. As soon as he reached out his right hand, a beautiful blond girl went down on her knees to undo his sleeve buttons. When she was doing this, the girl had no facial expression on her face, and her bust was seductively half-revealed in her Tria-style blue dress.

"Sir Jarolim, please go and get Leo," the young man said to the short man standing beside him with a smile. Finally, they had found Leo, the guy who ruined their great plan. Right now the young man's anger was burning.

"Yes, young master," Jarolim answered in a plain tone.

Jarolim's leather shoes were shining. Taking a step forward, his figure turned into a shadow, rushing to the back of the bar. Clearly, he had a real knight's power. The power scared the

remaining people in the bar, and they felt too nervous to move fast. Those people blocked Lucien's way as well.

When Lucien finally got right beside the gate, Jarolim had already come back, grabbing Leo's collar in his hand. Obviously, Leo's power was not even close to that of Jarolim, not to mention the fact that he was besieged by so many people.

Seeing that they had caught Leo, the bar owner and the bartender stopped fighting against the swordmen and started thinking what they should do next.

Lucien took a quick glance at Leo out of curiosity, who was still trying to get out of Jarolim's hand. Although he was only in his middle age, Leo's hair was black mixing with white. His face looked gaunt, and his eyes, which were tightly closed right now, were surrounded by wrinkles.

Jarolim threw Leo to the ground right in front of the young man, Warren.

Leo's body was covered with a layer of black flame, which had consumed all his strength to the point where he could not even stand up on his feet.

"Very nice to meet you, Mr. Leo." Warren leaned his body forward and slapped Leo's face with his right hand, "You wanna say anything to me?"

Warren's blue eyes were filled with violence.

Leo opened his eyes using great effort, and it looked like there was great pain in his green eyes but there was zero regret, "Warren, I just reminded the noble lady... I reminded her that you are a trafficker! Dare you say how many human beings, elves, dwarves and orcs have you sold to Schachran? I can't let you do this to her!"

Warren sat back and smiled, "What a nice guy you are, Mr. Leo."

Then he fiercely kicked Leo's stomach. Leo burst out a painful groan and was now writhing on the floor.

Then Warren sent his right foot in front of the blond beauty and made her clean his shoe carefully. He rubbed his chin a bit and said, "I'm confused, Leo. Why you always want to mess up with me? You don't even know the chick? You like her?"

Leo was coughing, and he tried his best to answer, "This is... my principle... You cannot do this... to anyone."

"Wow, wow... Mr. Leo, aren't you such a man with great knight spirit?" Warren suddenly took back his right foot and stepped on Leo's head, grinding it against the floor, "What a pity... You're not a real knight. You only deserve this... Your head being stepped on by a bad man's foot, ha.

"Oh, I forgot the other thing you deserve..." Warren added, "There must be a reason that your whole family was killed, isn't it?"

That really hurt Leo. His throat was making hoarse noise like a wild beast giving dying kicks. Seeing that, some other people present felt sympathetic, for Leo, and also for themselves.

Warren looked at the bar owner, "You don't say anything. This guy has been messing up with me, and I have to show people how I deal with guys like him, or they would forget who they were."

The bar owner could not say anything.

Then, Warren said to his men, "Beat him up, then cut off his arms and legs. Hang the remaining of him on the wood frame out of the city gate and let the coyotes finish him at night."

As he was saying, he kicked Leo toward the man missing one eye.

As soon as the guy got Leo, he and his men started punching Leo fiercely.

At this time, someone was stamping on the floor, making a door-knocking noise. When the people in the hall all stopped what they were doing and looked back, a young man stood out and smiled to them, "Good afternoon, every one."

All the people present were more than confused right now.

Although Warren was also confused, he asked cautiously, "Do I know you?"

Warren was not stupid, although basically his powerful father could take care of everything for him. He knew that he must be careful with a guy who decided to show up like this in this kind of situation.

Lucien pointed at Leo casually, and all of sudden, Leo floated in the air and came next to Lucien.

"Mr. Warren, I need to hire Leo right now for my mission. You two deal with your stuff when the mission is done," said Lucien in plain tone, as if he was giving a command.

What Leo had done revealed that he was a principled, righteous person, and that was the kind of person that Lucien needed for his trip through Schachran, not to mention how he would feel if Lucien saved his life.

Sometimes, people felt that a person's honorable characters and qualities were worth of nothing, but in fact, someday, they might save your life.

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Chapter 259: Leo's Suggestion

Thanks to his Blessing, Frost Giant, Leo did not pass out yet. Hearing Lucien's words, he opened his eyes with great difficulty, looking at the strange young man in front of him both surprisedly and worriedly.

Facing Lucien's direct command, the bar owner was shocked as well. He wondered if this young man knew who Warren was and who his father was.

Warren first laughed a bit as if he saw something beyond ridiculous, then, suppressing his anger, he said to Lucien, "Why do you think I'd let you take Leo? Who do you think you are? How dare you talk to me like this?"

Clearly, Warren was on a bad mood. His great deal with a duke in Schachran Empire had been ruined by Leo. When he finally found Leo and was about to make him pay, some random guy just showed up right in front of him and commanded him to let go of Leo. No one except his own father and the nine city lords dare talk to him like this!

At this time, Jarolim took a step forward, with a pair of black daggers in his hands, ready to launch his knight-level attack toward Lucien.

If Lucien was intimidated, Jarolim would know that the young man was actually only doing his bravado, so then Jarolim could directly take him down.

Jarolim's gray eyes aggressively looked into Lucien's eyes, letting Lucien feel the power of a knight.

All of a sudden, he saw a quick flash of white light in Lucien's brown eyes and, in the last second, he felt something dreadful sneak into his brain.

Then, Jarolim started to feel extreme pain and a tingling sensation throughout his body. Before he realized what was happening to him, several people in the hall started screaming, as they saw that Jarolim's hands and face were festering with light yellow pus bleeding out.

Knowing that this was magic, Jarolim quickly covered his body with layers of black flame. However, the festering quickly put out the flame and kept spreading all over his body.

Warren and his guards also noticed what was happening on Jarolim's body. Within only a few seconds, Jarolim became beyond weak. Right now he was kneeling on the ground, using all of his strength to gasp for air. Although the festering had stopped, clearly it would take a long time for him to recover from it.

Looking at him, Lucien was just standing there, smiling. He did not continue his attack.

The third-circle necromancy spell, Curse of the Putrid Husk.

"Are you... a necromancer?" Warren tried to stay calm, although his voice was trembling. After all, necromancers never enjoyed good reputation, especially in the north.

Lucien was just smiling, but offered no answer.

The other tall and strong knight leaned forward beside Warren and whispered to him a bit.

Warren stood up, his facial expression looked meaningful, "So... Mr. middle-rank sorcerer, are you from the Congress, or some place here in the north?"

Hearing how Warren called this young man, the rest of the people present were all shocked. This guy was a middle-rank mage!

Although a middle-rank mage was just an ordinary person in Allyn, a middle-rank was of the level of a grand knight or a bishop. Apart from a few big cities such as Lance, Allyn, Rentato, and Aalto, a middle-rank mage, a grand knight, or a bishop could stay in charge of a whole city. In the East Haven, only the nine city lords were that powerful, and the rest of the suzerains here were only about Lucien's level.

In fact, because of the variety, a middle-rank mage's power was basically the same as that of a grand knight who was actually one level higher.

Lucien's Holm ring was right now being covered underneath his glove. He adjusted his monocle and answered the young man calmly, "It doesn't matter where I come from. What's important is that I want to take Leo with me. Are you okay with it?"

Lucien's tone reminded Warren of those genius sorcerers from the Congress of Magic, especially those ones from the Hand of Paleness. He quickly put on a smile and shrugged, "You know what... You've shown your power, sir, and it's time for me to leave."

Although Warren was still under his father's protection, he knew the rules here in the East Haven. He knew what was a wise decision in that situation.

"You're smart, Mr. Warren." Lucien smiled.

Honestly speaking, Lucien really hated traffickers like Warren. However, here in the East Haven, he could not directly attack an important local leader's son with no sufficient reason, and that was why Lucien kept pushing Warren to make him lose his head.

However, Warren's face only twitched slightly. Then, he left the place without another word.

The other guards also followed Warren and left the bar. When Jarolim was walking toward the gate, he had to lean on the other guards' arms.

"Mr. Warren, I'll send you the bar's loss quote! You gotta pay, or we'll see each other on the city lord meeting!" said the bar owner aloud.

Warren almost tripped over the doorsill.

...

In the room behind the bar, Leo slowly recovered with his strong life force as a knight. Lucien had released him from the black flames covering his body.

When Leo was lying in bed, he saw Lucien casting some strange spell, and the light spots in his hand quickly disappeared.

After a surge of magic waves, Lucien's mouth slightly opened but he did not make any sound.

"What are you doing here, sir?" asked Leo gratefully and curiously, "Anything I can help with?"

"Nothing, just being cautious." Lucien smiled and shook his head.

Leo did not chase after the answer, but switched the topic, "Sir, how do you want me to call you? What's the mission about?"

"For now you can call me Mr. X. I need your help to guide me across Schachran Empire and get to the northeast part of the the Dark Mountain Range," said Lucien directly.

As Leo suffered a lot of pain back in the days in Schachran Empire, he frowned a bit, "What's your specific destination, Mr. X? Traveling through the empire without being noticed isn't too difficult, but I need a more specific destination to figure out which route we should take and what kind of fake identity we should use. If you don't feel comfortable with telling me these, we can sign a magic compact first."

Leo just accepted the job without even asking what kind of dangers they were expected to face in this task. He knew that, without Mr. X, he would have already died.

Lucien nodded and took out the compact that he had prepared before.

After signing the compact and watching the roll of parchment being burnt down by light blue magic flame, although Leo had known Lucien's name, he still said to Lucien respectfully, "Mr. X, Schachran Empire's nobles are conservative and corrupted. Except the nobles themselves and those clergies, common people are always expected to have a very difficult time traveling through the whole empire. If you want to get to Aalto, playing the role of a noble from the empire's northwest province should be our best choice, as the real ones don't usually leave their own territory."

When a sorcerer reached the sixth circle, when he or she needed to sign a low-level magic compact, the sorcerer could hide or change his or her real name using strong spiritual power and magic skills, but Lucien right now still had a long way to go.

"I see." Lucien nodded with satisfaction. Leo was professional.

Leo pointed at the northwest territory of the empire on the map in front of them, "The Vladimir family is ruling this area. As one of the ten most powerful families in the empire, the Vladimir family has one duke, one marquis, three earls, lots of viscounts, barons and lords. Therefore, without their genealogy, no one could know that you're actually not their relative, even including the duke Vladimir himself. "

"But people wouldn't just buy into our words. We need something to prove our identity." Lucien was hesitant.

Leo answered seriously, "In the empire, winners laugh, and losers cry. If one decides to fight over the succession but fails in the end, his sufferings soon ensue. In the East Haven, there's a knight who used to fight against the duke Vladimir over right of inheritance of the title, and he knows how to make the identity documents of the Vladimir family and he still has all the family stamps. His name's Valentin."

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Chapter 260: A New Identity

The wind was warm. The sunshine was warm. Everything seemed to be warm and drowsy.

On a street of Segru, Lucien, who had changed his whole set of outfit, was heading for Valentine's secret residence following Leo.

Once Leo recovered, he showed his good disguise skills: he changed Lucien's Holm-styled black long coat to the typical tight surtout in the style of Schachran Empire, with white breeches and black long boots. Using hair oil, Lucien's hairstyle was now slicked-back, together with the make up and his moustache, Lucien now looked like a serious and calm gentleman around twenty-seven or twenty-eight.

Since in the East Haven there were lots of people who managed to escape from Schachran Empire and finally came here, Lucien and Leo's way of dressing was more than common. Cautiously, Lucien and Leo walked through the crowd to prevent being followed by anyone. After all, the duke Vladimir sending assassins to kill Valentine was not a secret at all, and also, if anyone saw that they visited Valentine, their fake identity would be seen through easily.

Segru was not a small city. To be more specific, the city was about half the size of Aalto, but the buildings here were very disorganized, and the streets were thus very narrow and messy. However, Leo was very used to the environment and familiar with the surroundings. Like a fish in the water, Leo had confidently guided Lucien across many streets, alleys and crowds to get rid of any possible pursuers.

Half an hour later, Lucien and Leo walked out of a quiet alley and came back to the busiest street, then crossed it and entered a grocery. Directly ignoring the grocery owner, Leo walked to the stairs. From the shadow, two bulky, butcher-like men stopped him.

"The griffin over Nigreen River." Strange words came out of Leo's lips. The words were Schachranese.

Hearing that, the two men lowered their guard. After glancing at Leo and Lucien carefully, they gave way to both Leo and Lucien.

The stairs to the second floor were squeaking. Lucien sensed that the whole place was protected by dangerous magic circles, and they were purposefully revealed to people who could sense them directly to be a deterrence. Lucien was not sure whether there were more hidden magic circles around.

The cost of placing all the magic circles could be easily over ten thousand Thales. Only the man who once could compete against the duke could afford this. Lucien estimated that this place's security level was about the same as that of Bertren Castle. Obviously, when Mr. Valentine ran away from the empire, he must have carried a great fortune with him, so he could afford having middle-rank mages to set up this place for him.

The floor squeaked when Leo and Lucien walked on it with their leather shoes. Other than that, the whole place was beyond quiet.

When they came to one of the rooms on the second floor, Leo knocked at the door gently and said politely, "Mr. Valentine, I'm Leo. I'm here on business."

"Come in," responded Valentine in his dull and old voice. He already knew it was Leo from the magic circles downstairs.

Leo pushed the door open like a butler, and he signalled to Lucien to enter the room, "Mr. X, please."

Lucien nodded and walked in the room covered by thick, black curtains. The whole room was very dark.

In the shadow in front of the curtains, there was a desk and an armchair. In the chair sat a man wearing black suit with his back to Leo and Lucien.

As Leo slowly closed the door, the man in the chair slowly turned around and looked at them.

His blonde hair had started to get thin, but his face was still featured, although it already looked quite old. Lucien estimated that this man should be in his sixties. According to Leo's words, when Valentine first came to the East Haven, he was a level-four grand knight. However, after this twenty to thirty years, no one knew for sure whether this man's power had improved even further, or dropped.

Valentine did not have much interest in them. After taking a glance at Lucien, Valentine said to someone else in the room, "Tea for the two guests."

From the shadow walked out a decently-dressed elder man. He bowed to them politely, and then he walked into the tea room.

Leo, as Lucien's guide, said, "Mr. Valentine, my employer wants to enter Schachran Empire, thus he needs a fake identity."

"So you want to pretend that you're from the Vladimir family?" Valentine asked directly, and his way of looking at Lucien became sharper.

Seeing that Mr. Vladimir was looking at him, Lucien had to talk to him on his own, "Yes, Mr. Valentine. A relative in the Vladimir family. How much shall I pay?"

After a couple of seconds of silence, Valentine burst out in laughter, "If you can kill Ilyich for me, I won't charge you anything. Well, well... I guess you would not be here if you were that capable..."

Ilyich was the first name of the Duke, Vladimir.

Pausing a bit, Valentine took out a cigar from the drawer and lit it with a match.

In the gray smoke, Vladimir said to Lucien slowly, "The more you make this kind of fake identity, the easier it is for you to get caught. In the past twenty years, I've made six of them so far, so a fake identity is very expensive. Five hundred Thales or the equal value of Schachran gold. If you cannot afford it, you might want to consider doing me a favor."

Although the expense for the task would be covered by the Congress later, right now Lucien only had some gold and gems with him, worth about a hundred Thales, plus other magic potions and materials.

After considering for a while, Lucien smiled, "I prefer to pay. Unfortunately, I don't have enough with me right now. I wonder if you're willing to accept magic items as well, Mr. Vladimir?"

Lucien did not want to be involved in Valentine's stuff, even though the task might not be that difficult, the task might still be part of his contend against the duke.

"Pity," Valentine responded in a monotone. "Mr. X, I do accept magic items, and the value estimation here in East Haven is very fair."

For Valentine, getting a magic item was way better than getting money, since in many places other than Allyn, magic items were very valuable because very often they were not available on the market.

Lucien took out Rosan Aaron's Asthenia Dagger and said, "This is a level two magic dagger..."

Valentine coughed a bit, and then an hook-nosed, elder sorcerer wearing a robe in the style of the ancient magic empire entered the room. The elder sorcerer first took a weird glance at Lucien, and then grabbed the dagger.

From the magic waves surrounding the elder man, Lucien could tell that the old man was a sorcerer that followed the ancient magic system.

"Level two, middle-rank, enchanted dagger. It can corrupt other people's weapon, and wounds left by the dagger are hard to heal. It should be around three hundred and eighty Thales, but because of the scarcity of magic items on the market, one could sell it for four hundred and twenty Thales."

"Let's just do four hundred and twenty, then. So you can save some time selling it around," said Valentine directly.

Hearing the price, Lucien was very surprised. As a person who had always been kind of a moneygrubber, he almost wanted to trade magic items between Allyn and the East Haven to make a fortune, however, this was strictly prohibited by the congress.

Lucien nodded to agree on the price. Then he took out some materials that he would not use for a while and some gold to pay Valentine.

After playing with the dagger a bit, Valentine took out a piece of special paper from the Vladimir family and started writing. As he was writing, he said to Lucien, "Peter Joseph Vladimir. His father was Lord Joseph, the son of Ilyich's grandfather's youngest cousin, and he died many years ago. You'll play the role of Peter, who failed to inherit the lord title, and was secretly killed by someone during one of his smuggling trades in the East Haven. You remember, Joseph was mean, alcoholic, and rough, while Ilyich is mean and a pervert, but he likes pretending he's nice and loving."

Valentine was providing Lucien with detailed information within the family to help Lucien do a better job in his role-playing. It was easy to see that Valentine had still got support from the inside of the family. He even knew the several new knights from the family very well.

...

After Warren left the bar and turned around at the corner, the big, strong man beside him suddenly started to cast a strange spell, and the magic waves started to ripple around him.

The man was not a knight, but a real sorcerer!

"What are you doing, Mr. Reja?" asked Warren, a little surprised.

"Lord Warren, most sorcerers are vicious and cunning, and I was checking if he had left any marks on us to track us." Reja opened his eyes and answered, "But it seems he's not one of them."

Warren nodded unhappily, and then turned to the armed guard beside him, "Keep an eye on them."

Then Warren went back to his garden villa in Segru.

Around four in the afternoon, in his study, Warren said excitedly, "So Leo and the sorcerer visited Valentine?"

"That's right, young master," the middle-aged man responded in a flattering manner.

Although Valentine had been hiding himself well since he arrived at the East Haven, there was no way that he could completely disappear under the nose of Warren's father, the member of the city lord conference. The reason why all the important people in the East Haven had reached the agreement keeping Valentine in this place was that they saw the potential and the possible great future value in Valentine.

In order to keep a close eye on Valentine, Warren's father had put a servant around him.

When the servant left his study, Warren calmed down a bit. Looking outside of the window, there was a vicious smile on his face, "Hiring Leo... Visiting Valentine... You want to get a fake identity and pretend that you're part of the Vladimir family... You'll see what I can do once you enter the empire..."

Warren always took his revenge!

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Chapter 261: Shut the Mouth

Holding his together behind his back, Warren looked at the clouds outside of the window for a while, then walked to the one-eyed swordman standing beside the door of the study. "Lorban, keep an eye on Leo and the sorcerer, especially on what they buy and where they go."

As there was still a small chance that Leo and the sorcerer visited Valentine because of some other reason, Warren needed to make sure his guessing was correct. However, even if he could not make sure of their intention, he would still write to the big nobles and remind them to be more mindful.

"Yes, Lord Warren," responded Lorban with great respect.

Because of what happened in the bar, Lorban felt that, as one of Warren's best guards, he let the young master down. Now he was trying to leave Warren with some good impression with his extremely respectful manner.

The task was not risky, since Lorban would not need to lead a whole bunch of guards to follow a middle-rank sorcerer, which would be basically the equivalent to committing suicide. What Lorban needed to do was only to tell those bar owners, gangsters, and smugglers what the young master, Warren, wanted. As long as Leo and the sorcerer were still in the East Haven, they would always know where they were and what they were doing.

Watching Lorban leaving with some other guards, Warren's mood became pretty good. Imagining the picture of the young sorcerer's dead body lying on the ground surrounded by the cardinals from the empire, he walked to the bar in his living room and poured a glass of fancy golden rum for himself, celebrating his upcoming victory,

Sipping the amber-colored liquor, the spicy taste heated up his throat all the way down to his stomach. Warren released his breath smelling of liquor and put on a mocking smile, "What a pity...

The sorcerer's actually a pretty good-looking guy. Given one month, I could turn him into a great toy, like what I did to those good-looking young boys and girls."

Thinking of the naked girls and boys in the secret chamber of the villa, Warren felt aroused. So he put down the glass and was about to go there to vent his desire with his lash.

Warren felt a bit too warm from the liquor, so he decided to take off his long jacket first.

He was wondering which boy or girl he should torture first when he got there, and when he stared at himself in the mirror, a strange man wearing brownish-red jacket suddenly showed up behind him in there!

Warren's eyes suddenly opened wide and he was about to quickly turn around to defend himself.

However, he realized that he could not even remove his eyes from the young man's eyes, as if his eyes were two magic swirls!

At this time, a flash of blue light burst out of Warren's chest and that light refreshed his brain. Warren managed to escape from the young man's eyes.

As the son of a grand knight, the man in charge of a notorious human trafficking group, Warren was arrogant, but he was also very cautious. In case of his mind being controlled by someone else, Warren bought a Unicorn Necklace, which had cost him a lot of money. The necklace could protect him against low-rank spells targeting his mind and brain.

Although the necklace did not work immediately, it still managed to protect him!

However, one second after Warren got rid of the young man's control and felt lucky, the young man started casting a strange spell again. Some kind of weird power sneaked into Warren's body and he could not move anymore!

The third-spell magic, Hold Person!

Warren was so scared that he wanted to scream, however, he could not even move his lips.

"Don't overestimate the power of the magic item." Lucien stopped behind Warren, smiling gently. "And also don't underestimate a cautious sorcerer."

Being full of cunning tricks was one of the symbols of being a qualified sorcerer. A good sorcerer should always be prepared for many possibilities in a fight.

As Lucien was saying, using Mage Hand, Lucien took off the necklace from Warren's neck and removed Warren's spirit imprint in it with the skill from the Congress.

After leaving the bar, because Lucien never trusted such an immoral and viperous man like Warren, before Leo recovered, Lucien used the first-circle, Unseen Servant, to follow Warren and his men to see what they were going to do.

The fact that Reja was actually a sorcerer was out of Lucien's expectation, but fortunately, the servant strictly followed Lucien's order and stayed a hundred meters away from them when Reja

was detecting the surroundings. Then, the unseen servant sneaked into the villa following the guards and hid in Warren's villa. Then, it witnessed the whole scene where Valentine's servant sold him.

After that, when Lorban left the villa, the unseen servant also managed to leave the place and then it found Lucien on the street using the connection between the summoned and the summoner.

Hearing the unseen servant's words, Lucien decided to remove the trouble thoroughly.

Thanks to the many servants and guards going in and out of the villa, Lucien did not really have a difficult time getting in here. To be cautious, Lucien used his improved version of the spell, Charm Person.

Feeling his own spirit imprint in the necklace being destroyed by Lucien's great spiritual power, Warren's face turned pale. His eyes were begging for mercy.

Lucien's brown eyes looked into Warren's eyes again, and they started becoming mysterious and deep.

Although Warren was still trying to threaten Lucien with his eyes, he realized that begging did not work at all, as Lucien did not care. He had the Will of Elements behind him, and even the whole Congress of Magic.

Warren's eyes gradually lost focus, then an admiring smile appeared on his face, "Sir, I'm at your service."

Lucien smiled.

...

When Reja was working on his magic experiment with a useless dwarven girl abandoned by Warren, he heard someone knocking at the lab's door.

"What?" asked Reja aloud.

"Mr. Reja, the young master's looking for you," answered the familiar voice on the other side of the door, "About the sorcerer and Leo."

Reja frowned a bit and murmured in low voice, "Why look for trouble? He's a middle-rank sorcerer!"

As a low-rank sorcerer, Reja knew clearly how big was the power difference between each circle, not to mention the power difference between mages of different ranks.

However, since he relied on Warren a lot to get money and magic materials, Reja walked out of his lab and came to Warren's living room.

Warren's cheeks slightly flushed, as if he was drunk, and his voice was lower than usual, "Mr. Reja, come here and grab a drink first."

"I'm working on an experiment now. A cup of Sky Blue will do." Reja did not feel suspicious at all.

When Reja approached the bar, Warren quickly walked toward him and gave him a big hug. To the great surprise of all the servants present, Warren shouted, "Reja, I love you!"

"What?" Reja was confused. Then quickly, he had this strong sense of danger coming to him. Although he tried his best to get rid of Warren's hug, he could not. After all, Warren had awakened his Blessing with some magic potion. Being hugged by him, Reja's spiritual power could not concentrate.

At this time, a big fireball fiercely shot out of the room beside the living room, and directly hit them. A great explosion filled the whole place. Apart from the fireball, the explosion was also contributed by the explosives around Warren's waist, tearing Reja's magic robe into pieces.

When the blast waves faded, there were only pieces of flesh of Warren and Reja left.

Like in a nightmare, the servants were all trying to run out of that place. However, together with the voice casting a spell in the room, their movement was immediately slowed down.

After finishing the two major enemies, Lucien started to clear away Warren's men, including Jarolim and Lorban, who later came back.

...

The human and elf prisoners in the chamber all heard the great explosion. They waited there with great hope to see whether anyone would come for them. However, no one came, so they started trying to open the magic gate themselves.

Surprisingly, the gate was not hard to break. When they left the chamber, they found the whole villa quiet like a tomb.

A human among them said to the rest of them aloud, "We should stay united! Or we would be sold again by those bastards in the East Haven!"

They all agreed with the human, and they started to search for more slaves in the villa and freed them.

After that, they secretly left the sinful place.

...

In the evening, in the manor outside of Segru, Jacob got the news.

"What? Someone killed Warren and destroyed his place?!" The veins on Jacob's forehead were bulging.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 262: Clean Up

In the fierce thump of hooves, seven or eight strong Dragon Scale horses rushed southeastwards through the city gate of Segru.

"Bastards! Don't you see people?!" shouted a gatekeeper, who was almost knocked over by one of the horses.

Apart from special situations, Segru's city gate was never closed.

Another gatekeeper shot him a warning glance and lowered his voice, "Didn't you see the man on the horse? It was Lord Jacob! How dare you!"

Hearing that, the first gatekeeper immediately closed his mouth tight and looked around alertly. He started to get worried that someone would remember what he just said and put him in trouble.

After a while, he asked the other gatekeeper confusedly, "What happened in Segru? Why was Lord Jacob in such a hurry?"

"Lord Jacob... I head that... Lord Jacob's son is dead! He was killed by someone in his own villa, and all his guards were killed, too!" answered the other gatekeeper in a frightened but also excited way.

"Wow... I mean... What?!" Hearing that, the first gatekeeper felt not only greatly shocked but also excited. Warren's name was notorious. Most people hated him very much. This was definitely a big deal, a big deal that had not happened in the East Haven for years! He wondered who had the guts to challenge the authority of a suzerain by killing his only son!

Hearing their conversation, several other gatekeepers gathered closer. The guy who got the fresh news was flattered, so he said to them excitedly, "All the slaves in Warren's villa were gone! Maybe the young master pissed off someone he shouldn't have, and the person directly killed every single one of them!"

The first gatekeeper looked back and released a sigh, "Warren's the only son of Lord Jacob. Lord Jacob must be beyond furious now. We was being really careful recently, in order to stay away from any trouble."

"That's true. Some people said that this happened in the afternoon, however, the noise was blocked by the villa's own magic circles, so no one found out about it until evening. I bet the guy who did this must now be hundreds of miles away from here. It's almost impossible for Lord Jacob to catch the guy. Lord Jacob's Blessing, Werewolf, will definitely drive him crazy. Many people in the East Haven will die for nothing just because of his anger." The informed gatekeeper sighed. Fortunately, they were the gatekeepers of Segru, not the East Haven. Jacob would not easily vent on them because of the nine city lords.

Jacob was a level-four knight with Werewolf Blessing. He was fast, strong, tough and was able to heal fast from injuries. At the same time, he had also got the powers known as Rampage, Unholy Blight, Dark Asthenia Halo, and Roaring, all derived from his Blessing. The only shortcoming of the Blessing was that Jacob could not launch long-range attacks, and he could not stay conscious in moonlight, instead, he would turn into a real huge wolf.

...

In the living room of Warren's garden villa.

Jacob stared at the blood and flesh pieces on the floor with his eyes wide open. He could not believe that the son he had raised for almost thirty years now had turned into the remaining pieces in front of him!

Wolf fur started to come out from his armor, covering his clenched fists.

Smelling the air, Jacob said in an extremely suppressed tone, "The smells of blood have mixed together. Bastard... He did this on purpose!"

Jacob's men started to search the place, thinking to themselves that they could only bury the relatively big pieces of Warren. At this time, no one wanted to stand in front of Jacob to take his violent rage.

"Mr. Spencer, please check out the place using magic to see if we can find any clues." Wolf fur started growing on Jacob's face, as his great anger and his intense urge to kill were going to explode at any time. He must and he would find the bastard who killed his son. He was going to make the guy's body kneel in front of Warren's tomb, for hundreds of years, thousands of years, even when the body had turned into pure bones!

A middle-rank mage was qualified to be a suzerain in this place, or at least a major consultant of the nine city lords. Therefore, Jacob, a level-four grand knight, could never afford a middle-rank sorcerer, not to mention that he was not even qualified for having a middle-rank sorcerer working for him. Due to the mysteriousness of magic, however, Jacob still needed one, so the Spencer guy he just talked to was a second-circle sorcerer, and together with his apprentices, Spencer worked for Jacob as his consultant.

Spencer took out a crystal ball from his pocket and put in on the top tip of his black magic staff. Then, he started to cast some Astrology spell.

The crystal ball turned black, as if a night sky was in there. Stars in the crystal ball all had their own track.

"Astrology cannot provide the direct answer, so the sorcerer who killed the master should be good at Astrology, and since he killed the young master with a Fireball spell, the sorcerer should be... around third-circle..." Spencer could not find answers from the crystal ball, but he had some assumptions based on his experience.

Jacob's eyes had turned red. Pointing at the flesh and blood on the floor and the completely destroyed bar counter, Jacob yelled, "This kind of explosion... from a third-circle sorcerer?!" Clearly he did not trust what Spencer just said.

Bottles of wine were shattered by his furious voice, and the liquor covered the floor. The whole place was filled with the mixed smell of blood and wine, which made Jacob's nose less sensitive than usual.

Spencer pointed at some of the glass pieces on the ground, "Lord Jacob, look at these. My guessing's that lots of alchemical materials exploded together. So maybe the sorcerer controlled the young master or Reja first, and then he or she tied lots of explosives to one of them. When the sorcerer cast the fireball spell, the explosion thus turned out to be this powerful."

"I don't want to hear how Warren died. I just want to know who the fu*king bastard is!" Jacob started roaring like crazy.

Spencer took a deep breath and then started casting again. This time, there were no stars in the crystal ball, but a creepy, old voice came out from it, "Carry the unknown destiny, flash back the ever-running time... The sorcerer who summons me... You can use five gems to get an answer, but only one."

This was a third-circle spell called Question. The caster could ask a question to an unknown evil existence at the cost of five precious gems, and the thing only provided the answers between yes or now. If the level of the question was not too much above the caster's own knowledge level, the accuracy was about seventy-five percent.

It looked like Spencer's magic staff was a level-three magic item.

The five beautiful rubies disappeared as soon as they touched the crystal ball, then Spencer asked, "I want to know whether the sorcerer who killed Warren had known Warren for just a few days?"

With smaller time range, the investigation would be easier.

The vicious voice answered immediately, "Yes."

Hearing that, Jacob hurriedly commanded, "You, you, and you, go and check it right now! We must be quick! Before the bastard gets out of here!"

Most of the knights hurriedly left the villa, and Spencer and another two knights checked the rest of the living room, but found nothing useful. So they decided to go to the chamber where those slaves were to see what they could find. Spencer also sent messages to his students to come and help.

Jacob rubbed his forehead and said, "Mr. Spencer, I gotta leave this in your hands right now. I'm too disturbed by my rage to think properly. We must find the fu*king bastard!"

Spencer nodded and hurriedly left the place with the two knights to see if there were any other clues they could find.

The living room suddenly became quiet, and this made Jacob feel even more bothered.

As he was walking back and forth in the living room, gray spider webs came out from nowhere on his feet and Jacob got entangled tightly in the webs!

A figure showed up in the corner where the wine smell was very strong. The man was wearing brownish red tight jacket, white breeches and black boots, as well as a monocle on the man's good-looking, smiling face.

Lucien never left the place! He hid himself in the safe corner under the cover of the mixed smell of wine and blood! No one ever expected this!

Lucien was very patient. He had been waiting here for four to five hours, waiting for the chance to kill Jacob together! If he did not, Jacob would finally find out what happened, and that would make his effort of killing Warren become in vain, so Lucien needed Jacob to die! Once Jacob was dead, all the suzerains would be busy with fighting over his land and wealth, and no one would care about how he was killed or who killed him!

That was how Lucien cleaned up things afterwards!

Chapter 263: Get Rid of Future Trouble

Chapter 263: Get Rid of Future Trouble

No one, including Jacob, Spencer, or the many knights, ever expected that the sorcerer who killed Warren and Reja was still waiting here. In almost every case, the murder would hurriedly escape from the site as fast and far as possible. Therefore, when Jacob and the knights first arrived at the living room, they were only looking for clues and evidence, but it never occurred to them that there was another person there!

Lucien took advantage of this, and he called it the psychological magic.

When Jacob saw the gray spider nets covering his whole body and noticed a person slowly showing up in the space, he immediately realized what was going on there. He was not frightened, instead, he was furious. He tightened all his muscles under the armor to break the fibres, but the threads were stronger than he thought. He could not move at all, not to mention reaching to the sword around his waist called Ice Break.

The second circle spell, Spider Web!

Experienced as Jacob was, he knew that being trapped here meant his demise. He had to keep intervening Lucien's casting to buy himself more time to get rid of the threads. Thus, he opened his mouth wide and the tusks in it grew longer. When he was about to use Roaring to stun the sorcerer, Lucien pointed at him with his coral staff, and a middle-sized lightning ball directly dashed into the open mouth!

The second circle spell of the Ambola staff, Lightning Ball.

If Jacob could move right now, there was no way that Lucien could do this. However, in Lucien's eyes, Jacob was just like a fixed target for practicing casting!

Jacob's whole brain was instantly numbed by the lightning ball, and he could not make any sound at all.

However, due to his powerful Werewolf Blessing, Jacob recovered from it quite fast. After all, this was just a second circle spell, and the fact that it was cast by a third circle sorcerer could not make it any more powerful.

Lucien knew this. After Lightning Ball, he started to cast another spell in a weird intonation. A beam of gray ray shot directly out of Lucien's right hand, which was covered by a white glove, and it instantly hit Jacob's body.

The third-circle Necromancy spell, Enfeeblement Ray, and it could quickly exhaust the person's stamina.

Jacob's black armor lit up to prevent the ray from affecting his body. However, although his armor was great against physical attack, it did not work that well with magic. The gray ray went directly into his body, and Jacob immediately felt cold. He felt tired, but again, because of his powerful Blessing, he was not entirely exhausted.

The ring on Jacob's right hand flashed, and lightning was summoned, going directly toward Lucien.

Jacob knew that he was not good at ranged attack, so he bought this expensive magic ring.

At the same time, Jacob's relatively good-looking face started to get distorted. His cheekbones started to protrude, his eyes became red, and wolf fur started to grow out of his face. Jacob's whole body bulged and his size increased by half, even including his ten knuckles!

Within two seconds, Jacob now looked just like a huge wolf!

Werewolf's Rampage. Once it was activated, the person's strength and speed would be greatly improved, and would also be immune to most mind-affecting spells. At the same time, however, the person was not able to use magic items in Rampage.

The spider webs suddenly became too fragile to stop Jacob. Gasping, Jacob marched forward toward Lucien with great effort.

Lucien quickly covered himself with a layer of golden and white flames and shielded himself from the lightning. After a few seconds, when Lucien was ready for another round of casting, the crystal ball rose above his head and burst out dazzling light.

Lucien clenched his fists and the light shone on Jacob. Instantly, Jacob felt that the living room's floor was like a mire, dragging him downwards, thus he had to make a lot of effort to pull his feet up to keep moving. The rest of the spider threads all over Jacob were not making it any easier for him.

The second-circle Astrology spell, Grasping Earth!

Jacob's bent wolf back suddenly straightened up, and a wolf shadow came out from him. The shadow was free from the spider webs and the sinking floor, and it jumped right toward Lucien.

Werewolf Blessing, Unholy Blight!

Holy light burst out from Lucien's chest, and a beam of flame-like light from the roof directly hit the shadow and made it disappear in a second.

Divine spell, Flame Strike!

Jacob became weaker when the shadow was destroyed, and he almost stopped moving forward.

Seizing the chance, Lucien cast Enfeeblement Ray on Jacob again.

Being hit by the gray ray again, Jacob did not even have the strength to roar. He knew that things could not keep going like this, so he, at the great cost of feedback damage afterwards, activated Rampage again! Only a grand knight could do this twice within this short period of time! Jacob started advancing toward Lucien again!

Lucien's left hand shone with cold light, and the frost blades perfectly struck Jacob's shanks! Although the blades could not really hurt Jacob because of the heavy armor he was wearing, the frost quickly turned into ice and froze Jacob's legs to the floor.

However, because of Werewolf's power, the ice instantly broke into pieces.

When Jacob was ready to bite Lucien's throat open, layers of new spider webs covered his body again. Jacob roared furiously.

Lucien was prepared for this fight. He had his plan and strategies in mind. This was the power of a sorcerer. In front of a prepared middle-rank sorcerer, if a level four knight did not have some secret power or great magic items, basically the knight would have no hope in winning the battle.

Again, with Lucien pointing the Amboula staff at Jacob's huge mouth, another lightning ball rushed in there. Jacob's roar was thus instantly cut off.

When Jacob was still trying his best to get rid of the new spider webs, he heard the sorcerer casting the same weird spell again! The gray ray hit him again!

Jacob's knees suddenly lost all the strength, and he almost kneeled down on the floor. However, the spider webs not even let him fall down!

Jacob was gasping. His throat was making a harsh noise. However, it could not turn into a roar. Jacob's eyes, staring at Lucien, were filled with great despair and anger.

Finally, Enfeeblement Ray worked!

There was still a smile on Lucien's face, but he directly ignored the way Jacob stared at him. Lucien was waiting for his cooldown time to cast the last spell.

After a few seconds, Lucien's raised his right hand and pointed at Jacob's left chest. A black hole appeared in front of Jacob's chest and the magic item he was wearing turned into colourful particles in solids, gases and liquids.

That was Lucien's special spell, Elemental Order, and Lucien also liked to call the spell Item Destroyer.

Jacob's eyes opened wide, and the veins in his eyeballs almost exploded. When Jacob was still striving to recover his power, Lucien cast Elemental Order again.

Jacob was shocked to find that the wolf fur in front of his chest and his muscles started to dissolve due to some mysterious and unstoppable power. His flesh was turned into colourful particles and his heart was thus directly revealed!

Jacob heard something about this horrible spell before. He could not believe the young sorcerer in front of him had this kind of power!

Before Jacob's muscles and skin could grow back, Lucien lifted his Amboula staff again and shot a strong acid ball directly toward Jacob's heart.

The strong acid immediately covered Jacob's heart, and the wolf-like man burst out a miserable, shrill cry out of the great pain.

At this time, Lucien cast a green acid arrow and the arrow fiercely penetrated Jacob's heart.

The level four knight just died like this. In front of a sorcerer, Jacob did not even manage to have the chance to make use of his strengths such as his power, speed and agility.

"Go meet your son in hell," said Lucien very calmly. Then, a big fireball was summoned and Jacob's body was blasted. Lucien did not want to leave any evidences here that could reveal his special power, Elemental Order.

Although the fireball was powerful, Jacob's black armor still looked pretty solid. The fire covered Jacob's whole body when the spider webs were lit on fire.

This was why Lucien did not choose to use fire to attack Jacob—the spider webs would be burned down.

Lucien closed his eyes and started to sense the surroundings using his spiritual power. He saw that Spencer, instead of rushing to save his master's life, hurriedly turned around and escaped away. He must have somehow confirmed Jacob's death.

Spencer was only hired by Jacob. There was no way that Spencer would risk his own life to seek revenge for Jacob and Warren.

Lucien knew this well. So he did not bother killing Spencer. Lucien took away Jacob's sword, armor, money and the rest of his magic items. He also left the unique marks of the Congress of Magic and the Will of Elements to show the East Haven people their power. So, they would draw the conclusion that Warren and Jacob were killed by a sorcerer because they pissed off the Congress and the Will of Elements. Therefore, Lucien could be totally free of future trouble.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 264: Set Off

Ice Break, level four medium rank magic sword, bonus damage of ice and acid, balance improvement. Jacob had spent almost ten thousand Thales on it, however, in the last fight of his life, he did not even have a chance to draw the sword.

Lucien picked up the sword from the floor and slightly shook his head. The sword was glowing in a greenish-blue light. Together with the armor named Demon Soul, the ring named Punishment, which could cast Lightning three times a day, and some gold coins and gems worth around forty Thales, Lucien put the sword and other trophies into his magic storage pouch.

To collect the pieces of equipment, Jacob made countless filthy smuggling deals. Now they all belonged to Lucien. However, Lucien was not planning on using them, because some nobles in Schachran Empire could probably recognize them, which definitely meant unwanted trouble. Therefore, Lucien was going to have Leo sell them.

The unicorn necklace was an exception. Because a necklace could be very unnoticeable if it was properly hidden, Lucien was going to ask Leo to wear it to be immune to mental spells. This was good for both of them. And because Lucien was wearing Sun's Corona, he could not wear the two items together.

Collecting trophies made Lucien quite cheerful. He put back the crystal ball in his pocket—many astrology spells, due to the mysteriousness of destiny, still required casting materials when used. Maskelyne's Star was a typical example. And Astrology was not alone here. Other schools of magic also had this kind of special situation. Therefore, the completion of building a magic model in one's soul did not always mean that the caster would never use the corresponding casting materials.

With a flash of magic waves, Lucien's figure quickly disappeared and he secretly left the villa.

...

The basement of the common-looking house was one of Leo's secret hiding places.

"Mr. Peter, Jacob's death had made a great stir in the city. The suzerains have started fighting against each other for Jacob's land, wealth and resources, and the issue has been brought to the City Lord Meeting. Some nearby ancient sorcerers have also arrived here. They hope to join the East Haven's meeting to share the wealth." Leo, although there was no one else around, still carefully called Lucien's fake name.

Lucien was a bit surprised, "Is Jacob that wealthy? I did not find too many valuable items on him."

Leo answered, like a real butler, "Because most of the earnings of Jacob's manor had to go to the nine city lords. He also had to buy lots of precious materials for improving the power of his own Blessing such as Moonlight Stone and werewolf blood... plus his extravagant way of living, he could only use probably one tenth of his wealth to buy magic items. Also, high level magic items are very precious in the East Haven, and in most cases, the items would go to the city lords. Finding a level four or five magic item is already hard, not to mention finding a suitable one. So it took Jacob several years to gather his whole set of equipment."

Lucien slightly nodded. This was one of the major advantages of joining the Congress of Magic and the Will of Elements. As long as he had money, there were always great magic items there for him to choose. Every time Lucien went to the congress's Exchange Zone or the Demiplanes Warehouse of the will of Elements, he wanted everything there and he always had a difficult time making decisions.

"What about the nine city lords? Did they say anything?" this was what Lucien cared about the most.

Leo, wearing the makeup of an old man, shook his head, "Mr. Peter, no one has heard anything from the City Lord Meeting yet, but the owner of the bar told me that the city lords' people have only been there once for investigation, and no order for arrest has been released yet. The several suzerains claimed that Jacob and Warren were killed by the Congress of Magic, and this has nothing to do with the East Haven. According to the local law, it was totally fine for them to fight for Jacob's wealth."

"I see. Anyway, we shall still wait for a few more days to make sure we're safe before we set off for Schachran Empire." Lucien nodded, "Can you please find a way to secretly sell the magic items and use the money to buy a level four or five magic sword?"

"Mr. Peter, you'll at least suffer a twenty percent loss in a hurry trade, and a level four or five magic sword is quite hard to find. I cannot promise that I can find you a good one." Leo was straightforward.

"Not a problem." Lucien smiled and adjusted his monocle, "This is just for temporary use, as long as it doesn't have a high requirement on the user's strength, agility and willpower."

When they were in Schachran Empire, Lucien wanted to try his best to avoid using magic, therefore, a powerful magic sword became really important. Lucien did not really care about the features of the sword, since he was going to sell it when he got back to Allyn later anyway.

"As you said." Leo slightly bowed and left the the basement.

...

A few days later, in the early evening, Leo came back with a fancy sword inlaid with rubies.

"Mr. Peter, this is your magic sword. Level four high rank. Twenty three thousand Thales. After selling Ice Break, Demon Soul, the ring and the gold and gems, you have one hundred and sixty Thales left." Leo handed the sword to Lucien, and he also showed Lucien the evidence that he did not make up the prices and profit from the trades.

Lucien drew the sword and gently stroke it. The sword felt cold. Although the major body of the sword looked rather simple, the hilt was very sophisticatedly designed and it was covered with complicated patterns.

Following the method that he learned from Natasha, Lucien easily left his own power in the sword, and he got the message from the dwarf maker:

"Frost, level four high rank. Built by the special material called Jade Ice found from the deep Northland. The sword can slow down your enemy with freezing damage when it hits the target.

" Everyone likes fighting with an enemy who gets slower and slower! — Adaaran, the Copper Hammer"

The most outstanding feature of the sword was the fact that it could slow people down, but that was it. This was also the reason why Jacob chose Ice Break.

Lucien wielded the sword and felt the power in it, as much as that of a level four knight. And then he put the sword back into its scabbard, and hung it on one side of his waist — Alert was on the other side.

Lucien did not take a single look at the evidence but directly ruined it, "I trust you, Leo. And as a sorcerer, I also have a rough estimation of its value. Is there anything going on outside?"

Leo was a bit excited about Lucien's trust, "Mr. Peter, I have confirmed it with Mr. Valentine and the owner of Taran. The nine city lords have connived at the fact that the suzerains can take Jacob's wealth and land, and they have announced their final decision after contacting the Congress—what happened was due to Jacob and Warren's personal conflict with the Congress, so the city lords and the East Haven will not get involved in this. This is over."

Lucien had this feeling that the nine city lords had more or less of a connection to the Congress. It was not easy for the East Haven to remain neutral among this many powers.

Lucien stood up, "Leo, there's no moon tonight. We shall set off."

...

In the darkness, Flame Fortress was like a giant dragon safeguarding the best entrance of the mountain range. The rest of the places were full of terrible monsters, deep forests and snow cliffs.

Lucien, taking Leo with him, was right now flying in the night sky, as if they were part of the darkness.

According to the information they had, Lucien avoided the magic circles for the purpose of guarding in the sky and the patrolling routine of the airships, Lucien easily went through the fortress. They did not land until they arrived at a small town in Schachran Empire.

Without special magic or divine spells, there was no way that one could fully block the endless sky!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 265: The Superrich

In the year 819 of Saint Calendar, the end of the Month of Beginning.

In the afternoon, the gray sky started to reveal a touch of cheerful blue. The great storm had finally stopped.

Snow accumulated in front of the unique-looking buildings with domes, and the snow was so thick that the doors of the buildings had been blocked. Some Schachran Empire residents got out through the windows. They started pushing aside the snow with big shovels, drinking spirits at the same time.

Most people here had blond, light blond or black-colored hair and were well-built. While young ladies looked beautiful and elegant, those middle-aged ones tended to have put on extra weight. Many of them were double the size of their husbands, and they could easily roll the big snow balls, which were even very heavy for many young lads, with one single hand.

On the second floor of a hotel along the main street, through the window, two youngsters were looking at the joyful scene when people down there were busy with cleaning the snow. Grabbing her hands together, the blond, blue-eyed girl grinned. "I've never seen this big snow in Ural before. It's already the end of the month, wow!"

The district of Ural was located in Kirov Province, southwest of Schachran Empire. Ural was two provinces away from the north fortress of the Duchy of Violet, and it was known for its ores and skills in making weapons. Therefore, Ural was also responsible for the logistics of Marinov's line of defense.

The young lady was beautiful, and the long coat made of fox fur she was wearing showed her nice figure. The short-haired young man standing beside her was a bit hesitant but still said to her, "Yielena, you've been spending quite a bit time with... Mr. Peter?"

"Yes, Igor?" Yielena turned around, feeling a bit confused, "Mr. Peter is profound and humorous. I like spending time with him."

As she was saying that, there was a little smile on her face.

That smile irritated Igor. He stamped his foot and said to her in an eager tone, "Yielena, he's a noble! And his wife must be a noble!"

Yielena's beautiful eyebrows frowned together, and she felt a bit offended, "So what? We're just friends. Come on Igor... There's nothing between us. If Mr. Peter was here, he would never upset me like this. He would talk to me about the fun games we can play in the heavy snow..."

"Mr. Peter, Mr. Peter... Yielena can't you just stop mentioning him for a second? Nobles are hypocritical!" Igor lost his temper a bit, "He looks elegant, uh? Who knows what he does for a living? Who knows what he has done before? Look at his showy swords. And he treats well every beautiful girl with us in the caravan! That means he doesn't care about you! He's a playboy! He hasn't even activated his Blessing yet!"

This was not the first time that they had this conversation, however, Yielena never listened to Igor. Igor could not bear this anymore.

Seeing that Yielena lowered her head, Igor softened his tone, "I care about you, Yielena... This is why I upset you. He's trying to get you to..." Igor stopped there. Although he talked dirty when he was with those mercenaries, he knew how to stop himself in front of Yielena.

Yielena now looked really upset. There were tears in her blue eyes. She said to him, in her trembling voice, "Igor, why do you always think Mr. Peter is a bad guy? He has refused two good-looking single ladies in our caravan. And I'm not an idiot as well!"

Then, she turned around and walked back to her room, slamming the door loudly. Igor started to apologize on the other side of the door.

On the other end of the corridor, two men were also looking outside of the window.

"Mr. Peter, I have to say that Vladimir family is really well-mannered. You're the most upright noble I've ever seen in front of women." The elder man with a brandy nose smiled. He was Berdychiv, Yielena's father, member of the caravan.

Lucien, or say, Peter Joseph Vladimir, put his hands in white gloves on the window rails and smiled. "In fact, there are many nobles who are loyal. Think about all those romantic stories."

In order to play the role better, Lucien dyed his hair blond using a special tree sap, and he also changed his eye color into blue. Now, he looked more lively.

"Both of us know that those stories are for those innocent young ladies, to get them to become the nobles' lovers." Berdychiv laughed, "Mr. Peter, you wanna have lunch together? I still have a good bottle of wine."

Lucien withdrew his right hand and shook his head, "Thank you, Mr. Berdychiv, but I cannot drink. I injured myself slightly when I was traveling around."

"Haha, Mr. Peter... This is the only thing in you that it's not that pleasant!" Berdychiv had been acquainted with Lucien for a month. He could now joke with Mr. Peter in a more relaxed way.

Schachran Empire was also known as the Empire of Knights, because they had way more knights than Violet and Holm, and this was also why the empire had been standing for hundreds of years against the South Church.

This made lots of adventures believe that harsh environment was good for fostering one's strong willpower, so that they could awaken Blessing sooner.

In the dinning hall, Lucien found a table in the corner. Leo, who was right now his butler, stood next to him.

After a while, when Lucien was having his Borsch, a middle-aged man wearing black jacket and marten waistcoat came in his direction, followed by his servant. His blond hair was shaped in

slicked-back style, and a thick cigar was in his mouth. On his ten fingers, there were at least seven or eight dazzling rings.

"Hey, Mr. Peter. Can I sit here?" asked the bulky, middle-aged man passionately.

Lucien looked around and saw there was no spare seat left, so he nodded, "Sure, Mr. Sergey." The heavy snow trapped many tourists here, so the restaurant was busier than usual.

Sergey joined the caravan around five or six days ago, and he was heading for Ural city. He was straightforward, generous and talkative, so he had got familiar with most people in the caravan already.

After ordering some Bulin, which was a kind of naan bread, caviar, roasted veal and lamb, Sergey grinned, "Mr. Peter, I gotta say that you've really reminded me of Count Kutuzov also from Vladimir family. Both of you are very graceful and well-mannered. I mean... when I was doing my business in Volck, I met him a couple of times..."

Lucien cut his chicken into pieces, and he smiled, "Uncle Kutuzov? Is he still suffering from arthritis in rainy days?"

Kutuzov was important in the family, therefore, Valentin did mention some details about him, such as his diseases from his failure of breaking through the level of grand knight.

"Still the same, the same..." Sergey put on a smile and switched the topic. He started talking about other nobles he knew.

After sharing his stories with all the nobles, Sergey had built up the picture of himself—mysterious and superrich. Then, he released a slight sigh, "It's such a pity that I have to say goodbye to you soon, as we're already very close to Ural. I got to know Count Witte through Baroness Carleena's personal connection and I bought a recent discovered gem mine in Ural. Although the project will be tough, the value of the mine is beyond imagination. Lots of people are craving for it. So I'm afraid I'm gonna stay in Ural for a long time."

Count Witte's land was half the size of Ural District, and he was the actual ruler.

Lucien chewed his chicken well. After a while, he asked the question that Sergey was expecting, "Beyond imagination?"

"For sure! Experts have proved that the value of the mine's equal to a whole county! Thanks to the fact that Count Witte just doesn't want to bother and he'd rather make money from tax, or I'd definitely have zero chance to get it!" Sergey took all the documents out from his suitcase and showed off in front of Lucien.

Many spells needed gems as casting material and many magic items were made of natural gems.

"Congratulations." Lucien smiled politely.

"Thank you, Mr. Peter. But you know this isn't an easy trade. I almost went bankrupt just to please the count. Now I have no money for hiring people and buying all those equipments. I've been running around recently trying to collect money from my friends, and I'll pay them back double! But I'm still expecting a bit more..." Sergey looked worried. "I really hope the empire has banks that give out loans like those in Sturk and Holm... Now I'm even considering selling some of my share..."

After finishing his words, Sergey stopped and waited for Lucien's answer patiently.

However, Lucien did not say anything for quite a while.

"Well... Mr. Peter, you don't want to say anything?" Sergey raised his wine glass.

"Sure." Lucien wiped his mouth with napkin, "I've finished my lunch. Mr. Sergey, take your time and enjoy."

Then, Lucien elegantly stood up. After adjusting his two fancy swords a bit, he left the dining hall with Leo.

For a second, Sergey's smile froze on his face. Then he smiled, and took a sip of his wine.

...

In the afternoon, when the snow had just been cleaned a bit. An invitation arrived at the hotel. The invitee was Lucien, and the invitation was sent by Baroness Carleena.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 266: Winter Hunting

"Dear Mr. Peter,

"It is so nice to hear that we have a Vladimir family member here in Ural. Now, the storm has stopped and the weather has cleared up, therefore, in order to celebrate the upcoming spring and welcome our distinguished guest from afar, I would like to invite all the nobles in town to join together for a winter hunting in the forest belonging to my manor. May I have the honor?

"Baroness Carleena Lottnico."

That was a fancy invitation, made of fine cardboard and printed with sunflower patterns, with her elegant and beautiful handwriting in Schachran language. The invitation also had the unique feminine scent, left by the mature and beautiful noble lady who wrote the invitation.

"Baroness Carleena Lottnico..." Lucien just heard the name from Sergey, who he suspected to be a swindler, so he was now feeling a little hesitant.

The caravan members saw that Lucien did not say a word after reading the invitation, so they asked out of curiosity, "Mr. Peter, which is this noble inviting you?"

It was not Lucien's first time receiving invitations like that. Many suzerains had invited him before because of the family name, Vladimir. Out of a noble's courtesy, Lucien had accepted many invites and attended many parties.

Although after when the suzerains knew that Peter was only the son of a lord who failed to inherit the title, they became quite cold to Lucien, those invitations still brought the caravan good convenience in the empire.

"It's from Baroness Carleena," answered Lucien straightforwardly. Schachran Empire had a vast territory and countless important and small nobles. Lucien really did not know them well, except Count Witte, and he was expecting that the caravan members could provide him with more information.

After having some good wine with his lunch, Berdychiv's face looked flushed, and his red nose looked even brighter, "Baroness Carleena! Haha... A real beauty from Ural! A widow! She has all the wealth left by the baron, and Mr. Peter, you've got no idea how many young nobles are longing for winning her affection. The beauty, the manor, and the wealth... Think about it."

Berdychiv was still a bit drunk. He looked at Lucien trying to give him hints, as this had always been the traditional topic among men.

"Baroness Carleena is called Black Widow and the Vain Fox," added a blonde and green-eyed girl, a bit unhappily. "She was born in a noble family, and she's also the niece of the count's second wife. But years ago, she rejected all the young nobles who were pursuing her and married Baron Lotnikov, a widower with no offsprings, who was at that time forty-six years older than her for the sake of wealth and his title. Baron Lotnikov's health condition was quite good when they first got married, but five years later, the baron aged a lot and got really sick. Soon, he passed away."

"Irina, don't spread rumors," said a gentleman in the caravan. "Look around, we're in a fancy hotel in Ural, not in the middle of nowhere. What if some nobles heard it?"

Berdychiv waved his hands, "Relax. Trust me, those nobles want people to spread Baroness Carleena's bad name. So they can have less competitors. Those nobles don't care about the baroness's reputation. They want the title, the money and the beautiful body."

"She does have a bad reputation. She started inviting young nobles to her manor and having those extravagant parties only half year after the baron passed away."

"Anyway," Lucien smiled, "the baroness has invited me, and we're not in any hurry to leave. I should be polite and not let the hostess down."

Lucien had to play and maintain his noble reputation well. As he was not the only noble invited, the winter hunting should not be risky. And as long as he refused to be greedy, Lucien was confident that he would not be swindled.

After all, at that moment, Lucien himself was, in fact, a swindler as well.

Hearing that, the several caravan members had mixed feelings. Some started playing jokes, while some did not look too happy.

Lucien stood up and slightly nodded to them with a smile, "Then, see you tomorrow, everyone."

After he said that, he closed the book Работа актёра над собой (An Actor Prepares) in his spirit library.

...

The land was covered with a thick layer of snow. Tall and big pines, from time to time, shook off the snow to get rid of the heavy burden. Several big, black Ural dogs shot out as fast as arrows, chasing after the rabbits.

Suddenly, an arrow shot from afar penetrated a gray hare very precisely.

Applause followed. A young noble tried to please the noble lady, "Impressive! Carleena, your archery has improved even further!"

Carleena lifted her bow in a triumphant way, then she turned around and said to Lucien, "Mr. Peter, now it's your turn. Vladimirs are all good archers."

Baroness was around twenty seven or twenty eight. Her soft blond hair was tied back, and there was always a smile matching her big blue eyes. Her slightly pouty red lips were like flower petals. The black hunting jacket outfit showed the beauty of her figure lines. Seeing that, many young nobles could not even remove their eyes from the baroness.

Lucien had seen women more beautiful than her, so he just took a polite glance at her and replied, "Thank you, Lady Carleena. The glory all goes to the family. But, honestly speaking, I'm more of a close combat person than an archer."

Lucien pointed at the two swords on his waist. Then, although he was being polite saying this, Lucien still quickly shot an arrow and it directly got a hare in the snow.

The key point of archery was stability and good vision, and they were no problem for Lucien.

"Umm... Clearly, you're really being humble, Mr. Peter. Your archery is close to knight level. You should teach me when you have time." Carleena stared at Lucien with her big blue eyes out of admiration.

This made other young nobles quite unhappy. A black-haired noble picked up his bow and said, "He's close to knight level. But let me show you what real knight-level archery is!"

After saying that, he shoot an arrow so fiercely that it was almost covered by fire. The arrow directly shot through a huge tree and went right into the eye socket of the animal behind it, leaving its fur totally undamaged.

He turned around and put on a complacent smile, "Peter, you see that? Of course, I wouldn't mind practicing sword with you either."

Before Lucien said anything, Carleena smiled sweetly, "Nice extraordinary bow, Barshac."

The implication of her words were clear. Then, Carleena turned to talk to other nobles. Her great social skills made this whole evening warm and cheerful.

...

In the forest some distance away from the nobles, two guys in black cloak were staring in Carleena's direction. When the young nobles started to scatter in the forest in order to find the best gift for Carleena, one man said to the other, "Mianka, you turn yourself into a winter bear later and attack Carleena. Make sure that the first round of attack miss the target. Then, you attack the blond noble guy beside her. After injuring him, you run away pretending that you were beaten by him."

"No problem, Niake." As the tall guy was saying, his body was covered by a layer of gray light. When the light disappeared, the guy had turned himself into a big, white bear.

Winter bear was a common magic creature in Schachran Empire. A fully grown one could have the power of a knight.

Niake grinned and said, "Mianka, control yourself a bit, so you won't directly beat him by accident. And be a good actor when you retreat. Don't make him suspicious."

"Relax. I got this," responded the white bear.

After a couple of minutes, a huge winter bear popped out and directly rushed toward Carleena. Screaming, Carleena barely dodged the bear's attack and then she hurriedly sought for Lucien's help.

Then, the huge winter bear raised its giant paw in front of Lucien. Seeing that, Niake put on a smile. Everything went exactly how they planned. Now, the next step would be Mianka hurting the noble man and then running away.

All of a sudden, after a flash of light, the winter bear fell over in front of Lucien's horse with a bang!

Lucien, on the horse, was holding a long, blue sword, with his back straightened. As he stared at the bear, it burst out gray light again and revealed its real look—the black-coated guy.

Seeing that, Niake almost dropped his jaw, "What's going on here?"

Chapter 267: The Hero and the Beauty

Chapter 267: The Hero and the Beauty

It seemed that everything stopped for a few seconds, even including the chilly wind.

Carleena and her guards were shocked and were just standing there, watching the huge winter bear jumping toward them. Then, with a flash of sword light, the winter bear fiercely fell onto the ground, stirring the snow everywhere.

They could not believe their eyes. How could a fully-grown bear just be killed like this?

Blood oozed out of the thin line throughout the bear's forehead, nose, mouth and its body. To be more specific, the blood did not manage to come out literally, but was frozen into some kind of shining, blue ice.

Then, mysterious gray light burst out from its body. When the light disappeared, the bear was gone, and instead, a man wearing a black cloak was on the ground. There was a deep wound on his face, right in the middle, and his cloak was also cut in half.

The man was still alive, writhing. Obviously, if they decided to do nothing and just left the man there, he would definitely die in a few minutes.

Facing such a sudden attack, Lucien was always direct and sharp. He always used his full power.

"A druid? Or a sorcerer who specializes in the ancient school of Transformation?" Lucien thought to himself. Clearly, seeing the man, Lucien was also a bit surprised. Because of the gray light he just saw, Lucien would say that the guy was a sorcerer.

However, before figuring out what was the man's intention and plan, Lucien would not save him in front of people just because he was a sorcerer.

After staring at the man for a few seconds, Carleena finally realized what just happened and she burst out a sharp scream, "Assassinator!"

Piles of snow on the pines were shaken off by her scream, and the young nobles around all hurried back to her.

At the same time, Carleena's face turned pale, and her body suddenly lost balance. She was going to fall from her horse, and she fell toward Lucien's direction.

The same calm look remained on Lucien's face, and his right hand was still grabbing the sword. At the same time, Lucien reached out his left hand and helped Carleena sit back on her horse again. Lucien asked politely, "Are you alright?"

"I'm okay. Thank you so much, Mr. Peter. Without you, I might have died already." Carleena's look was like a little white flower that needed to be taken care of tenderly. After sitting back on the horse, her hands gently entangled with Lucien's left hand, and her full body started to lean against Lucien's arm, as if she was seeking for a shelter and a reliable place. Lucien could smell the mixed scent of her make up and perfume.

Lucien's nose was a bit irritated. He was not used to this, and he almost subconsciously cast Air Filter Bubble to get rid of the overly sweet smell.

The thing happened all of a sudden, and Lucien already did not trust the baroness because of Sergey, so Lucien had absolutely no feeling toward the beauty holding his arm. So, he politely pushed Carleena away and said, "Good to hear you're not hurt. There still might be other assassins around. We're still in danger. Do not distract me."

Carleena was just about to lay her bust against Lucien's arm. However, after hearing that, she got a bit pissed. Carleena thought to herself that what kind of man would say "Do not distract me" to her... What the hell...

Nevertheless, she still managed to maintain her manner. After a bit of a pause, she responded, "Okay then, Mr. Peter. You're surely brave and cautious."

At this time, Carleena's servants surrounded her to protect her from any possible following attacks.

Carleena was not totally inexperienced. Gradually, she calmed down a bit, and she said to her people, "Take the assassin! Don't let him die! Bring him back to Pastor Nicolay!"

"As you command." Several servants stepped forward and took out magic-blocking robes and healing potions.

Barshac and the other young nobles just came back. They hurriedly asked, "Carleena, are you alright?"

Carleena's face looked a bit pale, which made the young nobles want to take good care of her even more.

Carleena forced a smile on her face and said, "I'm alright. Mr. Peter beat the assassinator. Surprisingly, he's a real knight, and he stopped the bear with one single movement."

As she was saying, Carleena took a quick glance at Lucien, and her face flushed.

Seeing that, Barshac was very jealous. He stared at Lucien and clenched his fists. But soon he realized what Carleena had just said, and he asked out of great surprise, "Peter's a knight?"

Although people here had a greater chance to awaken their Blessings, the status of a knight was still a dream for many young nobles. Barshac was now twenty-four, and his goal was to become a knight by thirty. If he could marry Carleena and get her wealth, even if he failed to do so, he could still buy those secret potions from the smugglers to obtain the power.

Within the Congress of Magic, the Blessing-awakening potion plus Blood Cleanser was about five hundred Thales, however, nobles in Schachran Empire, this inland country, were willing to pay even ten thousand Thales to get the potion. Only nobles themselves understood how badly they hankered for power and titles.

Therefore, the trade of the potions was an industry of excessive profits. Because the empire was not really an enemy for the Congress, the Congress chose to smuggle a limited amount of potions from time to time to the empire to make a great fortune. Also, some ancient sorcerers nearby in the East Haven were also making a small amount of the potions to make extra money.

Carleena nodded, "Yes, Mr. Peter's a real knight. He's strong and brave."

The young nobles all looked at Lucien with mixed feelings. Some felt confused, some upset, and some jealous.

Holding Alert, Lucien said, "I've been traveling around Flame Fortress for many years, and I've been put in quite a lot dangerous situations, thus I managed to awaken my Blessing... You know, just like how eyases are pushed out of the nest to learn how to fly."

Carleena sensed the awkward atmosphere. So, she coughed a bit and said to the nobles, "Distinguished guests, because of what just happened, we have to end our winter hunting earlier than we expected, but our welcome party for Mr. Peter is not affected. No worries, in the manor, we have lots of guards and pastors there!"

It was a bit too late for the young nobles to go back to Ural from Carleena's manor, and also, the last thing they wanted to do was to leave Peter the chance to spend time alone with Carleena. So they all agreed to attend the party.

...

Unlike Aalto or Tria, Schachran music was unique and had an outburst of enthusiasm.

The floor of the spacious hall was covered by thick red carpet, and the young nobles were socializing with wine glasses in their hands. The long dinning tables in the corner were loaded with the empire's signature liquor, Gold Lega, and also butter, white bread, pancake, creamy roasted fish, caviar, roasted lamb, fried chicken, steak, borsch, beef soup and all kinds of fancy dessert.

Carleena, as the host, was leading Lucien to meet the guests.

She was now wearing a black evening dress, and her nice figure was thus perfectly outlined. Carleena chose to only wear a pearl necklace tonight, showing her beautiful neck and bust.

"This is Mr. Ivanovszki, our famous businessman in the empire. From Storm Strait to the provinces in the northwest, even including the land where Marinov line of defense is, you can see his businesses," introduced Carleena. Wearing a pair of gilt-edged glasses, Mr. Ivanovszki looked quite elegant, but his figure was quite well-built, like a winter bear.

Ivanovszki kissed Carleena's right hand and said, "My lady, your beauty is more precious than any jewels. I'm just an ordinary merchant working for nobles."

Then Ivanovszki shook hands with Lucien, "Nice to meet you, Mr. Peter. I've heard your name in the northwest province. Congratulations for awakening your Blessing so fast. I'm sure that when you go back to your family, you'll get the title very fast. What a pity that your father cannot share the joy..."

"Well... He got excited easily and he was always drunk, so..." Lucien responded casually. According to Valentine, Peter and his father did not get along with each other well at all.

After chatting casually a bit, Ivanovszki smiled, "If I can have the honor, I hope we can cooperate to make some good money in the future. Now I must leave you and Carleena alone for your opening dance."

Carleena nodded, and she said to the guests in a louder voice, "Ladies and gentlemen, let's welcome Mr. Peter Joseph Vladimir from the northwest!"

The applause was not too warm, but Carleena did not care. She looked at Lucien like she was fascinated by him, "Mr. Peter, as the host, I invite you to have the opening dance with me."

Lucien bowed to her slightly and reached out his right hand, "Lady Lottnico, my great honor."

With a sweet smile, Carleena put her soft hand in Lucien's, and they started to dance in the music. They were doing Ilia Circle Dance.

Carleena leaned her body against Lucien's chest, and her eyes became alluring, "Peter, you know what? When the bear was coming for me, I was totally helpless and desperate. But you stood in front of me and saved my life! When I was looking at you from behind, I felt the great sense of security that I have never experienced before. I feel that you're the one who can shelter me from any wind or rain, and you're the one who can make me happy and forget all my fears and worries."

"Thank you, Carleena, but I was also protecting myself," Lucien answered.

"No matter why..." Carleena's lips approached Lucien's face, and her breath became faster and warmer, "When you save me from the bear's paw, you're my hero—my brave and reliable hero! My heart beats fast for you, and I've never felt this before, even when I married my husband... He was more like a father to me, and I was touched..."

Lucien thought for a few seconds and then said to the woman seriously, "Carleena, you're a great person..."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 268: Leo's Finding

"What?" Carleena was confused.

"I mean... we should be friends," said Lucien seriously.

"... I heard you..." Carleena put on quite a few facial expressions within a few seconds. Finally, she put on a delicate and charming look, and her big eyes stared at Lucien's face with some tears in it, "I'm so sorry, Mr. Peter. I've troubled you this much."

Although most guys would probably be touched by the way she looked right now, Lucien was an exception. He was still wearing the polite smile, "I really appreciate your affection. But you're just not the type I like. I'm sorry."

The song gradually ended. Carleena looked down, and her tears dropped onto the carpet.

Her nose was a bit stuffy, "I know I'm only a widow, and I don't deserve you, Mr. Peter. Anyway, I've told you my feelings toward you. Thank you for dancing with me. Feel free to come back to Ural in the future."

When the music stopped, Carleen quickly turned around and left the dancing floor.

Seeing that, Barshac and some other nobles all left their dancing partners and followed Carleena, trying to check her out and comfort her. However, Carleena quickly hid in the lady's dressing room in the corner and locked the door from inside.

Barshac stared at Lucien with mixed feelings. He was not sure if he should feel lucky or angry, but he knew that he was definitely jealous.

However, facing Lucien's power, no one dared to challenge him directly.

In the dressing room, Carleena raised her head, and her beautiful face looked very angry. She murmured to herself in a bitter way, "A great person? How dare you say this? Who do you think you are? Damn it! I'll make you regret it!"

...

In the dungeon behind the manor, Mianka slowly came out of his coma, and Niake was right beside him.

"Finally, you woke up..." Niake started to put some magic potions back into the small box.

"Where... where's this place?" Mianka was confused, "What happened?"

"Come on, Mianka... I told you to pretend that you were beaten. I never told you to commit suicide! Your winter bear form at least had the power of a real knight. You should be the one telling me what happened..." said Niake quite pissed.

Mianka scratched his head with effort, "The guy was fast. When I saw his sword coming, I was not able to dodge at all. Then, I fainted... I thought my winter bear form could handle at least the power of a level two knight..."

"His sword should be at least of level two high-rank... We've underestimated this guy. I need to report this to the master," said Niake. Due to their lack of information, their plan of playing the hero and the beauty almost turned into a disaster.

...

After putting on some make up, Carleena went back to the dancing floor with the same sweet and cheerful smile on her face as usual. The only difference was that now her attitude toward Lucien was rather cold, as if what happened was all an illusion.

That relieved Lucien. He was only passing by that place. He wanted nothing from this party, and he only wanted to stay away from trouble.

When the party ended, Carleena started to send guests to their guest rooms. When Lucien put on his coat, he noticed that his butler, Leo, was gone!

Looking around, Lucien did not see Leo. When he was about to use spiritual power, Leo popped out from behind a pillar in the corner, "My lord, the party has ended?"

His wrinkled face looked a bit pale, as if he was trying his best putting up with something. And on the face, Lucien also saw fear.

"Are you alright?" Seeing that all the butlers and servants had followed their masters to the rooms upstairs, Lucien asked Leo in low voice.

"You look tired, my lord. Maybe you want to take a rest now." Leo gave Lucien the eye.

"Alright." Lucien got it right away.

When they went back to the guest room, and after they carefully checked the place, Leo said to Lucien in fervent hatred, "My lord, I saw the smuggler... in the party."

"The smuggler who killed all your family?" Lucien slightly adjusted his monocle.

Leo nodded seriously, "Yes, it was him. I remember his face all day and all night. When I was waiting for you beside the hall, I saw him with his new assistant. I was afraid that he might recognize me, so I hid behind the pillar. I saw him walking into the main hall."

"...What's his name?" asked Lucien thoughtfully.

Leo lowered his voice even more, as if he was using this way to restrain his emotion, "He's changed his name. I heard other nobles and butlers calling him... Mr. Ivanovszki"

"I thought so..." Lucien slightly nodded. Carleena's acquaintances were either swindlers or smugglers, which meant that she probably had many secrets as well. She was just playing the role of a widow whose heart was filled with vanity. And very possibly, Sergey worked for Ivanovszki.

However, Lucien was now even more confused. If Carleena knew the big smuggler, why would she kept throwing herself in his arms? For what?

Although Lucien's sword, Frost, was quite pricy, for Carleena, twenty thousand Thales was nothing. She had several manors and three major mines from the baron, not to mention the gold. Also, as the niece of the second wife of Count Witte, it was just absurd that Carleena would approach Lucien because of the sword, unless she was crazy about wealth, which was very unlikely to happen.

"No worries, my lord. I'll not break my promise, since I've signed the compact, and you've saved my life. One day, I can break his neck."

"I trust you, Leo. But you can tell me more about him." Lucien nodded. Although he felt sorry for Leo, in Schachran Empire, he could not take the risk to take revenge for Leo, since big smugglers like Ivanovszki were always under lots of protection. And if Lucien was going to take revenge for Leo, it was very likely that the north church would notice that a sorcerer had arrived in the empire.

Leo had great grief in his eyes, "When I first met Ivanovszki, he was already the most famous smuggler in the East Haven. It was said that he had a big noble and two city lords behind him. He was also connected to some ancient sorcerers, so he could sell magic items and potions. Ivanovszki's so influential that he can ignore all the nobles other than the count."

Lucien nodded. He was listening to Leo carefully.

"He has several good magic items. He always has middle-rank sorcerers or grand knights protecting him. His smuggling business accounts for at least twenty percent of the industry in the empire. When I worked for him, mostly just trading some materials in Brianna like Black Nightingale, I protected him once, and I helped him connect to the southwest black market of the empire, so I was awarded with the magic potion and awakened my Blessing." Leo continued, "After that, once he planned on robbing a village and selling all the villagers to an ancient sorcerer as his experiment material. I could not bear this... so I told his plan to the church, and he suffered a great loss from it. After that, I changed my name and everything. Although I thought I did this secretly, he still managed to know it was me who did it... Before I could send my family to a safe place, he..."

Lucien rubbed his chin, "He could escape from the north church... It sounds like Ivanovszki does have the support of a big noble..."

Knowing that Ivanovszki was protected by some middle-rank sorcerers, Lucien had decided that he should leave Ural as soon as possible.

After getting more information from Leo, Lucien did not go to sleep immediately. After Leo went back to his own room, Lucien blew off the candles and sat down in the couch. He started to build the magic model of the fourth-circle spell, Professor's Infrasound Resonance, while looking at the moonlight outside of the window.

Lucien sensed the smell of danger. He wanted to wait for the daylight.

"Remember me whenever you see the moon..." Thinking of the past, Lucien suddenly smiled.

At this time, Lucien heard someone knocking on the door.

"Who's it?" asked Lucien calmly but alertly.

"It's me, Ivanovszki. Can we talk, Mr. Peter?" the man's voice sounded friendly and relatively familiar.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 269: Ivanovszki's Plot

Lucien purposely asked in a confused tone, "Mr. Ivanovszki? It's quite late now..."

Ivanovszki's response was quite cheesy and suspicious, "I'm visiting you this late, Mr. Peter, because of the good news. I know several viscounts from Vladimir family, so I felt quite close to you the first time I saw you, Mr. Peter, not to mention how your courage and fighting skills impressed me... So I'd like to share the good news with someone I like."

All of Ivanovszki's words only reminded Lucien of a fraud. However, as powerful and influential as Ivanovszki, why would he be interested in Lucien, a nobody?

After thinking for a few seconds, Lucien decided to listen to him to see what the good news was. Getting more information was never a bad thing, since Lucien would probably be able to see through Ivanovszki's secret plot during their conversation.

Lucien used his knight instinct and sensed that there was someone else on the other side of the door with Ivanovszki, but the person was not trying to hide himself—the person should be Ivanovszki's assistant or something.

With his left hand holding Frost, Lucien opened the door casually.

Ivanovszki still dressed in his party suit, like a winter bear wearing a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. Beside him there was an old man wearing a black suit and bow tie. The old guy looked gloomy, his eyes dull, face wrinkled and cold. Holding a black suitcase, he was shorter than Ivanovszki.

Seeing that Mr. Peter opened the door himself, Ivanovszki looked a bit confused, "Mr. Peter, where's your butler? How come you do this yourself?"

"He's sick because of the storm. I asked him to take a rest." Lucien explained casually, "And this is?"

Ivanovszki pointed at the old man and grinned, "This is my assistant, Matvienko. He's talented in doing business, and he's got his own understanding of economy."

"Oh... Mr. Matvienko, may I ask for your thoughts on the production, circulation and distribution of wealth? Do you think the market is controlled by an invisible hand and follows its own rules?" asked Lucien seriously. Obviously, he did not like this old guy at all, who was not so much an economy expert as a aggressive safeguard.

Matvienko frowned, offering no answer, while Ivanovszki's smile froze on his face. After a while, he laughed out of embarrassment, "Haha, Mr. Peter, it's really hard to find a noble and a knight like you who's this profound in economy..."

"I'm just a beginner in economy. Some related knowledge is helpful for when I have my own land in the future, isn't it?" Lucien did not keep giving them a hard time. What he just said was more like a warning—dare you mess up with me!

Ivanovszki put on an impressed look, "Good idea. Young nobles like you, Mr. Peter, do have different understandings and thoughts." He also did not mention anything professional in economy.

Lucien let them in. When they sat down on the couch, Lucien poured each of them a cup of water, "So, what is it about, Mr. Ivanovszki?"

Ivanovszki's big hands were holding the porcelain cup like a toy. He smiled, "Mr. Peter, you do know that Count Witte has part of his blood from family Vladimir, right?"

"Of course. The count's mother was family Vladimir's member. She awakened the family Blessing, Frost, as a knight and a lord." Lucien replied, "But so what? Count Witte's Blessing, Withering, is still from his father's family, and Count Witte is the first one in his family who managed to become a radiant knight, not to mention all his brilliant exploits on the battlefields... His achievement has way surpassed the glory of his mother's family..." Lucien seized the chance to show that he knew the family well.

Ivanovszki's put on a meaningful smile, "Just as you said, Mr. Peter... the good news is that you will be provided with the title of a count, and the wealth of a local count."

Because of the many mines in Ural, most nobles here were way richer than nobles in other countries and areas.

"What do you mean?! What's gonna happen to Count Witte?" Lucien pretended to be shocked, "Why me?"

Ivanovszki slightly nodded to calm Lucien down, "As you know, Carleena's the niece of the second wife of Count Witte, and she's thus close to the count. According to Carleena, Nevskiy, the cardinal in Ural city, asserted that the count could only live up to another half year. No divine power can cure this, because it's the count's natural aging."

Lucien maintained the shocked look on his face.

"Because of his Blessing, Withering, the count has had a difficult time in having offsprings, and he spent most of his best years in the south, fighting against the south church. Although he married three wives in total, Count Witte only had a son, but his son died before ten," continued Ivanovszki.

"So?" Lucien asked calmly.

Ivanovszki put down the cup in his hand, "Mr. Peter, you should know the fact that the count successfully awakening his Blessing was a miracle, a miracle that was made come true by family Vladimir. The count lost his parents because of the war when he was young, and he failed to awaken his Blessing until twenty-five. Before that, his remote relatives gave him a very difficult time because they wanted to take over family Witte's land and title. It was some members from family Vladimir here who once helped him."

"I know." Lucien nodded.

"The count has revealed his plan to Carleena. He wants to have one of the male members from family Vladimir to be his stepson and give this stepson his title and wealth. To do this, the stepson must marry a lady from family Witte, who's not closely connected to the core family, leaving the rest of family Witte no hope to touch what he has. Mr. Peter, you're elegant, strong and good-looking, and you have even awakened your Blessing! You can't miss the great opportunity! The count will of course like you!"

Now Lucien understood what they were planning on. The count title and the great fortune equal to half of the wealth of the whole Ural district was beyond alluring to everyone, not to mention a greedy smuggler.

After that, Lucien asked casually, "So, Carleena's also from family Witte?"

Ivanovszki first was a bit surprised and then laughed, "Yes, several generations ago. Although it's quite remote, no one can deny. Without Carleena, we would never know what the count likes specifically. She plays an important role here. I mean... marrying a beauty and gaining the title and a great fortune... can anyone say no to this?"

Lucien now understood Sergey's true intention. Sergey was not trying to get his gold or sword, but to control him using the business. So, when both Sergey and Carleena failed, Ivanovszki came to Lucien and tempted him directly.

However, what Lucien did not understand was why the count would be dying so soon twenty or even thirty years earlier before he reached the average life span of a radiant knight. Was it because he was somehow severely injured during the war?

And Lucien was quite sure that no matter who married Carleena and got the title, the person was only going to be another piece of evidence pointing that Carleena truly deserved the name people called her by—Black Widow.

Therefore, Lucien put on a smile and said, "It's a hard decision, but I'm still saying this. Mr. Ivanovszki, I cannot agree on the plan. I won't work with you guys."

Although Lucien often craved for money, in Schachran Empire, he could not take any risks, not to mention the fact that he was not even a real family member of Vladimir, as the cardinals would test his blood.

A less greedy person was always smarter.

"What do you mean, Mr. Peter? Literally, you're saying no to a count title, half of the district's wealth, lots of mines and manors..." Ivanovszki could not believe his ears. He did not believe that anyone would reject the offer, not even the emperor in San Ivansburg!

Lucien said to Ivanovszki seriously, "I cannot give up my surname. My name is the glorious representation of my family. I believe that one day I can become a count myself under the name Vladimir!"

After that, Lucien added, "I'm proud of my name!"

Ivanovszki looked at Lucien as if he was lunatic, "I thought those kind of knights who only pursued glory had all disappeared in the empire, but you shocked me, Mr. Peter."

Then he stood up and bowed to Lucien, "Mr. Peter, good luck with your faith."

Although Ivanovszki tried his best to be respectful, Lucien felt that he was not saying what he was really thinking.

"Before the decision is made, I'll keep the secret for you." Lucien still pretended to be super righteous.

Ivanovszki put on a nice smile, "I trust you, Mr. Peter, a noble knight. Maybe we can work together in the future."

Then, he left Lucien's room with his assistant, Matvienko.

"Be careful, my lord." Leo walked out of his room after Ivanovszki and Matvienko had left, and he reminded Lucien worriedly, "He's more ruthless than one can imagine, and he does not like any latent troubles."

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Chapter 270: The Count's Invitation

Holding the fine porcelain cup, Lucien slightly nodded, "I know. People like Ivanovszki are definitely ruthless, or they wouldn't be able to survive. I wish I knew who was protecting him, so I could..."

Although Lucien's tone was gentle, his words made Leo feel cold. The person he was working for right now was a sorcerer who was beyond calm. If this young man knew more about Ivanovszki, then through a series of analysis, he would kill Ivanovszki as soon as possible.

"When I was working for Ivanovszki, in public, he only had a grand knight or a middle-rank mage protecting him, but as you said, he must still have more people. I've seen it several times. Those assassins sent by his competitors never made it into the place he lived. There was one time... a level two knight whose Blessing allowed him to hide, and thus he seriously injured Ivanovszki's grand knight. The moment when Ivanovszki was going to be killed, the assassin fell on the ground, dead. I still remember the look on his face... it was horror." Leo told Lucien what he knew altogether.

There was smile on Lucien's face, "I just sent my unseen servant to follow him, and he almost noticed it. But the servant still managed to make sure that his room was protected by some spells. It's hard for us to spy on him. If we want to kill him, we need to make him step out of those places that he knows well. We want him to follow our plan."

"My lord..." said Leo, a little hesitant, "If you give me a middle-rank magic item, I'll seize a chance and die together with Ivanovszki."

Lucien looked around and said, "Suicide attack? Not necessary yet. Go and have some rest, Leo."

Lucien's biggest advantage now was the fact that Ivanovszki did not know anything about his power as a sorcerer. No matter who Ivanovszki sent to kill Lucien, it was always going to be a mistake, which was a great chance for Lucien, since he could consume Ivanovszki's power bit by bit. Of course, if Ivanovszki was not planning on killing him, that was the best.

At the same time, Lucien also cast a secret magic circle invented by the Congress around his room. The magic circle did not block other people from spying on the person in the room, but it could

reinforce the caster's spiritual power for sensing any magic waves, so the caster could detect even the slightest amount of magic wave disturbance.

The moonlight was gentle and delicate. Lucien sat in the couch and slowly closed his eyes.

In the darkness, everything was very quiet. At this time, Lucien sensed a tiny amount of magic waves. It was only like part of the night breeze, so, if Lucien had not placed the magic circle, there was no chance that he would notice this.

The magic waves gradually settled, however, it was still there—like a mirror, watching Lucien.

Lucien, in the couch, adjusted his position from time to time, as if he had fallen into deep sleep.

Just like this, nothing ever happened throughout the whole night.

...

Ural City, Green Vine luxury hotel.

After selling most of his goods in this busy city and buying some more local ironwares, Berdychiv was quite relaxed.

He sat in the hotel's corner after having breakfast, drinking his liquor and looking at the many guests in the hotel. He and another juice head were remarking upon the guests' appearance and manner.

"Father, are you seriously drinking in the morning?" asked Yielena a bit angrily. She had accepted Igor's apology last night, and they were planning on having a tour in the city.

Berdychiv let out a belch. The strong smell of liquor was rising from his stomach. "Yielena, come on..." Berdychiv laughed, "Tomorrow we're heading back home. Just let me drink today. The more I drink, the more revitalized I am."

The caravan's next stop was the provincial capital of Kirov.

"You've been drinking for two days!" Yielena frowned, "You have to promise that you won't drink a single drop on our way home!"

Berdychiv laughed, "Yielena, you think I'm drunk? Ha, you cannot cancel my breakfast drink, lunch drink, and dinner drink from the list!"

After saying this to his daughter, Berdychiv suddenly stood up, rolling a bit back and forth, "Mr. Peter, welcome back! I thought you were gonna stay in the baroness' manor!"

The ambiguity of Berdychiv words contradicted his age.

Lucien, followed by Leo, was right now walking into the hotel. After having breakfast in the manor, Carleena, who was obviously much colder to Lucien than yesterday, sent Lucien and Leo back to Ural City, which was what Lucien wanted exactly, but he would not lower his guard.

"Morning, Mr. Peter." Yielena grinned. She always believed that Peter was a decent gentleman.

Lucien also smiled, "Good morning, Miss Yielena. You two are good again, aren't you?"

Yielena's face flushed, and although Igor did not like Lucien, he also scratched the back of his head shyly, having no idea how to answer.

Berdychiv patted on Lucien's shoulder and comforted, "You're still popular among young girls, Mr. Peter. Maybe... Maybe you're just not lady Carleena's type, you know..."

Although Lucien was a few centimeters taller with his disguise, compared to most guys in the empire, he was still small.

At this time, Igor said to Lucien, "Mr. Peter, there's one thing... I live next door to you, and last night I heard some noise in your room. You might want to go back and check your luggage, or maybe it was a mouse... I'm not sure."

Lucien quickly exchanged a look with Leo, and then said to Igor calmly with a smile, "Thank you. I'll go back and check it right now."

...

In the room, Lucien carefully checked almost everything including the secret magic marks he left, his cups and kettle, then he said to Leo confusedly, "Nothing... Maybe it was a mouse?"

"I don't think so, my Lord. This can't be just a coincidence." Leo knew what kind of person Ivanovszki was.

Lucien nodded, and he started checking around again.

Opening his suitcase, Lucien searched through his clothes, some folk music transcripts and some special souvenirs...

At this time, Lucien noticed the set of stacking dolls in the corner. When he examined the dolls with his spiritual power, he finally detected a tiny amount of vicious power in it, which made the look of the doll quite creepy.

"Curse..." Lucien murmured. He had been studying curse-related things for almost a year.

Leo also saw the dolls. He asked, "My lord, what shall we do?"

After thinking for a while, Lucien smiled, "Do as nobles do."

He activated Sun's Corona in front of his chest, and the holy light immediately covered Lucien's body.

Then Lucien opened the stacking dolls, one by one.

When he opened the fourth layer and an old grandma's face was revealed, black smoke burst out and came directly and fiercely toward Lucien!

However, the holy light blocked the smoke completely, and the smoke disappeared.

When the light was going to disappear, Lucien started to roar out of great anger, "A sorcerer tried to kill me! A sorcerer! In this empire!"

As he was shouting, Lucien asked Leo to wrap the dolls with clothes, and they directly walked towards the church nearby, leaving Berdychiv and other people feeling astonished in the hotel.

...

In a secret room in the church.

"You must know what I just said is true. My divine item just saved my life!" said Lucien to a city lord. Lucien was still furious, or say, pretended to be furious.

The cardinal was like a big bear wearing white robe. He nodded and comforted Lucien, "Yes, I know, Mr. Peter."

"Good. Then, Cardinal, please get the damned sorcerer as soon as possible! I have no idea how the bastard dared to do this to me in the empire under the close watch of the church!?" As Lucien was saying, he even quickly took out his Sun's Corona in front of the cardinal. With only two layers of seals unlocked, Sun's Corona looked like a level-five divine item.

"I understand, Mr. Peter, but we still need some time to investigate," said the Cardinal calmly.

"But I do know who did this! It was Ivanovszki! It was Carleena! They are craving for the count's wealth! That's why!"

Then Lucien told the cardinal what happened in the manor.

"But, Mr. Peter, the baroness and Mr. Ivanovszki are not doing something immoral. Most people would do exactly as what they are doing if they could get the information ahead. Nevskiy also knows this." The cardinal felt that this young noble was overreacting a little, "Of course, thank you for providing us with the information. We'll look into this."

Lucien spent half an hour in the church asserting that it was Ivanovszki who did this. After that, he gradually calmed down and left the church.

Following Lucien, Leo asked in a low voice, "My lord, why you did not mention Ivanovszki's a smuggler?"

"They won't trust me. Or they probably know this already. An influential businessman like him must have great support behind his back." Lucien slightly squinted, "I've done what I can do. Now let's see how Ivanovszki will respond."

...

As soon as they came back to the hotel, a middle-aged gentleman greeted him.

"Mr. Peter. Count Witte heard that an outstanding young man from Vladimir family has arrived in the city. Count Witte would like to invite you to his castle." The man smiled.

Lucien was a bit surprised. It looked like his plan on dealing with Ivanovszki was going to be disturbed by the count's invitation.

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Chapter 271: The Old Count

In the warm afternoon sunshine, a fine coach was heading toward the center of Noble Zone in the southwest of Ural City. Its destination was the count's castle, Dry Vine.

All the pedestrians, when seeing the coach, yielded to it respectfully, as they could easily recognize it as the count's coach.

In the coach, Lucien pretended that he was just going sightseeing, however, he was checking out the empire's map in his spirit library and he paid extra attention to the surroundings of Ural City.

The count's invitation was a surprise, and Lucien could not find any excuses instantly to turn it down. The role Lucien was playing had brought him much convenience, but also some trouble.

Also, because the invitation was out of everyone's expectation, Carleena and Ivanovszki's plan could be interrupted by this. Lucien had no idea what they would do to have things back in their control, but definitely not something good, so he had to be prepared in advance.

Lucien was sure that the invitation was not part of Carleena and Ivanovszki's plan, since before they could be certain that Lucien would work with them, there was no reason that they would want to expose Lucien in front of the count. If the count did like him, but another young lady from family Witte was designated, Carleena and Ivanovszki's effort would all be in vain. And this was one of the reasons that Lucien decided to accept the invitation.

What Lucien felt confused about was that he thought Carleena and Ivanovszki would severely control what Count Witte could see and know. Why this invitation went out of their control? How did the count send out this invitation under Carleena and Ivanovszki's close watch, especially, according to Ivanovszki's words, when the count was so sick and the most trustworthy person for the count was Carleena?

If Ivanovszki did not know how to control the count, Lucien believed that Ivanovszki should rather drop his smuggling business and go home to find a safer job. Smuggling and craving for the count's wealth was not suitable for him.

As he was checking out the map, Lucien casually asked Leo beside him about the surroundings of Ural City, especially whether there were some haunted places around. Lucien wanted to be as prepared as he could.

"Mr. Peter, the Church is around, so those haunted places only exist in the stories to frighten children, or were made up by those sorcerers living deep in the mountains. According to what I know, several mines to the west of the city are called Cursed Place or The Cave to Hell because collapses often happened and many people died there." The servant of the count, Nicolay, when hearing the conversation between Lucien and Leo, joined them and introduced.

Nicolay was a knight, and he was also a lord. However, he had been working for the count for most of his life since the war against the south Church, and he was saved by Count Witte many times. Therefore, Nicolay was willing to stick around and became the count's servant.

These kind of people were actually not that uncommon. They could often be found around big nobles, dukes, kings and emperors. Unlike those knights whose duty was to protect the nobles because they had joined the Knights, these people were willing to give up their land to stay close to and protect other nobles for various reasons:

Some had passed on the right and title to their offsprings, and by protecting bigger nobles, they could have the chance to obtain an even higher status than the family's hereditary rank of nobility; Some, like Nicolay, wished to pay his gratitude; Some were cultivated by other nobles, so they had made the promise that they would serve the nobles for an amount of years by protecting them; Others worked for nobles just because of the secret methods for improving Blessings that were passed down by inheritance in the noble families.

After hearing Nicolay's words, Lucien smiled, "Mr. Nicolay, I do know that there are haunted areas in the northwest province and they are right now under the Church's control." By providing information about the northwest territory, Lucien was trying to show the fact that he knew the family very well.

"Maybe it's true. Maybe there are some places like this around Ural City and they're under the Church's control. But we cannot know for sure." Nicolay had spent many years on the battlefield, so his way of talking could be quite straightforward.

Lucien did not mind. He kept talking to Nicolay and Leo to get to know more about the surroundings.

...

Half an hour later, the grand castle covered by dry vines was in front of Lucien.

Just as Lucien got off the coach, he saw a fancy coach coming from another direction in a hurry.

As soon as the horses stopped, a beautiful lady wearing a white wool dress got off the coach with the help of her maid hurriedly.

"Mr. Peter..."

"Lady Carleena..."

They were both surprised to see each other in front of the castle gate.

Lucien first smiled and said, "So you're here to visit the count?"

"That's right. I heard that uncle Witte just invited a guest, and I was worried that he might now follow the doctor's words and get too tired. The count needs good rest right now." Carleena also put on her bright smile again.

"No worries. I won't bother the count too much." Lucien slightly bowed to her, "After you."

"Mr. Peter, you have the best manner among Schachran Empire. I do like it." Carleena nodded to him and then went inside the castle gate.

What she said was true. Most Schachran nobles did not like following rules and manners at all. Instead, they preferred spirits and fights. So they were often called by the nobles in the south as savages.

As Lucien guessed, this invitation was out of Carleena and Ivanovszki's expectation. Lucien wondered what happened in the castle. He followed Carleena and entered the gate.

...

The bright fire in the fireplace warmed the whole space of a living room in the castle, which was not very big.

Lucien took off his coat and handed it to the servant. Then, he bowed to the old man politely in a noble manner, "It's my great pleasure to meet you, Count Witte."

The old man was sitting in the couch right next to the fireplace. Wearing black, heavy coat, the old man was still trying to wrap himself up with the coat tightly, as if he still felt very cold. His face was pale, although the figure of his face still looked more or less fortitudinous. His eyes, that used to be clear blue, now looked dim and cloudy. The black beret that the count was wearing covered his thin hair. Lucien's overall first impression of the count was that the man who used to be beyond brave and strong was now like a withering plant.

Seeing that the count, who was a level seven radiant knight, now looked this weak, great fear rose in Lucien's mind when he thought of aging and dying. Fortunately, there were many ways for prolonging one's lifespan in the world of magic. Everyone feared death. Human beings, with their very limited lifetime, always pursued ways to live longer and keep their youth.

"Mr. Peter, pleased to make your acquaintance," said the count in a weak voice and with his pale lips. "It's hard for me... to see an outstanding Vladimir family member in Ural."

After saying this, he gasped a bit and said, "This is my niece, Carleena. You two should have met each other already. This is my steward, Semenov, my good steward."

Carleena was on the count's left side and Semenov on the right. Semenov's hair was already gray, and although there were only a few wrinkles on his face, they were all quite deep, so it was hard to tell Semenov's real age.

It was said that Semenov was a grand knight, and unlike most stewards, he was a quite interesting person.

"Yes, my lord. Lady Carleena invited me to her party before, and she's really nice," said Lucien in a pretended sincere manner, and then he sat down in the couch.

Carleena did not like what Lucien said, but she also had no idea how to pick on his words. She could also curse him that every single girl he met in the future would say the same thing back to him.

The count smiled, "Yeah... Carleena's a nice girl. Actually... I've been looking for a young man from family Vladimir, and you, Peter... here you are..."

Before he finished his words, he started gasping again. He was really in a bad health condition.

Carleena got nervous all of a sudden. Her hands grabbing the count's arm became stiff, and the veins in her hands stuck out.

Lucien politely waited for the count.

The count lowered his pace of talking and said, "I'm old now... really old. I am not that firm and strong anymore... I start to like looking back. I remember... when I was young, I went to the northwest province with my mom. Are there still those many strange trees, flowers and animals in Tula forest?"

"I haven't gone back for many years as well, my lord. But I do remember almost everything in the forest... especially the red magic trees that can move and hunt like animals," answered Lucien confidently.

Carleena felt a bit more relaxed.

The rest of the conversation between the count and Lucien before lunch was all about the count's memory, and the conversation went pretty well. The count invited Lucien to have lunch with him and to stay there tonight. The caravan was going to leave tomorrow.

There were many grand knights and knights within the castle, so Lucien agreed. Things had gone sideways, and now Lucien had to see how things could go.

...

It was getting darker. In one of the many rooms in the castle, Dry Vine.

"How did the count know Peter?" Ivanovszki questioned Carleena a bit angrily.

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Chapter 272: Night Falls

Translator: _Leo_ Editor: Vermillion

Carleena responded in confusion, "what does it have to do with me? Ivanovszki, I thought the intelligence agents that worked for uncle Witte were under your control. Why is he asking to see Viscount Fyodorov after he woke up and had the breakfast?" She sounded frustrated and angry.

Viscount Fyodorov was the senior brother of Barshac and it was obvious that he had heard about the matter regarding Peter.

"I've checked the situation. It's impossible for Count Witte to meet Viscount Fyodorov just because of the intel, and none of the agents contacted Count Witte secretly. Carleena, there might be a problem with the servants and maids you selected." Ivanovszki denied the allegations and accused Carleena of selecting the wrong people.

Carleena shook her head with confidence in her eyes. "No, their parents and relatives are under my control. They won't leak any information of uncle Witte to the public without my permission. They only talked about the situation of the manor and the snow. Also, they executed all my orders. The agents are the only ones who are allowed to visit uncle Witte. They told the Knights who wanted to visit that uncle Witte needed rest, so the Knights could only send letters or oral messages to him."

No one expected the incident. Carleena and Ivanovszki were at the same position. They were trying to find excuses subconsciously so they could blame each other. No one wanted to take the responsibility.

Ivanovszki remained silent for several minutes and pushed his gold-wired glasses up slightly. "Maybe Count Witte just suddenly had this idea. Anyway, it has become a problem and we should make sure that the Count doesn't leave his legacy to Peter. We need to..." He gripped forward with his right hand and the behavior looked like he was about to break someone's neck.

"Are you crazy? This is the Dry Vine Castle, there are several Grand Knights and more than 20 Knights guarding this place! You'd be burnt at the church's stake if they caught you after!" Carleena spoke in a surprised tone, her pretty eyes were wide open, and she was staring at Ivanovszki as if he was crazy. She could not believe what Ivanovszki just suggested.

The nobles like Viscount Fyodorov that served Count Witte would take turns to guard the Dry Vine Castle with their own Knights in the district of Ural. It was a duty that the Knights had to their lords. When there was no war going on, they needed to serve the lord for two months every year. It was their chance to communicate with other nobles and show their loyalty to the lord.

Ivanovszki pulled his collar slightly, it seemed like his collar was a bit tight.

"We planned to kill Peter but we don't want anyone to notice what we're doing. The problem is, we failed to strike him by surprise. Peter realized what our plan was and reported us to the Church. The situation was bad enough and we shall do what an empire noble would do. It's the simplest method, but it'll be very effective!" He spoke in a cold tone.

"The Grand Knights, Knights, and the Priests in the castle are not a problem. We have Mr. Matvienko, which is a middle-rank sorcerer, and... that one..."

Carleena suddenly calmed down after hearing the word, it almost looked like she never got nervous. She spoke in a worried tone, "Let's just follow your plan if you already made the decision. I just think something is off here. It almost felt like those things happened for no reason."

"Don't worry, Carleena. There's only a dying old man on this floor beside the servants and maids that are already under your control. Although the old man was a Radiant Knight, he already lost his ability and his will. We just need to be careful and he won't notice anything. He didn't do anything when we killed those faithful attendants, right?"

The anger and anxiousness were no longer bothering Ivanovszki. He rubbed his lips and calmed down.

"Also, Peter probably thinks he lives in a safe environment as there are so many Grand Knights and Knights guarding this place. Our chance of assassinating him is high."

Carleena's expression changed several times, and she spoke in a calm tone, "Destroy the body after we kill him. Ask Mianka and Niake to transform into Peter and his housekeeper. They can just leave with the caravan and sneak out on the way. Make sure you send the strongest assassins to

kill Peter. I don't want anything like what Mianka did happening again. We spent way too much time on cleaning the mess."

Mianka became the laughing stock of the group after the Winter Bear Incident.

Carleena continued before Ivanovszki responded, "Although Peter tried to hide his Knight-level power with his footwork, I still determined that he was just a normal Knight after checking his heart rate, blood flow, and skin when we were dancing. Peter is a Knight that has high agility and speed. That's why he defeated Mianka with a sword. The problem is that it seems like Peter carries two enchanted long swords and one of them is at the middle-level."

With her keen sense and clear analysis, it almost felt like she was not a normal female noble who spent a lot of time on hunting.

"According to Mianka's description, the sword might be a level three or four magic item. However, a normal Knight has no way to survive a fight against a Grand Knight and a middle-rank sorcerer with just a middle-level magic item. Also, he has a level four or five divine item that will protect him from curses and spells that might kill him instantly, so the Grand Knight should be the assassin and the middle-rank sorcerer needs to make sure the Grand Knights at lower floors don't notice anything."

Ivanovszki stopped for a second and continued, "What did Peter experience at the northern continent? A man that became a Knight not so long ago has such an expensive magic long sword and a divine item? He's probably richer than me! However, they'll be mine after tonight." It sounded like he was jealous of Peter.

Carleena completely calmed down, and there was a seductive smile on her face.

"I'll take the divine item," she chuckled.

They thought that a normal knight like Peter was lucky enough to acquire two magic longswords and a level four or five divine item. He probably had a suit of magic armor at the most. Peter probably found some magic items during an exploration and he sold the items to purchase the gear.

After the discussion, Ivanovszki turned to Matvienko, who was standing on the side with hands on his back, and said, "Mr. Matvienko, please make sure that no one notices our action and prevent Peter from activating any magic item that can help him teleport away."

Ivanovszki respected Matvienko in private as the man was a third circle sorcerer that was good at curses and transformations. Matvienko could ambush and kill other level five classes when they were not prepared, including sorcerers and bishops.

Matvienko nodded with a cold expression on his face. "Sadly, Peter has a divine item with the Death Ward, or I could just kill him with my curses, just like what I did to..."

Ivanovszki smiled. "Mr. Matvienko, I trust you. Also, please make sure you don't stay too far away from me so you can continue to protect me. I'm sure there are people that want me dead."

Ivanovszki knew that his own safety was the most important part, and he was trying to imply that Carleena might be a threat to him, but it sounded like he was not concerned when he talked to Matvienko.

"For sure," Matvienko responded quickly. There was still a sexy smile on Carleena's face. It looked like she did not care.

Ivanovszki clapped his hands after he gave Matvienko the order. "Mr. Petrov, I'm counting on you for the assassination."

A deep voice came from the darkness in the corner, "yes, Mr. Ivanovszki."

Narrowing her eyes, Carleena looked at the corner, but the only thing she could see were the shadows.

"A Darkness Blessing or a Shadow Blessing?" She opened her mouth.

"Dark Blessing, level three," Ivanovszki spat out several words and did not say anything else.

The smile froze on Carleena's attractive face. A level-three Dark Blessing was at the same level as the top-level blessings like the Sun, the Shield of Truth, the Sword of Truth, the Silver Moon, the Vampire, the Devouring Beast, the Destruction Beast, the Devil Duke, and the Demon Lord. One of the nine city lords in the East Haven, Onegin the Dark Sky had the same blessing, and he could fight a level eight Knight with a normal blessing as a level seven Knight.

The power of the blessing was famous for its defensive ability, for example, with the Darkness Blessing, one would be immune to the supernatural effects that could impact his mind and body. The spells and divine spells that had a lower level than the owner of the blessing would do no damage to his body. Also, the owner of the blessing was immune to necromancy and transformations. Physical attacks that involved acid, explosion, or ice, would do absolutely no damage.

Matvienko suddenly disappeared as the night fell.

Ivanovszki sighed slightly, "God the Father bless us."

Carleena was also drawing a strange cross, which was longer in the horizontal direction and shorter in the vertical direction, in front of her chest. "God the Father bless us."

...

In the guest room of the Dry Vine Castle.

Leo felt unsettled and anxious. "Master, the invitation from Count Witte probably interrupted Ivanovszki plan. It's highly likely that Ivanovszki will try to solve the problem with a simple but effective way. Please be extra cautious after you leave the castle tomorrow.

Leo had served Ivanovszki as an assistant for about ten years and he knew the man well. However, Leo thought that Ivanovszki would attack them after they left the castle. The castle was owned by a Radiant Knight, Count Witte, and there were also many Loyal Grand Knights and Knights guarding the place.

"Leo, I understand and thank you for the information. You can go rest now."

The smile disappeared from Lucien's face after Leo fell asleep in his room. Narrowing his eyes, he knew something was about to happen as he dropped a teacup accidentally just a while ago.

It was a warning from the Host Star and it was the power of the star, also, it seemed like no one interrupted the Host Star's power.

"An enemy that is stronger than me or a mysterious spell? Will they take the risk and try to attack us tonight?" Lucien did not use the astrology as he did not want to alert the knights in the castle. He checked his psychological blind points and had several thoughts in mind.

"Anyway, I should stay alert tonight." It was a simple but effective decision that he made without thinking for too long.

...

It was dark at night and the darkness in Lucien's room was dancing like it was alive.

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Chapter 273: Slaying

The dim moonlight behind the curtain did not light up Lucien's room, but made the whole place very quiet and somehow even darker.

The darkness in the room was not evenly distributed, as if the darkness had life. But when one took a closer look at it, there was nothing in the darkness.

Lucien was lying in the bed, and his breath was long and smooth. It seemed that he had fallen into a sweet dream in his deep sleep.

"The darkness shows... He's indeed in the bed...

"His swords... two swords... about ten centimeters from his hands. He's very alert...

"Breath... heartbeat... spiritual power... all normal. Hands are covered by the blanket... hard to tell... His posture is awful... not like a noble at all...

"He's in deep sleep. Maybe the many guards in the castle made him feel safe...

"He's still wearing the amulet. The amulet can be activated very fast, but it only works facing lethal magic spells and curses. It cannot protect him from any physical or elemental attacks, nor can it hurt the attacker.

"Maybe he still has more magic items, but I should be able to get him before they actually work...

"I'm ninety-nine percent sure... I can send him to hell before he wakes up!"

After close observation, Petrov had made up his mind.

In the darkness beside Lucien's bed, a figure suddenly showed up! The figure fiercely took a step forward and the dagger shining in green light directly stabbed toward Lucien's throat!

Just now Petrov dared not to get too close in case Lucien could sense the danger with his intuition. Although Lucien had a magic sword and a quite useful divine item, Petrov was not afraid of them. In the darkness, he was totally confident with his Blessing. However, his only concern was that, if the divine item was too powerful, the magic circle set up by Matvienko for blocking the noise might collapse, and then the grand knights in the castle would notice what was going on here.

Petrov was fast, and his blade was even faster. However, as soon as his dagger cut Lucien's throat, he sensed a surge of familiar magic waves. He could not believe the first idea flashing through his mind, but it was true—it was magic!

Feeling shocked, Petrov saw Lucien's figure breaking down into pieces like a broken mirror.

The second circle spell, Mirror!

Although Darkness Blessing was immune to those lower level spells, this was only for defence. When the power was used to attack, it would still be affected by magic.

In the moonlight, the mirror broke into shining pieces, just like a beautiful dream.

"A Sorcerer?!" Petrov's heart suddenly sank, but soon he realized that the information was not accurate. In the next second, he was ready to go back into the darkness to retrieve!

However, it was already too late. He saw Lucien's real figure beside the bed, and holy light lit up in front of his chest.

Immediately, the whole room was filled with the bright, burning light.

The darkness that Petrov heavily relied on was instantly dispelled, and his figure was revealed.

The level three divine spell, Burning Radiance!

Petrov fought to bear the great pain but released no scream. In great effort, he tried his best to move away from the light, but the pain made him move way too slow.

Without hesitation, Petrov activated the magic ring on his left little finger.

However, as soon as the black smoke started to rise out of the ring, Lucien directly cast Elemental Order!

Bang!

The ring first cracked, then the power in the ring lost its balance. When the ring exploded, the power completely covered Petrov and blasted his light-brown blood everywhere.

With Lucien's outstanding spiritual power as a third circle sorcerer, when he cast Elemental Order, if his enemy did not have anything for defence, Lucien's power was enough to destroy most level four alchemical items.

Seeing that the ring just exploded, Lucien was a bit upset. His possible trophy was gone now. No wonder all the powerful sorcerers were very careful with using the ninth-circle spell, Cracking, since most enemy's magic and divine items under legendary level would be destroyed by the power, leaving one with no gain at all from the fighting.

Also, Cracking was a spell with an area of effect. If one still had his or her teammates around, it would be a great concern to the caster. Therefore, comparatively speaking, Lucien's Elemental Order was much more convenient to use.

Petrov was still writhing on the floor, trying to reach the shadow in the corner. Lucien, of course, would not leave him with any chances, so he activated Sun's Corona again. The flame summoned directly hit Petrov.

One second before, Petrov had no other choice and activated his ultimate and forbidden power, Darkness Assimilation, however, the flame put an end to all his hope.

In the flames, Petrov's figure was quickly overwhelmed. His mouth and throat were burnt into ashes instantly, thus his howling of great pain and fear was restrained in his chest. He could not believe that he had failed this fast, after all, his power was not fully revealed at all! Still, very quickly, nothing was left of him.

Petrov's dagger dropped on the floor.

When Flame Strike was cast, the divine power in the room peaked, but the power was still a bit away from destroying the invisible magic cover. As Lucien expected, the grand knights in the castle sensed no difference.

Because they estimated that the divine item Lucien had was about level four or five, in order to be careful, Matvienko also built a level five magic cover.

Seeing what just happened in Lucien's room, Matvienko was so shocked that he was distracted for a second, thus his figure showed up in the air outside of the window from Lucien's room, right beside that of Ivanovszki!

Lucien's buffering time for casting had passed, and thus he immediately looked at Matvienko in the air and locked him with spiritual power. Lucien's eyes were shining with dim light. He was ready for another round of fighting!

As soon as they started spying on him, Lucien instantly found out what they were planning.

Magic waves spread. Matvienko, who had cast Mechanized Mind and Magic Armor on himself, saw that his invisible covers were silently broken down.

For a second, Matvienko suddenly felt that Lucien was a quite nice guy. However, he quickly realized that Lucien had cast Charm Person on him, but now he felt a little dizzy.

Matvienko had no idea why the spell, Charm Person, could be this powerful. Although his spells had countered most of Lucien's spell power, for a short period of time, he still could not stay concentrated with his spiritual power.

Fortunately, Matvienko could still use his magic item. After seeing what happened just now, without any hesitation, Matvienko activated his magic boots and disappeared in the air.

The third circle spell, Short Distance Teleportation!

Matvienko had just witnessed how Lucien fought—his fast, continuous attacks never left his enemy any chances to fight back, so Matvienko instantly decided to run away.

Lucien was still in his buffering time for casting Elemental Order, thus he could not destroy Matvienko's boots. However, Lucien had many powerful magic items. Now, he calmly activated his ring, Element.

Outside of the window, a cluster of greenish yellow smog was released, and the smog in the air surrounded the building.

In the smog, several tall and thick pines quickly perished, and even the bugs hiding in the trees were not exception, as if nothing could survive in the smog.

The fifth-circle spell, Gaston's Poison Cloud!

Without any preparations for this, one could die from the smog even with a small amount of it inhaled!

Matvienko's teleportation could not make him move far enough to avoid the toxic smog. When he showed up in the air again, he was surrounded by the greenish-yellow gas.

As a sorcerer, Matvienko was alert enough to know what to do right now. He instantly held his breath and cast Air Filter Bubble.

Matvienko decided to protect him first, and then cast Dissipate Smoke, because dispelling all the smog could take some time.

However, he was greatly shocked when he saw that the filtering bubble was being dyed by the greenish-yellow smoke bit by bit.

"Damn it!" Matvienko had no idea how many middle rank magic items Lucien had. Since he knew that Air Filter Bubble could only manage to handle toxicants produced by spells under the fourth circle, he understood how dangerous the smoke was immediately.

At this time, Matvienko noticed that his skin started to fester!

He could not believe the fact that the toxic smoke could affect his body directly!

"A unique spell...?!" Matvienko's brain started to get slow. With great effort, he managed to retain his consciousness, and activate the spell enchanted in his magic robe, Gasification.

He wished to turn himself into gas for a while to temporarily get rid of the toxic smoke, at the cost of not being able to cast any spells during that time, only being able to fly.

Lucien would not let his wish come true for sure. He cast Elemental Order again, and many holes appeared in Matvienko's magic robe!

"What..." This was Matvienko's last thought before he turned into pus.

Since Lucien cast Charm Person, everything happened within just a few seconds.

At this time, a big hand formed by force field suddenly showed up in the air, trying to grab Matvienko, but it was too late.

Also, a fierce wind blew off the greenish-yellow smoke completely. Then, a man flew out of the window of the count's room. He looked furious, as if he was very mad that he failed to save Matvienko.

Lucien sensed great danger. The man's anger was like the boiling waves in a rough sea.

The man had gray hair and deep wrinkles. It was Semenov, Count Witte's steward!

"Senior rank mage?!" Lucien was shocked.

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Chapter 274: Good Actors

Translator: _Leo_ Editor: Vermillion

When the dark assassin Petrov was killed by the Flame Strike, Ivanovszki and Carleena only noticed the waves from the divine spell. They knew something went wrong but they had no idea what happened in Lucien's room.

When the short but intense magic battle between Lucien and Matvienko happened, they finally learned the "truth" as they focused in the scene mid-air.

"He's a middle-rank mage?! Damn liar!" Ivanovszki's eyes were wide open, it almost felt like he was about to break his gold-wired glasses. After the surprise, the man started cursing furiously.

Ivanovszki could understand how reluctant Petrov was before he died and how desperate Matvienko was at the moment.

Carleena was so surprised and confused that she could not close her half-opened mouth, exposing her neat teeth to the air.

"Peter isn't a knight? He's a sorcerer?! Wait, he's probably not Peter Joseph Vladimir! Liar, what a liar! All he did was telling lies!" She started cursing in her mind.

Sadly, it was too late for them to save Matvienko. The battle ended quickly and they saw Matvienko's rotten body falling at full speed.

After that, they shouted at the same time, "Mr. Nikonov!"

They addressed the man in a respectful way. It was Semenov, who was flying out of Count Witte's room, and he was a senior-rank mage with a power that was deep like the abyss.

What they did not know was that Semenov was not the Nikonov they knew.

...

The housekeeper Semenov, who was called by the surname "Mr. Nikonov", was floating outside Lucien's room, staring at Lucien through the window and curtain that were damaged by the Flame Strike and Burning Radiance.

His sight was so cold that it felt like he was staring at a dead man.

Lucien was surprised by the fact that Semenov was a senior-rank mage, however, he had successfully fought and eliminated a senior-rank mage by luck before. He was not terrified by the difference in rank like a normal mage would. Lucien had fought many life-or-death battles, so he quickly calmed down and got ready to activate the transformation robe.

It was a large castle, so Lucien had the chance to survive if he transformed into a rat and moved around. Also, if the priests, knights, and grand knights noticed what was happening in the Dry Vine Castle, they would be able to send the signal to Cardinal Nevskiy, who resided in the Ural City.

If Lucien cast the Elemental Swirl, the spell could barely do any damage to a healthy senior-rank mage, and he would put himself in a bad position.

Lucien was about to activate the transformation robe using his mind, however, he suddenly noticed he had trouble thinking, and he could barely control his spiritual power. He could not even activate the robe.

"Am... I... impacted... by... a... spell....?" Lucien was trying his best to think but it felt like his brain was acting like a rusty gear that was barely spinning.

The power of a well-prepared senior-rank mage that had not experienced an intense battle was terrifying.

Lucien finally realized how hard it was for Felipe to escape the chase of a senior-rank necromancer, feign death, counterattack, and force necromancer to waste a lot of strong spells and magic items. That was probably the reason why Felipe was the best of all of the geniuses in this generation.

However, Felipe was already at fifth circle when he encountered the senior-rank necromancer, but Lucien was two circles below that. Also, Lucien did not have a spell like Life Hiding as a final resort.

Semenov casted the sixth circle spell, Distraction, to impact Lucien's soul and mind. Although he was calm as a spellcaster, the burning rage was striking his mind. His best student and the most loyal servant were killed in front him. Semenov underestimated the target and he failed to rescue him in time.

Semenov spoke in a cold tone due to the shame and anger, "I'll turn you into a frog and torture you. You'll learn that sometimes it's better to be dead than alive!"

It almost felt like those words were pushed out of the gaps between his teeth by some chilling wind.

Semenov did not care if this bastard was from the Congress of Magic or a strong inheritor of an ancient sorcerer. The man must pay for what he did and there was a strong organization backing Semenov up.

"As long as... he doesn't... kill me... right away... I still have... a chance..."

Lucien had not given up in such a desperate situation and he was trying his best to deal with the Distraction spell, he would not let any chance slip by.

One shall never give up even though it might be his destiny.

One shall keep trying until the last breath!

Lucien's ability to think started recovering slowly due to his strong willpower and a bright light that burst out of his soul.

However, it was too late. His opponent was a senior-rank mage, and although there was a gap between every spell Semenov cast, he could still deal more damage than Lucien could heal.

Semenov was much stronger than Lucien.

Semenov's deep blue eyes looked like a calm and depressing sea when the storm was about to come. Lucien noticed that his body was being decomposed and reformed following a certain pattern.

Baleful Polymorph!

A ball of black smoke appeared beside Lucien. Leo was in caught inside it, he wanted to push Lucien away, but he was too slow.

Suddenly, the dark sky that was illuminated by the silver moonlight turned yellow, and dried tree roots that looked like dark tentacles appeared everywhere. Those strange shadows gathered together and wrapped around Semenov like a ball.

In the castle, the land with the muddy fragrance was decaying quickly, the flowers which just survived the coldness withered, and the vibrant needle-like leaves of the trees started drying out...

It was a power that was at a similar level as a senior-rank mage.

"Withered Shadow!"

"Uncle Witte!"

It was Ivanovszki and Carleena who were shouting in surprise. They thought Witte would not be a problem, but the thing that worried them the most still happened.

"A level seven radiant knight, a strong knight that survived countless intense battles, a knight that owns his unique honorable title, is he really under our control?!"

"He's getting old, his body was weakened by the serious illness, and we have Nikonov, who's a sixth circle senior mage. We placed a curse that is hard to notice and his body will be weakened even further, but his name still terrifies us."

Today, when everything was finally about to end, the things that Ivanovszki and Carleena worried about actually happened, as if it was a nightmare.

In the withered ball, a strange glow flashed upon Semenov's body, and he disappeared into the air, teleporting to the shadows on the far side. Also, an energy armor was created on the surface of his body.

A sixth circle spell, Magic Trigger!

It was a signature spell that separated the senior-rank mages from the middle-rank mages. If the spell is created in the soul, it meant the sorcerer had another life, and a chance to fight back.

The spell would be triggered under different circumstances, based on how the sorcerers set it up. The spell might be triggered when the sorcerer was about to die or when there was a strike that was too hard for him to block. When the requirement was met, the Magic Trigger would instantly cast two spells that were stored in the model, which were at a level that could not exceed half of the sorcerer's level. Also, those two spells could not be interrupted and they were perfect for life-threatening situations.

The situation was under Semenov's control after he dealt with the Withered Shadow using two 3rd circle spells: Shadow Step and Greater Mage Armor.

The withered ball turned into a human being, revealing Count Witte. He looked old and weak but he stood there with pride.

He was holding a dark greatsword using both hands, the wrinkles and weakness were still displayed on his face, however, the fierce expression on his face made him energetic, and he did not look like a normal old man at all.

"I can still kill even if I'm about to die," Count Witte raised his eyes slightly and spoke in a cold tone. He slashed forward with the greatsword. It turned into blurry shadows and went toward Semenov.

His patience finally granted him the chance!

The Baleful Polymorph was interrupted by Count Witte at the most important moment and the black smoke disappeared before it completely surrounded Lucien's body. Lucien noticed that his body returned to the normal form and the impact of the Distraction was no longer a problem.

"Move!" He glanced at Leo and jumped down the patio of the castle. A fight between the radiant knight and the senior-rank mage was about to begin, this was Lucien's best chance to escape.

No matter if the senior-rank mage who disguised himself as Semenov or Count Witte the Withered Shadow won the battle, Lucien was certain that they would kill him. He killed the sorcerer's student and the radiant knight had killed countless sorcerers in his life. Also, this was the Schachran Empire, a country that would hunt and burn sorcerers.

Lucien decided to escape the castle using the knight-level speed because the shadows in the air would catch him if he used the flying spell that was relatively slow.

Leo noticed that Ivanovszki was observing the situation in another window before he jumped. His body suddenly expanded and was quickly surrounded by a frost aura. He jumped to the window with his muscular body and a long sword in hand.

"Ivanovszki's middle-rank guards were eliminated and this is my best chance to kill him! Doing so will temporarily pause the intel web of the smuggling organization and Lucien will have an easier time escaping. Lucien saved my life and I want to repay him, also, I want to avenge my family. I shouldn't let this chance slip even if I need to risk my life for it!"

Ivanovszki was worried that he would be caught in the fight between two strong individuals and he wanted to jump to the patio just like Lucien. However, he did not expect the strike from Leo.

Although Ivanovszki was weaker than Leo, he still pursed his lips into a sneer, "It's you."

"Die!" Leo could feel that his blood was boiling as his sword was about to hit his enemy.

However, Leo saw Ivanovszki striking forward with his right fist, and the next moment his sight turned black. Leo could not handle the attack, and was sent flying in the air like a kite with a broken string.

"Grand Knight?! He's a grand knight!"

Ivanovszki's tight suit was changed into a silver full-body armor and there was a cold expression on his face. He jumped down with a greatsword in hand and started chasing after Lucien.

The infamous smuggler was a real grand knight and his bloodline was not granted by potions.

That was the reason why he survived the attacks of the assassins.

Carleena muttered after seeing the scene, "A grand knight? He's a liar too!"

"Ivanovszki, a smuggler and a grand knight that disguised himself as a knight squire. Mr. Nikonov, a senior-rank mage that disguised himself as Semenov the housekeeper. Uncle Witte, who made it look like he did not notice anything and he was just waiting for the death to come. A middle-rank mage and knight that disguised himself as a member of the Vladimir Family. An enemy of Ivanovszki that disguised himself as the housekeeper of Peter. Also, I disguised myself as a weak woman who hasn't activated her bloodline power. What an incredible stage. It shows we're all good actors..."

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Chapter 275: Entrance Gap

Lucien's room was on the third floor of the castle, more than ten meters above the ground. Even a knight would get hurt if he fell onto the ground from this high. However, casting Feather Fall was also not a good idea, since Lucien would for sure become an easy target when he slowly glided toward the floor.

Therefore, Lucien jumped out and did not cast any spells, so he fell freely for half a second, then he quickly cast Flying, using the gravity of stars to slow down his falling.

With that perfect calculation, Lucien landed on his feet safely in the garden. Although the controlling of the right time was greatly challenging, Lucien's strong spiritual power and outstanding calculation ability made the whole process simple for him.

After landing, Lucien quickly dodged the colorful light pieces falling from the sky, and directly rushed to the castle gate.

Since Leo had a magic ring enchanted with Feather Fall, Lucien thought he would be okay when he jumped down. Lucien's only concern was that Leo would become the target when he slowly fell down, therefore, Lucien chose to be the first one taking actions in order to attract all the attention. Also, Leo was not as important as Lucien in their enemies' eyes.

However, as soon as Lucien started running, his spiritual power field sensed that Leo was fiercely punched back by Ivanovszki, like a rag dool. Bang! Leo's body hit the ground hard.

The magic circle for blocking noises and magic waves set up by Nikonov had nearly reached its limit, but it was still there. The grand knights and other knights in the castle still had no idea what was happening there right now. As the fight between Witte and Nikonov was so bitter, neither of them had a chance to either reinforce the magic circle or to break it for the knights' help.

To Lucien's great surprise, the powerful punch revealed the fact that Ivanovszki was in fact a grand knight. Before that, Lucien had no clue at all about it.

Although through training, knights could hide their power by adjusting the way they walked, the strength of their muscle, heartbeat, blood circulation and so on, real knights, especially those high level ones, could easily reveal their identity by showing their vigor and imposing manner. However, despite the fact that Lucien had talked to Ivanovszki twice in person, Lucien never doubted that Ivanovszki was just a common knight who awakened his Blessing through a magic potion, and that was it.

Lucien felt lucky that he did not take any reckless actions when he was in Carleena's manor. Then, he sensed that after releasing a painful moaning, Leo quickly stood up again, while Ivanovszki also jumped down from the window and started to chase after Lucien.

Ivanovszki's bitter punch hurt Leo badly. He had pain in his body everywhere. He knew that right now even a high level squire could kill him. Fortunately, he had activated his Blessing, Giant, when he was attacked, or his head would be like a watermelon broken into pieces right now.

However, Leo's cheekbone on one side was broken, so the side of his face had sunk, and blood covered his whole face. He felt great dizzy, and his organs were severely damaged as well. He was not capable of fighting now!

This was the gap between the power of a grand knight and someone who had just awakened his Blessing. Although Leo had spent much money on those magic potions to improve his power, the gap still existed!

Compared to the great pain in his body, Leo's pain in his heart was even bitterer. His revenge now seemed to be hopeless after he realized that his enemy was a grand knight. He now saw no hope at all.

At this time, he heard Lucien's voice, "I'll attract Ivanovszki's attention to cover you. You run. We meet at the place we agreed before..."

The second circle spell, Electromagnetic Message.

Leo suddenly realized the situation, feeling greatly depressed, but he knew that it was not a good time to let himself be immersed in grief. He wanted to live... at least he still should pay Lucien back.

After sending Leo the information, Lucien kept running and soon came in front of the castle gate.

Activating Fire Weaver, a huge fireball hit the gate directly. The great explosion opened a gap in the solid iron gate. And Lucien directly ran out of the castle to the west of the city.

Ivanovszki's landing made the ground shake a bit. He was not hurt by jumping down at all. Without taking even one look at Leo, he ran out of the castle chasing after Lucien.

The ignorance depressed Leo greatly. He knew that he was not a threat to Ivanovszki at all, so Ivanovszki would not waste a second on him. However, Leo knew that he could not let the depression catch him again.

Quickly, Leo took out a tube of Storm and drank it. After the injury became under control and the potential of his body was driven, Leo activated once more his Blessing, Giant, and started to run toward the castle gate.

At this time, he tripped lightly on something on the ground. Looking down, it was Matvienko's boots. Although the color of the boots looked dim because of the fight, it was barely damaged.

"The master might need this..." Leo murmured. After quickly wrapping the boots up with his clothes, Leo used all his strength and ran out of the castle. He must leave this place before the fight between the count and Nikonov drew the attention of the grand knights in the castle!

In the room, staring at the fight in the sky, Carleena looked confused. When she saw Ivanovszki started chasing after Lucien and left the castle, she swore, "Damn you, Ivanovszki..."

A second later, she also jumped out of the window. Before she hit the ground, her body started to change and a pair of black wings grew out of her back. Also, two tiny horns grew out of her forehead, which looked quite cute. Her fair skin was now covered in a whole set of half-transparent black armor.

Carleena was a knight too! Her Blessing was Succubus!

Her black wings flapped, and Carleena landed safely. But when she was about to fly up again, in the middle of her forehead, a thin blood line appeared, and her body quickly withered like a piece of autumn leaf. Her big eyes were filled with great fear as she died in a few seconds and her dried body hit the ground.

Among all of them, the count hated her the most. He really liked and supported this niece before, and he even helped her inherit the wealth left by Baron Lotnikov. But now, she was taking advantage of the fact that he was now old and weak to benefit herself together with some other people. The count could never forgive her. Had the count not gotten some information from the projection of a powerful person, he was sure that he would eventually die under Carleena and Ivanovszki's watch.

Seizing a one-second chance, Count Witte killed his niece directly. Now, the knights and grand knights in the castle had all seen the fight, and they were supporting the count and informing the church and other nobles.

...

Casting Speed on himself, Lucien managed to keep some distance away from Ivanovszki for a while. Then, the two of them went out of Ural City over the city wall and ran northwestwards.

A while later, Lucien sensed that Ivanovszki had slightly changed his direction.

As Ivanovszki definitely knew the surroundings better, Lucien wondered if Ivanovszki was taking a shortcut to get him.

However, after a while, when Lucien was about to stop and try to kill Ivanovszki in this suburb place, he found that Ivanovszki was gone.

Lucien was surprised that Ivanovszki was not chasing after him, then he realized that Ivanovszki would never try to kill a middle-rank mage himself, not to mention how many powerful magic items and strange spells he had. Ivanovszki was not trying to take him down, but to run away!

If the count won the fight in the castle, the last thing Ivanovszki wanted would be to stay there, and as a grand knight, he could not help Nikonov, a senior-rank mage, at all. If Nikonov managed to kill the count, he would also not be blamed, since the reason why he left the castle was to chase the sorcerer.

Lucien was impressed with Ivanovszki strategy and his talent of being a great actor, since the anger and determination that Ivanovszki just showed was so real.

Shaking his head slightly, and after checking the direction, Lucien started to run toward the mine to the west of the city.

...

In the mountains, Lucien was flying low over the trees, looking for the closed mines because of the frequent collapses. After picking the most creepy mine pit, Lucien secretly sneaked in, and he started using Sun's Corona to look for an entrance gap connecting to the World of Souls.

Based on his experience, the creepier a place was, the more likely an entrance gap might show up, but Lucien was not sure. This was part of Lucien's plan. If he was going to face great danger, Lucien could enter the World of Souls to escape.

The tunnel in the mine was dark, long and crooked. Walking alone there, Lucien felt quite uncomfortable.

When he had almost reached the end of the mine, Sun's Corona informed Lucien that there was an entrance which could not be seen by eyes or sensed by spiritual power, just as Lucien expected.

Near the entrance gap, Lucien found a corner and hid. After a few minutes' rest, he heard the sound of someone's footsteps.

It was Ivanovszki!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 276: The Unexpected Encounter

Ivanovszki?!

Lucien was more than shocked. Luckily, Lucien had made himself stay concentrated when he heard the footsteps and he was always quite good at staying calm, or his Invisibility spell would have expired already because of his sudden mood swing.

Ural City was as big as Allyn, and its suburb area, surrounded by great mountains, was even broader. How could two people who were both trying to avoid each other just meet like this in the end of a mine tunnel?!

Lucien tried to calm down and restrain his idea of killing Ivanovszki, as a grand knight could sense nearby danger, including someone's intent to kill. He wondered if this was a coincidence or in fact Ivanovszki was following him all the way.

Hiding in the corner, Lucien saw that Ivanovszki stopped in front of the end of the tunnel and looked around.

Maybe it was because Ivanovszki just assumed that no one would be here. He did not use any other methods to check the surroundings. Then, after releasing a sigh, Ivanovszki looked more relaxed.

Turning around, Ivanovszki got down on one knee in front of the invisible entrance gap and started to pray with his hand crossing in front of his chest, "God the Father, may thy Kingdom come and live in us; may our filth and sin be purified; may our soul be saved..."

Praying? At this time? Lucien was confused. He totally did not expect that this great smuggler would be a loyal follower of the God of Truth.

However, soon Lucien realized that neither the North Church nor the South Church addressed the God of Truth as God the Father. Lucien also noticed that the cross that Ivanovszki was wearing looked quite different—the vertical was shorter and the horizontal was longer, like a lying down cross.

Therefore Lucien guessed that Ivanovszki was a follower of some other gods, but soon he rejected this idea. According to the book he read before, no followers of any gods, in order to avoid the influence of the Saint Truth, were using crosses as their symbol.

Which power was behind Ivanovszki? Lucien was getting more and more confused. He tried hard to stop thinking, or his spiritual power might be noticed by Ivanovszki due to his active mind.

When Ivanovszki's praying ended, holy divine power and white light surrounded him.

To Lucien's great surprise, the power was indeed that of the Saint Truth. Although the followers of different gods could all cast divine powers, the powers had their unique features and varied slightly.

The holy light went into Ivanovszki's eyes. Smiling, Ivanovszki reached out his right hand and it directly went into the entrance gap to the World of Souls.

"Thanks, God the Father... for helping me find this secret world, so I can temporarily shelter myself," Ivanovszki murmured to himself in a relaxed manner.

However, the look on Ivanovszki's face suddenly changed! Grabbing his heavy sword with his left hand, Ivanovszki fiercely hacked at the corner where Lucien was hiding in.

Lucien was greatly shocked when he saw Ivanovszki found the entrance gap. For a second, Lucien was distracted, and the grand knight instantly noticed it!

Luckily, as soon as Lucien had this sudden mood swing, he knew what was going to happen. Trying his best to calm down as soon as possible, Lucien activated the magic model in his soul.

Circles of blue light spread out surrounding Lucien like ripples.

The third circle spell, Deep Sleep! This was another new spell Lucien constructed in his soul in those couple of months he had been in the empire.

Using Spider Web should be Lucien's best choice. However, this second circle spell, although Lucien had built its magic model in his soul, still required casting reagents just like the spell Maskelyne's Star.

Although Ivanovszki was very fast, as Deep Sleep was a ranged spell, there was no chance that he could avoid it.

When Ivanovszki hacked his heavy sword at Lucien, his body was covered with a layer of white holy light. So, Lucien's blue light was directly cut off.

Some spilled blue light affected Ivanovszki slightly, but it was only for a second. Squinting a bit, Ivanovszki became sober again, and his attacks did not stop.

That was totally out of Lucien's expectation. Fortunately, he still had a plan B. Activating his spiritual power, his body was covered by a magic flame shield, using the power of the ring, Element.

When Ivanovszki's heavy sword hit the flame shield, sparkles burst out everywhere.

The flame shield shook fiercely and cracked a little, while Ivanovszki let out a painful moaning when the flame burned his skin black.

Powerful Fire Shield was not only for physical, elemental and pure power defence, but it could also reflect damage with the flames. The fifth circle spell did not show its full power because Lucien's previous enemies were all using creepy and strange necromancy, curse and soul spells.

"Damned it! How many magic items does this Peter guy have?!" Ivanovszki also found Peter. To his surprise, Peter used another fifth circle spell.

Although Ivanovszki was very pissed seeing that Peter's magic items seemed to be countless, as a grand knight, he quickly forced himself to focus on the fight again. As soon as the holy white light mitigated the pain, Ivanovszki swiftly dodged sideways to avoid being located by the sorcerer, and then used his heavy sword and hacked at Lucien again.

Again, the heavy sword hit Lucien's flame shield. The shield's structure was damaged. And the great impact brought by Ivanovszki's hacking buzzed Lucien's mind, making it hard for Lucien to focus, thus, Lucien's buffering time for casting spells became longer.

"Interference? A pure Blessing for hunting sorcerers!" As a sorcerer, Lucien was of course relatively profound. He quickly recognized what he was facing.

The Blessing, Interference, could greatly disturb a sorcerer's casting and could even dispel spells. Therefore, it was regarded as one of the most powerful Blessing for hunting sorcerers. As a Saint Knight, Ivanovszki's divine power could strengthen the Blessing even further.

Although the flame shield was almost destroyed, Lucien was still calmly analyzing Ivanovszki's movement and his way of launching attacks. Although his strength should be at least of level five, his shortcomings were speed and agility... which were below level four. Quite possibly, he was using some items to reinforce his strength. As Saint Knights having Interference Blessing always had more requirements when it came to wearing magic or divine items, in most cases, they could only wear bigger items such as armor, boots and gloves enchanted with extra magic circles, in order to counteract their own power.

Holding Amboula in his left hand, Lucien tried to concentrate his spiritual power. It seemed that his experience of fighting against the sixth-circle spell, Distraction, had somehow improved

Lucien's soul power slightly. Under Ivanovszki's fierce attacks, The recovery speed of Lucien's soul was faster than Lucien's expectation. Finally, Lucien's buffering time passed.

Ivanovszki was now only a step away from completely destroying the shield. He was confident that he could take away Peter's life with his next attack!

Suddenly, Ivanovszki sensed great danger from the sorcerer. Decisively, Ivanovszki quickly turned around and made a dive for the entrance gap to the World of Souls.

A cluster of greenish-yellow gas came to Ivanovszki. As soon as he touched a bit of it, Ivanovszki instantly felt dizzy and weak. However, he did not slow down his movement, but became even more concentrated on his target—the gap. Holy light burst out of his body, and Ivanovszki successfully jumped into the gap.

Ivanovszki felt lucky that he still had the World of Souls to hide and shelter himself, and the path was informed by God the Father. Only those ones who were favored by God the Father could get to know this path. No any other creatures could.

As soon as he entered the World of Souls, most colors faded, and only black, white and gray were left. This was a silent world, a world of no lives.

Ivanovszki still felt dizzy from the poisonous gas. Half kneeling down on the ground, he activated his Blessing to drive out the toxin from his body. Drops of pus came out, and his life force started to recover quickly.

When he finally relaxed a bit, a great dizziness hit his brain bitterly, then he felt the torturing stabbing pain in his brain like countless needles were penetrating his head. The attack was so out of Ivanovszki's expectation that his Blessing did not help him too much.

Charm Person—the special version against knights!

Seeing Lucien standing in front of him in the World of Souls, Ivanovszki's eyes opened wide.

"How come?!" Ivanovszki could not move because of the great dizziness. Lucien's sword directly hacked at the crack on his armor, left by the corrosive gas.

No sound was made. No obvious damage was left from the hacking. But Ivanovszki felt his thinking and body started to become slow—like slow motion.

It was because of Lucien's sword, Frost. The sword could slow down his enemy's movement.

After hacking at Ivanovszki's armor twice, Lucien took a few strides backwards. Pointing at Ivanovszki's helmet, which had been partially corroded from the gas, Lucien cast Elemental Order and broke the helmet down.

As soon as Ivanovszki's helmet was gone, Lucien activated Fire Weaver's Bracelet. A head-sized fire ball flew right toward Ivanovszki's head.

Ivanovszki was too slow. He could not do anything at this point.

After the silent explosion, Ivanovszki's head was covered with lots of wounds, and his blood, which now looked black, white and gray, was everywhere.

However, as a grand knight, Ivanovszki did not die yet. Instead, he got rid of the negative effect left by the sword. Now, he could move faster.

The only problem was that Ivanovszki's brain was now a complete mess, thus it was hard for him to make any correct decisions. What he knew was to run around to avoid being an easy target.

Unfortunately, another fire ball, a much bigger one, hit his head again.

A small mushroom cloud rose.

The serious injury together with the toxin that remained in his body finally killed Ivanovszki. Staggering and stumbling, his body hit the ground hard.

The level three Saint Knight, Ivanovszki, died.

Lucien did not lower his guard. Decisively, he hacked Ivanovszki's head off. Then, he finally felt a bit more relaxed.

Lucien entered the World of Souls for two reasons: to kill Ivanovszki, and to avoid the toxic gas himself.

Casting Gaston's Poison Cloud in a narrow place could be very dangerous to himself. This was why Lucien did not use it at the very beginning.

"This is... the projection of Dry Vine castle?!"

Now, Lucien finally had the chance to look around. This place looked exactly like the count's castle, spacious and quiet, but the only difference was that it did not have colors other than black, white and gray.

Suddenly, Lucien heard that someone chuckled! In the World of Souls!

Looking up, he saw a young man sitting in a throne above, holding a glass of wine in his hand.

The silver-haired young man had a beautiful face that Lucien was quite familiar with. He was wearing red shirt and black coat with high collar.

He raised the glass slightly and said, "Welcome."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 277: Rhine's Request

"Mr... Mr. Rhine?! Why are you here?!" Lucien was more than surprised. Although he was still alert, it was still a big relief to Lucien.

It was Rhine who was sitting in the throne up there, raising his glass to greet to Lucien. Just like when he was in Aalto, Rhine still looked very relaxed and casual, as if he was here just waiting for Lucien.

The fancy gold throne in this glorious castle built by Count Witte himself to honor his great achievement in the countless battles now looked boring in this world of black and white. When facing death, all those valuable things including feelings, glory, loyalty, treasure and cuisines had lost their meaning. In the world of death, everything was the same meaningless.

However, Rhine was the only colorful existence in this space. Silver, red and black... he was so out of tune here, a living man in the world of death. He lit up the space, but also made this space seem a bit absurd and so unreal.

"Why am I here?" Rhine swirled the wine a little and grinned, "I'm here for you, Lucien."

"Come on, Mr. Rhine..." the corner of Lucien's lips twitched a bit. Rhine still liked playing jokes, which made him feel a little more relaxed.

Lucien did not believe Rhine's joke. After all, they had not met each other for a long time. Even prophesy could not be this accurate.

Rhine shook his head and put down the glass. When he slowly stood up, Lucien saw the pair of huge bat wings behind his back. The wings were so huge that the whole castle was filled with them, and the dim light on the wings rippled like water.

"Vampire... Legendary?" After seeing that, Lucien finally became certain that Rhine was not a human being. Although he had much of this thought when he met Rhine's grandson, Viscount Carendia, now his guess was finally proved right.

Rhine slowly walked down the stairs and smiled, "I am not joking. Lucien, I am waiting for you. I even cast my projection into Count Witte's dream."

Although this Rhine in front of Lucien was acting in a quite casual way, Lucien suddenly had this weird feeling that Rhine was using all his power to maintain his own existence. Maybe this Rhine was not real. It could be a projection!

"I see. What can I do for you, Mr. Rhine? You also know the World of Souls?" Lucien became more serious.

Rhine nodded, "I was sent by the Dark Council to Aalto for a task, but later I found the real seal of the Master of Argent. Because the seal was part of a very important story that had created much of a stir before Saint Calendar, and the secret of the World of Souls, I changed my plan and chose to work with my enemies."

"Sard... The grand cardinal?" Lucien murmured thoughtfully. Across Aalto, the grand cardinal seemed to be the only one who was qualified to be Rhine's enemy and to work with him. The other two legendary-level people were all in the north fortress—one was God's Glory, Bellia, the leader of Sword Brothers, Natasha's teacher, and the other was Snake the Chaos, Milton, who had a very close relationship with Violet family. To Lucien, it was just absurd and creepy thinking of the fact that a Saint Cardinal would work with the ancestor of a vampire...

Rhine's smile was as charming as before, "Brilliant. Then, our goal was basically fulfilled. But when I was exploring the Word of Souls, I ran into some... some accidents, and I got trapped somewhere here, like Maskelyne, who left you with the amulet."

He took a glance at Lucien's chest as he was speaking.

"How do you know...?" Lucien burst out a question. However, he instantly realized that Rhine was watching him all the time before he entered this world. It was not hard for Rhine to know that Lucien had found Sun's Corona left by Maskelyne.

When they were now standing face to face, feeling the existence of Sun's Corona should be even easier for this legendary level vampire. Maybe Rhine also knew where Maskelyne was in the World of Souls...

Thinking of this, Lucien hurriedly asked, "Mr. Rhine, but you look different, as if you and Mr. Maskelyne are both trapped here? What's the secret of this place?"

Lucien had been bothered by this question for days and nights, especially after he found that Maskelyne might have something to do with the establishment of Saint Truth. Finally, Lucien had someone in front of him that could probably answer this question!

Rhine shrugged a bit, "It's a long story. I am always cautious, so before I entered this world, I was quite prepared. Also, because I can borrow someone's power, even trapped as I am right now, I can still cast my projection. Unfortunately, this projection does not have much power. To communicate with the material world, I can only pick those lives that are close to death to cast my projection in their dreams. In fact, what Count Witte has encountered so far is related to something in this world, so I have been watching him for a long time. From Mianka, the Transfiguration sorcerer's dream, I got to know that you were going there."

Lucien nodded seriously. He had no idea how complicated everything was behind the story on the surface.

"Because you've known the existence of the World of Souls; because we're, haha, quite close friends; because you're the weakest one among all of us who know this world, and thus the safest one; because I cannot cast my projection into your dream... I had this plan and decided to use Count Witte to lead you into the World of Souls again to talk to you." Rhine grinned.

"But Mr. Rhine, what does Count Witte's business have to do with the World of Souls? Is this place related to the gods? You want me to save you, right? But before I become a legendary archmage, I'm afraid I am not capable of digging into this world..." Lucien asked a lot of questions. He was shocked and also lost.

Rhine nodded, and this serious look on his face was rare, "I don't know for sure what the ultimate secret of this world is. In my mind, according to the information that I have, this place is indeed related to gods and the true immortal. Unfortunately, I haven't met Maskelyne or his friends yet, so I cannot answer your questions, Lucien. Maybe you'll find your own answer when you explore this world more yourself."

After pausing a bit, Rhine continued, "As for Count Witte, someone who was very close to the secret of gods like Maskelyne sent his people to get the count's wealth. I don't know why he is doing this. After all, the wealth should be meaningless to him."

Lucien nodded seriously and said, "Then, how can I help you, Rhine?"

"Two stages," said Rhine. "First, when you become a senior-rank mage, go to several places, quite dangerous I must confess, and activate the things I left there. Also, find a person for me. If everything goes well, I should be able to leave this place without stage two; If stage one fails, then we'll wait until you become a legendary archmage, or a grand arcanist, which would be the best, to save me, like what Maskelyne asked."

Lucien was a bit surprised with how well-planned Rhine was. Then, he said to Rhine seriously, "Mr. Rhine, you've helped me many times, and I'll always keep this in mind. If I can become a senior-rank mage, of course I'll try my best to help you. But as for reaching legendary level... I'm not sure if I am that capable right now..."

"I like your personality, Lucien." Rhine smiled. "We both know that this thing is dangerous, and I am only asking for your help, not forcing you to do this by making you vow or promise anything. It's always up to you. Also, I won't make you help me for nothing. When you become a senior-rank mage, go to the place where I store my treasures, and take three items that you like the most. If you can save me or become a legendary archmage, you can go to the bottom floor and pick one of my most valuable items out of my collection. Don't say no, Lucien. The more powerful you are, the bigger chance I have of being rescued."

Lucien nodded slightly, "I will do it for you, and also for me. As an arcanist, after knowing such a big secret, I cannot stop myself from exploring further."

What Lucien did not mention was that his fear toward aging was also part of the reason.

Also, as sophisticated as Rhine, Lucien did not believe that he was Rhine's only hope.

"Lucien, before you reach the legendary level, do not tell this to other people and ask for their help, no matter if he or she is a legendary knight from Holm, or a grand arcanist, or a legendary archmage. What's most likely to happen when you tell such a big secret to someone powerful like them is that they'll kill you to keep the secret."

Lucien nodded with great caution and in a very serious way. This might be the biggest secret of the world. Once the secret was revealed, the world was going to face a horrible storm.

After staying silent for a few seconds, Lucien asked, "Mr. Rhine, can you tell me more about this world?"

"Knowing too much all at once might not be a good thing, Lucien. When you are qualified to know more, I'll cast my projection in your dream to tell you." Rhine put on the charming smile again.

When Lucien just found that what Rhine said was a bit contradictory to his previous words, Rhine said to him, "Right now, let me give you some pay in advance."

He took a step closer to Lucien and a great power burst out from his body. Lucien could not move at all. Four sharp fangs grew out of Rhine's well aligned teeth.

It was not horrible or scary, but beautiful in an unique way.

"Mr. Rhine?" Lucien did not panic, since he knew that Rhine had no reason to kill him after this long conversation.

Rhine's voice was gentle, "Relax, this isn't the Embrace." Then, he lowered his head and bit on Lucien's neck.

Lucien's neck felt some pricking pain, and he felt dizzy. Then his blood started to boil, and the heat became some kind of power, running toward Lucien's soul.

His body quickly became very weak, while his soul was strengthened at an even faster speed!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 278: Improvement

While the power in Lucien's blood was profoundly nurturing Lucien's soul, his skin started to get pale and dry, like an old mummy buried in a tomb for many years, or a dying poplar tree struggling in the desert.

Lucien's legs were trembling, his muscles became slack, and his heartbeat slowed down. However, his refreshed soul rose in the air and looked down at his withered body.

The creepy feeling came to Lucien so suddenly that it made him feel he was in the world of meditation.

When Lucien thought he was going to die when his Blessing power had been drained by the growth of his soul, some strange power penetrated into his body from Rhine's sharp teeth, and the great improvement in Lucien's soul immediately stopped. The remaining slight amount of Blessing power was stimulated by the strange power and thus started to rapidly recover in Lucien's veins.

The paleness of Lucien's skin gradually vanished, and his skin began to look tight and healthy again. There was an explosive power in his muscles, and although his heartbeat was still slow, it was steady and solid. As for Lucien's brain, now it worked even faster.

Rhine's let go of Lucien's neck, leaving a slight amount of numbing pain.

Rhine's body now looked a bit transparent, and there was tiredness in his silver-colored eyes, but his smile was still bright and elegant, "A distinguished gentleman is never stingy to pay."

Now Lucien could move his body again. After checking himself, he was surprised, "My soul... its power has reached the level equal to that of a fourth-circle sorcerer. My physical strength has reached the level of a level two knight... Are you alright, Mr. Rhine?"

Seeing that Rhine stumbled a bit and his huge wings started to shrink, Lucien hurriedly asked.

Rhine smiled, "There are many magic rites that can help people strengthen their soul and spiritual power. And ancient sorcerers just love doing this. But there are two problems: one is that very few sorcerers could afford these rites, and comparatively speaking, the cost of magic potions is much smaller. Therefore, sorcerers who really need these rites are those ones who either have a hard time improving themselves or must achieve a higher goal within a short period of time."

Knowing what Lucien was thinking, Rhine explained further, "The second problem is that these rites can leave side-effects, which are mostly from the materials consumed and used in the rites. People can also meet further obstacles because of their lack of understanding of magic. If the side-effects could not be eliminated soon, a sorcerer would need to rely more and more on similar magic rites, which might lead to one's twisted disposition. But you, Lucien, you have neither of the problems, because this is my pay for you in advance. What this rite just consumed was my Original Blood, and what nurtured your soul was your own Blessing power, so there is no side effects. Also, since your Blessing is Moonlight, it does not conflict with the power of a vampire."

Lucien listened to Rhine's words carefully and nodded.

"Although your physical strength has also been improved, since the further development of a knight depends on great willpower, unless you want to give up arcana and focus on becoming a knight, there's no way that you could become a grand knight. Of course, you can also do as what some of the sorcerers do to get strong but creepy physical body and longer lifespan... You know, this was why they started using human beings to develop different Blessings. For you, the winner of Holm Crown prize, magic and arcana knowledge should not be a problem at all."

Lucien was finally relieved. After a couple of weeks, when Lucien could handle the newly strengthened spiritual power better, he could try to hit the target of becoming a fourth circle sorcerer, which was two years earlier than expected.

"Mr. Rhine, when I become a senior-rank mage, I'll go and activate the devices you left. But, where are they?" Lucien asked.

Rhine pointed at Lucien's neck and said, "I left a mark on your neck, so I can cast my projection into your dream through it and talk to you. Of course, only under your permission. Also, you can reach me through the mark backwards as well."

Lucien quickly checked his neck using his spiritual power. Like Rhine said, there was an unnoticeable, crescent-shaped mark there, like a birthmark.

"I can tell you really don't want me to know too many details right now, Mr. Rhine." Lucien grinned.

"If you are really interested in knowing more, go to the Congress's Arcana Library and find those books about the history of the church. Read them carefully, and maybe you can find something interesting. The most shocking secret can be hidden in the most ordinary things." Rhine smiled. Then he put his right hand on his chest and excused himself, "After the rite, I'm too tired to maintain my projection. Now, I must go."

As soon as he finished the last sentence, Rhine's body turned into countless black bats, flying everywhere in the space. Then, they all disappeared.

The World of Souls went back to being the colorless and silent world again.

"It was just like pigeons flying up on the square, but they were bats." Lucien smiled and murmured, but no voice could be heard.

After looking around the hall, Lucien looked at Ivanovszki's body. He was a tough enemy, and his Blessing was indeed a big trouble to sorcerers. Were it not for Lucien's many powerful magic items and the fact that they were of the same level, Lucien would be the one who needed to run for his life.

Lucien got really lucky when Ivanovszki lowered his guard after he entered the World of Souls. After all, it was not an easy thing to kill a Saint Knight who was fast and agile.

Ivanovszki's whole set of armor had been completely damaged, so Lucien could only pick some pieces. Maybe they could be used as alchemical materials in the future.

Ivanovszki did not have any rings, necklaces, amulets or belts, because of his special Blessing. He only had a heavy sword and a pair of silver-gray gloves:

"A divine heavy sword built for cleansing sorcerers—Cleanser: level three high rank heavy sword (requires both hands). Before senior-rank, user's magic defence can be improved by one level. Every time when the target is hit, the physical attack is doubled by the holy power attached."

"One can only rely on power!—Ogre Glove: level five middle rank. User's power can be improved to the level of an ogre leader, which is equal to that of a level five grand knight."

Although both of the items were more or less damaged by the toxic gas, Lucien was confident that he could fix them.

Putting the two items in his magic pouch, he decided to give Leo the sword and keep the gloves to himself.

Lucien also searched Ivanovszki's clothes and tried to see whether there was more that he could find about Ivanovszki, but the effort was in vain. Ivanovszki was very careful. Except for a small money bag, Lucien found nothing.

After dealing with the body, Lucien stared at the black-and-white castle hall and his mind started wandering—who was the person behind Ivanovszki? Did the person know anything about this world? Were any other wise creatures here? ... What were the secrets of gods? What was the immortal side of the world? A world whose physics and chemistry were so similar to what Lucien had learned on Earth...

...

In the material world, Dry Vine Castle.

"Cardinal Nevskiy, sorry for troubling you and the night watchers..." said Count Witte, brimming with energy and vitality, "Please get Nikonov."

Having lots of strange magic items and spells, Nikonov managed to escape when Count Witte was distracted with killing Carleena.

Since Nikonov could tell that Count Witte was only overusing his body to get back to the peak time of his power temporarily, if he could make this fight last longer, quite possibly, he would be able to kill the count. However, the church had received the message at that time, so he had to withdraw immediately.

Wearing a red robe, the cardinal looked upright and kind. His blue eyes sincerely looked at the count and said, "I'm very sorry for my mistake, Count Witte. I did not find what was hiding behind your disease... the curse."

"Now that they dare do so, they must be very confident with hiding the curse. It's not your fault, Cardinal." The count smiled, and then he switched the topic, "By the way, Cardinal, I've sent my will about my heritage to His Majesty using my own secret way safely. I'm His Majesty's knight, and I believe that there is no better way than let His Majesty select my inheritor."

Nevskiy nodded and smiled, "Proper decision, Count Witte. His Majesty must know your will and select the best inheritor for you. I'm sure the selected one will be as outstanding as you. Well, I gotta go back to the church now."

"Walk Cardinal Nevskiy out," said the count to a knight standing beside him.

Watching Cardinal Nevskiy walking out of the hall, the count suddenly took a few steps backwards from the great sense of tiredness. At the same time, a sneer appeared on his face.

When the red-robed cardinal left the castle with several pastors and bishops, in the light of dawn, Nevskiy looked up and started to cross in front of his chest with his right hand.

The vertical was shorter and the horizontal was longer.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 279: The Red Robe

In the World of Souls, Lucien stopped the many thoughts in his mind and was about to find a room in the projection of the castle to take a rest. He planned to meet Leo later at the place they previously agreed, when this whole thing settled down.

According to Lucien's estimation, this would take three to four days. Leo and he had agreed on meeting each other a week later, so he had plenty of time. He could use this time learning how to control his newly-grown spiritual power.

Lucien felt lucky for not meeting any undead creatures here. The deeper one went, the more dangerous this space was. Lucien was only a middle-rank mage right now, and he knew his own limit.

When Lucien was going to step on the stairs, the castle started shaking fiercely, like a boat in the ocean meeting a great storm.

Then, the castle was torn into countless pieces of shadow. A second later, the shadow all disappeared.

This whole thing happened too fast. Lucien did not manage to cast any spells to protect himself. All of a sudden, he was exposed to the wild, and he could feel the sense of death from this world.

He was confused.

At this time, the white tear-shaped mark on Lucien's left hand refreshed him like a breeze. The breeze comforted Lucien greatly in the dreadful surroundings.

Lucien's was cheered up, feeling lucky for having the young girl's blessing wish. At the same time, he looked around and realized that he was on the west side of the mine of Ural. He silently murmured to himself, "This should be the real reflection of the material world..."

According to Lucien's knowledge of the World of Souls, unintelligent things in the material world, like a building, could be mistakenly reflected there. For example, a building in the west of a city could appear in the north in this creepy world. However, the mistake usually would not go beyond a certain range, say, within a city or a village. Still, the fact that Lucien entered the gap entrance in the mine but directly arrived at Dry Vine castle was out of his expectation. After all, they were quite far from each other.

Now, after witnessing what just happened to the castle, Lucien realized that it was Rhine's power that dragged the projection of the castle there. After Rhine left, the world recovered itself.

Actually, it was also a good thing. Lucien did not have to worry that the others might have the evidence that he killed Ivanovszki.

"But wait!!"

An idea suddenly struck Lucien and he immediately ran toward the gap exit close to him.

If Ivanovszki knew the existence of the World of Souls and the entrance, what about those who worked for or cooperated with him, say, the senior-rank mage, Nikonov? Did he know how to get into this world? If Nikonov also chose to hide in the World of Souls and saw the evidence of the fight between Lucien and Ivanovszki, he would definitely know that their enemy was also here! The secret of this world could have been revealed!

To all the people on Ivanovszki and Nikonov's side, and to the person pulling the strings behind them, the fact that someone else knew the existence of the World of Souls could be even more threatening than the fact that their plan toward the count had failed. If they found out about this, they would spare no effort on killing Lucien by searching around the entrance very carefully, and probably setting up some sensing traps.

If Lucien wanted to find another exit, he would need to go deeper in the World of Souls. And, very possibly, he would meet some horrible undead creatures!

Therefore, Lucien must take the risk and eliminate all the evidence at the bottom of the mine, and then find another place to hide.

Before going back, Lucien carefully sensed the other side of the gap with his Sun's Corona. Making sure that there was no one around there, Lucien activated Powerful Fire Shield, which was his last chance of using this spell today, and came back to the bottom of the mine again through the heavy "curtains" in the gap.

There was no wind here, so the toxic cloud was still around. Rocks, bugs and mice were being corroded.

After casting Dissipate Smoke easily using his stronger spiritual power for a few times, there was finally no toxic gas in the air. Then, Lucien started to deal with the bodies of the dead bugs and mice, as well as the damaged stones, making sure that no one could tell that once there was a bitter fight here, in a very organized way.

After less than ten minutes, Lucien's work was almost done. If one did not check around carefully, it would be very hard to notice. And as time went by, there was no way that one could tell any evidences here, except if he or she directly used the ninth-circle spell, Retrospective Sight.

After carefully checking around again, Lucien cast Invisibility and was ready to leave the place.

However, when he just took a few steps, all of a sudden, Lucien sensed that Nikonov had arrived there, as expected!

Maybe it was because Nikonov did not expect anyone to be there, or he was too confident, but Lucien was lucky to find it out in time, and thus had enough time to hide.

Lucien quickly restrained his spiritual power field and looked around. He knew that he could not hide in a corner like he did the last time. Nikonov was a senior-rank mage!

A senior-rank mage's spiritual power field was solid and very powerful, which could sense every single creature in the space. In the narrow pit, only the fourth-circle spell, Greater Invisibility, could hide the caster properly.

Therefore, decisively, Lucien entered the World of Souls again.

...

Black, white and gray. The bushes and trees were like concrete. Lucien ran fast on the open field, with dim shadows following him. His destination was the plain, because he had a greater chance to meet undead creatures down there.

This time, Lucien did not avoid the undead creatures, but tried to find them on purpose. He used the crystal ball and Maskelyne's Star at the same time. When the light balls and the stars hit each other and burst out shining pieces, Lucien's luck was improved.

Lucien did not believe in fate. This time he wanted to take the initiative and try his best to survive here! Even if he was doomed to die here, Lucien still wanted to fight for himself till the last second.

In this chaotic world, Lucien arrived at the plains in a very short time. There, he saw groups of ghouls. The way they looked—their rotten flesh and hanging pieces of skin—, in Lucien's eyes, was quite familiar.

And this time, Lucien felt lucky that he found the ghouls.

Smelling the air, the ghouls found Lucien—a live creature! Immediately, they became agitated and crazy. They were coming for Lucien!

At this time, Lucien silently cast a spell, and his smell suddenly changed. His body was shrouded by a dense smell of death, and his flesh started rotting. Soon, Lucien changed himself into a disgusting ghoul!

The unique second-circle spell from the Congress, the Undead Transformation!

The spell was invented based on two ancient spells: Death Cover and Undead Disguise.

The brainless ghouls felt very confused. After looking around, they accepted the fact that, all of a sudden, they had got a new friend.

The leader of the ghouls released a silent howling, asking Lucien to join the line.

Soon after Lucien joined this group of ghouls and wandered around, he saw a figure flying in the gray sky. The man was wearing a black magic robe. He was Nikonov.

Apparently, Nikonov was not interested in the ghouls at all. He did not even take an extra look at them, not to mention using his spiritual power to scan them carefully.

Lucien was quite nervous when he was walking among the real ghouls. After making sure that Nikonov had really left, he released a long sigh in his mind.

It seemed that Nikonov never expected his enemy to be here at all.

Just in case, Lucien kept wandering with the ghouls for a while. A little later, a figure wearing a black loose robe drawn with lots of complicated patterns flew across the sky. The aura that the figure had was one of absolute death!

The figure also directly ignored the ghouls, that could be found everywhere in this world.

Based on the direction, Lucien wondered if this figure was chasing Nikonov. He was not sure whether the figure was an intelligent undead creature or not.

After a while, Lucien started to get bored. When he was just about to leave and find the exit gap, he saw another figure flying across the sky again.

This time, Lucien was greatly shocked, because the figure was wearing the robe that was only meant for the cardinals!

Although Lucien could not tell the real color of the robe, he was completely sure that the style and shape was exactly the same!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 280: Lucien's Finding

Lucien stared at the sky like a real ghoul, and he murmured to himself in his mind out of confusion, "Is the red-robed cardinal from the North or the South Church? Why is he here? Is he chasing after Nikonov?"

The main divergence between the North and the South Church was their different understandings of some doctrines and prayers. The North Church especially doubted the status of the pope as "the Speaker of God on the Land of Truth". Therefore, after the secession, the North Church referred to the pope as pontiff, and a pontiff should not enjoy the lofty status of being respected as the spokesperson of God, but only a leader of the grand cardinals. Through the grand cardinals, a pontiff could lead the church. And that was it.

Therefore, in order to prove their own legitimacy, the hierarchy of the two churches still followed the tradition: the grand cardinals, then red-robed cardinals, then bishops and then pastors. Furthermore, the religious clothes they wore and their symbol—the cross—were basically the same.

As soon as Lucien had these questions in his mind, he mocked himself silently, "Come on, Lucien, are you muddled from the fight? The cardinal came in through the gap at the bottom of the mine, so he must be from the north!"

At the same time, Lucien also realized who that person was, since there was only one single cardinal who had this power and might know about the existence of this world—the level seven red-robed cardinal, Nevskiy...

One might have this thought that the person could also be some red-robed cardinal from the south who had secretly arrived in Ural because of some important task. However, it would be almost impossible to see a like that cardinal just carelessly wearing his own cardinal robe and flying around, considering how much the North and the South Church hated each other.

Then, Lucien's mind was filled with many new thoughts. He wondered how the cardinal knew about the existence of this world—did he learn this a long time ago? Or did he find the place when he was chasing after Nikonov? Lucien hoped the answer was the latter, but if it was the former, the cardinal's relationship with Nikonov could be quite complicated. After all, the secret of the World of Souls was not as easy to get as cabbages sold on the market.

Also, Lucien wanted to know what kind of undead creature was that thing which just flew across the sky some time ago.

The secret of the World of Souls was like its own existence, as both of them were covered in a thick cluster of fog.

Lucien decided to leave the place later, because the cardinal might come back at any time, and he might have left some complicated traps around the exit to make sure that no one was following him. If Lucien hurriedly left this place, he would put himself under great risk. Also, there might be more senior-rank people coming.

Patience was always a good thing in most cases.

Waving his arms, Lucien wandered on the wild land aimlessly just like the many ghouls. Pretending that he was seeking dead bodies, Lucien was waiting for the cardinal to come back.

At the same time, Lucien was reading the books about the history of the Church that he had collected so far, trying to find what happened before and after the secession.

Facing the secession, both the South Church and the North Church were trying to glorify themselves and bring shame on the other by destroying all the history records that were not on their side. Lucien was slightly amused by the fact that both sides had totally different comments on the same thing or the same person. For example, according to the South Church, the pope Gregory I

was merciful and devout, while the first pontiff Ivan, was pictured corrupted and greedy as a big liar.

However, according to the North Church, Ivan, the first pontiff, was the one completely devout to the God. In order to prevent the world from being deceived by the pope, Ivan bravely stood out and chose to fight. Meanwhile, they denounced Gregory I, the pope who led the Saint Truth to the period of great prosperity, as the primary defiler, who kept stealing the glory of God, and should be purified first of all.

Although the Congress of Magic collected and saved the copy of lots of history records from that time and tried to stay neutral when understanding the history, there was nothing special or really valuable in the plain records, except the scandals of some important people from the church.

Part of the book Lucien was reading recorded the grand opening of the Highest Theology Conference, "...On that day, God stared at the Holy City. The four Saints—Ivan, Aleksey, Uriel, and Felix—and the seven Saint Cardinals including Sotte, Alester, and Siricius, stood in the holy light and denounced Gregory as the avatar of the Lord of Hell..."

The Saint was a holy title in the Saint Truth, following the Speaker of God, and the Saints were regarded as the archangels sent by God to the mundane. Although the title did not necessarily represent one's power, they were closely connected together. Pastors or cardinals could upgrade more easily under this title. Therefore, in most cases, they were the most powerful ones in the Church, following right after the Pope.

When reading this record, Lucien frowned. "Mr. Rhine said I could find something interesting, but I've found nothing here. There were some interesting anecdotes, but they're not what I'm looking for..."

Having nothing else safe to do, Lucien continued reading the books.

After a while, the red-robed cardinal flew back through the sky. Ignoring the ghouls on the ground, he directly left here through the gap. However, neither Nikonov nor the senior-rank creature showed up. The world then became dull and dreadful again.

When reading a book called The Saint Ivan, Lucien saw the cardinal flying across the sky. He wondered what happened, and maybe it was time for him to leave the place now.

Lucien had to leave this place, to avoid meeting other grand cardinals in case the cardinal decided to bring them to this place. Meanwhile, he also did not want to rush before making sure the red-robed cardinal had really left the place. The proper timing was very important here.

When Lucien closed the book, The Saint Ivan, he took a glance at the sentence on one of the pages, "... so the Saint Ivan accepted the command and headed toward the land under Wilfred's control. They needed to purify this extremely vicious and horrible sorcerer..."

A strange idea struck Lucien's mind suddenly, like a flash of lightning.

"Wilfred... the Great Master of Paleness... Wasn't he the legendary necromancer who once worked with Maskelyne and his partners?"

Lucien got this information from Hunt's notebook. Meanwhile, Lucien also saw this name, Wilfred, many times in other books that he had read. Unlike Maskelyne, Viken and the other three legendary archmages who got lost or were trapped in the World of Souls in the end, Wilfred died in the encirclement of the several grand cardinals.

Maybe due to some reasons, Wilfred did not manage to join the team exploring the deep secret of the World of Souls... That was Lucien's guess. At the same time, he quickly searched the Church's record of the important encirclement.

To his surprise, which also concerned Lucien a bit, the search results were mostly from the North Church and the Congress, while the South Church chose to be very brief on this historical event, without even mentioning the leader, the Saint Ivan.

"The six grand cardinals—Ivan, Aleksey, Nikon, Uriel, Geno, Felix—launched a surprise attack on Wilfred's Demiplanes Magic Tower. In this bitter fight, the six grand cardinals killed the necromancer and destroyed his life box... Nikon was killed by Wilfred."

Lucien repeated the names in his mind, and he felt that the tip of the horrible secret had been revealed...

Nikon was killed by Wilfred... but what about Geno?

Searching the materials quickly, Lucien saw the last record of this grand cardinal, "During the fight against the vicious necromancer Wilfred, the Grand Cardinal Geno, was severely injured the last second before Wilfred died. Geno's soul was entangled by the power of death. Seven years later, Geno died in Lance, the Holy City."

The book was left open on the spirit library table. Lucien was lost in his thoughts...

After a while, Lucien realized what the most important thing was right now. He forced himself to calm down and secretly left the ghouls, running toward the exit gap.

After scanned and sensed the whole place using Sun's Corona, Lucien passed through the heavy and cold "curtains" in the gap and came back to the material world. Quickly, he left the mine pit and hid in the mountain range.

...

One week later, beside a pond deep in the Ural mountain range.

Leo secretly popped out from the bushes and checked the surroundings very carefully, making sure no one was following him.

Some unnoticeable marks were left beside the pond, guiding Leo to go somewhere else.

Leo followed the signs, and the location for them to meet was changed a few times. Finally, Leo heard the gentle voice, "Leo, is the Church and the empire still searching for us?"

Leo quickly turned around and saw Lucien standing on a giant pine tree with a heavy sword in his hands.

"Yes, they still are. We might have a few tough days going to Duchy of Violet through the forests..." Leo's voice suddenly trembled, then he asked in an unbelievable way, "My lord... This heavy sword is...?"

Translator's Thoughts

Kris_Liu Kris_Liu

Hi ladies and gentlemen, I've got a few words to say to you,

1. Thank you all so much for supporting TMA. I know we're being quite slow recently as we're waiting for our editor to fully recover. He's a great editor and the one who make sure the quality of the translated novel. We won't give up TMA and we'll try our very best to present you with an even greater adventure in the close future.

2. Here I also want to clarify one setting here: In order to be short, I chose to use "cardinal" to refer to "red-robed cardinal". As you may have noticed, in this chapter, I specified the concept to show the difference between a cardinal/red-robed cardinal and a grand cardinal. A grand cardinal is much more powerful then a (red-robed) cardinal.

Many thanks! In the next chapter, Lucien's going back home, Aalto!

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 281: The Missed Music Festival

Although the heavy sword in Lucien's hands did not look fancy, the design of it was solemn and sacred. However, the look and the value was not the reason that made Leo's body slightly shake and his voice tremble.

"That's right. The sword's called Cleanser, and its last owner was Ivanovszki. I killed him." Lucien nodded. When he said this, there was a calm smile on his face.

Lucien was not worried about the possibility of someone figuring out that he also knew about the existence of the World of Souls, after all, no one could tell that, instead of chasing after Lucien to kill him, Ivanovszki was actually running for his own life toward the mine pit.

Sneaky as a sorcerer could be, there was still chance that Lucien could end Ivanovszki's life using some kind of strange magic items or traps. Also, Nikonov did not find any evidence at the bottom of the mine pit, and neither did he find Ivanovszki in the World of Souls. Therefore, Lucien should be safe.

In addition, it was not easy for a middle-rank sorcerer to control a grand knight's will using spells, not to mention that Ivanovszki had the Blessing called Interference, who was very resistant to mental control. At least a ninth circle spell, such as Invade Brain, should be used if a senior rank mage wanted to get the information about the World of Souls from Ivanovszki, which was definitely the most significant piece of information, well protected by Ivanovszki's subconscious, or the target would soon wake up from the great sense of revolting.

From another perspective, those reasons above were also why the important people behind Ivanovszki would feel secure to tell him how to enter the World of Souls.

From comparing and contrasting the list of the saints who were against the pope over the Highest Theology Conference and the list of the grand cardinals who jointly killed Wilfred, the Great Master of Paleness, Lucien felt that he was already right in front of the great, shocking secret, and thus he had a better understanding of the great value of the World of Souls. Once the fact that he was also aware of the existence of the World of Souls was revealed, regardless of what others would do to him, Lucien was certain that the saints and the pontiff from the North Church would definitely kill him in person.

But why didn't the North Church hide the list, but made them available to almost everyone? Because they knew it well that there was a premise if one could really see the great secret existing

between the two lists—one must be aware that, although Wilfred, the Master of Paleness, did not end up missing, he had a very close connection to the several missing legendary archmages. They did some secret experiment together, and he also knew the secret of immortality hidden in the World of Souls. However, those people who knew this much did not need the list to figure out what happened.

This was why the Congress of Magic, although having all the records from both the South and North Church, still got findings at all.

Although Lucien's answer was quite plain, Leo's eyes in his wrinkled face suddenly lost their focus. At this second, the purpose of his life had ended.

His hands were shaking fiercely. His lips slightly opened but his throat could not make a sound.

After more than five minutes, Leo forced a smile on his face and said, "Thanks, my lord... for taking the revenge... for me."

Lucien could tell the mixed emotions in Leo's voice. There was joy, regret, depression and confusion. And Lucien totally understood.

"The dead belongs to the past..." Lucien tried to comfort Leo, but was interrupted by him.

"Sorry, my lord. Please give me a few minutes."

Lucien nodded. Then Leo walked toward a huge rock on the side. Although he looked relatively calm, he almost fell over because of the tree root. He kept stumbling forward.

In front of the rock, Leo's knee suddenly dropped to the ground. Crossing in front of his chest, he kissed the dried moss on the rock, and murmured some names...

Lucien walked to the side to show his respect. Knights who grew up under the influence of the church always drew the cross in front of their chest when they felt emotional, no matter whether they believed in the God of Truth or not, and no matter whether they had any impious behavior. They drew the cross and pray, and it was a stamped habit left by their parents or families, not necessarily piety.

Lucien's mind wandered a bit. He was thinking of a new arcana research topic—the influence of one's early childhood experiences on one's behavior pattern.

After a few minutes, Leo slowly walked back. Feeling a bit tired, he said to Lucien, "My lord, let's set off right now. We gotta leave Ural as soon as possible. The night watchers and knights have been searching for us like crazy. Fortunately, I am quite familiar with this area, or I would not be able to meet you here, my lord..."

Although his heart was still filled with all mixed feelings, Leo reminded himself of his own duty.

Then, he took out a pair of boots embroidered with dark gold patterns, "My lord, these are the boots I found... from the sorcerer's body."

Sidestep, level three middle rank magic item. The boots could improve a sorcerer's agility to the level of a level three knight, and also provided the sorcerer two uses of third-circle spell Short Distance Teleportation a day.

After checking the boots carefully, then smiled, "Ok, we can go through the Ural mountains directly. I can handle the beasts and creatures in the mountains, and I also have Sorcerer's Cabin."

Pausing a bit, Lucien comforted Leo, "When we arrive in Aalto, Leo, try to stay there and do not come back again. You should think about your future life and probably have your offspring again. Take the sword, Leo. You'll need it in the mountains."

Hearing the word "offspring", Leo's face dimmed a bit. In this world, where Blessing, title, treasure and glory played the most important roles, one's offspring mattered a lot.

Leo took over Cleanser silently, as if he was lost in his own thoughts. After checking the sword carefully, Leo started walking in front of Lucien, with the heavy sword in his hand.

...

In the early evening of the Month of the End of Spring (April), 20th.

A coach from Tiran Province in the north arrived at Massawa town, which was only less-than-a day's travel away from Aalto.

Lucien, whose hair was blond and eyes were green, stepped out of the coach, followed by his butler, Leo. He walked into the familiar hotel and looked around.

Lucien left Aalto on April 9th in the year 816 of Saint Calendar and arrived in this small town. Now, after a whole three years, Lucien finally came back. He was a bit emotional, as everything in this place was triggering his memory. He was excited about going back "home".

After leaving Ural, Lucien and Leo travelled through the deep mountain range. Although they encountered beasts and other creatures many times, they handled them very well with Lucien's further-grown power as a fourth-circle sorcerer, so they arrived at the fortress in the north as planned.

However, because the north fortress had God's Glory and Snake the Chaos guarding the gate, Lucien and Leo had to climb over the great snow mountains to enter the Duchy of Violet, thus their trip had been delayed for almost a month.

Massawa was just a common town, so the hotel was not nearly as fancy. The hotel hall was its dining hall. People wearing different styles of clothes with different accents were eating and chatting in the heated atmosphere. Here, no noble manner was required.

"Compared to the music festival held three years ago, this year's Aalto music festival is... Umm... just so so, but... I mean, it's still a great feast of music. I've stayed here a week longer than I planned," said a wealthy middle-aged man wearing a silk shirt to the other guests sharing the table with him.

Hearing the man's words, Lucien suddenly realized that April was the month of Aalto Music Festival. Unfortunately, he had missed it. However, Lucien was also glad that Natasha should be free now. He wanted to reach her as soon as possible, or coming back to Aalto as the famous musician could bring him a lot of trouble from the Church.

As the winner of Holm Crown prize, Lucien was quite famous in the Congress of Magic. Lucien was very careful with disguising himself, as the Church might have found some clues connecting the great musician Lucien Evans to the genius sorcerer Lucien Evans X.

Lucien signalled to Leo with a glance. Leo nodded and walked to the middle-aged man and asked politely, "Excuse me sir, do you mind if we take these seats?"

Lucien hoped to get more information about his friends and what recently happened in Aalto. After he finished building in his soul his fifth fourth-circle spell, Professor's Infrasound Resonance, he would directly head for Aalto on the following day.

"No problem at all." The middle-aged man found Lucien young and elegant, so he nodded immediately. The other three guests also agreed.

Lucien sat down in front of the dining table and smiled, "Good to meet you all. I'm Michel, from Syracuse."

"I'm Ginton, a businessman traveling between the fortress of the Dark Mountain Range, Aalto and Tria." The middle-aged man made a brief self-introduction, followed by the two men and the lady.

Lucien put on a regretful look and sighed, "I tried my best to attend the music festival in Aalto, but still missed it... A lot of things happened during my trip. What a pity... Mr. Ginton, from what I heard from your words, it seems that you just came back from Aalto. Do you mind sharing with me some of what you've seen over the festival?"

"That's indeed a pity." Ginton nodded in an understanding way, "This year's music festival was not bad... Actually, I should say it was pretty good. However, you know... The festival held three years ago was too impressive to be compared... And this year's festival, without the presence of Mr. Christopher and Mr. Evans, appeared to be a bit plain and disappointing... But, of course, this year, Mr. Victor's playing in the Psalm Hall was still very stunning..."

Chapter 282: Come Back Home - Aalto

Chapter 282: Come Back Home - Aalto

Lucien was glad to hear the news about his music teacher, Victor. The fact that Victor held his concert in the Psalm Hall during the music festival showed that his music achievement had been acknowledged. With a pleasant smile, he asked, "Which piece did Mr. Victor play?"

Seeing that the young man was interested in this topic, Ginton also got excited and started to blather, "Four pieces in total! All of them were fantastic! Personally, I like the last piece, Symphony No. 8 in C minor, the best, of which love is the theme, but it is also more than love! It's like an autobiography! Each chapter conveys different emotions and feelings one could have with love. Sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter... It reminded us of our own love stories! After Mr. Victor finished playing, people applauded sincerely. Love touched our hearts deeply..." As Ginton was saying, there was also a sweet smile on his face, and then he lowered his voice, "I heard that this music piece was written by Mr. Victor himself in memory of his dead wife, Winnie. It took him ten years to finish it. Symphony No. 8 in C minor's a piece of artwork. In my eyes, it is no inferior than Fate, the War of Dawn, Sonata Pathétique and Moonlight!"

Love and music was always a combination that most ladies could not resist. The only lady took out her handkerchief and gently tapped the corner of her eyes, saying regretfully, "We missed this music festival because of the absence of Mr. Christopher and Lucien Evans. What a mistake..."

Lucien knew well the love Victor always had toward his wife. He sincerely felt happy for Victor as he could put all his love and thoughts in music, which must be a great comfort for Victor.

Lucien's voice also became gentler, "Were there any new musicians on the music festival?"

Elena, Felicia, Pierre, Grace... He wondered how his classmates and friends were doing right now, and whether they were still pursuing their music dream.

"There was one, a female... named Louise. Her piano playing skill's really impressive and her music work has those kind of special feminine features. Also, she's a knight in training. She even has a beautiful white wolf as her pet!" said Ginton.

Lucien never heard this name. So, he took a sip at his lemonade and asked, "Anyone else?"

"Sure. Aalto Music Festival's always the heaven for young musicians." Ginton started listing the names as a way of showing off.

When Lucien almost lost his patience, he finally heard a familiar name.

"Mr. Victor's student, also, Mr. Lucien Evans' classmate, Felicia, also held her first concert over the festival. She played one symphony piece, one sonata piece and a couple of piano pieces that she wrote when she travelled through the continent. Also, she played Moonlight written by Mr. Evans to show her playing skills. I mean, although Miss. Felicia cannot yet be considered an outstanding musician, she's on her way and, as a noble lady musician, she's definitely very promising."

Lucien nodded slightly. He knew that Felicia must have worked very hard in the three years.

Over the meal, Lucien had a pretty good appetite because of his good mood. At this time, Ginton sighed, "Speaking of Moonlight... It's such a pity that we've never heard the great musician, Lucien Evans, playing Moonlight in person. Although the playing of his student, Miss Grace, was quite good, we're still looking forward to the great musician showing the real beauty of Moonlight..."

The lady sitting beside the table also nodded, "Mr. Evans' accomplishment in the field of piano playing is... incomparable. He created the brand new playing style as well as the foundation of fingering. I bet one person must have heard Mr. Lucien Evans playing Moonlight."

Lucien's face felt a bit hot when hearing all the compliments. He was also glad that Grace indeed followed his words and came to Aalto.

Another man laughed, "Of course, Her Majesty. It is said that the first movement of Moonlight was already written by the time Mr. Evans set off for his trip, and that he had played it in person in front of the princess."

People around the table laughed.

Lucien felt a bit embarrassed, so he cut off a small piece of steak and started chewing. Then, he asked in a casual way, "It's been three years since Mr. Evans left Aalto. When's he coming back?"

"Maybe in a year or two. No one knows except the princess." Glinton answered, "But the best thing's that he's still working on producing great music pieces... Moonlight, Storm... I really look forward to the day when he comes back."

It was more than normal that a musician could only produce one music piece within a year or so, not to mention the fact that Lucien Evans was still on his trip.

Hearing that, Lucien thought to himself that no matter whether the church had known that the great musician was in fact a vicious sorcerer, they had not told the public yet.

Lucien got no information about Elena, but it was not out of Lucien's expectation. After all, she just started learning music three years ago.

As for John, Joel and aunt Alisa, because they had nothing to do with the music festival, Lucien didn't dare to ask randomly.

...

The second day, the first orange light of morning had just appeared.

At this time, Lucien finished the complicated magic model in his soul with the last piece of arc.

Light covered the model and disappeared. When the model appeared again, it was already surrounding Lucien's Host Star of Destiny like many other magic models on the track.

It was Professor's Infrasound Resonance, that could harm or even kill an enemy using infrasound resonance. Its power was penetrating, which could go through most power or elemental shields. However, it would still fail in front of magic-immune or magic-reflection defensive shields.

If Lucien's spiritual power was enough, the spell could be used to affect senior-rank mages. However, currently, as a fourth-circle sorcerer, Lucien was not able to do so.

Looking at the thirty-six first circle spell models, twenty-eight second circle models, twenty third-circle models and five fourth-circle models, Lucien let out a sigh of relief.

It was the third time that Lucien tried to construct the model of Professor's Infrasound Resonance, and he finally succeeded, as the complexity of this spell model was already close to fifth circle. Fortunately, Lucien had a solid foundation of arcana knowledge.

Half an hour later, Leo knocked at Lucien's door.

After Lucien opened the door, Leo said to him respectfully, "It's time for breakfast, my Lord. Then we shall set off for Aalto."

"Alright." Lucien stood up and adjusted his clothes a bit. Taking a glance at the early morning sky, Lucien took a deep breath of the fresh air. Once again, he stayed awake for the whole night.

Because the Dark Mountain Range was very dangerous, Lucien had been working hard constructing the magic models. Therefore, he had analyzed and constructed five fourth-circle spells, including Professor's Infrasound Resonance, Douglas' Absorbing Wall, Douglas' Huge Palm, Arcana Light, Arcana Eye.

...

After breakfast, Lucien got on the coach and set off for Aalto.

On his way, he had mixed feelings. He missed Aalto, but he also had fear in his mind.

He knew that he could not directly go back to uncle Joel and aunt Alisa, or he might bring trouble to them. First, he should find Natasha to make sure he was safe.

In Aalto, Natasha was the only person to whom Lucien could safely reveal his identity, but soon he frowned—he had no idea how to find Natasha!

Natasha was the princess, the heir of the duchy. Although she was already a radiant knight, she must still have a lot of knights, guards and servants following her around the palace. As a nobody, Lucien basically had zero chance of randomly running into the princess.

Also, Lucien assumed that Natasha would not want to go to the Musicians' Association after Silvia died... Now he finally realized that if he had not chosen to study music, he would never had the chance to get to know Natasha—they were different people from different worlds.

Although Lucien did write the letter to Natasha telling her that he was coming back, Natasha still had no idea what the specific time would be and how Lucien would look when he came back.

Lucien did not have a really good plan right now. He decided to see whether he could know Natasha's common routine first, and then see if there were any chances that could be created.

In the afternoon, the tall city wall appeared in front of Lucien. Aalto still looked the same grand and prosperous.

"I'm back." Lucien murmured to himself.

Then, he got off the coach and got ready for the inspection for entering the city.

At this time, the crowd was divided into two sides on its own. A group of knights slowly went through the city gate, and the leading knight who was wearing black armor was a very beautiful young female. Her beauty was not the typical kind of female beauty, but the mix of femininity and heroism.

It was Natasha, the princess who had dream-like, purple-colored eyes. She looked like a flourishing violet.

"Natasha?!" Lucien was very surprised.

When the knights slowly went past the crowd, Natasha suddenly turned her head around and looked at Lucien, who right now had blond hair and green eyes.

A stunning smile appeared on her face. She winked at Lucien quickly and then kept moving forward followed by the knights.

Lucien could not believe that the trouble that bothered him so much was solved just like this.

At time time, several people started talking to each other, "The princess is visiting the manor again?"

"Yeah... That's quite strange. After the princess finished her practice in the abbess, Her Majesty has been visiting the manor everyday in the afternoon, and coming back to Aalto the next morning..."

The corner of Lucien's lips moved. A smile appeared on his face.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 283: Welcome Back

In the early morning, in a fancy hotel in Nolan district.

Lucien had sent Leo to the room next door to sleep quite a while ago, and he also told Leo not to panic and just continue to sleep if he heard some weird noise from Lucien's room that night.

After running into Natasha, Lucien was sure that, as a princess and a radiant knight, as long as he did not hide himself on purpose from her, it would not be too big of a trouble for Natasha to find him in Aalto.

Holding a glass of red wine in his hand, Lucien sat cozily in the couch. He did not drink the wine, but just swirled it in the glass, staring at the red ripples. His mind was filled with thoughts and memories.

The wine, Berne, was produced in the chateau of Felicia's family. In most cases, only the family's guests could enjoy it. But this hotel was closely connected to the Hayne family, so the hotel was able to store a few bottles here and promote the wine as a main feature of the hotel.

Knock, knock... Someone knocked the window from outside.

Lucien smiled and turned around. Just as what he expected, Natasha, wearing a long purple dress, was standing on the balcony, followed by, as usual, Camil, in her black dress.

Natasha was indeed a radiant knight. Although Lucien was expecting her to visit tonight, he still failed to notice her arrival in advance.

Putting down the glass, Lucien walked to the window and opened it.

"Evening, Lucien," greeted Natasha casually. "Do you want to take a walk with me to enjoy the fantastic silver moon tonight?"

Lucien laughed, "Natasha, come on..."

A simple joke pulled them together as close as they used to be a few years ago.

Maybe due to the power of a radiant knight, Natasha still looked the same, twenty-something. However, maybe from her facial expression, or maybe her behavior, Lucien felt that she became much calmer and maturer.

"You haven't changed much..." said Lucien.

"You've become quite mature, like a real gentleman now..." said Natasha at the same time.

The two good friends looked at each other and laughed together.

"Good evening, Lady Camil." Lucien then nodded to Camil politely, who was following Natasha like a shadow all the time.

After seeing the power of Count Witte, Lucien knew how horrible Camil's power, the Blue Tide, could be.

Camil just nodded to be politely, but did not say anything. She was quiet all the time.

Taking a few steps forward with her long legs, Natasha sat down in the couch casually like she was in her own palace, War Gallery. She lifted her purple brow slightly and said, "Although this doesn't look bad, I prefer your original look. Black eyes and black hair... That works better for me."

"Why do you always treat me like a lady?" Lucien also joked. When he first arrived in this world, his look was already not bad. After the following years and after experiencing this much, Lucien had become more elegant and calm. His Blessing, Moonlight, also contributed to his appearance. However, of course, Lucien's appearance was nothing compared to Rhine and those who were already born good looking.

Natasha grinned and she said in a proud manner, "Since I left the abbey, I was expecting you to come back soon, or at least in two or three months. I was worried that you could not find me, so I estimated the possible time that a traveller from Tiran Province might arrive at Aalto and go through the city gate. So I have been visiting the manor outside of the city every day at the time I estimated to see if I could run into you. And also, it would be convenient for you to know this as part of my daily routine. But I directly sensed the familiarity in the air today, haha! See? My plan's perfect!"

She was obviously very proud.

"Yes, a perfect plan. On my way back, I was worrying about how I could find you..." Lucien told Natasha his concern honestly, and then he smiled. "Now, all problems have been solved by our smart, brilliant princess!"

Lucien now sat close to Natasha. He saw the dream-like color of Natasha's eyes, the mix of silver and purple. Her eyes were deep and attractive, like a swirl that could pull people in. After the three years in the abbey, she had got a very good control of her Blessing power.

Hearing the compliment, Natasha was quite satisfied. Then she started to ask Lucien to share more of his adventure in Allyn, Holm and other places with her.

Because Natasha knew about the collapse of the Magic Lock called Grand Cross, she was definitely aware of the existence of the World of Souls. However, she probably only regarded it as another dimension for the dead, like most other people who knew the World of Souls did. Therefore, Lucien only hid the important parts related to the ultimate secret of the World of Souls, and shared the rest of his adventure honestly with Natasha, bit by bit, either mentioned in the letters or not.

Natasha was a good listener. She knew when to listen and when to interact. Lucien was encouraged and their conversation did not finish until midnight.

At this time, Natasha put on a strange look and asked, "Haven't you been in any romantic relationships? Come on, Lucien... In Allyn, you don't have to hide anymore. What a pity!"

"Um... When I first arrived in Allyn, I had no idea what arcana was and I was... busy. Yup... Very busy... so no time for pursuing ladies..." said Lucien a bit embarrassedly. "Maybe... in the future..."

Natasha reached out her right hand and rubbed her chin. The strange look remained on her face, "That's not right... Girls in Allyn... They're even more beautiful than the girls here. You're the winner of Holm Crown prize, and you're good-looking, and powerful... So there's only one answer to this — you like men!?"

Natasha just let her imagination fly.

"That's impossible! I'm really, really busy! Like... super busy!" Lucien immediately denied, "I mean... I do have a few ladies trying to be close to me in Allyn, but I had no feeling toward them. I'm not that kind of person following every single lady he meets! I put quality before quantity!"

Natasha patted on Lucien's shoulder and said, "It's okay. I understand..."

"I'm not..." Lucien tried to clarify this, but he knew that probably Natasha had already had a whole touching love story developed in her mind.

Natasha laughed in a cunning way like a fox which successfully got a chick. Then, she quickly changed the topic, "Why some important sorcerer would ask you to send the letter to the Dark Mountain Range... It's such a waste of time, and, of course, it's dangerous. A legendary archmage

could easily use stars as pedals doing space leaps, and get to the Dark Mountain Range from Allyn using a very short period of time..."

Natasha had a very close relationship with the grand arcanist Hathaway. Sometimes, she even knew more than Lucien.

"I'm not sure either. Maybe there are reasons... Say, Nightmare King refuses to see sorcerers above middle rank in order to avoid modern arcana theory impact..." Lucien guessed.

Natasha frowned, then she said, "It's hard to say. But don't worry, Lucien. I'm sure the Congress wouldn't send you, a promising young sorcerer, to die in the Dark Mountain Range. Also, no legendary archmage would go to this much trouble just to kill you... There's no reason."

Then she looked up at the clock and smiled, "It's almost five now! I forgot to welcome you officially, Lucien!"

So Natasha stood up and grinned, "Welcome back, my knight!"

Lucien also smiled and held Natasha's right hand. He gently left a kiss on Natasha's hand and said, "It's great to see you again, Your Majesty."

After becoming a radiant knight, her power became more internal, and her hands became softer.

Then, Natasha said to Lucien, "Did you forget to ask me anything, my knight?"

"Oh, right..." Lucien rubbed his forehead, "I was about to ask at the very beginning... Did the Church learned my identity as a sorcerer? How's John, Joel, Iven and Elena doing?"

Natasha made a surprised look and said, "Wow, that's a lot of information required... Where shall I start... Well, according to what I know, after you won the prize, your appearance, age and your power level have been recorded by the Church. However, the series of following experiments brought the Church to great impact and put them under a lot of pressure, so you haven't been put on the Cleansing List. Violet Duchy, for now, hasn't got any information about you."

She got to know Miller experiment from Lucien's letter. Natasha also felt very confused for a long time, but before the Church revised the theory, Natasha had calmed herself down and it seemed that she kept being the same devout.

Then, Natasha said to Lucien seriously, "I'm sorry, Lucien. I made a mistake."

"What?" Lucien was confused.

"The reason I suggested you to keep the identity as a musician was that I hoped you could have a proper excuse for traveling through the continent. I did not expect you to win such a prize this soon. Now, the identity as a musician has become your burden. So, find a chance, say, after a splendid concert... to let your musician identity die. It's better than telling people who care about you that you ended up missing during your trips..."

"I understand, Natasha. I'm okay with letting this identity die personally, but if I do so, uncle Joe, aunt Alisa, and John and Iven... They'd be very sad," said Lucien. "Also, in the future when I am included in the Cleansing List, the Church will still be able to link the sorcerer to the musician, which's still not a good thing to the family..."

"I did not say you must lie to your relatives, Lucien." Natasha smiled, "As you said, yes, sooner or later, the Church will find this out, and indeed the people you care would be brought into big trouble. I'd suggest that you directly tell your families the fact that you're a sorcerer and ask them to move to Holm with you. If they could accept both the fact and your invitation, that's the best result, but if they did not want to leave, I can watch them until you leave Aalto again. Later, I'll ask them to report this to the Church and make it look like they are cutting off with you. Under my help, I can assure you that they won't be affected that much because of you in the future if they decide to stay in Aalto."

When Natasha was talking, she was so calm that she looked just like a grand duchess.

"That's quite cruel..." sighed Lucien.

"You know... Sometimes cruelty can also be a kind of mercy," replied Natasha.

"You sound like a philosopher." Lucien tried to play a joke.

Natasha also slightly sighed and put on a bitter smile, "Every person who's lost their love is a philosopher."

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Chapter 284: Mr. Evans Is Back!

Lucien did not know what to say. He just wanted to play a joke, but the joke poked the softest and the most painful part of Natasha's heart. He wanted to comfort Natasha, but he did not know how.

Seeing Lucien's embarrassed look, Natasha bit her lips lightly and said, "It's okay, Lucien. No matter what happened, it's a part of me. I always try to appreciate it and learn my lesson out of it. That's my attitude. Don't worry, Lucien. I'll never blame you for saying something you never really mean to say."

"Well... If so, let me be honest, Natasha," said Lucien in a pretended serious way. "The only thing that I learn from memory and history is that... we can learn nothing."

Natasha first paused a second and then burst out laughing with Lucien. She was laughing so hard that she even could not keep her back straight like a knight, like a flourishing violet.

"Maybe what you said is true. Next time when I meet my love, I'll still give her all I have," said Natasha in a bit coarse voice from the good laugh. "I learn nothing."

"Good luck, Your Majesty. Hope you can meet a great lady and have a really good relationship soon," said Lucien sincerely.

"Soon?" Natasha lifted her good-looking brows and said, "Am I that kind of person who can just quickly forget her love and past? Come on... I'm not!"

Although she looked angry, Lucien could tell that Natasha now felt much better by letting out the sorrow that she could not share with other people.

"Umm... You're not that kind of person. Then, can I say you do not have much relationship experience yourself? You've been telling me that you can teach me, but now I highly doubt it." Lucien grinned.

"Better than yours." Natasha quickly talked back, "Also, let me remind you, if you didn't notice—I'm also a lady, and at least I've experienced a complete relationship. In front of you, I'm still qualified as a teacher to tell you how to pursue a girl. You haven't even touched a girl's hand!"

Lucien shrugged his shoulders, "Don't keep mentioning this..."

"Okay, another topic then. Your first kiss is still there, right?" Natasha put on a sneaky smile, "What a pity... Girls' lips are..."

"Hey... Don't act like a pervert, ok?" Lucien rolled his eyes.

Natasha clapped her hands and laughed, "Just admit it, Lucien, you innocent little boy. Admit that I've got enough to teach you about these things!"

"Okay, okay... You win." Lucien put up both of his hands.

The princess smirked, like a flower. Then she looked at Lucien and said in a gentle tone, "Thank you, Lucien."

"I'm your friend." Lucien nodded to Natasha, smiling.

"Good laugh always reminds me of the fact that losing love doesn't mean the end of my life," said Natasha. "I still have my father, my relatives, aunt Camil, and you, my friend. I can overcome this," said Natasha. "And then I'll introduce you to a good lady."

"Let me handle this on my own..." Lucien shook his head and smiled.

Natasha now got a bit more serious and started to tell Lucien how his family was doing, "After awakening his Blessing, John has become a knight and given the title as a Lord. Like his teacher, Venn, John serves my family, the Violet. Now he has his own land and a garden villa."

Lucien grinned. He truly felt happy for his friend.

"You uncle and aunt Alisa have been learning noble manners in these years to help John around and reach out to other nobles." Natasha continued, "Although they were often looked down upon by other nobles, for their son, they finally did it. Now your uncle Joel, known as 'the Eight-fingered Harpist', has gained some reputation among nobles. But I guess that, among the nobles, your uncle could only feel really happy when he plays music..."

"Good for them!" There was nothing better than seeing that all his relatives and friends were also striving for their better life like Lucien himself.

"As for Iven, he's grown quite a bit and he's a young man now. Iven's still under tough knight training. Felicia just held her very first concert in her life, and it was not bad. She's ready to start her career as a musician. Elena, after working hard on studying music for three years and fighting against her arranged marriage, now has been hired by a big band. So now she has her own career and does not need to rely on a man anymore..." Natasha smiled. "Pierre, after being quite depressed for two years, finally overcame the barrier and started to study the fingerings that were

first developed by you. By combining the skills with the fingering of Harpsichord, he has found his own playing style. Your student, Grace, has been working hard all the time and is spoken highly by several musicians. Both Lott and Herodotus have also become good master instrumentalists..."

Lucien felt really touched in his mind, because he heard the news of his friends and family, and also because of the fact that, as a princess and the future Grand Duchess, Natasha kept collecting these nobodies' information just for Lucien.

"By the way, John isn't in Aalto now. According to the rules, new knights must join Violet Knights and guard the Dark Mountain Range Fortress or the North Fortress for five years, and then he'd be sent to other places according to the duchy's needs. He's at the Dark Mountain Range Fortress right now. If you can stay here longer, maybe he could come back during his vacation..."

As she was saying, Natasha stopped and looked at the gentle smile on Lucien's face, feeling a bit strange, "Lucien, why are you looking like me like this?"

"I really, really appreciate your help," Lucien said sincerely. "Thank you for collecting all these information for me."

Natasha grinned, "Of course. I'm the best!"

Their conversation lasted until dawn. When morning light slightly lit up the sky, Natasha stood up in an unwilling way and said, "I'm afraid I gotta go now."

Then she said to Lucien, "Your uncle and aunt should be out of town right now in John's manor, so you probably want to visit Mr. Christopher and Mr. Victor in the Musicians' Association first. Then, hold your concert as soon as possible, so you can say bye to your identity as a musician. Unfortunately, you don't have any new pieces of symphony of the same level of Fate, or your last concert would be definitely recorded by history, and you'd leave no regrets in your career as a

musician. I mean... Moonlight and Storm are good. The concert's still going to be a great success. Don't worry."

"When I was traveling, I did have some thoughts on different styles of music, and I do have a few movements. But I'm not sure if I still have enough time to finish it..." sighed Lucien slightly.

Lucien used music to relax himself. By combining the different styles of music all over the world, Lucien developed quite a few movements on his own based on New World Symphony by Antonín Dvořák. Because Lucien was still far from being a real master musician, the symphony he wrote and New World Symphony were very much alike.

"Wow... Can't wait to hear it." Natasha looked excited, and her face was glowing. "Do you have any interests in religious music? I think a piece of music work praising God be good for you when the Church... Never mind, I was being stupid... You're a sorcerer with no belief."

Lucien grinned and shook his head. It seemed that Natasha was getting less serious about religion, or at least the Church.

Their conversation lasted a bit longer when it came to music. When the sun was rising, Natasha finally realized the time and said goodbye to Lucien.

When flying in the early morning sky, Camil looked at Natasha's right hand a bit confusedly and strangely.

"What is it?" asked Natasha. She saw no difference on her right hand.

"Nothing." Camil shook her head.

...

In front of the unique building of the Musicians' Association, Lucien, after shaving and removing the dyed color on his hair, was staring at it.

It felt a bit weird. This building looked familiar, but also strange. In this building, Lucien even still had his own exclusive lounge.

After Natasha left in the morning, Lucien told Leo that his mission had been finished. However, Leo wished to follow Lucien to Allyn and became his real butler. After carefully considering it, Lucien agreed. But he asked Leo to wait for him in Aalto first until he came back from the Dark Mountain Range. Lucien was not sure whether he could protect himself properly in the mountains, not to mention taking care of Leo.

Some passerby's laughter woke Lucien up from his thoughts. They were tourists who stayed a bit longer in Aalto after the music festival, hanging around the Musicians' Association casually to see if they could luckily meet the musicians they liked here.

After adjusting his jacket a bit, Lucien walked to the stairs. There were a few young musicians and instrumentalists standing there.

A guard took a step forward. When he just about to stop the young man, the guard quickly rubbed his eyes and his mouth opened big, "Mr. E... Evans... Good morning, Mr. Evans!"

His voice was loud. Several tourists turned around, and so did the young musicians and instrumentalists on the stairs.

After seeing clearly the face of the young man, the musicians and instrumentalists lowered their heads slightly and said in a respectful and excited manner, "Good morning, Mr. Evans. Welcome back!"

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Chapter 285: Lucien, the Respected Musician

The hall of the Musicians' Association was the same, grand but quiet. No matter where, the Musicians' Association was always the most quiet place among all the professional associations, as most musicians and instrumentalists were busy with all kinds of stuff—including training the bands, rehearsal, looking for music sheets in the library and so on. Therefore, very few of them would come to the association in the early morning.

Also, the Musicians' Association was supposed to be a quiet place to let the musicians stay focused on their music works.

The two young girls behind the reception desk looked sweet and nice. Right now, they were a bit nervously talking to Mr. Hank, who was responsible for the association's daily routine. Mr. Hank was introducing a beautiful young lady to them.

The young lady was about twenty something. She had impressive, long black hair and a pretty face. However, what attracted people's eyes more was the white, huge wolf sitting beside her, which looked quiet and intelligent.

"Ms. Louise, we'll ask other musicians whether they're interested in nature music, and if we find any, we'll tell you as soon as possible," said one the young gir whose name was Polly respectfully to the new musician.

Ms. Louise was the envy of many people who had music dreams, including the receptionist girls. She was born in a noble family and she showed her music talent at a very young age. With the heritage she got and the money she made by playing music, she bought the magic potion and awakened her Blessing, which pulled her closer to animals and nature. This strange Blessing also made her playing skills even better and unique, and therefore she made herself famous over this music festival.

But for Polly, the person who she really admired was Miss Elena. Miss Elena started as a receptionist just like them, but she turned herself into a instrumentalist by working hard and now she was making good money.

Louise smiled and said politely, "Thank you. Music theme that is inspired by mother nature is not common in Aalto. Even Mr. Hank has no idea whether we have musicians who've put some thoughts into it. It all relies on you two now. Please ask the musicians for me carefully. Thanks a lot."

At this time, a young, good-looking man wearing black suit and bow tie entered the hall through the stained glass door, followed by a few young musicians and instrumentalists.

Polly had been working there for a year, but she never met the young, good-looking man walking in the front. Meanwhile, she knew all of the several musicians and instrumentalists following him. Somehow, Polly felt the young man's face quite familiar.

Hank turned around. He first looked confused, and then a big smile appeared on his face, "Welcome back, Mr. Evans!"

"Mr. Evans?!" Polly and the other girl suddenly realized who this young man was. They saw Mr. Evans' brand new conducting skills and piano playing skills over the music festival in Aalto three years ago. The two girls were very young at that time, but they still remembered Mr. Evans' elegance and talent.

"Good morning, Mr. Hank." Lucien smiled and nodded. After the three years, Mr. Hank seemed even politer and more enthusiastic to him.

When Lucien walked to the reception desk, Polly and the other girl bowed to him excitedly and politely, "Good morning, Mr. Evans."

"Good morning, Mr. Evans," greeted Louise, also a bit excitedly.

Young girls in their age sort of spent their adolescence time with the company of Lucien's music. Therefore, their excitement could be imagined.

Lucien, keeping the polite smile on his face, looked at the white wolf whose ears were pointing upwards and said, "You must be Miss Louise. I've heard people talking about your music, and I also heard your music. Very nice..."

Lucien made the hotel band play some popular music works over the dinner last night. Of course, only those ones that did not require a whole symphony band to perform.

"Thank you, Mr. Evans. I still have much to learn." Louise's face flushed. For a young musician, a sentence of compliment from a great musician like Lucien meant a lot to her. It was for sure a great encouragement, and it could also contributed to her career development a lot.

After greeting around, Lucien asked Polly and the other girl, "Nice to meet you. May I know if my teacher, Mr. Victor, and Mr. Christopher are here today?"

After finishing his last concert, Christopher has become the association's honorary chairman.

"Yes, yes... Mr. Evans..." said Polly, a bit stammering. "Mr. Victor is the association's director now. He's always got a lot of things to do, especially after the music festival. He's been working in his office for a while. Mr. Christopher's also here. Recently, it seems that he has got some new music ideas."

Lucien slightly nodded. No wonder Natasha asked him to come to the association first. She must have known that, very possibly, Mr. Victor and Mr. Christopher were here.

Lucien also checked whether Felicia and Elena were here today, but the answers were no. So then Lucien walked toward Mr. Victor's office on the third floor under Hank's guidance.

On his way, a few musicians who Lucien knew from before all greeted him respectfully.

Before Lucien left Aalto, no matter how big an achievement Lucien made, for those musicians and instrumentalists who witnessed the poverty he suffered before, Lucien was always the poor boy who started with collecting rubbish and working in the library, but then the poor boy suddenly became an overnight "millionaire".

However, after those three years, Lucien's talent did not fall like most geniuses who only made an overnight hit for once. Instead, his new music works, especially Moonlight Sonata, which was known as the most touching piano piece, still received huge success.

The fact that Lucien had been away from Aalto for three years left people with a greater room for imagination. Therefore, when Lucien came back, people respected him as a real great musician, a significant figure in the world of music!

Polly and the other young girl watched Lucien and Hank walking away from behind. After their walked upstairs, Polly held her face with both of her hands and said to the other girl excitedly, "Mr. Evans's even more elegant than I thought! I really wonder what kind of music he's brought back!"

...

"Good for Mr. Christopher." Lucien chatted with Hank casually when they were close to the third floor, "He's still composing..."

Hank nodded, "Although Mr. Christopher has finished his last concert, his passion for composing never stopped. Using his words—it should be called 'Where there is life, there is music'. After hearing the splendid chorale over the music festival, Mr. Christopher wants to compose a piece of religious music. But you know, among so many religious music works, it's really hard to make your own music outstanding. Right now, Mr. Christopher's kind of stuck."

Before Lucien brought the trend of theme music to the public, religious music played the major role on the stage. Religious music had become the eternal theme of Aalto, after the cardinal, Charlie I, set up the standards of chorale. Lucien believed that the status of religious music would still not be shaken for a long time, and the many classic pieces could hardly be challenged.

"Religious music..." Lucien nodded thoughtfully.

Soon, Lucien and Hank came in front of the door to Victor's office.

"You might want to knock the door yourself, Mr. Evans... to give Mr. Victor a surprise," suggested Hank.

Lucien agreed and knocked at the door gently.

Then, he waited in front of the door. With his sharp listening, Lucien heard that Victor was slowly walking toward the door.

Mr. Victor's manner was still the same, which never changed after he became a director. Most directors would ask behind the door first to see who was visiting, and then decide whether they wanted to open the door.

The door slowly opened. Victor's face also did not change much over the three years—light mustache, black curly hair, blue eyes. A man in his age was neither like a youngster who changed his look all the time, nor a man over fifty who aged very fast.

Victor looked in quite good spirits. The gloom he had before now turned into peace and calm, probably because the completion of Love Symphony had comforted his soul.

Seeing the young man standing in front of him, Victor first looked a bit confused. Then, he scanned the young man from head to toe, as if he was making sure if the young man was real.

After that, Victor reached out his right hand and put it above Lucien's right shoulder. After a slight pause, Victor patted on Lucien's shoulder and said to him in his low, gentle voice, "You're back... Good... You're back."

Although his voice still sounded calm, Lucien could tell his excitement and joy from the hand on his shoulder.

Lucien felt the true emotion from the hand, trembling and grabbing his shoulder a bit hard. When his heart was filled with bitter nostalgia and joy, the melody that Lucien had been working on for a long time became complete.

True music came from true feelings.

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Chapter 286: A Fan of Lucien

In Victor's office.

After both of them calmed down a bit, they started exchanging what they had seen and experienced during their own trips, including the assorted local conditions and customs throughout the continent, and, of course, all kinds of folk and traditional music. Their warm conversation was full of joy.

"Good, good! You've grown a lot from your trip, Lucien!" Victor nodded approvingly. He could tell that Lucien now had a much better understanding and perception toward different music genres.

Because Victor himself also held concerts throughout the continent, instead of lying that he came back from Holy Heilz Empire or the Kingdom of Syracuse that Lucien in fact had never been to, Lucien told Victor that he travelled from the south central part of the continent to the Storm Strait and then returned the same way he came. Because he appreciated the folk music a lot there in that region, he stayed there for quite a long time.

Hearing his own teacher's praise, Lucien grinned, "I've seen a lot of great, unique music genres during my trip. I'd like to have them to be part of my music."

"This is why I always believe that a musician should leave the place he or she stays in from time to time to see more and to experience more," said Victor, sharing all his thoughts with Lucien. "I can tell that you've been still practicing during the three years. You did not come to me with a solid foundation of music, but now you've filled the gaps."

Three years ago, despite of the fact that Lucien had excellent memory and great body coordination, it was still hard to grasp all the parts of the foundation of music. Although when talking to common musicians and instrumentalists, Lucien was fine, when he talked to master musicians like Mr. Christopher and Victor, he made many mistakes. Fortunately, they were all tolerant people, and they knew that Lucien was still new, so they did not give Lucien a hard time but corrected him in a nice way.

During his spare time in Allyn and the rest of his trip, except for studying arcana and teaching the apprentices, Lucien relaxed himself by playing music.

Most sorcerers had their own interests and hobbies during their spare time. Although being dedicated was one of the major conditions for a sorcerer to be successful, sorcerers needed to find the balance between magic and life. For example, the Hand of Annihilation was an outstanding painter, and also a playboy.

At this time, someone knocked at the door politely.

As the student, Lucien stood up and opened the door.

"Mr. Christopher?" Lucien was surprised.

Although having aged quite a bit, Christopher still shaved his beard well, like how he did three years ago.

Seeing Lucien, Christopher smiled, "Lucien, welcome back."

"Thank you very much, Mr. President." Lucien still called Christopher by the title president, even though the current president was Othello.

Christopher joked, "This old man was waiting for this young fellow to visit him. He has waited for so long that he's decided to come over and find you. I'm very interested in what you've seen during your trip and your new music."

Three years later, Christopher had become more playful.

"I was about to..." Lucien was a bit embarrassed.

"Just kidding." Christopher grinned. "Actually, I'm here to invite you two to attend a small concert held by a young man. He's from the southern Gusta. A tough young man who suffered a lot but is still pursuing his music dream. Finally, he made it to Aalto, and I heard his playing on the street. It was quite interesting. So I invited him to come over to the association and hold a small concert."

"On the street?" Walking to them, Victor asked.

It was quite strange to Victor. If this young man's playing on the street was that impressive, he should have heard his name as well. However, he never did.

Christopher nodded seriously, "He's got no money for renting a venue. He was playing piano and singing on the street. His music style was popular over the music festival, but most musicians in the association looked down upon it, because of their bias. By the way, his name's Franz."

"I see." Victor smiled, "Is it starting now?"

Christopher pointed at the floor above and nodded, "Yes, let's go. There're people waiting for us."

Lucien and Victor each walked on one side of Christopher. When they were heading upstairs, Christopher smiled, "Franz told me that your music has given him a lot of energy and power. Without your music, he said he could not have come this far."

"Uh?" Lucien was quite surprised.

"Franz did not come from a wealthy family. His father was an ordinary man, working in an business association. Although the family did not have the money to send him to study music, he was selected into the church choir because of his beautiful voice, and he also managed to learn some basic vocality and composing skills. Later, he was kicked out of the choir because he refused to be a castrato. He studied music really hard since then." Christopher introduced, "Unfortunately, his music did not win the affection of nobles or the public. After his father passed away, his life got even tougher. He was a worker on the port, a warehouse keeper, a bartender, a bard... Life was hard to the twenty-something young man, both physically and mentally, until he heard your Symphony of Fate and started to make money by sticking to his music style. Now, he's in Aalto."

Victor smiled, "What a tough young man. This kind of story always touches my heart."

"I'm really happy that I can help him," said Lucien sincerely. The story made him a bit less guilty.

...

Soon, they arrived in the hall on the fifth floor.

In the hall, many musicians, instrumentalists and music students had gathered together here out of curiosity. They all wondered what kind of young man could win the appreciation of Mr. Christopher.

Although the hall was almost full, the first row of seats still remained empty. They were saved for the top musicians.

"Mr. President."

"Mr. Victor."

"Mr. Evans."

When they walked in the hall, all the musicians stood up and greeted them. They watched them walking toward the first row.

Soon, the small concert started. Franz, wearing black suit, walked on the stage excitedly. He bowed to the audience many times.

He was about twenty-four or five, with thin face and curly, tangly black hair. His face looked very serious, as if he was praying in the church.

He looked at the famous musicians seating in the front. Franz knew that they were Mr. Christopher and Mr. Victor. But who was the young man?

Soon he realized who this young man was. His hands started trembling and he had to take a few deep breaths to calm himself down. Then, he sat down in front of the piano. A castrato came to the center of the stage.

The melody of the piano piece was like stream flowing. The poetry-like lyrics sung by the castrato were touching.

The structure of the piano piece was complete and full of varieties. The deep emotions in the music combined perfectly with the piano.

The audience in the hall was immersed in the melody. Some were slightly nodding along with the music.

The songs of different styles completely caught the heart of the people present. The hall was quiet. No musicians ever thought that a young man could give bard songs new life and this great sense of elegance.

When the first part of the concert finished, Franz stood on the stage, waiting for the musicians' comments nervously.

This was part of the small concert.

Christopher smiled, "Evans has just come back. Let him say something first."

Franz's hands were held together tight. He was beyond nervous.

Lucien tried to be humble in front of Mr. Christopher, but the president insisted. So, Lucien smiled and said, "The music has led us into a new world by making us forget the common form of ordinary songs."

This was a very high comment, and this comment came from his idol. Franz waved his right hand slightly out of the great joy. There were tears in his eyes.

Lucien continued, "You've greatly explored the possible forms of songs, which is a brand new path in front of us. I have some ideas about developing long verse into songs, and hope we can have a good talk after the concert."

Lucien was inspired by Franz's songs.

"Of course... Thank you so much, Mr. Evans. You might not know this, but I have to say that during the darkest days in my life, when I was about to end my music life, it was your Symphony of Fate that saved me... You might have no idea how shocked and encouraged I was when I heard it..."

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Chapter 287: Reunion

Franz got emotional with his memory, "I labored, in a hard way... I was also staying up all night studying music and composing. Soon, my body became weak, and my mind was bothered. I could not focus. People around me said I was like a walking dead body, and they were all telling me to give up music, although they knew that my music wasn't that bad... I knew it, too. I could not feed my mother and young brothers and sisters with music. I was so overwhelmed by the pressure from life... I was at my limit every single day. I was about to give up my dream, because I could not just live for myself. I still had a family."

Franz sounded as if he was going to cry. Many musicians and students present felt the same way. They knew how tough this path was, and how big was the pressure they were under. They were facing continuous fatigue all the time, waiting for the day that their talent would be revealed.

Of course, they had to admit that the difficulties they were facing was nothing compared to what Franz had experienced. Therefore, they all became more determined that they must work hard and stick to their dream until one day they could stand on the stage like Franz.

In their mind, Franz, after showing his great piano playing skills and receiving Mr. Evans' high comment, had already become a successful musician. The attention Franz was receiving now could compare to the time when Mr. Evans was spoken highly by Mr. Christopher.

Looking at the young man on the stage, Lucien was touched as well. If he had not taken the great risk improving his spiritual power, and hence strengthened his memory, even though he had the spirit library, Lucien would still have great trouble studying music at that time. Without a proper music knowledge foundation, even though Lucien had the great masterpieces in the library, he would not dare present it to the public.

Tears rose in Franz's eyes. Looking at Mr. Evans, Mr. Christopher and Mr. Victor, he added, "When I was about to give up my music dream, I decided to go to a cheap concert as my farewell to the career I love. However, I underestimated my passion toward music. When I was at the concert, when my heart was being seized by the symphonies, sonatas and concerto, I realized that my life meaning depends on music. The great pain covered me, so I was about to leave. But... at that time, I heard the breathtaking opening of Symphony of Fate! The intense rhythm and pace overwhelmed me, just like all the great burdens from my life. But in the symphony, I heard great determination... I heard heroic courage! I heard Mr. Evans asking me—are you gonna give up and yield to life? Is it life that makes you give up music or it is yourself? Are you gonna fight or retreat like a coward? When the symphony ended, I found the answer. After that day, I left my work and became a bard. Honestly speaking, I always looked down upon bards at that time... Every time when I felt having reached my limit, I played Symphony of Fate and Pathétique for myself. Gradually, things started to pick up. I started to be able to support my family, and felt free to pursue my dream."

Franz put his right hand on his chest and bowed to Lucien with great respect, "Without you, sir, without your belief and courage in your music, I could have never gone this far. You're my true mentor, and it's my greatest honor having you here listening to my very first concert in my life. Thank you again, Mr. Evans."

Thunder-like applause echoed in the hall.

"You're the one who made the right decision," said Lucien emotionally.

Then, both Christopher and Victor also gave Franz pretty good comments.

Later, this encouraged young man revealed his unique music style in the symphony part. Although his music was still not mature, the true feelings and the great hope contained in his music were like gentle spring breeze that soothed everyone's heart.

When Lucien was attentively listening to Franz's symphony, three ladies came into the hall: one had red hair and pouty lips; one had green eyes and looked sweet; and the black-haired one looked mature and elegant.

Felicia, Elena and Grace, after hearing the news that Lucien was back, they hurriedly arrived at the hall at the same time.

After seeing the young musician sitting at the first row, they all released a sigh of relief—it was him.

Lucien noticed that his friends had arrived. He turned around and grinned. Then, he put his finger on his lips to let the ladies remain quiet and enjoy the music first.

Felicia, the noble young lady from three years ago, now looked much more mature. Apparently, her trip with Mr. Victor had taught her a lot. Elena's appearance also changed a lot: her slightly tired-looking face and elegant updo made her look sweet and beautiful. Grace was now in a much more relaxed state after the heavy burden on her mind had been removed.

Three years had passed. Although they often saw Lucien's name on newspapers, they still felt a little strange when facing Lucien.

And Lucien felt the same way.

...

After the concert, Lucien made an appointment with Franz the next day to talk about developing music based on long verses. Then, he visited the familiar address—No. 12 Snehva Street—together with Mr. Victor and his friends. Victor was going to have a luncheon to welcome Lucien back in his place.

After Victor left to talk to his steward, Mr. Athy, Felicia and Elena, who had remained silent on their way back, finally talked to him, "Welcome back, Lucien."

It had been a long time, and they had no idea where to start and how they should talk to Lucien.

"Mr. Evans, thank you for the letter." Grace also showed her appreciation.

Lucien smiled and started to talk about some of the interesting experiences he had during the trip. Gradually, they started to get more comfortable.

At this time, a servant opened the room door and a strong, big woman wearing a tight long dress ran in. She directly gave Lucien a big hug and sobbed, "Finally! Finally you're back! I thought you met robbers and wolves..."

After receiving the message from Victor, she hurriedly came over with Joel and Iven.

"Alisa, let go of Evans." Joel smiled, "He's not afraid of those things... And, welcome back."

The noble life did not slow down Joel's aging. Many years of hard work had brought him a few more wrinkles.

"I've been missing all of you all this time," said Lucien emotionally.

Joel said to his son, "Iven, come on... say hello to Lucien."

Iven had changed a lot. To be more specific, he should be the one who changed the most. He had now grown even a bit taller than Lucien. Looking like his elder brother and father, Iven's teenage face started to look handsome and to have beard.

Looking at Lucien, Iven looked rather shy, as if he was facing a stranger. Lowering his head, Iven said to Lucien, "Welcome back."

Three years was a long time to Iven. It was normal that a young teenager would now feel rather shy.

...

After chatting for a while, Lucien started to feel a little exhausted from facing aunt Alisa's effort to try to find him a wife and urging him to have kids, thus he excused himself to go to the washroom.

At this time, Grace followed him, "I've got something to tell you, Mr. Evans." Grace lowered her voice a lot.

"Yes?" Lucien was a bit surprised.

"After I came to Aalto, once there was a clown-looking man secretly asking me about you." Grace came to the point directly.

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Chapter 288: Testing

"A clown-looking man? What did he ask you?" Lucien frowned. He wondered if someone here had known the fact that he was a sorcerer already.

Grace shook her head seriously, "I have no idea who he is. His creepy look made me beyond nervous. I'm sorry, Mr. Evans... I failed to resist... He asked me how I met you in Sturk, how I got your help and how you introduced me to Mr. Christopher and Victor. Right... he also asked me whether at that time there was someone else with you... I'm really, really sorry, Mr. Evans... I was afraid that he might kill me, so I told him all of it. I knew this might bring you trouble, but I really could not control myself at that time..." apologized Grace sincerely.

Lucien listened carefully and slightly nodded, "In my eyes, this might bring trouble to you. Now, someone else has known that you once used my name to promote yourself without my permission. But since this thing happened a long time ago and now you're already a well-known musician, I can earn some good reputation out of it. Other people'll know me as being generous and forgiving."

Grace grinned and then she said, "Fortunately, I did not tell the clown that, in order to have your forgiveness, I was asked by you to send the message to Granneuve. Instead, I told him that you had mercy on me, and... and we spent a night together... I told him so because I was afraid that he would not believe it that you forgave me just because of generosity."

When she was saying, Grace carefully observed Lucien's facial expression.

Lucien responded seriously, "There was nothing really to hide. I was just trying to help a friend of mine reach Mr. Granneuve at that time. What you said can do no harm to my reputation."

As long as Viscount Wright was still there, and as long as Granneuve was still hiding his true identity properly, even if Grace told the stranger the whole story, they should be fine. Lucien told Grace to keep this a secret at that time mainly for being careful with Granneuve.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Evans. I was the one who had a dark mind." Grace hurriedly apologized again, "I thought hiding this secret for you was very important, as you asked me to do so."

"It's okay." Lucien's facial expression was kind, "I understand. Just don't do this ever again."

"You're definitely a generous and forgiving musician." Grace relaxed a little, "I have to go back to the living room now, or they would think there's really something between us."

Watching Grace leaving the corridor, Lucien's put on a calm smile.

In his mind, Grace was never a strong-willed person. Instead, although she was relatively talented in music and piano playing, she could fall prey to temptation from time to time. Also, Lucien did not think Grace would put her life under risk because of her appreciation toward Lucien.

Therefore, Lucien would not believe that Grace was able to hide the key part in front of the life-threatening danger.

Going into the washroom, Lucien thought to himself, "Night Watch? An investigator from the Hand of Paleness, or Argent Horn? An intelligence man from the duchy?"

Lucien reasoned that the man should not be an investigator from Argent Horn because Argent Horn would not wait until Grace came to Aalto.

Also, because the intelligence department of the duchy was now under Natasha's control, there was no need for her to investigate Grace.

For the remaining two, either Night Watch or Hand of Paleness came undoubtedly without good intentions. Still, since when they noticed the connection? What happened over the Feast of Death should only be among the necromancers and Viscount Carendia.

Therefore, Lucien made an rough conclusion. He believed that those people still had not got accurate evidence to prove that the great musician was a sorcerer, or he would not be able to enjoy the temporary peace right now.

Wiping his hands with the tissue, Lucien put aside his many thoughts and went back to the living room.

...

Over the pleasant lunch time.

"Lucien, so, aside from Moonlight and Storm, do you have other new compositions?" Victor took a sip at his wine and smiled, "I'm sure folk music has greatly inspired you. We're all looking forward to it..."

Hearing what Victor said, all of the people around the table looked at Lucien with great expectation, except Iven, who was still sticking to dinning manner in a restrained way.

"I do have another two pieces of symphony. One of them is almost done, but still requires some final touches according to the outcome of the band performance," Lucien answered, while thinking about what happened earlier. "Because the inspiration comes from folk music, the new symphony has a less strict structure. Maybe it will receive broad criticism."

Because of their conversation before lunch, Felicia now felt more comfortable talking to Lucien, "Among the many titles you have, Lucien, I like the Innovation the most. We're always expecting you to create something new, instead of sticking to the common path."

Three years later, she was now more approachable as a noble lady, and also more humorous now.

"Yes, Evans, I'm really looking forward to your new symphony. Your aunt and I grew up in the south of the duchy, and we've never really left Aalto after we had decided to live here. So I really don't have many chances of learning music from other countries." Talking about music, Joel felt sincerely happy, as his face was glowing with excitement.

As an common instrumentalist, Elena was still shy to talk in front of other people. After they all made their comments, Elena asked Lucien with a sweet smile, "What about the other music piece? Are you going to hold your coming-back concert until after you finish it?"

For a great musician like Lucien, as long as he wanted to hold a concert, the Psalm Hall was always available.

All of them looked at Lucien, and even Iven also put down his folk and knife.

"It's almost there, but I still need some time... Maybe two or three weeks..." said Lucien, whose mind was full of thoughts about the clown.

"Awesome!" said Grace excitedly. "There're countless people waiting for your second concert."

Lucien's relatives and friends around the table all grinned and nodded.

After this lunch, the news that the talented young musician, Lucien Evans, was going to hold his second concert in a month would be known by everyone in Aalto.

...

After saying goodbye to Elena, Grace came back to the garden villa she rented in Gesu. In Sturk, she had saved quite a sum of money.

Ignoring her servants' greetings, Grace hurriedly walked to her bedroom and locked herself in the room.

As soon as she closed the door, Grace collapsed in the bed. Extremely fine black threads retreated from her body like tides.

After a while, Grace left the bed and murmured to herself, "Why do I feel so tired today? Did I get too excited seeing Mr. Evans? Why was I acting like that toward him? In my mind, I was trying to... seduce him...? That's not right... Although I admire him, I'm actually also afraid of him..."

...

In a random house.

A grinning clown face suddenly took several gasps. It was very consuming controlling a person remotely for a lo

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Chapter 289: Seizing the Chance

The creepy smile on the clown mask never changed, but the voice coming from behind it was rather deep, "Not really. Lucien Evans seemed to be quite frank and open with why he sent the message to Granneuve using Grace. Maybe he's not the one we are looking for."

"You really think so? He is the only one we can investigate right now who is directly related to Professor," said the battle priest, Juliana, who lowered her head in dismay and held some of her black hair in her hand unconsciously.

Professor was just a code name, and it had not been used much anymore. If they lost the clue here, they had to rely on using the spies in the Congress of Magic to steal files for them, which the grand cardinals would never allow them to, since it was such a waste of resources.

Minsk, the Red Dragon, growled like a real dragon: "Impossible! Lucian Evans for sure has something to do with Professor! At least he knows who Professor is! Professor first appeared because there were apprentices asking him information. Then Professor dragged us into the fight against Argent Horn. He killed the traitor, and also, Lucien Evans' uncle and aunt were rescued. During Lucien's absence, Professor never showed up again..."

Hearing Minsk's words, both Juliana and Lend slightly shook their heads. Minsk was just trying to justify his opinion, and what he said was not completely true. For example, after killing the traitor, Professor had already never showed up, and Lucien left Aalto almost half a year later.

"Although Minsk's reasoning isn't that persuading, we shall not forget the message from Djibouti parish. Felipe and Professor, the two famous men on the Cleansing List, once showed up together on the land once possessed by Wilfred," said Clown.

Before, the Church did not know about the Feast of Death. However, the fact that Felipe forced his way through Storm Strait leading a whole bunch of sorcerers pissed the Church off, and they also noticed that they were all necromancers following the ancient magic system, thus the Church started to intensively investigate the area once possessed by Wilfred, since it was the only place that could gather so many necromancers.

Even if Felipe did good preparation before they set off, facing the Church's focused searching, finally a magic apprentice was caught by the Night Watch. Therefore, although the Inquisition

failed to get the name list for the Feast of Death, they still got the basic information from the apprentice—there were two famous men attending the event. One was Hand of Rehabilitation, and the other was Professor.

Involving two men on the Cleansing List, Djibouti parish sent the information to the Holy City, Lance. Then, the cardinal in charge passed on the message to all the parishes and inquisitions.

"Others may not know, but we've been watching Lucien Evans for so long! He was in Djibouti at the same time, exactly in the Wilfred area! That was the exact time when Professor attended the Feast of Death!" Clown raised his voice angrily, "But when we reported this to the Violet Inquisition, they did not care at all! They said that there was not enough evidence, and they even did not bother doing some investigation! Don't you know why?"

"I think, like the inquisitor said, the biggest chance should be that the princess sent Professor to protect Lucien Evans on the way," said Lend, the Devil Hunter Knight, who was not as emotive as Clown.

A parish's inquisition had three main positions—Executer, Censor and Arbiter. However, powerful parishes, in order to control all the inquisitions, always sent a cardinal to each inquisition, who was the one who really got the power.

Minsk growled, "Plus all the coincidences? If Lucian Evans doesn't have anything to do with the Professor, I'm willing to be sent to hell! Lend, I'm telling you... those people in the inquisition do not want to piss off the princess... that's why. Princess Natasha was a faithful follower, the future duchess of Violet, an important weight in balancing the power between the nobles and the Church! The inquisition just won't investigate her sweet lover just because a middle-rank mage killed some useless night watchers!"

"You tell me, Lend... Have you forgotten Salvador's death? He died on his way saving Natasha, and his body was reduced to ashes!" said Clown with a sad voice, "At that time, only a few grand knights were chasing after Natasha. Salvador could fly, and he had powerful divine items, but he was just killed like that, before anyone could come to help. Guess who he met at that time, and who killed him?"

The muscles of Lend's face twitched a bit and he buried his head. "I don't know."

Hearing Clown's words, Juliana was the saddest one among all the night watchers. She sobbed, "No inquisition cares. Our leader, a level five pastor died, and no one ever tried to investigate this thoroughly. The princess was only imprisoned for three years. The life of a devoted guard of God only deserve that? I chose to be a night watcher because of the sentence in the Canon—at the foot of God's throne, all his devoted lambs shall be equal. But now... I finally realized that lambs are never equal... Although I'd still rather believe that this isn't the will of God."

Hearing that, while crossing in front of their chest, they all prayed, "Only truth lives forever." The way Clown and Minsk drew the cross was closer to the classic cross before the Saint Calendar.

"Next, what should we do with Lucien Evans?" Lend calmed down a bit after praying.

Clown turned around to look at Lend. "We directly attack Lucien Evans to see if he's a sorcerer or not."

"What?!" Lend did not expect Clown to be this crazy, "This would annoy Natasha so bad. Right now she is a radiant knight with the well-known title, the Sword of Adjudication! And the Blue Tide, Camil, always follows her around. The two can directly destroy the entire Night Watch in the duchy, and the inquisition is not going to protect us for sure..."

After becoming a radiant knight, Natasha also got her own honor title.

Clown laughed, like a real creepy clown, "Sure, they can, but they cannot always keep an eye on Lucien. I'm a level five grand knight, I have my own way of doing this. No matter who Natasha sent to protect Lucien in Aalto, they should hardly be above grand knight level. They would not notice how I approach Lucien. Don't forget how they called me before—I was the Killing Puppet in the Dark Mountain Range. All I need to do is to secretly enter his place, control his mind and get the information I want. If Lucien only has the power of a knight in training like what we know about him, this should be just a piece of cake. If he casts magic spells, that's exactly what we're waiting for..."

Looking at the creepy clown mask, Lend could not say no. He nodded lightly.

...

A few days later, late at night.

An almost invisible figure secretly entered the garden villa owned by Lord John. The guards from the Intelligence Department did not notice anything special.

On the corridor, a maid was walking downstairs holding a candlestick. Earlier today, she left a piece of her accessory in the living room, so she hurriedly got back and tried to find it back.

The dim candle light and the early spring temperature made the maid a little scared. Suddenly, the wind lightly swayed the curtain and the maid shivered. She saw some illusion-like figure flashing across, like a ghost!

However, a second later, when the maid looked around, there was nothing there.

The maid hurriedly went back to her room, drawing a cross in front of her chest. She decided to come to the living room the next day.

The door of the guest room where Lucien lived opened silently, and a creepy clown mask appeared in the darkness.

Clown, wearing a colorful costume and plain black gloves, lifted his hands and started to move his fingers like playing piano, as if he was looking for the invisible threads in the air.

Suddenly, in the bed, Lucien's body bounced up! His arms and legs looked distorted. However, silver light shimmered around his hands, and the invisible threads were pulled apart.

"Level five grand knight?" Clown was very surprised. At one moment, he got nervous, because facing a grand knight, he might not have much chance to win.

However, soon Clown realized that the power came from an extraordinary item that Lucien was wearing. No matter who, either Professor or Natasha, gave Lucien this, that was very generous.

Seizing the chance. Lucien's left hand pulled apart the threads on his throat and shouted out loud:

"Assassin!"

The young musician's voice spread well.

Although he tried, Clown failed to completely control the musician. Instead, Lucien managed to grab the blue sword to protect himself from the many threads in the air.

Knowing that the power only came from an magic or divine item, Clown was confident that he still had the chance to fulfill his task.

However, the secret guards from Intelligence Department, before Juliana and Minsk could do anything, had already lit the signal flare. The firework light lit up the sky.

Staring at Lucien's face for two seconds, Clown decisively turned around and jumped out of the window. He ran as fast as he could in the darkness, since he knew that if he wasted another second, the princess or Camil would definitely come after him.

Lucien did not use magic. Right now he was using the sword to cut the puppet threads. The threads could not only control one's body, but could also poke into the body to hurt the organs.

"Are you alright, Mr. Evans?" A guard ran into his room and asked concernedly.

A thought flashing across, Lucien started coughing hard to let the blood come out from his throat, "I'm okay... just some small injuries..."

g time.

"Leader, did you find anything?" A gentle female voice asked eagerly.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 290: The Last Movement

Seeing that the corner of Mr. Evans' mouth, chin and chest were covered with blood, the guard insisted, "Hold on there, Mr. Evans. Have you got any medical potions? I have one here. Take it. If you still don't feel good, I'll ask for the bishop's help from the Golden Cathedral!"

Of course Lucien did not want the bishop to come over, so he painfully took out a bottle of healing potion and slowly drank it. Then, he waved his hand and said, "Not a problem at all. I'm also a knight. No worries. The assassin didn't really hurt me."

Hearing that Lucien was still able to talk fine but only coughing a bit, the guard felt more relaxed. He pulled out his sword and stayed with Lucien, in case there would be another assassin coming for Mr. Evans.

The guard also reminded Lucien, "Mr. Evans, some dark powers are creepy. Although sometimes one doesn't feel badly injured, one's organs could be gradually corrupted or poisoned. And when it shows, it'll be too late. Even a red-robed cardinal would not be able to do anything with it. So, Mr. Evans, you probably still want to have a bishop to check it for you tomorrow."

"Thank you. We'll see then." Lucien pretended to be rather stubborn.

"Alright." nodded the guard.

Many people were just like this. They were afraid of death, but they were also afraid of visiting doctors or bishops. They worried that they might have some problems, but they also did not want to know what problems they had.

A while later, Alisa and Joel, followed by their guards, rushed into Lucien's room. Seeing that Lucien was okay, they released a long sigh of relief.

"Who's the bastard?! The bastard wanted to kill you?! You're only a musician..." Alisa had tears in her eyes, "Wait... Did one of your competitors send the assassin?"

"Stop, Alisa. It's impossible. No musician could afford an assassin of a grand knight level." Joel got some information from the guard, "What did you see, Evans?"

At this time, Natasha and Camil arrived. Natasha smelled the air, then she became really serious, "Lucien, did you see the assassin?"

"I saw only a figure... It felt familiar... Maybe he's from Argent Horn." In front of other people, Lucien did not say exactly what he saw. He put the blame on Argent Horn because of what happened before.

"Argent Horn?!" Alisa's face turned pale, and she took a step backwards. She could never forget the day when one of her fingers was cut off.

Joel's fists tightened. His deep voice sounded extremely angry, "They're still coming after you..."

In fact, Argent Horn really did not have anything to do with that.

After sending Joel and Alisa back to their room and dismissing all the guards, Natasha looked at Lucien and asked with a bit of a smile on her face, "So, what happened? Was there really an assassin? Or it was just part of your plan to kill the musician identity?"

"There was really an assassin. Probably a level five grand knight, wearing black gloves and a clown mask," said Lucien honestly.

"Ummm... sounds familiar..."

"The night watchers' leader, Clown," said Camil seriously. "I've seen him a couple of times."

A night watcher's information was strictly sealed, and only the leaders of an inquisition or cardinals of a parish could have access to it. Night watchers called each other by their pseudonyms.

Those night watchers had been walking in the darkness for a long time, shading their faces with masks and hoods. So Natasha was not sure who Clown was, and neither did Lucien. Lucien had no idea, during the fight between Argent Horn and the Night Watch, how many night watchers actually survived and who they were.

"I see..." Lucien had mixed feelings hearing that. On one hand, he felt worried, since he knew how those night watchers would act once he became their target; On the other hand, he also felt a bit relieved, because the way Clown came over and tried to test him showed the fact that those cardinals were not part of this thing, or those cardinals could easily use divine spells to examine Lucien, say, over a feast or concert, and directly draw the conclusion.

"He's one of the night watchers who survived that night in Melzer Black Forest," said Camil with a cold face. She totally disliked Professor.

"Now I remember..." Natasha clapped her hands.

Lucien finally realized why those night watchers were still tracking him. The loss he brought to the night watchers was massive.

"This can be a good thing. I was going to have someone else conduct the concert to make people know you're sick badly. Then, after the concert, we would be able to announce your death," said Natasha. "So you won't be checked by some red-robed cardinals who suspected you during the concert. Now, we do not need to bother."

"That's good. Although I could suppress the power in my soul using Blessing in the Psalm Hall in front of those red-robed cardinals, in front of Sard, the Saint Cardinal, I won't say I'm gonna be lucky. Last time when I saw him I was only an apprentice, so the difference could be ignored, but now I'm a fourth-circle. I really don't feel secure standing in front of him..."

Natasha looked serious, "Since the Grand Cross collapsed, the Saint Cardinal never really showed up again over any events or concerts. He only attended the grand cardinal conclave once. So, you don't need to worry. Even if he comes, you still have enough time to pretend to be sick and have someone else conduct for you."

She seemed to worry about Sard's health condition.

Then, Natasha's facial expression changed. Rubbing her chin, she asked surprisedly, "Wait... You said you are... a fourth-circle sorcerer?"

Because this was related to the secret of the World of Souls and Rhine, Lucien did not mention this to Natasha during their conversation.

"Sometimes great danger could awaken one's soul potential, like what happened to me down in the sewers," explained Lucien, which was quite a good excuse.

"Good for you! You're still two months away from turning twenty-one, but you're already a fourth-circle! Even in the a hundred years when the Congress has been producing lots of talents, you're one of the most outstanding ones!" Natasha felt sincerely happy for her friend, "You must have great gift in arcana, and I'm sure your future path will be even brighter."

Lucien smiled, "This is nothing compared to what you've achieved. I remember that when you were eighteen, you were already a grand knight, and then you've reached level five when you were twenty-one."

"I'm glad to hear your compliment, Lucien. But for knights, although strong willpower and knight spirit are important, the Blessing also plays a significant role. I was trained in a hard way, but my mixed Blessings helped me more at that time. So I would say that I was more proud when I became a radiant knight, which was better evidence to show my willpower," said Natasha honestly.

Lucien grinned, "There are people who are born with mixed Blessings but never manage to awaken the power."

"Sure, I'm gifted as a knight." said Natasha proudly.

Then they started to talk about their following plan.

...

In a house.

Wearing the creepy mask, Clown entered the chamber gloomily.

"Leader, what did the Arbiter say?" asked Juliana hurriedly.

Lend and Minsk also looked at Clown in a worried way.

It was totally out of Clown's expectation that Lucien had a very precious level five extraordinary quality item and a sword of at least fourth level with him. Clown failed. What was worse was that Lucien saw him, his mask and black gloves. The inquisition soon received Natasha's serious complaint.

Clown shook his head, "The Arbiter said it was Argent Horn pretending to be a night watcher. After all, they don't want this to be known by more people. They want to hide it as much as possible. But the Arbiter also did not listen to me. He gave me the most sever warning. If this happens a second time, I'm gonna be put on the secret court."

"Are we giving up just like this?" Other night watchers asked, feeling rather reluctant.

Clown looked out of the window and said in a low voice, "I awakened in the darkness. Following God's words, I became a night watcher. No matter how crazy I was, ever since I became a night watcher, I've been fighting against the evil. So, even if I cannot get the support from the Church, I won't give up. I cannot just let Professor enjoy his life after killing so many of us. My belief won't let me give up."

At first, Clown felt that Professor made him lose his face, but now, his primal belief and faith was challenged.

The other three also agreed.

Clown turned around and looked at them, "Okay. Then we'll wait until another chance comes."

...

Lucien's bad cough made Franz, who was helping Lucien with the lyrics using a long verse, feel very concerned.

"Shall we take a break, sir?" asked Franz. "We can continue when you feel better."

Lucien's face was pale, but he shook his head firmly, "The last movement is almost there, and I feel the even stronger passion and inspiration coming out from my life. I don't want to stop, and I can't. You understand, Franz?"

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 291: Everyone's Waiting

Franz totally understood. When he was under poor health condition, many times he still pushed himself to an even further limit just because the passion and inspiration could not be shut down at that moment.

Therefore, Franz nodded with a sincere smile, "I see, Mr. Evans. I'll try my best to help you. When I first heard the fourth movement of the symphony, the chorus movement, I was totally shocked by its beauty and grandness. And the idea of adding chorus in a symphony is a great innovation! It's my great pleasure to be part of this helping you complete this masterpiece. It's gonna be one of the most memorable things in my life."

In order to fit the long verse in, to avoid those parts that were disrespectful to God, and to keep its original linguistic beauty, Lucien and Franz had spent a lot of time and thoughts.

Franz was a very dedicated musician and a great fan of Lucien. In front of his idol, Franz praised the movement with great excitement.

Lucien coughed hard and then asked in an excited way, which was a bit strange, "Thank you, Franz! Now our job's almost done! Then, the lead singer and the chorus shall start practising and provide us with feedback. Do you think it's... too hard?"

Franz shook his head, "It's hard, but I wouldn't say it's too hard. Any changes would take the beauty away from the movement. A great singer and a chorus should be able to handle it."

"I think so too." Lucien grinned.

At this time, someone knocked at the room door, and then the door was gently opened. It was Victor. Lucien and Franz were now in the piano room of the Musicians' Association, on the fourth floor.

"Mr. Victor, we just finished our work." Lucien smiled.

"I really picked a good time. Congratulations, Evans." Victor smiled. Then he took a step aside and introduced, "This is Mr. Fabbrini, a great singer. Mr. Fabbrini's the lead singer of the Golden Cathedral Chorus."

Before Ode to Joy (The Symphony No. 9 in D minor from Ludwig van Beethoven) was completed, Lucien asked for Victor's help to find him a great singer and a chorus.

Mr. Fabbrini was in his early twenties, had blue eyes and blond hair, looking like an angel serving the God of Truth. Unlike most men, Fabbrini was wearing light make up. In his fancy clothes, Mr. Fabbrini had this sense of feminine beauty.

Lucien was not too surprised, because most outstanding musicians were castrati, not to mention a lead singer of the Golden Cathedral Chorus.

Lucien smiled, "Nice to meet you, Mr. Fabbrini. Hope we can work well together."

Here in this world, castrati were very popular. A countess in Gustav crazily loved their voice and once even started a war for a castrato.

"Mr. Evans, I'm going to meet the chorus and we'll be waiting for you there in the concert hall. You don't look very well, sir. Please take care," said Fabbrini in his gentle voice.

After Fabbrini left, Lucien started coughing very badly, as if his lungs were going to come out.

"Are you alright? You still haven't recovered, have you?" asked Victor concernedly. "Maybe we can put off the concert until you feel better."

Lucien shook his head firmly, "It's okay, Mr. Victor. I'm a knight, so it shouldn't be a problem."

Maybe the fact that Lucien was a knight really assured Victor, so he nodded, "We're both musicians, so I do understand. But as your teacher, I still think having a doctor come over is necessary."

"I will. Thank you, Mr. Victor." Lucien was confident that he could deceive a doctor and have the doctor believe that although the injury could not be cured shortly, it would not be a life risk.

...

After more than a week, in the middle of the Month of Flower. In the concert hall on the fifth floor of the Musicians' Association.

"How many times do I have to tell you, Fabbrini?!" Lucien pretended that he was a bit out of control, "Why do you keep making mistakes here?"

Fabbrini looked at Lucien's pale face and hurriedly explained, with tears in his eyes, "Mr. Evans... This part's too challenging... I need... need more practice..."

"But we've practiced a lot!" Lucien waved his arms.

Fabbrini took a deep breath and said, "Still not enough, sir. Please give me some more time, or maybe you can alter this part to make it simpler."

"No way! This is perfect, and I'll never allow it to be ruined! Fabbrini, just try harder. I believe you can do this! We can put off the concert a few days as long as..." Lucien started coughing very bad. And he squatted down beside the stage.

Franz hurriedly lent a hand to Lucien. Fabbrini also comforted him, "I'll try even harder, Mr. Evans. I won't let you down."

At the end of this rehearsal, when he walked down the stage, Fabbrini, in his black shirt embroidered with golden threads, somehow looked back at the stage, as if he could still see Mr. Lucien standing there, acting crazily but full of passion.

...

"...Maybe at that time, Mr. Evans already had the hunch, so he was that pushy and strict, which was not at all like how people commented on him as being polite and gentle." A few years later, Fabbrini recalled what he remembered of Mr. Evans when preparing the concert. "He was that dedicated, that hard-working, and that crazy... as if he was trying to burst out all the energy and radiance left in his life to leave no regret. I was blessed by God, so I was lucky to know Mr. Evans at that time, and finished the symphony with him. I saw, as the brilliant musician he was, his great passion towards music, and his piety to God."

...

Glinton, the merchant that Lucien met in Massawa town, headed for the north after leaving Aalto.

In the Kingdom of Syracuse, he sold all his goods and then again bought some Syracuse goods, ready to leave for the fortress in the north of Violet.

This morning, when he was having his greasy breakfast, a glance at the newspaper suddenly stopped him from cutting the brisket. He could not believe his eyes, and he double checked a few times.

He was very surprised, but also a bit upset. He did not expect that Mr. Evans would come back as soon as he left Aalto.

"May twenty-sixth... the Psalm Hall... 'Return' Concert..." Glinton murmured to himself. He wondered if he should spend sixteen days going back to Aalto. Right now, it was already May fifteenth.

Putting down knife and fork, he took a few steps back and forth. Then he finally made the decision. He had missed Mr. Evans' first concert, so there was no way that he was going to miss the second one, not to mention the fact that Mr. Evans just came back from his three-year trip.

Glinton decided to leave right now and leave the goods to his butler. He was not going to sit in a coach, but would ride with several guards. If he was quick enough, eleven days probably would be enough. Knowing quite a few nobles, Glinton was confident that he should be able to get a ticket. At least, he should try.

...

When Glinton arrived in Aalto, it was already May twenty-eighth, thirteen days later.

He was not upset at all, because he heard that the concert had been put off to June first.

Without taking any rest, Glinton directly headed for the Psalm Hall.

"What? Sold out? But... but there're still four days!" Glinton was a bit pissed off, "I know Knight Mitch of the Hayne family, and..."

Glinton started listing.

The man sitting in the ticket office pointed at the many citizens around and said, "I'm sorry, sir. The tickets are sold out. There are just too many people waiting for the concert, and as far as I know, even Knight Mitch also failed to get a ticket."

Glinton was very discouraged. Looking back, he saw crowds around the Psalm Hall.

In the corner, a journalist from Aalto Weekly quickly wrote down what he saw on his notebook, "Except for Aalto Music Festival, we've never seen a concert like this that can attract these many people to come to Aalto, as if they have forgotten that the Psalm Hall tickets are not usually for common folks...

"Lucien Evans has become an idol that the whole city or even the whole duchy has been crazy about...

"This has become a phenomenon. Maybe we should create a new word for this..."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 292: Moonlight on Everyone's Heart

Seeing the crowd, Glinton was very upset. It was totally not fair that those important nobles and pastors were directly invited to the concert without buying tickets.

Turning around, Glinton saw the grand Psalm Hall. For the first time, he felt the coldness underneath its magnificent appearance. This place was never for the devoted followers, but for those nobles and pastors up there.

Glinton murmured to himself, "Not all lambs are equal..."

When most of the people were leaving with great disappointment, a black horse rushed over here and gradually stopped in front of them.

Then the knight on the horse said out aloud,

"All civilians, Her Highness, Princess Natasha, Violet Duchess, believes that music should not only belong to nobles, but for everyone. Therefore, Her Highness has decided to offer support at her own cost to the Church and open the divine circles for Mr. Lucien Evans' return concert on the Municipal Square, so that everyone could enjoy the great music here in the city of music!"

The crowd suddenly became quiet, and then people wild with joy started to cheer like crazy.

"Her great Highness!"

"God bless you, Highness!"

"Long live her Highness! Long live Violet!"

Among the people, Glinton was very excited as well that he also cheered together with them. He was glad that he made the right decision to come back to Aalto.

...

The first day of June was a happy day, at least for people in Aalto.

After welcoming the grand duke, the princess, Mr. Christopher, President Othello, and Mr. Victor, Lucien was now preparing at the backstage surrounded by Franz, Grace, Fabbrini and some of the instrumentalists who he was familiar with.

Lucien picked the band which once worked with him before, but the lead instrumentalist was no longer Rhine.

A bit away from Lucien stood other instrumentalists, castrati, and kids from the choir.

"Mr. Evans, I can already imagine the great shock that the Symphony in D minor would bring to the audience. I can't wait to step on the stage. God bless us. It's is the most breathtaking music piece I've ever heard! I'm afraid I might have tears in my eyes later..." said Fabbrini out of great excitement before the performance.

Tonight, Fabbrini was wearing a red bow tie, and his lips were as red as fire.

The symphony Fabbrini was speaking highly of was called Ode to Joy, by Lucien Evans. As their several rehearsals went better and better, Fabbrini's heart was now filled with admiration toward it.

Hearing Fabbrini's comment, Grace looked at Lucien out of curiosity, "Is it that impressive? It seems that Ode to Joy can win over Fate?"

"They're different. People might have different opinions. But I do think it's a great music piece." Lucien smiled, as if he was commenting on someone else's music.

Franz relieved a long sigh and said, "Actually, I was quite worried about the Symphony in E minor would not be accepted by most musicians and critics, although I like it quite a lot, especially the beginning of the second movement. I mean... its structure's just too advanced to be recognized. But now because we have Ode to Joy as the finale, everything will be just fine."

"Music comes from one's heart, and structure is only a tool," explained Lucien. "When the tool starts to become a burden, we shall be brave to get rid of it and find a new one."

Lucien was actually talking about the transition from classical music to romantic music.

In fact, compared to most music works in the later period of Romanticism, Antonín Dvořák's New World Symphony, which had been renamed here by Lucien as New Country Symphony, was already close to traditional classical music. After all, Antonín Dvořák was still deeply influenced by classical music.

Hearing Lucien's words, Franz nodded thoughtfully. Maybe he was reflecting on his own composition.

The violoncellist, Thomas, also commented, "I think New Country Symphony's a great piece of work. Although it can receive some negative comments, I believe anyone who really understood

music and appreciates its beauty can see the great value in it. Time will prove that New Country Symphony is a masterpiece. Both Ode to Joy and New Country Symphony are masterpieces, I should say. You have my greatest respect because of your courage for inspiration and revolution, Mr. Evans."

Thomas was very sincere, and he believed that the concert would be the greatest success ever. He also could see how much he was going to benefit from this concert. After playing with Mr. Victor and Evans, the band Thomas was in was now already the best one outside of the palace, and also the most expensive one.

"Thank you all for the encouraging comments, but we still have to see after the concert." Lucien smiled, "It's time now. Let's go."

After taking a few steps, Lucien added with emotion, "In the following four hours, let's forget everything, and live for music!"

"Live for music!" All the instrumentalists, band members, and singers responded aloud.

Lucien adjusted his bow tie and grabbed the baton. But at this time, he suddenly started coughing badly.

"Mr. Evans?! Are you alright?"

Lucien gasped, then waved his hand, "I'm okay. It's been a while like this. I'm fine. Let the band out to get prepared first."

"You sure, Mr. Evans?" Thomas did not leave with the band but asked again out of concern.

Lucien took out a small bottle of pink potion and drank it all. Then, his face was no longer pale. He said to Thomas, "I've got the potion. Don't worry."

Seeing that Lucien was still able to talk fluently, Thomas was relieved. Then, he left the backstage to get prepared.

After Thomas left, Fabbrini asked gently, "Mr. Evans... This... doesn't look like some simple potion for cough-relieving. A potion cannot work this fast."

As the lead singer of the Church's chorus, he knew more than most people.

Lucien was now totally refreshed, and he said to Fabbrini with a smile, "A bit something else in it to bring out the best of me in the following four hours. It's okay. I'll take a good rest after the concert."

Then Lucien grabbed the baton and walked out of the backstage in an elegant manner, leaving the rest of the people behind with a straight and impressive figure.

Fabbrini did not say anything for a while. Mr. Evans' determined smile was still in front of his eyes.

...

On the municipal square, when people saw Lucien walking to the center of the stage in the Psalm Hall, they started to applaud, and then the applause became louder and louder. No matter if Mr. Lucien Evans could hear this or not, all of the people were expressing their joy and excitement. They were welcoming the talented young musician, and also showing their gratefulness to Her Highness' generosity.

In the history of Aalto, there was never a concert like this that could receive such warm applause before it even started!

Glinton was now standing along the edge of the square. Looking at the crystal screen, he felt joy and was very satisfied. Finally, he could be here and enjoy Mr. Evans' live performance with his own ears and eyes.

The repertoire was already available: the concert would start with the famous Symphony of Fate, followed by a piano solo of Moonlight and Pathétique. Next, Mr. Lucien Evans was going to show his playing skills by doing an improvisation playing. Then it would be the symphony called New Country, and later Ode to Joy, the Symphony in D Minor, would serve as the ending of the concert.

When the first several music notes jumped out, the familiar melody awakened everyone. They became very quiet, waiting for the feast of music.

After Symphony of Fate, Christopher smiled to Victor and said, "After the three years, now Evans' conducting is even better. He used to be a bit crazy when conducting, but now he knows where to let the emotions out and when to restrain them. His personal features are still there, and serves a better support and guidance of Fate."

Lucien's conducting was no longer inexperienced but mature. Now his conducting matched the great symphony piece.

"He's the one who never forgets to work hard." Victor also spoke highly of his own student, "Among the so many times Fate was played, only when Lucien conducted did the music have the most impacting power."

After a ten minute break, the band left the stage for now. The whole stage was left with a black piano and Lucien, who also dressed in black.

The divine power circle focused on Lucien, covering Lucien with a dim layer of light.

Sitting in front of the piano, Lucien closed his eyes. He knew that this concert was a farewell to the people who liked him. In order to make sure that his relatives and friends were safe, and knowing that, sooner or later, his name would be put on the Cleansing List, he had to let the young musician die, and say goodbye.

He did not know what kind of choices uncle Joel, aunt Alisa, John, and Iven would make, and he was also not sure whether if one day he could still be able to see Victor, Elena and all his friends again. He had no idea whether one day he would still be able to come back to Aalto without hiding himself carefully...

Maybe... maybe after becoming a senior-rank mage, Lucien would be able to take a look at them from afar...

The great sorrow seized Lucien's heart, and his hands pressed down on the piano. The peaceful and gentle melody flowed like a stream in the Psalm Hall, and it brought everyone back to the lake that was shining under the moonlight, just like a dream.

People were immersed in the peace and quietness. They were enjoying every second of the heartfelt sweetness, gracefulness, and also sorrow.

Underneath the sweetness of the melody, they did somehow feel sad.

Felicia noticed that Elena, who was sitting next to her, wiped the tears from the corner of her eye and murmured, "I don't know why but... I feel like crying..."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 293: A Master's Piano Playing

The touching melody revealed the complicated emotions and feelings in Lucien's mind perfectly: there was tenderness, melancholy, and lots of thoughts, just like a shimmering lake under moonlight, bringing the audience to a dream-like world filled with Lucien's sentiments.

People forgot the anxiety and agitation they were usually under most of the time and started to contemplate. Many had tears in their eyes...

The first movement ended, but the cheerful second movement immediately followed, as if it was comforting people's heart. The emotions changed perfectly.

Many musicians present exchanged a surprised look. They were more sensitive than those unprofessional nobles and common citizens. They had noticed that there was no pause at all between the two movements, but it brought people the excellent transition and the sense of fluency.

Those musicians did not dig into it but continued to listen to the playing carefully, because this was a great opportunity for them to listen to Mr. Lucien Evans' playing of Moonlight here on the stage. The only thing they wanted to do was to appreciate the beauty of music.

The cheerful second movement slowly became more restrained, but just when people were about to take a break to enjoy the following exciting movement, Lucien directly led them to the third movement.

The melody full of passion immediately seized people's heart, and they felt the great enthusiasm and tension, like picking flowers along the cliff.

They saw Lucien's hands jumping around and dancing on the keyboard, as if they were blessed by God with power, and therefore a touching and infectious passion flowed. His silhouette on the stage had great charm, and the passion he had now was totally different from the mood he was under when he played the first movement, which formed a sharp contrast.

The signature high notes ended the playing. As soon as people were relieved from the intensity of Lucien's playing, warm applause followed like tides.

Betty, with a short bow on her back, said to Joanna and Simon full of joy, "Compared to Mr. Evans' playing, the versions of Moonlight that we heard before were nothing. Only Mr. Evans could present the great passion, the sadness and the joy in the song!"

In the past three years, she had grown more professional in appreciating music.

"That's true. After all, Mr. Evans is a musician, not a common instrumentalist." Joanna looked at the crystal wall on the square and smiled, "Betty, I remembered that Mr. Evans once promised you that he would play a song for you. Is it right?"

Betty's face flushed, "Don't make fun of me. I know I still have a long way to go before awakening my Blessing, but I'll work very hard!"

Lucien once promised that he would play a song for Betty if she could awaken her Blessing and become a knight.

"The Duchy of Violet is a perfect place for us to awaken our Blessings. It's very close to the Dark Mountain Range," said Simon. In the past several years, he had made much progress in training himself as a high-level squire. Now, he was much closer to awakening his Blessing.

Betty first nodded, then she looked at the young musician on the stage who was taking a short break and said with a sweet smile, "I know that Mr. Evans was just trying to encourage me. I'm not really expecting him to play for me. Having a chance like this to be on his concert is already enough for me. But I'll still work hard and always keep this encouragement in my heart."

Glinton, while applauding, said to people beside him, "It's just awesome! Listening to Mr. Evans' playing Moonlight already made me more than satisfied with this concert. I believe no one can compare with Mr. Evans when it comes to playing Moonlight! This is how a master of music plays!"

In the noble balcony in the Psalm Hall.

"I see... So there should be no pause at all between each movement. Then the contrast of different moods can be more defined and the structure can be perfect," murmured Natasha. "No wonder when I was playing, I always felt that something was missing... He did not mention this in the letter..."

"Maybe he thought that Your Highness could figure this out," joked Christopher.

Since Lucien left Aalto and started his traveling, he only wrote letters to the princess. Even those letters to his family were all first sent to Natasha and then delivered by her. Although many would concede that this was the most convenient way, there were still lots of people who believed that there was something between the young musician and the princess, just like the rumors said.

Natasha did not mind the joke but continued to talk about how one's personal style mattered when playing music with Mr. Christopher.

Hearing their discussion, the grand duke was pulled out of his sweet and sad memory brought by the music. When the grand duke looked at Natasha, his eyebrows slightly frowned but he also had a relieved look on her face.

Those musicians and instrumentalists were comparing Lucien's playing with their own versions and trying to improve their own skills, but they were not going to just copy Lucien's version because Moonlight varied in everyone's mind.

...

After taking a short break, Lucien started to play Sonata Pathétique.

It felt very familiar, but compared to the first time Lucien played the sonata, the belief that one should never give up hope despite the many great difficulties in life was more prominent, and people now also had a better understanding to appreciate the theme.

When he finished playing Sonata Pathétique, Lucien coughed hard on the stage with his right hand covering his mouth. Franz, Grace, Fabbrini and many who knew about Lucien health condition suddenly felt rather worried.

Fortunately, Lucien stopped coughing soon. With flushed cheeks, he stood up as usual and thanked the audience. Then he sat back on the piano bench.

"What is Mr. Evans going to play to show his skills?" asked Fabbrini. Because this part was a solo playing, Fabbrini had no idea what this part would be like.

He thought Franz, as Lucien's assistant, and Grace, as his student, should at least know something about it.

Franz shook his head, "Mr. Evans never rehearsed this part in front of us. No one can ask a great musician like Mr. Evans to go through the whole repertoire for the concert. So neither of us know what he is going to play."

"That's true," agreed Grace. "But the teacher said that this part is for showing a pianist's skill, so I suppose it's going to be very challenging."

At this time, the whole Psalm Hall and the square quieted down, because they saw that Lucien had put his hands on the keyboard.

Then, Lucien started to play.

Immediately, they thought that they heard countless bumble bees flying and buzzing beside their ears.

Faster and faster, the sound of bumble bees flying around filled in the space. People were shocked to see how fast Lucien's hands could move — they were too fast to belong to a human being!

Faster and faster, people started to become crazy with the great passion for music.

Although Flight of the Bumblebee lasted for only a few minutes, when Lucien pressed down the last key, people took a couple of seconds to recover and then started to cheer aloud for this great young musician!

They had never heard something like this before, but they could feel the freedom underneath the playing skills.

Seeing Lucien's excellent playing skills, those musicians including Christopher, Victor, and Othello all nodded with satisfaction, but at the same time, they felt that this part was a bit too strange and creative for them to accept for now.

Natasha, however, spoke highly of it and whistled, "Awesome! I wonder if he could be even faster!"

She understood that being fast was not all that mattered. As a radiant knight, speed was not a problem. However, if one wanted to play very fast and still bring the audience the beauty of music, this was not easy, but a great test to a musician.

...

After the solo part, the audience started to talk to each other when taking a short break, because there were still two long pieces of symphony following.

Some of them were phrasing Lucien's outstanding conducting and playing skills; some were trying to recall how fast Lucien's hands moved; and others held great admiration toward Lucien's inspiration...

Fifteen minutes later, Lucien, in a black tuxedo, came back to the stage. He first bowed to the audience, then came to stand in front of the band.

Christopher stood straight and his mind was full of expectation just as other musicians and the audience. They wondered what kind of symphony New Country was.

For music in Aalto, symphony was the mainstream, the most shining and precious gem on the crown of music.

Lucien slightly closed his eyes, and the baton in his right hand started to stir. The band followed his instruction and started to play. The gentle but profound melody was like a long story gradually unfolded.

This was Lucien Evans' music! It seized people's heart immediately and made all the musicians present nod out of satisfaction.

The latter part of the introductory movement suddenly became intense and full of surges. The trumpets were indicating a more passionate theme of the symphony.

However, the following first movement made most musicians frown, as it was just so folk-music style and away from the traditional symphony structure.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 294: Nostalgia

Facing this unique style, most musicians subconsciously felt a little bit uncomfortable. However, the composer was Lucien Evans, one of the top musicians, known for his spirit of reform and innovation, so they still listened very carefully.

Soon, most musicians who were not originally from Aalto found that the passion in the music was contagious. It reminded them of the busy life they lived when they first arrived in Aalto.

The life back in the days was beyond busy. They had to run around every day just to make a living as an instrumentalist. During their very limited spare time, they were either pulling hair seeking for a piece of melody or playing instruments despite the pain in their hands. They could only find peace in music.

Then, they heard a brand new style of music, which came from another country's exotic folk music. The new world of music brought the audience great shock, just like when they first arrived in Aalto and heard the music there. The totally different style let them have a new understanding of music and expanded their horizon like never before.

Christopher's knitted brows gradually unfolded. He had lots of memories in his mind.

With his music dream, Christopher left his hometown and finally arrived in Aalto after going through great difficulty. However, Aalto was a place that never lacked talented musicians and instrumentalists. Christopher knew it well that without outstanding talent and accomplished playing skills, it was going to be very hard for him to stay here in this city.

Therefore, Christopher had no choice but to play music on street. At that time, he lived on very little money given by strangers. During the countless nights, Christopher studied the music from Aalto crazily. At the same time, he was also saving money to learn how to read and to borrow books.

By chance, he met Mr. Lessing, a person who changed his life completely and opened the gate toward symphony for him.

When he first listened to a symphony, he felt that he had arrived in a brand new country.

Christopher had to say that Lucien's music perfectly reminded him of his past experience, Despite the stereotype he had in his mind towards the music style.

Then the band started to play together. The melody was full of passion like strong waves, and the two secondary themes were revealed. Flute and oboes brought out the sadness and feeling of alienation in the two themes.

The new structure of the music surprised the musicians present. At the end of the first movement, they finally found how the recapitulation part was arranged in such a unique way. After several turns and delays, the recapitulation part finally started.

Most nobles and common folks did not have this strict sense of structure. Although they had some feeling that this symphony was different from the ones they listened to before, and some could even tell which parts were different, they all agreed that New Country was an outstanding and touching masterpiece.

They were listening to the music using their ears and heart.

After pausing a bit, Lucien raised the baton again, with his eyes slightly closed. The bass part brought out the mysterious yet gloomy atmosphere. Lucien had lots of memories in his mind, and those memories had all turned into many pictures that he missed:

He missed his family and friends, and the memory of them together was still so fresh; Mr. Victor, who was always nice, kind and upright, had offered him so much help and support; uncle Joel and aunt Alisa took care of him just like his mother and father, who lent him all their savings and tried their best to protect him from the gangsters; his friend, John, chose to fight with him facing the gangsters; Natasha, the humorous and generous princess, had helped him so much wholeheartedly, and they had gone through a lot of things together...

He missed the shabby shanty in Aderon. Lucien fixed the wood door himself, and underground there was a ruined magic lab. Living in the shanty, Lucien learned how to read, fought against the heretics of the Argent Horn, and became an apprentice...

He missed his garden villa, although he only lived there for a few months. He remembered clearly the stone bricks and vines covering the walls. In the garden villa, Lucien played For Silvia and Moonlight. There, Lucien got to know the existence of the Congress of Magic from Mr. Rhine...

He missed the Musicians' Association, its soft and thick carpet, quiet atmosphere, big library and well-designed instrument rooms... They had all witnessed the countless times of practicing and how Lucien came all the way there until today...

Those pictures were all in Lucien's mind, but what was even clearer was the fact that he was going to say goodbye to all of these.

The sorrow had been turned into the music notes flowing along Lucien's baton.

Then, the oboes played the melodious part, filled with mixed joy and sorrow. The melody seized the audience's heart.

Christopher felt that he was in a dream. For a moment, he felt that he was brought back to his small hometown. He wondered whether the classic two-storey buildings still looked the same old and a bit gloomy, and whether the ghost stories were still being told. He also wanted to know if the river running along the town wall was still that clear and if the apple tree in front of his old place could still produce fruits... and also, whether the lady he admired when young now had wrinkles all over her face just like him, and whether his families were still visiting their ancestors' graves...

The melody brought Christopher great nostalgia like never before.

Betty, Joanna, and Simon also lost in their thoughts listening to the music. They thought of the mountains and winding roads in Djibouti, as well as the horrifying stories about those necromancers. They missed their childhood friends, their parents, and their old house...

Betty and Joanna's eyes started to get full of tears. They suddenly wanted to go back home.

The music reminded Joel and Alisa of the small town in the south, the patio that carried their love story, and even trees and stones there. They still remembered the moss in the corner of the stone wall and the taste of the cuisines...

In the music, Grace saw Sturk. She saw the stone bridges over the rivers, the boats with a pointed tip, and the wax statues in the museums. Also, she saw her parents who were getting old day by day and her elder brother, who labored all day...

In the weeping-like beautiful melody, all of the people present, no matter nobles, musicians, businessmen or common folks, had been overwhelmed by the great sense of nostalgia.

Many of them had tears in their eyes.

Then, the first theme of the symphony slowly pulled people back to reality—the reality that they were all alone in a strange place by themselves.

The violin ended the second movement with the chord.

There was no applause. People were silent. People were lost in their thoughts and their own memory of the past.

The third movement burst out the great passion that was full of different colors, bringing people the beauty and charm of the new country.

Then the fourth movement was grand and exciting, and it reviewed all the previous themes again with the movement's unique power—the power from people's wish to go back home and the belief that they would go back home one day, with a better life!

Like a flowing river, the fourth movement ended the symphony in joy and hope.

And the new country slowly faded away.

The strong feelings in the symphony won the heart of everyone present. Thunder-like applause burst out of the crowd. And people started to cheer for the young musician and the symphony.

The applause just would not stop. Lucien had to keep bowing to the audience.

People were still applauding, although their hands felt numb, and their faces were covered with tears.

Lucien's music expressed the nostalgia and their wish to go back home for them!

Christopher said to Othello, Victor, and Natasha in a gentle voice, "Tomorrow, I want to go back to my hometown to take a look."

After pausing a bit, Christopher added, "This is the most touching lento I've ever heard in a symphony, and I forgot to focus on the structure... Maybe when a person gets old, he misses his hometown even more..."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 295: Feedback and Expectation

Lucien bowed to the audience in the warm applause for nine times, and then went back to the backstage to prepare for the ending symphony, the most important symphony piece of tonight's concert.

On the municipal square, people were still immersed in the great nostalgia. An old man in his late sixties said to a stranger next to him to let off his emotion, "Maybe you don't know, but I'm from the Kingdom of Shaq. That's a country in the south part of the continent, close to the Federation of the Free Cities. We have the great navy, and I was in the navy, too, fighting against the pirates... The thing in Aalto that I'm the most unhappy with is that the liquor here is not strong at all, not even close to the liquor called Peled in my hometown. When you take a sip of it, the burning feeling in your throat and stomach is just... I cannot describe it with my words. Also, we have a special kind of white wine made from the grapes growing in the high mountains. No one who's ever tried it can forget the sweet and refreshing taste. But only Count Lucio and the king could enjoy the wine... You know how I got the chance to taste it? It was on Count Lucio's wedding. At that time, I was a guard, and I was lucky to find some of the wine left in the glass... Come on... don't go. Just let me finish. You know the pork paste made in Lucio? Also we have goat cheese, the best honey and roasted lamb... Girls in Lucio are like glowing flowers and they are as passionate as fire! They like brave guys who can beat bulls..."

The middle-aged man was not interested at all. Slightly shaking his head, he felt quite bothered, since he also missed his own hometown.

The old man did not know what to do after the middle-aged man took a few steps away from him. Then, he started to murmur to himself, "I haven't mentioned the small house I have in the countryside in Lucio. The green vines must be covering the entire wall, and the light yellow flowers are more beautiful than any other flowers. The floor in the corner must be crooked now, but I cannot go back to fix it..."

The old man had been away from his hometown for more than thirty years. He was afraid that he would die on his way back to his hometown.

His voice became deeper and deeper. Tears came out of the corner of his eyes. He kept asking himself, "Go back? Shall I go back?"

Then, suddenly, he made up his mind. His fists forcefully waved and said out loud, "I'm going back!"

Glinton was a bit startled and asked, "Are you alright?"

The old man grinned, "Yes! I'm going home!"

His face was glowing.

Then he added, "Before I die, it is such a great blessing that I have the chance to listen to this symphony here from Mr. Evans. This is a masterpiece as a combination of folk music and symphony! After I get back home, I think I'm gonna miss Mr. Lucien Evans and his great music pieces!"

Glinton hurriedly nodded and agreed, "You're definitely right! When the first movement came out, I was a bit hesitant. I wasn't sure how to comment on it. But after listening to the second movement, I can say it for sure that New Country Symphony is more than just outstanding. It's going to be a classic masterpiece! Maybe just this little behind Symphony of Fate..."

Glinton used his two fingers to suggest how close New Country Symphony was to Symphony of Fate. In his mind, Glinton still preferred the latter, probably because he could always go back home from time to time.

Then Glinton sighed, "I wonder what kind of symphony can be used as the ending piece if even New Country Symphony isn't qualified."

It was totally within people's expectation that Fate was played at the very beginning, because it represented Lucien's past accomplishment, however, in their mind, they felt that this masterpiece, New Country Symphony, was totally enough for being the ending piece of the symphony, but it was not.

The old man smiled, "Maybe it's even better than New Country Symphony. I believe in Mr. Evans."

"Me, too." Glinton turned to look at the crystal wall again.

They were not alone. People were waiting for the ending piece with the great expectation and the belief in the young musician in their mind.

...

In the Psalm Hall.

Elena wiped off her tears and said to Felicia in a low voice, "I can tell how much Lucien missed his hometown, relatives, and friends in the past three years. The feelings are so real in the music, and the true feelings are beyond touching."

Felicia's eyes also looked a bit red from her tears, "It reminded me of my trip with Mr. Victor. At first, I did not feel much, but after a month, I started to miss my parents and my bedroom like crazy. I tried to turn this emotion into music, so I wrote the piano piece you heard. But it can never be compared to Lucien's presentation. His music has greatly inspired me again... Maybe, maybe I started to admire Lucien..."

As a student who studied music with Lucien together in Victor's class, although Felicia was surprised and even shocked for a few times with Lucien's talent and the music pieces he wrote, and she also respected him as a great musician, she never felt this admiration in her heart right now.

"Me, too." Elena smiled.

Felicia put her right hand in front of her chest and said, "Let's wait for the last piece of symphony. Let's admire Lucien even more!"

"Grace said to me that both Mr. Franz and Mr. Fabbrini praised Ode to Joy very highly, even higher than New Country Symphony," said Elena. "Lucien won't let us down. When I get old, I can tell my grandchildren by the fireplace that I am a friend of the legendary musician..."

...

In the balcony for the nobles, after hearing what Christopher said, Natasha asked, "Mr. President, are you leaving before finishing the religious music piece?"

"Maybe my hometown could inspire me even more." Christopher smiled peacefully, "Your Highness, did Lucien ever mention New Country Symphony to you in the letters? You look the same impressed as we are, as if it were the first time you heard it."

Natasha slightly lifted her brows and said, "It is my first time. He was good at keeping secrets. But I am not surprised with the theme because I could tell how much he missed Aalto from his letters. Of course, I have different feelings toward New Country Symphony, after all, Aalto is my hometown, and my memory belongs here. Lucien's music reminded me more of my childhood when I was traveling in Holm."

The grand duke agreed. Although the symphony provoked lots of memories in him, as a man born and raised in Aalto, he did not feel much nostalgia.

"I feel the same way, but I did feel the nostalgia when I was doing the tour concert." Victor nodded and spoke highly of his own student, "At that time, I missed Aalto a lot. I missed the place that Winnie and I built together. But my Love Symphony is not about this, and I also don't think I can compose such an excellent music piece..."

Othello slightly shook his head and said, "I have mixed feelings toward the symphony. I like the second movement a lot, but I don't like the structure of the other parts. I hope Ode to Joy can be more consistent."

"It must be a great piece of music that can be compared to Symphony of Fate." Natasha had faith in her friend.

Although it was not hard for her to listen to Lucien's rehearsal beforehand, she restrained herself from doing so and left all the excitement for today.

Victor also nodded, "I'm sure Lucien won't let us down."

"Don't put too much pressure on a young fellow." Christopher grinned, "But I have to say that I'm very, very excited as well."

The grand duke said with mixed feelings, "Let's wait and see."

Count Hayne, Count Rafati, the cardinal Gossett and many others were all waiting for the ending piece of the concert.

...

In the backstage.

Lucien's coughing was getting worse.

"Mr. Evans, are you alright? Maybe we should have Mr. Franz to conduct..." suggest Fabbrini gently.

Lucien covered his mouth and shook his head, "I'm... alright. It's just temporary. I've been doing fine for almost three hours, and I'll be still fine in the last hour. After all, I'm a knight!"

Because Lucien had been coughing quite a lot, but nothing big really happened, people in the backstage listened to Lucien and were not very concerned.

Lucien looked at Fabbrini sincerely and said, "There's no excellent baritone singer in Aalto, so... please, Mr. Fabbrini, although I know it's hard."

Opera was not as popular as Symphony in Aalto, therefore, it was also hard to find really good opera singers here.

Mr. Fabbrini's face flushed a bit under Lucien's gaze, "I assure you, Mr. Evans. I've been practicing a lot, and I won't let you down."

Using some secret techniques from the church, Fabbrini now could make the best use of his throat to sing different parts, which required a lot of practice time.

Lucien nodded and stood up. He looked around at the singers and chorus members, and then raised his arm, "My friends, let's forget the same old platitudes and sing for joy!"

"Sing for joy!" All of the people in the backstage repeated out of great passion.

When Fabbrini and the chorus members were prepared, Lucien adjusted his suit a bit and walked out of the backstage with confidence.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 296: Glory

On the municipal square, around the crystal walls, when the several famous singers walked out from the backstage together with the adult and children chorus and stood behind the band in a half circle, people were very surprised.

"What is this? Why is Mr. Fabbrini also here? Is this a chorus?"

Being informed that the last piece was Symphony in D minor, people had no idea what was going on there.

Betty asked Jonna, "Is Mr. Evans gonna add the chorus part in it?"

"Impossible. I've never seen anything like this." A man who was a symphony fan cut in.

Joanna responded, "Mr. Evans is known for being a reformer. His Symphony of Fate and New Country Symphony do not strictly follow the typical structure of a symphony either."

People were talking to each other, and they were getting even more curious.

In the Psalm Hall, when Christopher saw Mr. Fabbrini and the chorus showing up on the stage, Christopher said with a smile on his face, "He's gonna add a singing part in the last symphony piece... What a brave innovation."

Although Lucien tried to make it a secret, it was impossible to hide the fact from the many musicians in the association. Many musicians and instrumentalists already had a brief idea of what Lucien was going to do.

Being used to the fact that Lucien loved seeking for changes, most musicians were taking a neutral standpoint. At the bottom of their heart, they were expecting some new forms of symphony, especially those open-minded ones like Christopher.

"I heard that it's an excellent symphony piece!" said Natasha confidently, who was always on Lucien's side. In her mind, she blamed Lucien a little bit for never telling her anything about the new symphonies in the letters. After all, there was no chance that Lucien could finish composing both New Country Symphony and Ode to Joy within the few months after he came back to Aalto.

Othello shook his head, "No one has tried this before. We will see."

At this time, Lucien, who looked very handsome in his black tuxedo, walked out of the backstage and bowed to the audience.

The whole municipal square and the Psalm Hall became very quiet immediately.

This was the power of a great musician.

Turning around, Lucien stood at the center of the semicircle. He raised his hands and got ready.

Again, slightly closing his eyes, Lucien immersed himself in the memories. He remembered the day when he sat in the crate and saw Lazar wearing the black, double-breasted coat welcoming him, the day he finally arrived in Holm. That day was like a strong beam of sunlight that drove the dark clouds in the sky away!

Without enough life experience, a musician would find it very difficult to present a music piece in the way he or she wanted.

The baton and Lucien's left hand rose and fell gently in the air like they were trying to catch the original emotions and feelings from afar. Then, the deep and profound melody followed, and the trill part brought the audience the blurry picture of a distant view.

Victor felt thrilled with the trill in his soul, either from the excitement when he heard the melody or from the reverence in his mind toward the deep emotions lying in the music notes.

Victor was not alone here. Including the cardinals, the entire audience had this essential, deep and direct sense of feeling in their mind toward music. The music was grand and serious, as if there was growing power in it, and also as if there was some kind of gloominess hiding in it. It was the great difficulties that everyone must experience from one's birth to death!

Then, the power grew greater and greater. The strong rhythm shook the audience's heart like waves. The secondary theme made them feel retained, just like the feeling that no one would like

to face the difficulties and one's fate. The two themes together presented the fighting spirit in the first movement, which was also the main idea of Fate and Pathetique.

From time to time, some more peaceful and gentle pieces of melody were used alternately, signifying the belief that darkness would definitely be overcome!

The first movement lasted for sixteen minutes, and the audience was completely lost in the music. Warm applause burst out. People applauded with great passion to show their appreciation to the movement.

"Grand opening! Profound and full of images! Very outstanding!" Othello finally spoke highly of the music.

Natasha agreed proudly, "If the following three movements can be of the same level, without doubt, Ode to Joy would be able to be compared to other classic masterpieces like Fate and the War of Dawn. What a great concert!"

However, the grand duke was a bit hesitant, "Although the first movement is for sure impressive, I feel that there's something missing here... say, a climax."

"That's true. The structure, techniques, the melody... are all perfect. But it's not as imposing and overwhelming as Fate, neither as touching as Moonlight and Pathetique," said Christopher. "It still needs a point that people can remember. Right now, the first movement is like an extinct volcano with magma boiling underneath. The emotions need to burst out."

"I totally agree." Victor nodded, since he also felt the sense of oppression, "I'm expecting that Lucien can push it forward in the following movements."

Count Hayne, Count Rafati and Cardinal Gossett found it hard for them to add any comments here, but they also had the same feeling.

The feeling was in fact shared by everyone.

Soon, the second movement began. Unusually, the second movement did not follow the tradition of using *lento* but adopted a cheerful and lively pace, as if an army was chasing after its enemy in the mood of victory under the blue sky and in the sunshine.

"Again, he's not following what we expected." Christopher had a spoiling smile on his face.

Othello first did not feel comfortable with it, but soon accepted the change here, since, according to the theme of the second movement, he did not have a better way to present the music other than using *Allegro*, and also Lucien's way of transiting movements was quite acceptable to him.

The ones on the square who had even a little understanding in symphony had all noticed the difference there, but they focused more on the music itself, instead of on its structure. To them, the second movement was simply beautiful, so the change in structure was deemed as being necessary in their eyes.

The victory continued, but the darkness approached again. Enemies came back again from all directions. People felt nervous again with the fast pace of the music.

The second movement ended in a sense of nervousness. The audience applauded warmly again to encourage Lucien as well as themselves, as if the warmer the applause was, the more powerful they could be to fight against darkness and evil.

No one talked. They were silently tasting the sense of oppression and anxiety deep in their hearts, where the volcano deep within was still gathering more terrifying power...

After a short break, Lucien waved his baton again, and the third movement started.

The sweet and gentle melody made people think. No one ever tried to argue whether this movement should be *lento* or *allegro* anymore. Instead, they were simply contemplating. They needed some time after the first two movements. They needed time to think—why were they fighting? What was the meaning of fighting? What did it mean by victory? How did they come all the way here?

Did they ever meet difficulties?

Did they ever feel the sincere joy after overcoming the difficulties?

Did they ever feel that the difficulties in life seemed to be endless?

Did they ever want to give up when facing the difficulties?

Victor recalled the hard time he experienced. It was never easy for him to become a musician. He had to forget everything and lock himself in the room to work on his music, and he had to force himself to socialize with other musicians and nobles to have a chance to hold a concert. However, his first concert was a failure, during which many people directly left their seats... At that time, he was surrounded by bitter taunts and great pressure. Luckily, he had Winnie's encouragement and then he worked harder ten times more. In the end, his dream was achieved, but he had never been able to see Winnie again...

Natasha recalled her own past. Although she was from a top noble family and had the most powerful Blessing, as if she was especially blessed by the God of Truth, her life as a princess was also not free of pain. Within a short period of time, her elder brother died on the battlefield, and her mom passed away. Therefore, she closed her heart and devoted herself to the hard knight training to escape from the pain. When she finally found her own knight spirit and decided to be brave for her love, the person she loved betrayed her and she had to kill that person with her own hands. Her cousin tried to kill her for power, but, fortunately, she was saved by her friend, Lucien...

While conducting, Lucien was also thinking of the great difficulties he encountered from before, as well as how his power grew out of the process. In the darkness, he never stopped running toward the sunlight and success with hope and belief.

Did they ever feel depressed facing the endless darkness in life?

Did they obtain power and lessons out of it and move forward with an even stronger will, or let themselves sink?

Did they long for brightness and success?

Were they prepared to face the challenges and pain on they way of pursuing them?

In the sweet and gentle melody, people were thinking and asking themselves these questions. They were still waiting, although their full-hearted emotions were almost ready to burst out. They were waiting for the very moment in the next movement to help them let it out.

The third movement ended. People could not wait any longer.

Lucien's movement of waving the baton suddenly became forceful. The beginning of the fourth movement set off like an erupting volcano, giving all the thoughts and emotions great power to explode and to beat the darkness and all the enemies!

The audience on the square and in the Psalm Hall immediately got encouraged and excited, as if they could see the victory and sunshine ahead of them!

However, the darkness was still lingering, and the great difficulties did not disappear on their own. The fourth movement repeated the first three movements in fragments, and thus again gave people this strong sense of tension.

Victory was not there yet. They still had to march forward! They still need to run toward the light!

The major melody of Ode to Joy was played by double basses, comforting people and giving them hope.

But it was still not enough! Not enough!

People had made their effort, and they were already right at the edge of darkness and light, but they were still not there yet!

The melody of Ode to Joy started to become the major theme of the movement. The different parts of the band were joining together and playing the same song, like countless streams joining together into a great current.

But it was still not enough! Not enough!

It was just like when Lucien first arrived at the port in Holm, but the lid of the crate that he was in was not yet opened. Everything remained unknown and was still in darkness.

All the audience, including Natasha, clenched their fists, waiting for the last moment of victory.

At this time, a baritone sang with his deep and profound voice, "O friends, no more of these sounds! Let us sing more cheerful songs. More songs full of joy!"

"Joy!"

"Joy!"

Like being struck by lightning, like seeing an angel falling, the thrill in the depths of everyone's soul surged and covered their whole bodies.

The whole space was filled with the passionate praise and the joyful and sacred melody. And the music was going to overwhelm and conquer everything!

"Joy! Joy!"

"Joy, bright spark of divinity, Daughter of Elysium,

"Fire-inspired we tread,

"Within thy sanctuary."

...

People finally could let out their many strong emotions from their heart, and thus everyone's soul became light and relaxed, full of the ultimate and sacred joy.

It was like after going through seemingly endless darkness and then finally seeing the first beam of sunlight piercing through the clouds and lighting up the world.

It was like Victor, that after experiencing lots of setbacks and difficulties, finally received warm applause and won himself the victory. At that moment, his eyes were filled with tears.

It was like when the lid of the crate was open, and Lucien saw the blue sky and Lazar's big smile. His heart was full of all kinds of emotions and he realized that he could finally be entirely free from those worries he had in Aalto. All his hard work and the risk he took finally paid off.

If there was no bitter taste, there was no taste of sweet.

If there was no pain, there was no gain.

If there was no hard work, there was no success.

If there were no great sufferings, there was no ultimate and pure joy like this!

At this moment, people felt that they were shocked deep within their souls, and they were lost in the melody sung by the four parts. They found the ultimate joy with tears in their eyes, praising for the blessing from the God of Truth!

"All creatures drink of joy,

"At nature's breast.

"Just and unjust,

"Alike taste of her gift."

...

People believed that Ode to Joy was the praise to the God of Truth. Fabbrini also felt touched by the grandness and the divinity of this symphony. As he was singing, tears streamed down his face.

Since he was born, he suffered from the inhumane operation and forced himself to practice endlessly. For the first time, he felt the ultimate, pure joy given by the God of Truth. His tears were out of joy.

When he could take a short break when the choruses were singing, Fabbrini looked at the conductor standing in front of the band, watching how devoted this young musician was when presenting this great masterpiece to everyone.

What a great musician!

When it was his turn again, Fabbrini sang in an even more sincere and dedicated manner:

"Gladly, like the heavenly bodies,

"Which He sent on their courses,

"Through the splendor of the firmament,

"Thus, brothers, you should run your race,

"Like a hero going to victory!"

Listening to the lyrics, all the cardinals and pastors present, including Gossett, started to cross in front of their chests.

Again and again, the combination of human voices and the band was just perfect!

When the children chorus started to sing "Joy! Joy! Joy, bright spark of divinity, Daughter of Elysium" again, the audience was beyond thrilled when they let go of all their restraints and depression fully and delightfully.

They felt free. It was the ultimate freedom!

The sunlight kissed the whole world, and the world was filled with joy. Lucien's baton made the last movement, and the symphony ended there in a perfect way.

After a few seconds of silence, people started to get crazy. The applause beyond warm was like an erupting volcano, making the whole space tremble. They could not control themselves but tried to go forward to stay closer to the great musician. They had tears in their eyes. They wanted to kiss the great musician to show their crazy admiration and respect!

Many nobles in the Psalm Hall hurriedly stood up and ran toward the stage.

The people on the square stopped in front of the crystal walls and cried aloud:

"Lucien Evans!"

"Lucien Evans!"

"Lucien Evans!"

They believed that their cry could be heard by this young musician, so he could know how much they loved him!

No concert had ever been crazy like this.

For a second, Fabbrini felt it was like a dream, but soon he realized their great success!

"Mr. Evans... It's time to give your regards to the audience..." Fabbrini reminded Lucien, since he saw that Mr. Evans was still standing there with his head low.

Lucien slowly looked up, but his face was beyond pale.

After a big smile, Lucien turned around. His right hand was on his chest, and he started to bow.

To the great shock of Fabbrini and the audience, they saw Lucien falling to the floor like a swan that had lost all its strength in its wings.

The scene suddenly turned into black and white in Fabbrini's eyes. On one side, there were people crazily cheering for the great success of the concert like boiled water; on the other side, the young musician's body slowly collapsed to the floor.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 297: A Good Actress

On the streets around the municipal square, people were crying Lucien's name. Seeing that the crystal walls were slowly disappearing, they cried out loud, over and over again:

"Lucien Evans!"

No any other music pieces ever touched their soul like this, and no other music pieces ever won this much emotional resonance. They felt great pain and ultimate joy in the music. When Fabbrini started to sing, they were beyond thrilled.

This excitement lasted a long time even after the crystal walls disappeared. Although now they could not see the great, young musician who brought God's will to them, people on the square were still crazily showing their respect and deep affections toward Lucien.

However, in the Psalm Hall, the audience was completely shocked when seeing Lucien Evans collapsing to the floor like a falling angel, and they would never forget that moment.

Then, with a silvery-purple lightning flashing on the stage, the princess, Natasha, who was wearing a long purple dress, showed up beside Lucien and grabbed him with her arms before his head really hit the floor. Then, after turning quickly, Natasha took Lucien back to the balcony she was in within a second, leaving the nobles around the stage stunned.

The princess was quicker than anyone. When people realized what just happened, many started to feel certain that the rumor was true.

"Cardinal Gossett, please save him!" Although Natasha remained quite calm, her voice trembled a bit. Her hand held Lucien's hand tight.

Gossett nodded, "Only the most dedicated follower can produce this grand praise to the God. The God of Truth won't take away his life like this. I'll try my best to cure him."

Although Victor tried his best to come closer, Natasha was hugging Lucien in her arms like a mom guarding her own child. Staring at Lucien, Victor walked back and forth fretfully, until he saw the cardinal started to cast the divine spell on Lucien with the Saint Truth Badge.

Through holding Lucien's hand, Natasha infused her own power into Lucien's body, trying her best to disguise the differences in Lucien's soul when compared to common people, since he was a sorcerer.

Seeing that Lucien was not really dying, Gossett only used the most common divine spell for checking. Therefore, the cardinal did not notice much difference.

About a minute later, under the worried gaze of people, Gossett smiled, "He's alright. Mr. Evans just fainted, since he's been sick for some time and got too excited when conducting. Of course, if he does not receive any treatment for a week or so, he would probably die, even as a knight, but right now he'll be fine. God bless him."

The healing divine spells also had limits. From the Church's point of view, these divine spells could only work on the basis of one's life force. If a person's life force had been greatly lost because of some kind of long-time disease, the divine spells would also be ineffective. At that time, maybe only the God of Truth could save the person.

What Gossett did not mention was that Lucien Evans seemed to be a level-two knight. However, thinking of the relationship between him and the princess, he did not think it was a big deal.

"But why? As a young knight, unless being very weak or because of some kind of bad pestilence, he shouldn't get this sick." Hearing the cardinal's words, Natasha asked in a calmer way.

In fact, she was well aware of the fact that it was because Lucien cast the fourth-circle spell, Pestilence, on himself a few weeks ago.

Lucien did not do anything to treat himself after casting the spell on himself, instead, he completely relied on his own immunocompetence. As he wished, the disease brought by the magic spell slowly developed into a chronic disease, which was very hard for others to find out.

Gossett thought for a few seconds and said, "Maybe it's from his organ injury from before."

"I see." Natasha nodded, "Then please do something to help him."

Gossett reached out both of his hands and sacred light burst out. When the light covered Lucien's body, there were small, black clusters of miasma rising from Lucien's body, and the miasma clusters were seemingly made of invisible tiny worms.

Level three divine spell, Remove Disease. It was not a fancy spell, but sometimes worked very well.

Disguising the difference in Lucien's soul with her own power, when seeing the miasma slowly disappear in the holy light, Natasha put on a relieved look.

Seeing the look on Natasha's face, and the hands that held tight, the grand duke had mixed feelings in his heart. He had to say that he did not like the fact that his own daughter was going to leave him to be with some bastard boy, but also he was glad that his daughter finally went back to "normal", so the family blood would not die out.

Count Rafati grinned, "At least he has awakened his Blessing. Better than nothing."

The grand duke once told them that, no matter if the guy had awakened his Blessing or not, no matter whether he was a noble, and even no matter whether he really pulled Natasha back to "normal", as long as his daughter could get married and have offspring like a normal person, he would not interfere with Natasha's other choices too much.

The grand duke released a long sigh and nodded, "That's true..."

After Gossett cast another level four divine spell, Recover, Lucien slowly opened his eyes. He looked around confusedly and asked, "Why... What happened?"

Victor's brows tightly knotted together and he said in a very caring way, "You shouldn't have pushed yourself this hard. Health should always come the first place. Do you really think that it's right for you to hold this concert when you're sick like this? Couldn't you just put it off a bit?"

Hearing Victor's questions, Lucien was a bit touched, "I'm sorry, Mr. Victor. I was... just too excited about this concert, and I failed to stop. Now I'll take a good rest."

Gossett slightly nodded, "Mr. Evans, although the disease has been cured, you still have to take a long time to recover your life force."

"You almost made my heart stop beating, but I guess it was worth it. I was totally impressed by Ode to Joy, so I've got nothing really to complain." Seeing that Lucien was fine, Christopher joked a little.

Natasha released a sigh of relief and said to the cardinal, "I gotta send Lucien back first. Then I'll be back so we can have a conversation about his future treatment."

"Natasha, remember to tell people that I'm alright." Lucien reminded her.

"I got it." Natasha nodded. "You just take a good rest."

Seeing that Lucien was lying in Natasha's arms and their faces were so close together. Many people, including the grand duke, Christopher and Victor, put on an a slightly weird look.

After Natasha carried Lucien in her arms and left the hall, many nobles started to take glances at the grand duke, as if they were saying congratulations... The grand duke had no idea how to respond.

...

In the sky, Natasha said to Lucien with a smart smile on her face, "After you 'die', I think my father won't force me to get married for a long time."

Then her voice became a bit sad, "He knows how it feels to lose your beloved ones in a few years."

"I have to say that you're a good actress," said Lucien sincerely.

"Of course. I like drama a lot!"

"So when you suggested that I should let the musician die, you already had this plan to use me to get rid of the pressure from your father?" Lucien grinned.

"Come on... It just came to me..." Natasha put on an awkward smile.

"Friends don't lie. You can just admit it." Lucien lifted his eyebrows like Natasha.

Natasha switched the topic and looked around, "Well, we gotta get you back home first, so then I can talk to Gossett to make sure your next step of the plan can work."

Flying beside them and looking at them, with no facial expression on her face.

...

In the Psalm Hall, knowing that Lucien Evans was okay, the nobles were more relieved, and then they started to leave the hall, still feeling very excited.

What they did not know was that the moment when they saw Lucien slowly collapse to the floor like a black swan would in fact be their last look at this great musician.

After Christopher, Victor and Othello walked out of the Psalm Hall, when they saw the crowd that still lingered on the streets and around the square, they were very impressed.

Christopher said, "I've never seen something like this before. Maybe I won't be able to see this again before I die."

"Ode to Joy deserves this crazy affection," said Othello seriously, who just could not resist the power of this kind of sacred music. "As far as I'm concerned, Ode to Joy is the best symphony piece ever!"

Although he was right in front of Mr. Christopher, he still had to say so.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 298: The Angry Clown

In the Golden Cathedral, Aalto.

"What? Sentence Clown to death? He's the leader of the Night Watch!" Although Gossett, the red-robed cardinal, knew that Natasha would be pissed after seeing the black miasma, he totally did not expect this.

Natasha's silvery-purple eyes looked at the cardinal seriously, "Yes, Clown must be sentenced to death."

As a cardinal, Gossett was good at controlling his emotions. Although he knew that Natasha was not here for negotiation, he still said to the princess in a nice way, "Your Highness, Mr. Evans will be fine. No side effects will be left. Maybe you can let this thing go. After all, we cannot make sure that it was Clown who attacked Mr. Evans. Quite possibly, it was some heretic who wanted to frame Clown up."

"Cardinal Gossett, this is simple. If you think Lucien accused the wrong person, just let him ask Clown a few questions himself, and use the divine spells to test if Clown is lying, so everything would be clear," Natasha said in a very pushy way. After all, both of them were of senior-rank.

Facing Natasha's proposal, Gossett was a bit speechless. Because, in fact, the pastors and cardinals all believed that it was Clown who did this, and it would definitely bring very negative words to the reputation of the Church if the fact was proved.

"Alright..." Gossett used in the same gentle voice and said, "Let's first assume that Clown did it. Why would he do it? The only possibility is that Mr. Evans might have something to do with Professor, the evil sorcerer on the Cleansing List, so Clown decided to test him..."

"You've got any evidence?" Natasha took a step forward and there was stateliness in her eyes, "It's not in the War of Dawn, and you cannot randomly accuse someone of having 'something to do with' a sorcerer. Clown almost killed Lucien Evans because of his terrible assumption, so can I say someday the Church can directly kill a noble because of a baseless suspicion? No noble would want to live in this kind of fear. Also, although knights might not worry that much about themselves, they would still worry about the safety of their family!"

Gossett felt great pressure.

"On behalf of all the nobles of Aalto, I insist that Clown shall be sentenced to death to warn all the night watchers. No one can break the pact between the Church and the nobles!"

Gossett wished that they had lived in a few hundred years ago, so he could just ignore the unreasonable request from Natasha. However, the power of the nobles had increased a lot, and when they were united together, their power was strong enough to affect the decision made by the Church. Also, what Natasha said was not just nonsense.

"Your Highness, you're a devoted follower of the God of Truth. Fortunately, Mr. Evans is fine. And even though Clown made a bad mistake, sentencing him to death isn't the only solution, right?" Gossett softened his tone, "We can send Clown to the Inquisition, where he will get the punishment he deserves."

Natasha crossed in front of chest, "Only truth lives forever." Then, she said seriously, "I'm a devoted follower, so I don't want to see anyone ruining the relationship between the Church and the nobles like Clown did." Natasha's voice became very firm, "Clown must die."

Gossett remained silent for a while and said, "I'll send your request to the grand cardinals. I'm sorry I cannot make the decision for the Inquisition."

Natasha nodded, "I'm sure that the grand cardinal and cardinal Amelton know how serious this thing is, and I'll be waiting for the final decision."

...

In a common house in Aalto.

Clown was reading the information collected, trying to find clues out of it to figure out the relationship between Lucien Evans and Professor.

All of sudden, the door was pushed open. Juliana, the battle pastor, rushed in and said out of panic, "You gotta leave now, right now!"

"What? Calm down, Juliana." Clown looked up at Juliana with his ridiculous-looking face.

Juliana took a deep breath, "The Inquisition has decided to sentence you to death. You have to run now."

"What?!" Clown could not believe his own ears. He felt that he was abandoned by the whole world. He could not believe that all the effort he had made to defeat the evil for Lord, for the Church and the Inquisition now meant nothing at all.

Juliana said in a great hurry, "Lucien Evans passed out at the end of his concert an hour ago. Cardinal Gossett said it was because of the injury he had from before. The princess is very angry. Representing the nobles, she's imposed great pressure on the Church. From Lend's words, it seems that the Church has compromised. They're planning on arresting you and sentencing you to death secretly to pacify the nobles without damaging the Church's reputation."

"Sentence me... to death?" The ridiculous-looking clown face was still grinning, but the voice behind the mask was beyond desperate.

Juliana thought Clown did not believe her words, so she explained further, "You should trust Lend. I know we didn't get along well with him after what happened in the Black Forest, but as soon as he was selected to be the one to arrest you, he took a great risk and told me this. He needs you to leave Aalto right now. Someday you can come back using another identity. Several cardinals in the Inquisition are still on your side!"

Clown started murmuring to himself but just stood still there, as if his soul had been stolen. When Juliana was about to urge him to leave again, Clown burst out laughing.

"Hahahaha... Haha!"

The laughter sounded crazy.

"Are you alright?" Juliana asked concernedly.

The laughter suddenly stopped, and Clown replied in an extremely calm way, "I'm fine. I just find it funny. A musician who is close to an evil sorcerer and a princess who has special connections to the Congress of Magic can force the Church to kill their most loyal servant. I wonder if the Church has belonged to those sorcerers. How can the grand cardinals... How can Sard, Amelton, and Gossett let this happen?"

"It doesn't matter. I trust you, Minsk trusts you, Lend trusts you, and many night watchers are also on your side. Two out of the three leaders of the Inquisition have mercy on you! This is just temporary. One day the darkness will be driven away!"

Clown shook his head, "I'm okay, Juliana. You have to trust my willpower, or I wouldn't be able to control my Blessing power. I'll hide properly until I find the solid evidence. Then I'll accuse Lucien Evans of connecting to the evil sorcerer right in front of the Inquisition, or... it'll be even better if I can kill Lucien Evans right in front of Natasha's eyes."

"Don't! Right now Lucien Evans must be under great protection." Juliana hurriedly reminded him, "Maybe this is a trap for you!"

Although she was aware that Clown was able to control his emotions to avoid making stupid mistakes, Juliana also knew that a dark Blessing could make people more or less crazy.

Clown looked out of the window and sneered, "I know. I know how bad Lucien Evans was injured by me. I did not have the time to really harm him. As a knight, even without those potions, he should be able to recover within a few days. It was Lucien Evans himself who turned this into a bad disease, and thus Natasha could find the reason to kill me using the Church's hand. I'll be careful when investigating him. This time, I'll get him."

His eyes on the clown mask looked cold.

...

In the garden villa.

"Lucien, are you sure that someone will tell Clown the news?" asked Natasha with uncertainty. "Don't tell me you learned this from your magic crystal ball."

"How did you know?" Lucien pretended to be surprised, then he said, "It's just a simple reasoning. What you asked for was too much, and the cardinals and the leaders of the inquisition must more or less sympathize with Clown, not to mention that based on the number of night watchers that survived in the black forest, there must be other people who hate Professor very badly just like Clown, and those people must be on Clown's side."

What Natasha said to Gossett was previously agreed by the two of them.

"I see, but this is just your reasoning. Those cardinals and the Inquisition have always been taking a ruthless position when it comes to maintaining their relationship with nobles, so maybe Clown will be killed, and then your plan wouldn't be able to continue." Although Natasha was impressed by Clown's resolution in fighting against darkness and evilness, she was on her friend's side firmly. She knew it well when she should have mercy and when not.

"Even so, those night watchers are gonna be so worked up that they won't just let go of Professor."

Also, Lucien thought to himself that, if that person noticed something, he would not blow this chance. After Clown attacked him, Lucien found another way of using this chance and this was also the foundation of his reasoning.

"I hope so." Natasha smiled, "You've got that person's information. You should go now. I'll stay here for you."

...

Although he failed to awaken his Blessing, Viscount Klein was still very energetic in his fifties. His black hair was taken good care of and his green eyes were like deep lakes. He was an archon in the town hall of Aalto.

After attending Lucien Evans' concert in the Psalm Hall, he was too excited to fall asleep. So he just got up and started to read the books he collected in his living room.

It was getting late. Putting down the old book in his hand, Klein was ready to go to his bedroom.

When he put on his pajamas in front of the mirror, a mysterious figure showed up in it, like a reflection. The man in the mirror said to him in a hoarse voice:

"Long time no see, Mr. Philosopher."

"Professor?!" Klein was shocked, and in the next second, he activated mage armor. In the past years, he finally became a sorcerer.

Viscount Klein was one of the apprentices, Philosopher. Because he was close to Silvia's father, or say, White Honey's father, Natasha got his information but never told this to anyone.

Klein carefully looked back but saw no one behind him. However, the man wearing the black robe in the mirror was still there.

The fourth-circle spell, Figure in Mirror?

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 299: The Guide

Ten o'clock at night, on the 3rd day of the Month of Passion, the sixth of the year.

When the entire city was still immersed in the great charm of the concert, when people all over the streets were still humming the melody of New Country Symphony and Ode to Joy, those who lived in the darkness had come back to their original life, and now they were seizing the chance to have their secret gathering.

In a common-looking house in Purple Lily District, about ten people gathered in the basement. Most of them were wearing the same black robes, while some were wearing the common masks drawn with bear or goat that kids could easily buy on the streets.

"Hanger, why is Mr. Philosopher still not here?" A woman asked. Although she was wearing a loose black robe, one could tell that her figure was quite nice. Despite the disguise, her voice was still sweet.

They were standing around a round table, on which there were several white candles, many books and pieces of paper.

Hanger answered in his cold voice, "Why do you ask me, Mercury? As a sorcerer, Mr. Philosopher doesn't have to arrive here early."

In this dangerous city, Aalto, after becoming a real sorcerer, Philosopher did not leave the magic apprentice circle, instead, he chose to play the role of teacher for the apprentices. He taught the apprentices a lot and sometimes offered the apprentices useful potions and materials by exchanging some things. Now, he was already the leader in this circle. Thanks to Philosopher's effort, Hanger was also close to becoming a real sorcerer, and other apprentices had also improved a lot.

"Five more minutes. If Mr. Philosopher is still not here, I'm afraid we must go." Before Mercury said anything, the man wearing a reindeer mask said in a hoarse voice.

Other apprentices all agreed. It was not that they did not want to show respect to Mr. Philosopher. For a secret meeting like this, if anyone was late, that might very possibly be a sign of danger.

Hearing that, Morning Star said in frustration, "I'm really fed up with this kind of life... worrying and hiding all the time."

"If you don't want to worry and hide, consider Fire Wolf's solution." Hanger was being ironical.

Suddenly, all the apprentices quieted down. Although they were not there on the spot in the black forest, they heard the rumors and some were even directly told that Fire Wolf was the traitor.

Mercury released a sigh, "If Mr. Professor hadn't left Aalto in a hurry, if there hadn't been a traitor, maybe we would have known where the Congress of Magic is already, and we wouldn't be this confused and lost now."

When mentioning the name of Professor, she felt in awe. The name represented profound knowledge and terrifying magic power, and the name was even on the Cleansing List!

Hearing Professor's name, the apprentices who joined the gathering not long ago all felt very curious. They totally believed what Mercury just said, as the name was even intimidating for those sorcerers belonging to other circles!

"I thought Mr. Professor was a common middle-rank mage, but his power was way more terrifying than I thought..." Hanger murmured.

At this time, someone knocked at the door in a unique way.

"It's Mr. Philosopher..." The apprentices felt a bit more relaxed. They then all stood up to show their respect.

Mercury walked toward the chamber door and asked carefully in a low voice, "Mr. Philosopher?"

The house they were in was a two-storey one with lots of windows that one could get in. Therefore, they did not place any detection spells beside the house door, instead, they placed many magic traps on the corridor towards the chamber. They had special ways of knocking the door to know who it was, and if there was any dangers, they could escape through the secret magic hidden path in the basement.

"It's me," the man answered, whose voice sounded old.

The voice was familiar, and the tone was calm. Their spiritual power told the apprentices that there was nothing wrong.

Every time when someone was at the door, each one of the apprentices had their guts lurched up in their throat, which made them feel horrible.

Dismissing the magic trap, Mercury opened the door and saw Mr. Philosopher wearing the black robe and hood.

"Good evening, Mr. Philosopher." All the apprentices put their right hand on their forehead and bowed with great respect.

But after they looked up, they all gasped as they were completely shocked. There was another man wearing a big black robe standing beside Philosopher, but they were not aware of this at all just now when they used spiritual power to scan around!

"Who is he? Why are you bringing a stranger?" Mercury was angry. It was strictly prohibited by the gathering.

With no notice in advance, no one could bring any strangers here.

Although other apprentices also felt offended, they did not say anything right in front of Mr. Philosopher. After all, he was a real sorcerer.

Seeing Mercury's reaction, these apprentices guessed that very possibly Mercury had already become a real sorcerer, and she was just hiding her power.

Philosopher remained calm and grinned, "Calm down, Mercury. He's not a stranger. He's been here before."

"What? Who?" Mercury and the other apprentices were all very surprised.

"Mercury, Hanger, Morning Star, Reindeer... you all don't remember me anymore?" said Lucien in his pretended hoarse voice, and he released his great spiritual power completely to let the apprentices feel it.

This power did not come from any magic items, but from a real middle-rank mage.

In Hangers and the rest of the apprentices' eyes, the black-robed sorcerer was beyond dreadful. His power was like an endless pit of darkness, and just taking a step closer to it could take away all their strength and make them feel freezing cold. If the man really intended to use his power on them, their limp legs would not even be able to let them stand there still, not to mention casting any spells.

With no doubt, he was definitely a middle-rank mage!

His power was terrifying, and in front of his power, the power of the apprentices was just nothing.

Although Mercury also took a few steps backward, and her beautiful hands were slightly trembling, she was still able to move in front of the great power.

"... Mr. Professor?" Her voice trembled as well, "You're Mr. Professor!"

Professor was the only middle-rank mage she once had a connection to so far.

"I'm glad you can recognize me," said Lucien coldly. Although he laughed when he was talking, the laughter was also cold. He was aware that Mercury did not recognize him because of his appearance—the fake hoarse voice he was using was not special at all, and he made himself look even a bit taller.

The rest of the apprentices were beyond shocked.

"Mr... Mr. Professor?!" They repeated the name subconsciously. They could not believe that the sorcerer whose name was on the Cleansing List at the three hundred and sixtieth place was standing right in front of them. Professor, the name which had been bothering Night Watch for more than three years, was a legend in the circle of magic of Aalto!

They totally did not expect this.

The apprentices suddenly felt very proud and excited. Also, the hope that they might get to know where the Congress of Magic was started to grow fiercely!

Lucien was there before, so he totally understood what they were going through right now. Therefore, even though he had no other purposes, he would still find other ways to tell them how to get to the Congress.

After the apprentices bowed to Professor respectfully, Philosopher introduced, "Mr. Professor, among the apprentices you know from before, some left Aalto as they saw no hope here, like Oak and White Glove; some died, like Owl and White Honey... Now we still have Mercury, Hanger, Morning Star, Reindeer and me, and the rest of them are new members."

Lucien was a bit emotional as his memory was awakened. He did not expect that Smile died during his adventure, and he wondered if Lord Doro managed to escape. As for White Honey's death, no one knew better than Lucien.

After the introduction part, and after Professor sat down, Mercury asked hurriedly and eagerly, "Mr. Professor, can you tell us where the Congress of Magic is? I'm willing to do everything that I can for the information! Please tell me if there are any conditions?"

She wanted to get the information as soon as possible. No one knew what would happen in the next second.

Under the gaze of the apprentices, Lucien replied, "There's no condition required, as it's my duty as a sorcerer to introduce more of you to the Congress to help it grow. I'm here for you all as a guide, and I'm willing to help."

Lucien differed himself from Felipe and those people from the Hand of Paleness.

After a short time of silence, Mercury's voice trembled as she almost cried, "Mr. Professor, I have no idea how to express my gratitude. Thank you so much. Can you tell us where it is right now?"

Only people who were there themselves before understood the great nervousness and intensity as well as the depression these apprentices were under every day.

"If we can get there, Mr. Professor, we'll never forget your help!" Hanger was excited as well.

All the apprentices presented showed their feelings of gratitude. Then, Lucien smiled and said, "The Congress of Magic is in the Kingdom of Holm, across the Storm Strait. It's a floating city close to the kingdom's capital, Rentato, and the city is called Allyn."

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 300: Clown's Action

"It's a city in the Sky?! In the Kingdom of Holm?" Mercury repeated the words out of great surprise.

Hanger and Reindeer were also shocked, "Rentato? Near the capital?!"

It was totally out of their expectation, like how Lucien felt when he first heard where the Congress was. They simply could not imagine that the Congress of Magic could exist above board right in front of people's eyes in the country across the strait.

They thought that the Congress was probably deep into the mountain ranges, or even in another dimension or demiplane, which was secretly connected to the main material world.

Philosopher, Viscount Klein, had more or less heard something from Count Hayne, Count Rafati, and some other big nobles, so he remained relatively calm.

Looking at the surprised faces of the apprentices, Lucien felt quite satisfied, "Yes, the Congress is in Allyn. It's gained some support from the nobles in Holm, and its power has way surpassed that of the Church in the kingdom. Right now, if it was not because of the nobles' wish to maintain the power balance between the three parties, and if it was not because of the great cost the Church has paid to hold the Radiance Church, the kingdom would have been under the Congress' control."

"It's... It's unbelievable..." Mercury murmured, and she still could not believe what she just heard. She was born and also grew up in the Duchy of Violet, and in her mind, the Church's power was greater than anything else, even across different dimensions. If the Church had not been divided, most sorcerers would have died out already. How was it possible that the Congress of Magic could overpower the Church?

Mercury was not alone here. Even including Philosopher, the apprentices present were all very surprised and confused. Although Philosopher had heard something about the kingdom across the strait, because he was not qualified enough to sit close to the grand duke, the information he had was also very limited.

In order to give him more confidence, Lucien briefly told them the history of the development of the Congress of Magic, the achievement made by some great arcanists from the Congress and its current situation. In the end, Lucien said to them, "The Congress has been the second most influential power across the continent. In Allyn, you can learn arcana and basic magic for free, and you don't need to hide anymore. Instead, you can earn yourself status and wealth that you deserve by learning magic."

Lucien was not trying to exaggerate anything, but his plain tone made the apprentices thrilled. Their great excitement left their body slightly shaking, as they finally saw the light in the seemingly endless darkness.

Although Mercury was quite calm most of the time, now she almost burst into tears, "Then Mr. Professor... What shall we do? I think the Church must have blocked the strait... Can you lead us to get there?"

What she said reminded the other apprentices—they realized that they were not in Allyn yet, and there were still lots of dangers waiting for them ahead.

"I've got my own things to deal with. I cannot do this for you." Lucien first rejected them and then told them the two possible routes to get there. Then he added, "If you've got any magic items that can make you fly, consider to take the route in the north through Schachran Empire. If you don't, go to Sturk and find Ferryman. There you have to prove to them that you're qualified to be sent to Allyn. So try to show them your ability and potential if you haven't become a real sorcerer when you arrive in Sturk."

Lucien did not tell them who Granneuve was, because there might be a spy from the Church among the apprentices. Lucien only told them how to find Ferryman.

Learning from the lesson a few years ago, the liaisons from the congress now had a strict series of procedures to observe, question, identify and test the apprentices. So even if the spy told the night watchers how to find Ferryman, it would still be very hard for the night watchers to get to Allyn.

Mercury calmed down a little, "Thank you, Mr. Professor. If there's a chance, I hope to see you in Allyn."

The apprentices including Philosopher knew that they had to work really hard to prove that they were useful to the Congress in order to obtain the chance of going to Allyn. This was the cost they had to pay, and they were well aware of it.

"I hope that you can tell this to other apprentices and sorcerers who you can trust. Don't be selfish. Give others the chance to choose." Lucien nodded, and then he added, "After tonight, you might want to change an identity and find another place to hide. I'm concerned that there are still spies from the Church in other magic groups."

"Got it, Mr. Professor," the apprentices answered seriously. They completely trusted Professor's words, and no one wanted to fail when they were almost there at the edge of the light.

After a while, Hanger said to Professor with some passion, "Mr. Professor, you mentioned something about arcana and basic magic. As a profound middle-rank mage, can you make some brief introduction of them? As for the pay, you can pick any magic materials that we have here..."

"It's free to make some basic introduction..." said Lucien in a plain tone. In fact, the materials here brought by the apprentices were just nothing in his eyes.

Hearing that, all the apprentices including philosopher stood up and gave Lucien a respectful salute following the manner of the ancient magic empire.

Then Lucien started to explain magic system using the arcana way of thinking. All of the apprentices were shocked, as they had never heard something like this before, but the new way of thinking definitely had brought them lots of thoughts.

It was different from last time when they read the journal, Arcana. Last time they were totally lost, while this time because Lucien was great at explaining profound theories using simple language, the apprentices saw a new gate behind which there was an ocean of knowledge!

At the end of the gathering, the apprentices and Philosopher were still immersed in the new world of knowledge. Even though there were parts that contradicted what they knew, what Professor said was very persuasive.

At their current level, and because they had never received any systematic education after a profound leader, it was the best time for them to absorb new knowledge like a piece of sponge.

After leaving the basement, the apprentices and Philosopher again gave Lucien a respectful salute with their right hand on their forehead, "Hope we can learn more from you if there's chance in the future, Mr. Professor."

In their eyes, Professor was not just some mysterious and important sorcerer on the Cleansing List anymore, but more like a representation of arcana and the Congress of Magic.

Lucien grinned, "My students don't like me that much. If there's chance, I hope you all won't regret."

"...?" The apprentices were very confused. Then they watched Professor and Philosopher leaving together.

...

Down in the sewers of Aalto.

"What? Professor's in Aalto right now?!" Clown suddenly stood up and his eyes stared at Juliana like they were going to burn.

Juliana was both thrilled and nervous, "Yes, an hour ago, we've confirmed it from our spy that he just attended the gathering of the magic group. "

The spy reported to them immediately after the gathering. After all, Professor was on the Cleansing List, and what he had done could never be forgotten by the Night Watch.

Clown suddenly became silent, then he burst out laughing, but his laughter sounded crazy and sad, "Lucien Evans is in Aalto. Professor then also shows up in Aalto. If they are not connected, I'd rather put myself on the burning post! Those cardinals up there should see now..."

"Just stay here and wait for the good news. When we catch Professor and find the evidence that shows Lucien Evans is connected to him, you can go back to the Inquisition!" said Juliana joyfully.

Clown shook his head, "No, I need to seize the chance. I need to catch Professor myself."

"It might be Professor's conspiracy..." Juliana hurriedly said to Clown. "Professor might be here just because of you! Let us do this for you!"

The three leaders in charge of the Inquisition were all level six radiant knights, although they were not as powerful as the level-seven red-robed cardinals, they were enough to catch Professor. Any conspiracies were simply nothing in front of the absolute power.

Clown shook his head firmly, "Maybe there'll be someone behind controlling the Inquisition or the Church to buy Professor more time. I have to be quick, and I must take revenge for the more than twenty teammates of mine who died in that forest. I'll never forget what happened to us. I'll be very careful."

Clown had no idea what Professor's purpose was. There seemed to be pointless for Professor to kill him.

"I see. Please take care." Juliana knew that Clown would not change his mind, so she nodded.

Clown laughed, "Professor could never expect that we've got all the information about Philosopher!"

The night watchers had spent months investigating apprentices who were relatively close to Professor. Although they lost Owl because he died in the remains of the Magic Lock, Philosopher finally led them to find Professor.

"Then you'd better hurry. You want to find Professor before the other night watchers come." Juliana reminded him. After all, Clown was also on the night watchers' target list.