

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 39: The Tawny Owl

Mr. Victor passed a piece of notation to Lucien, which was written by himself for harpsichord beginners. The song did not require any expert skills, and thus, when it was played on a harpsichord, it was quite plain. However, after the improvement, the tone of the piano would definitely add some splendour to it.

With his diligent practice of meditation, Lucien had an even better memory now. It only took him a while to roughly go through the music several times. Before him, Mr. Victor only saw noble students, like Lott and Felicia, being able to do this, because they grew up under the nurture of music since they were born.

“All right, Lucien. I know you still feel you’re not prepared, but it’s time for you to start playing. Don’t be nervous and just pay attention to the keys you should press down. Take it easy.” Mr. Victor was quite looking forward to Lucien’s first play.

Putting his hands on the keyboard in a defined arch, Lucien pressed down the first key. It was not difficult for him to remember the song, but, as expected, playing it was a completely different story. Lucien felt his fingers were too clumsy to reach the right keys in time. Slow as he was, Lucien tried his best to focus on the keys to make sure they were the correct ones. Instead of a song, his first-time playing sounded more like a bunch of separated notes climbing out of the piano slowly one by one, or like a dying man exhaling with great effort.

However, no one there ever laughed at him, including the three noble students. Watching Lucien play reminded them of their own past struggle, which was even more terrible.

It was a short piece of melody, that should last around a minute, but it took Lucien more than three minutes to finish playing it. After he pressed down the last key, his forehead was oozing sweat. Lucien felt that even fighting with an aquatic zombie in the pipes could not be more exhausting.

Mr. Victor was the first person who started applauding Lucien, followed by Rhine and the other students.

“You did a good job, Lucien.” Victor comforted him, smiling, “I know how clumsy a person would feel when he or she first started playing. But you are the only student I’ve seen that managed to press every key correctly. It’s impressive.”

Rhine nodded, “Yes, you are very smart, Lucien. I’m sure you will improve quickly with more practice. But the coordination of your hands was for sure not your strong point, and later you will also need to use your feet for the pedals. It’ll be pretty challenging for you.”

“I agree,” said Mr. Victor, “But being more coordinate is just a matter of time. If you’re willing to work hard, you’ll be a qualified musician within ten years.”

“Ten years?” It seemed that even with the direction of a master musician, it still would take a long time for a person to make achieve something in music. However, Lucien was still expecting that, by becoming a qualified musician as soon as possible, his living expenses as well as the cost for his magic experiments could be fully covered.

“Is there any way to become a qualified musician faster?” Lucien asked.

“Yes, sure, if you’re a genius.” Felicia interjected, “But you are not, Lucien. Working hard is the only way to become a qualified musician, and of course it takes time. Don’t let Mr. Victor lose his face for having a student who couldn’t even play the piano decently.”

In Felicia’s eyes, Lucien’s question fully showed his shallowness.

Rhine responded in a more mild way, “I understand young people’s eagerness, but like Felicia said, my current small achievement in playing violin took me a long time, and it’s the same with other instruments.” Then he paused a bit, “Well, actually hard practice is not the only way to become a qualified musician. If you could awaken the Blessing in your blood, your ability of controlling your body would be increased by a large extent. With your smart little brain, you could probably become a piano musician within a few weeks.”

“But how long it would take you to awaken the Blessing?” Rhine shrugged his shoulders, “Maybe ten years, maybe twenty years, or forever... What do you think?”

“Becoming a genius sounds more practical, Lucien.” Lott laughed.

Victor turned to Lucien, “If you just want to master a relatively hard piece of melody, an intensive practice within a short period of time may be helpful, but this can never help you become a really good musician. Do not rush, but always work hard, Lucien.” Victor tapped Lucien on his shoulders to encourage him.

Lucien looked at Mr. Victor and nodded.

After the class, Lucien started working on his monthly budget. He needed to give auntie Alisa three Nars every month for the meals because he was now eating with their family more often. Also, more money would be spent on building a secret magic lab in the future, when Aalto calmed down and became safer.

Besides money, Lucien still had lots of concerns: buying too many glasswares for magic experiments could be very suspicious to the church, and Lucien currently had no idea what to do with them; he also needed some black robes, so he could sew some rows of small pockets inside for carrying more different magic reagents in the future.

Burying his head in his arms, Lucien thought to himself, “Maybe I’ll become a tailor sewing clothes for people rather than a sorcerer.” The idea amused him a bit.

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Several days later, at night, Lucien was reviewing the last magic he analyzed, Homan’s Oscillation, even though it was too risky for him to practice the spell at this moment. Besides, by changing the vibration frequency of his spiritual power, now Lucien could leave an imperceptible magic mark on a target, which made him very happy.

As for music, like Rhine commented, after a certain stage, his good memory could not help much anymore. His poor coordination became his biggest problem, so Lucien was still practicing the same etude.

All of a sudden, Lucien heard someone or something was swiftly approaching his shack.

Lucien hid all his stuff under the bed in a hurry and stood there in a defensive posture.

Knock, knock, knock

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The window opened by itself!

Lucien felt a familiar wave of magic power coming inside. He was very nervous, but also kind of excited. Was it another sorcerer apprentice, or even a real sorcerer?

A tawny owl flew in through the window and landed on the table. Somehow Lucien felt it had an arrogant-looking face.

And the owl started speaking in a harsh voice.

“You should open the window for me, you little boy.”

Lucien was not really scared. In the notes, the witch mentioned some animals that could talk. Some of them were sorcerers or sorceresses transformed into different kind of animals, while some of them were summoned pets. However, Lucien was not sure which one the owl was, yet.

Strolling on the table, the arrogant owl looked at Lucien from top to bottom. Then it started talking again.

“Don’t be afraid, boy. As long as you answer my questions honestly, Lord Doro won’t hurt you.”

Lucien nodded his head, feeling a bit confused...Who was Lord Doro?

The owl took a step forward and looked at Lucien's eyes, "Listen to my question... After the apprentice died, did any sorcerer or sorceress come here and asked you about her?"

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Chapter 40: Tracking

As long as all the required reagents were ready, an apprentice could start summoning his or her own pet. With different reagents, there were also different summoned animals. Some could be common animals like owls, cats or ravens, while some could be very powerful magic creatures like a Faerie Dragon.

Once they were summoned, mysterious connections would be built between the owners and them. Thus, an owner could gain some special abilities based on the features of his or her summoned pet, and vice versa. As long as the pet was strong enough to handle magic, it could also use some of its owner's basic spells. For example, if one could summon a cat as his or her companion, the summoner usually would then have good night vision, and there would be also a significant improvement in the person's agility. Meanwhile, the cat could help its owner to cast some of the apprentice spells like Darkness and Organ Preservation, even some basic Necromantic spells.

However, as to how many spells a companion pet could master, and how many times it could cast the spells depended on its owner's level. That was to say, the power consumed by a spell would not come from the pet, but still from its owner. If the owner's remaining spiritual power was not enough, the pet would not be able to use magic.

A summoned companion pet could also grow stronger to higher levels, but the special abilities its owner gained would not be further improved along the process. If the pet died, or somehow the connection was broken, the owner would lose the special abilities deriving from the pet and even be injured.

Lucien had never paid much attention to summoning spells before, because having a magic pet in the city under the nose of the church could easily bring him big trouble.

A few seconds later, Lucien slowly answered the owl's question, "No... I didn't see any other sorcerer or sorceress."

The owl flapped its wings in satisfaction, "Very well... You are indeed not lying. Lord Doro has been watching you for some time, and no one came or asked about her."

"Sneaky little bird..." Lucien almost rolled his eyes.

"Then, the second question. What happened in the witch's secret chamber and what did you find there?" The owl's big round eyes blinked.

"Well... I went down there with a few guards..." Lucien told the owl exactly what had happened in the chamber, except, of course, the part about the magic books being copied to his spirit library. No one would believe that there was a whole library in his soul anyway.

"What a tragedy for the guard! He lost his arm!" The owl sighed, "Good boy, Lord Doro's job is done now. Good night, little boy!" Then it flew directly toward the open window and gradually disappeared in the darkness.

Then Lucien finally realized that Doro was the owl's name. Without doubt, the owl had a master, and Lucien wanted to figure out who the person was.

So when Lucien was talking, he left an almost undetectable mark on Doro, the owl, with his spiritual power. When he was sure that the owl had flown some distance away from his place, Lucien quickly put on his black robe and ran out of the door.

It was very dark outside at midnight and the streets were quiet. Lucien spread his power out and soon detected the owl.

The owl did not fly very fast. Lucien was a bit hesitant whether he should follow the bird or not. Doro didn't look like a very strong summoned pet, so Lucien was guessing that its owner probably was also an apprentice. But what if there were other sorcerers at the place?

A few seconds later, Lucien decided to take the risk. After all, sooner or later, he needed to find other apprentices or sorcerers and join them. Such a good opportunity like the one sitting in front of him was definitely worth the risk. Furthermore, if Lucien found himself in a dangerous situation, he still had a level-two magic ring to help him, the Ice Revenger.

Lucien followed the target and ran on the streets. At the same time, he kept some distance between him and Doro to make sure he wouldn't be noticed.

About ten minutes later, Lucien saw the owl flying into a window on the second floor of a building covered by darkness. Carefully, he approached it, and was a bit surprised when he found out it was actually the Copper Coronet.

Lucien put his Ice Revenger on the finger, and then carefully walked toward the back door of the pub. With some easy apprentice spells, he sneaked into the tavern and went upstairs. Luckily, no one was on the corridor at this time.

Listening carefully with the help of his spiritual power, Lucien could hear a man talking in a low voice inside one of the rooms.

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Listening to his owl's report, Smile was sitting in a rocking chair with a glass of wine in his hand.

Then he closed his eyes and lay back on the chair, "Well... It seems that the guy doesn't know the witch as well. Oh no... I have no clue now, not at all. How can I find the man from the Continental Congress..."

"Smile, as long as we keep collecting information..." Doro was trying to comfort him.

While he was feeling depressed, there was a knock on the front door.

Doro jumped to the bed at once and buried himself under the blanket, while Smile bounced out of the rocking chair and asked nervously, "Who is it?!"

"I'm looking for Doro, the owl, and you, Mr. Smile" A man answered in a calm way. His voice sounded harsh and cold.

“What?!” Doro screamed and its big round eyes opened even wider.

Smile’s spell was ready, but he dare not launch the attack rashly on a stranger who he knew nothing about.

“I asked, who are you?!” Smile repeated.

“I’m a sorcerer, and I know the witch. Like you, I’m also looking for the man from the Congress.” The harsh voice paused a bit and continued, “Earlier I heard your owl asking a young boy about the witch, so I followed your pet and came here.”

“What?! It was Lord Doro’s mistake! What a tragedy!” yelled the owl.

Smile relaxed a bit. At least he knew it was not the church, or they would have broken the door at once, without any explanation.

“If you’re a sorcerer, you don’t need me to open the door for you.” Smile did not lower his guard though. If the man opened the door by himself, he could have a few more seconds to better cast defensive measures. Besides, he could tell from the spell if the guy was really a sorcerer, or a pastor in disguise. The two powers were different.

Then, the door opened. A freezing cold and threatening power came into the place before the sorcerer entered.

Smile took a step back. He knew he was definitely overpowered. None of his apprentice spells would be helpful when facing the other sorcerer's power. Then he saw a mysterious man wearing a black robe, whose face was hidden in the shadow of a hood.

Lucien, on the other hand, saw the apprentice's face well enough, and realized that he actually met Smile before. When Lucien first visited Copper Coronet, Smile was the hooked-nosed man sitting beside the pub counter.