

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 41: Apprentice Group

Facing the threatening power, Smile subconsciously tried to avoid looking at the face shaded by the hood, as if there was a dreadful and evil pit hidden inside. He even thought it was possible that the sorcerer in front of him was a user of black magic.

After putting on Ice Revenger, it kept infusing a steady cold flow into Lucien's body, strengthening his willpower. At the same time, Lucien could also sense the tension in the air built by the ring.

With Ice Revenger, Lucien could be immune to all the apprentice-level magics working on his mind. The person who wore the ring could, at the same time, have the Frightful Presence buff forcing people surrounding him or her to feel frightened, which was usually a buff of knight.

Without asking for permission, Lucien entered the room and closed the door behind him. Under the alert gaze of Smile, Lucien casually found a chair and sat down, then he started talking again in the pretended harsh voice,

"I knew the apprentice by accident. She made an appointment for me to meet the sorcerer who came from the headquarter of the Continental Congress of Magic. I was looking forward to meeting him to find the land where sorcerers and sorceress can feel free to study magic. But before the meeting, she died, and I never had the chance to meet the sorcerer. I was planning on asking the young lad named Lucien the same question as well, but your owl was a step ahead of me."

Knowing that the sorcerer sitting in front of him was not his enemy, Smile finally relaxed. Rubbing his hands, he started explaining why he was also looking for the mysterious sorcerer,

“I met her several months ago, and I invited her to our secret apprentice group meeting. Later she told us that she met a great sorcerer from the Congress. In her description, on the land where the Congress sits, all the sorcerers and sorceresses don’t have to hide anymore. We were...so encouraged...”

“I understand,” Lucien nodded, “We are sorcerers, not rats. We deserve much better than this.”

Smile raised his head and started feeling close to this unexpected visitor. Sorcerers and sorceresses always understood their shared struggle and fear. Facing the same enemy, most sorcerers and sorceresses united to help each other and to escape from the search of the church.

“Yes, sir. You must understand our excitement.” Smile lowered his head and looked at his hands again, “We also asked her to invite the great sorcerer to come to our meeting. Although he didn’t show up for the first time, the sorceress brought a journal called Arcana from him to us.”

Lucien remembered the journal. It must be the same one the sorceress mentioned in her notebook.

“Arcana?” Lucien pretended he never heard of the journal before.

“Yes, sir. When she first mentioned the Congress, some of us didn’t believe it. After reading it, all of us started yearning for the place. The journal was old, very old... it was published about twenty-five years ago. But the ideas in the journal were amazing, way beyond imagination... It was like a new world.” Smile’s face lightened up a bit.

A few seconds later, Smile continued in a depressed voice, “But she was found by the church before our next meeting. I know it was dangerous, but I still don’t want to give up. I moved from Purple Lily into this pub, hoping I could find any clue related to the Congress. Before, I was afraid that the church might still be watching her place, so I waited for almost a month and finally sent Doro there tonight.”

Lucien saw Smile’s face was changing with different emotions—excitement, astonishment, sadness and depression. He was pretty sure Smile was not lying. Hearing Smile’s explanation, Lucien felt kind of disappointed, since he was hoping that Smile might know something more about the Congress.

“Her death is our loss.” Lucien said slowly, “I’m afraid the sorcerer you were talking about might get caught with her at the same time. A sorcerer from the headquarter can easily catch the church’s attention.”

“I guess so...” Smile nodded with a sad look.

“What a tragedy!” yelled the owl Doro.

“Smile, can I take a look at the journal?” Lucien was trying to see if he could find any information from it.

Smile shook his head and replied, “Sorry, sir. The journal is not here now. We take turns to read it. The journal was very hard for us apprentices to understand, but I guess for a real sorcerer like you, it won’t be a problem.”

The power of the ring made Smile think Lucien was at least a sorcerer of the first or second circle, instead of an apprentice like him. Toward Smile’s assumption, Lucien neither admitted nor denied, since Smile’s respect might bring him some benefits.

“So...If you don’t mind, sir,” Smile asked Lucien with a bit hesitation, “you can join us. The journal will be passed on to another apprentice over the next meeting.”

Lucien thought about the potential risk, but he also didn’t want to miss the chance to find the apprentice group in Aalto.

“What do you usually do during the meeting?” Lucien asked.

“Aalto is the last city of ancient Sylvanas Magic Empire, and there are still many sorcerers and sorceresses teaching their apprentices secretly. Apprentices gather together to exchange information, magic materials and views. We work together and help each other.” Smile explained.

“I see... But the church is watching us all the time. How did the founders manage to start the group at the very beginning?” Lucien wanted to ask more questions to make sure it was not a trap.

“Well... there’re several apprentice groups. Most apprentices here belong to one of them, while some join more than one group. The founders of our group first met each other by accident in the Melzer Black Forest when they were seeking the same magic materials.” Smile answered in a patient way, “...I know you’re very cautious, sir, and I completely understand. Every one of us all felt the same way when we first joined the meeting group. You’ll see that it’s a very secret group. Except the one who introduces you to the meeting, you can hardly can recognize anyone else there, because we’d all dress like the way you’re dressing now.”

“If you can join us, sir, it will be our pleasure. And I’m pretty sure you can also find what you need there, at least we can try.” Smile added.

Despite the man's harsh voice, Smile felt the man in the black robe was not a vicious sorcerer, instead, he appeared to be quite calm and understanding. If their apprentice group could have a real sorcerer as a regular member, these apprentices, including Smile himself, could definitely benefit a lot from it. Even if the man was actually not as powerful as he appeared to be, Smile didn't think he would do any harm to the group.

Lucien was persuaded. He knew sooner or later he had to find a group instead of always working alone, and the magic potions and reagents were also too tempting for Lucien to refuse, "Well... My lab was damaged several days ago, if your group can provide me with a whole set of labware, I'll be more than willing to go."

"I don't think it will be a problem, sir." Smile grinned.

"Thank you, Smile. Then where is the group meeting, and when?"

"This Saturday evening," answered Smile, "It would be held in the sewers, but we haven't agreed on the specific location. Please tell me how to find you when we decide, sir."

"Don't hold your meeting in the sewers." Lucien warned Smile seriously, "The church is lately keeping a close watching there. Don't ask me what happened there, and don't ask why I know this. Just tell all your group members not to go down there recently."

"What?!" Smile was shocked. Even thinking about what would happen to the apprentice group if he hadn't met the mysterious sorcerer tonight made his heart beat really fast.

"We can develop a set of code first. Then when you decide where and when to hold the meeting, find the eighth house opposite to the ruin of the apprentice's place and leave the secret code on the corner of the wall. It's easier and also safer for both of us." said Lucien.

The house sat right beside auntie Alisa's place. It was very convenient for Lucien to see the code on his way.

After agreeing on the secret code, Lucien stood up from the chair and was about to leave. Smile stopped him and asked,

“Sir, can you give me your pseudonym? We don't use real names during the meeting.”

Lucien thought for a few seconds and replied, “Well... call me ‘Professor’.”

Lucien slightly dusted his black robe and walked toward the door. Before he left, he turned towards Smile, “I almost forgot... I'm working on an experiment recently which requires Corpse Mushroom and Revenant Dust. I'm running out of these two materials. If you guys can provide some, I'd really appreciate it.”

Then he opened the door and stepped out of the room, “Good night, Owl.” Lucien nodded politely. “Owl” was Smile's pseudonym.

Smile watched the mysterious sorcerer closing the door gently and heard his light footsteps downstairs. Like a dream, the room became quiet again, as if the man never had never been there.

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Chapter 42: The Secret Meeting

After leaving the room, while Lucien was walking downstairs, he dispelled the spirit mark he left on Doro, as he didn't want Smile to somehow find out his own unique way of tracking.

Carefully, Lucien approached the back door. Again, with some easy spells, Lucien managed to leave Copper Coronet quietly and no one ever noticed him. Just in case, Lucien took a very roundabout way first, instead of going back to his place directly,

Lying in his bed, Lucien felt kind of encouraged since now he was certain that he was not alone. He was comforted by the fact that there were still other apprentices working hard while carefully hiding from the church. He wondered how many apprentices, sorcerers, and sorceresses were there in Aalto in total.

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In the following few days, Lucien's life was pretty plain but peaceful. Lucien got up early in the morning to do some work out and then went to work. Sometimes he read music books, and sometimes religion and travel book, sometimes he read in his own spirit library and analyzed the magic structures.

Although Pierre could be kind of weird sometimes, when he was reading his music books, Lucien almost couldn't feel his existence. And luckily, Wolf had been out of town for a while, and no one else in the association would ever give them a hard time.

Life was almost perfect these days. The only pity was that Lucien didn't have a chance to see Ms. Silvia, the famous violinist who was still single. According to Pierre, she was a goddess-like lady and was very talented. Since Pierre kept mentioning her for countless times, Lucien also started feeling curious. However, Mr. Silvia didn't come to the association very often.

While learning music, Lucien was still learning how to read, but the time spent on the latter was much shorter now, since he was learning really fast. Like the rest of the music students, after finishing the class, Lucien would stay at Mr. Victor's place and start another two-hour piano practicing. Lucien's quality of being persistent helped him a lot. He never stopped practicing until he had really sore fingers and arms and sweated a lot.

The evening was reserved to the study of magic. Nothing could pull Lucien out of the magic world in this period of time.

On Friday evening, what Lucien was on his way to auntie Alisa's place, he noticed there were some doodle-like patterns at the very corner of a wall. Lucien quickly understood what they meant.

"Ten o'clock. Saturday night. The abandoned house in the easternmost area in Aderon. Owl."

Lucien's expression did not change at all. He kept calmly walking toward Alisa's place as if he had seen nothing unusual.

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Lucien arrived at the place ten minutes earlier in his black robe, with Ice Revenger on his left hand. Before Lucien left his place, he also checked all the magic reagents in the pockets of the robe.

There was neither moon nor stars that night. Thick clouds covered all the light in the sky.

As soon as Lucien arrived, he heard an owl hoot in the darkness. It was Doro standing on the tall willow, serving as a sentinel. Under the tree stood Smile in a black robe. In order to let Lucien recognize him, Smile didn't wear his hood.

"Welcome, Mr. Professor." Smile walked toward Lucien and put on the hood, "I told the other members about you, and they were looking forward to your presence. Several apprentices also wanted to ask you for help with some magic problems. Of course, they will pay."

Knowing that Smile was trying to test him, Lucien, however, didn't feel nervous. He was pretty sure that he was more advanced than most of his peer apprentices, although he couldn't guarantee that he was able to solve all the problems, "I major in Astrology and Element magic. So if these are questions related to those, I shall be able to help them a bit."

Smile nodded, "Then please follow me, Mr. Professor."

Smile stopped in front of the old wood door of the abandoned place. After knocking on the door in a unique rhythm, Smile mimicked an owl hoot.

A few seconds later, a man wearing the same black robe opened the door slowly. When the man saw Lucien, he slightly nodded towards Lucien, "This must be Mr. Professor, then."

Lucien could tell it was not the man's real voice as well.

“Yes, this is Mr. Professor,” Smile’s voice was also lower than the other night, “and Professor, this is Fire Wolf.”

“Nice to meet you.” Lucien lowered his head slightly and greeted him. His left hand stayed in the sleeve, and his Ice Revenger was ready.

After walking through the living room and another door, Fire Wolf led them to the storage room. At the corner of the room, there was a staircase that led underground.

A basement! He wondered why he never thought about building a basement under his shack, instead of taking the risk and going down into the sewers every time. And at the same time, he could build a bigger crypt in Melzer Black Forest for practicing more powerful spells.

This was not a very spacious basement. Eleven low stools were placed surrounding a long table. Flickering candles sparsely illuminated the place. The other eight apprentices were already sitting there. All of them were wearing black robes.

Lucien walked downstairs with great caution, followed by Fire Wolf and Smile. They closed the door of the basement before they sat down.

“Everyone, today we’re honoured to have Mr. Professor here to exchange ideas and thoughts with us.” Smile stood up and started the introduction, “Mr. Professor is a real sorcerer. I’m sure our apprentice group meeting would benefit a lot from Mr. Professor’s profound knowledge.”

Then Smile started introducing the apprentices present one by one, “This is White Honey, Morning Star, Reindeer, White Glove, Oak, Philosopher, Mercury and Hanger.”

“The honour is all mine.” Lucien slightly bowed, “Please forgive me for being so direct. I come here largely because of the journal, Arcana. Can I take a look at it first?”

“No problem, Professor. Take your time and we can do random discussion first.” Philosopher nodded and slowly handed Lucien a black hardback book. His voice sounded pretty old, “Besides, I heard from Owl that you need a whole set of labwares and I brought them here tonight. I’ll be glad to give them to you as a gift if you can solve a problem for me later.”

Lucien didn’t open the book instantly, but carefully checked the cover of the book first.

There were a few separate silver lines joining together in the end on the black cover, which formed the word, Arcana, right in the centre. Under the name of the journal, a line of words wrote “Volume 11, the year 392 of Saint Calendar”. There were parchment pages inside it.

From the content page, Lucien found there were twenty-four articles in the journal. The first one was Discussion about the Fifth Failure of Finding the New Planets. Lucien felt interested in it and started reading.

“The theory of gravitation proposed by Douglas could explain lots of force field spells, even most spells of the Astrology school. Besides, the three laws of planetary motion also derives from that theory, which is of great significance for guiding the field of fortunetelling.

“Based on this theory, we have created many new and powerful spells. Thus we can say, if there are two major columns supporting the classical magic system, the theory of gravitation could be valued as the most important foundation for one of the columns — force field study.”

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“There is still one question remaining to be demonstrated: The theory of gravitation enables us to figure out many guiding formulas, and thus we know that the continent where we live in also belongs to a planet. The planet keeps rotating and at the same time revolving around the sun, so do the rest of the planets in the sky. Following the formulas mentioned above, we can also locate these planets.

“However, no one, not even the greatest sorcerer or sorceress, ever managed to reach the planets using the most advanced space magic, including me. Even we can calculate the coordinates of them, we can find none of them in the presumed places in space.

“When I was trying to cast the advanced space magic, although I could not reach the planet, I could feel the gravity of the target planet from my presupposed transit spot. The planets are there, but at the same time, they are not there.”

When Lucien found out that the planets in this world could tell destinies, Lucien was already quite surprised. Now he felt surprised again, and very confused.

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Chapter 43: A Real Professor

After he roughly went through some of the formulas in the article, Lucien found that the formulas in this world were basically consistent with what he had learned before, at school. If there was no calculation mistake, the sorcerer should be able to locate and find the planet. However, including the author, no one ever managed to arrive on the target planet.

“So weird...” Lucien thought to himself, feeling confused. Then he saw the author’s introduction:

Oliver Constantine—Grand arcanist; Legendary archmage; Level three in the profession of “the Hand of Annihilation”.

“It looks like the title of grand arcanist is even superior than legendary archmage, and the two titles are not overlapping. They should belong to different evaluation or ranking systems—the latter is decided by how powerful the sorcerer or sorceress is, while the former depends on one’s contribution to the study of arcana...” Lucien was guessing. Then when he looked at the other authors’ titles in the journal, his thought was proved right: All of them had two different titles, for example, “level eight arcanist, 9th circle Astrology mage”, “level six arcanist, 8th circle Element mage”... Lucien also noticed that, in most cases, the authors’ levels in arcana were lower than their magic power ranks. Therefore, it seemed the achievement in academic study was even harder.

Some of the rest of the articles were:

“Study of String Vibration in Some of the Magics”

“Brief Introduction of Differential Method and Infinite Series”

“Thoughts about Seven-bridge Problem”

“The Mutual Transformation Between Electricity and Magnetism in Magic”

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“A New Element Detected by a New Method”

“A Forever Debate: Whether Spiritual Power Exists in the Form of Wave or Particle — A Study of ‘Spirit Storm’”

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While Lucien was reading the book, other apprentices were observing him in secret.

Half an hour later, Lucien already had a general idea of the journal.

The study of arcana in this world could be understood as science on Earth. The development of mathematics and physics here was close to the one at the middle of the 18th century on Earth. Calculus had been basically built up, while there was a very rapid growth in the development of geometry. Also, the development in Mechanics and electromagnetism had been pushed further in this world. At the same time, some spells here were beyond the comprehension of Earth’s science, for example, Space Jump.

As for Element Magic, it was close to the development level of chemistry in the early nineteenth century on Earth. Researchers, or say, arcanists, had determined what particles made the elements and had realized that earth, fire, wind and water were actually not elements. Besides, they had started measuring atomic weight as well.

But the journal was published twenty years ago, Lucien speculated that the current development level of arcana should be even more advanced.

After he closed the journal, Lucien found that all the apprentices present were looking at him. He smiled and asked, "It's a very interesting book. Can I keep it for about two weeks?"

"As long as you can answer my questions, Mr. Professor." The voice of Philosopher sounded very old.

"Of course, Philosopher. You may ask now." Knowing that the elder apprentice was trying to test him, Lucien was pretty confident. He believed that his knowledge should be enough to answer some apprentice questions.

Philosopher took out a stack of papers filled with words and numbers, "Professor, since you specialize in Element and Astrology, I have some questions for you related to the first article in the journal... When I first met these formulas which can predict the orbiting of stars, I was so fascinated, but I couldn't understand how they were derived and why they actually work. Can you explain it for us, sir?"

It seemed like a shared question for all the apprentice present. All of them turned around and were waiting for Lucien's explanation.

Within Lucien's expectation, what Philosopher asked was related to celestial mechanics. He answered calmly, "Your question is too big to be fully explained at a time, because it involves too many different aspects. Tonight I can explain to you the basic principles of the formula and how to use them, are you okay with it?"

“Sure, Mr. Professor.” Philosopher answered politely.

“This symbol represents gravitational constant. Some of you may wonder what is gravity. Well, gravity is the force that makes you fall back to the ground when you jump up without using any magic, the force that makes apples drop. These phenomena never follow the will of God, and they should not be taken for granted...”

Lucien was trying to make his explanation simple. And when the other apprentices interrupted him to ask why, he just answered in this way, “In order to explain this question, many more concepts and principles will be involved, and they can not be comprehended when you are apprentices. After you become real sorcerers and sorceresses, these questions will be easier to be studied.”

That was actually because Lucien himself did not fully understand the underlying principles of the formula as well.

Philosopher sighed with emotion, “One can never learn enough in the world of magic. Before I thought I had made some progress in this field, but now I just realized I’m way far from that.”

The rest of the apprentices also nodded. Toward these formulas, although the mysterious “Professor” did not explain “why”, he indeed clarified “how”, from which they were provided with new ideas about how to analyze and construct many new magic structures.

After Lucien finished his “lecture”, Philosopher fell silent. After a few seconds, he grabbed his quill and started writing numbers on a piece of paper excitedly. Other apprentices were also lost in thought.

“Mr. Professor, I want to apologize for suspecting you were a liar...” White Honey was a female, who did not speak very much before, “You’re the most elegant and erudite sorcerer I’ve ever seen.”

Although she was trying to make herself sound like an elder woman, she was too excited to hide her original charming voice.

From her comment, Lucien, Smile and Oak immediately drew an important conclusion: White honey was a member of more than one apprentice group.

Lucien answered in his pretended harsh voice, “I accept your apology. But actually, I don’t really care what other people think of me. My knowledge and power is always mine.”

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Later, when White Honey, Smile and Oak were exchanging magic materials, Lucien also bought some of them.

Laying the right hand on his forehead, Philosopher made a deep bow towards Lucien. It was the manner of the ancient sorcerers.

“I want to extend my sincere thanks to you, sir, my mentor.” Philosopher said, excitedly, “Your explanation solved many of my questions. I’m hoping that, with your help, I can figure out how to analyze the key 1st circle Astrology magic, in order to become a real sorcerer. Mr. Professor, to show my appreciation I hope you can accept this set of labware. Besides, you can choose any one of my stuff here.”

“Mr. Professor, I heard that you need Corpse Mushroom, and I’ve brought them here. I’m not sure if you’re willing to solve a question of mine...” Mercury was another female in the group, who sounded quite nervous but also excited.

Other apprentices were looking at Lucien respectfully, hoping to learn more from him.

Lucien started feeling that he was a real “Professor” now.

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Chapter 44: Knowledge is Money

Mercury took out a small box, in which there were three Corpse Mushrooms. One was darker than the other two. She asked politely, “You can take them all if you’re willing to answer my question, sir.”

Corpse Mushroom was required in many magic potions. The average price was about ten Nars. And the darker ones were even more expensive. If they were badly in need, the price could be doubled or even more.

Lucien couldn’t resist the offer. He nodded, “All right.”

Mercury found the article in the journal titled “A New Element Detected by A New Method” and asked, “My question is about the basic elements... The author defines ‘Tai’ which is extracted from sunstones as an element in this article, but I thought only earth, fire, wind and water were basic elements...”

Her voice was slightly trembling, as if she knew that the answer to her question would overthrow all of her previous knowledge about Element magic. In fact, the question was related to the important difference between the ancient and the contemporary magic system.

“Well...” After a while, Lucien finally responded, “Honestly speaking, I’m not sure neither. I studied the ancient magic system like all of you. In the past, I often found conflicts between some theories and my own experiment practices, and thus I started putting more thoughts on it. The reason that I’m able to explain those formula is not because I already have a deep understanding of them, but because many of the corresponding questions have been existing in my mind for a long time, and the article just solved them.”

It was very suspicious that a sorcerer who claimed himself to have nothing to do with the Continental Congress of Magic could understand all of the formula in the article, but Lucien was too excited to realize the fact when he first read the journal. Now he had to restrain himself a bit.

“That’s why I was only explaining the application of the formulas. As for the principles lying behind them, they’re also strange to me.” Lucien continued. He did not want to take even a slight risk of being suspected, “This article showed the process and the result of an experiment, with only a few formulas. I can only share some of my thoughts roughly toward the theories mentioned in it, but I can be wrong.”

“No problem, sir.” Mercury answered firmly, and turned to the other apprentices, “And I want to invite all of you here to join our discussion.”

This kind of instruction could be very expensive. Without the questioner’s permission, others were usually not allowed to listen to it. Important information sometimes would be protected by a special magic called “secret communication” in order to avoid eavesdropping.

“I heard that there has been a longtime discussion between sorcerers and sorceresses on whether the belief of four basic elements of the world is just a myth.” Lucien started analyzing, “Many believe that the real elements should be more abstract, and should be more than just four kinds.”

The other apprentices nodded thoughtfully. Many of them had the same doubt as well when they were conducting magic experiments.

“I’m not sure what are the real elements instead. But from this article, it seems like they have redefined element and found many new ones through different experiments.”

The experiment in this article was an example. The author showed his way to find the new element — By using the 9th circle magic Fire Storm to bombard Sunstone in an enclosed magic circle, the author obtained a beautiful and pure crystal called Tai, which was both more flexible and lighter than Mythril.

Lucien speculated that there was no periodic table of the elements in this world yet. But in this magic world, elements here were probably totally unpredictable.

In order to show the conflict between the ancient element theory and real-life practice, Lucien took a few apprentice element magics for example. After hearing his idea, the rest of the apprentices present were very excited.

“Mr. Professor... I, I believe you’re right! Being explained in this way, many of my experiment questions can be easily solved!” Mercury was very grateful, “Thank you so much, Mr. Professor!”

Hanger, who was standing in the corner all the time, also could hardly conceal his excitement, “Mr. Professor, what about spirit? Is it also composed of certain elements? I don’t have the materials you need, but you can choose anything you want in my bag.”

The other apprentices now held no suspicion of Lucien's identity. They all firmly believed that Lucien was the most knowledgeable sorcerer they had ever met, and were all eagerly hoping that the great sorcerer could share more of his ideas with them.

Disappointingly, Lucien shook his head, "Sorry, I haven't dipped into Necromancy, so I cannot answer your question."

After putting the three Corpse Mushrooms into his pocket and taking Philosopher's suitcase, Lucien asked, "Do you have extra Corpse Mushroom or Revenant Dust? I want to buy more, or you can ask more questions."

The brain tissue of the aquatic zombie was enough for about seven to eight experiments, and each of them would consume one Corpse Mushroom. Lucien hoped that he could collect the materials as much as possible.

"Since the church has been keeping an eye on us for a long time and it's too risky to cultivate the mushroom by ourselves, Corpse Mushroom is very rare these days. Except Mercury, I don't think other apprentices here would be able to offer you more, Mr. Professor." Philosopher answered respectfully. He seemed like the leader of the group.

Like White Honey, Philosopher was a member of another two sorcerer groups. But the other sorcerers and sorceresses he had met were all very arrogant. They would only help the other group members who could offer something they really want, or give instructions to their own apprentices. Therefore, he was very grateful for Lucien's help.

"Compared with Corpse Mushroom, Revenant Dust is even harder to find." White Honey added, "The formation of revenant requires strong grievance and resentment gathering in a certain way. Although using the blood of some evil creatures can summon revenants, the blood is even more precious than the dust itself; after all, this is Aalto."

Lucien was kind of disappointed, but he quickly moved on. Later he answered more questions raised by the other group members and got more materials and magic reagents in return. Lucien's knowledge earned great respect for him among the apprentices.

Besides respect, Lucien also earned a whole set of magic labware, three Corpse Mushroom, many other magic materials and reagents. Just like the saying goes, "Knowledge is Money".

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Chapter 45: Lucien's Magic Lab

When Lucien had found most of the materials that he needed, it was time for him to call it a day. "I gotta go now," said Lucien in his pretended harsh voice, "We can continue over the next meeting." He also had to go back and review his physics and chemistry knowledge in order to explain more questions in better ways for the group members.

To show their thankfulness, all of the apprentices stood up, laying their right hands on their foreheads, and bowed low to Lucien.

"Mr. Professor, can we have the honor to keep you staying a bit longer? Each of us is going to share our recent thoughts by presenting them to the others later. It would be our great pleasure to have you here." Philosopher hopefully asked.

The discussion part was open to anyone. All of the apprentices present were hoping Lucien would possible make comments on their ideas. Even some random words from such a knowledgeable sorcerer could benefit them a great deal.

For Lucien, the invitation was an extra surprise tonight. Although Lucien could understand many advanced formula based on his previous knowledge, he, on the contrary, was having a hard time analyzing some of the apprentice spells. Concealing his excitement, Lucien was trying to make himself sound as calm as possible, "All right."

"Thank you, Professor." White Honey first showed her appreciation.

It was a productive discussion, from which Lucien also gained a lot from the other group members. Many of his questions related to apprentice magics were solved and his knowledge gap was filled. At the same time, the other apprentices were also every encouraged to see that Mr. Professor was actually paying attention to their discussion.

In the early morning, after exchanging some more information, the meeting was drawing to a close. Lucien was stopped by Philosopher when he was about to leave.

"Mr. Professor," asked Philosopher hopefully, "do you mind leaving your contact information to me? So if we can find any Revenant Dust, we can contact you immediately."

However, Lucien shook his head, "Sorry, I'd rather not. Owl knows how to contact me." Cautious as Lucien was, he would never trust anyone easily.

"Well..." Philosopher nodded disappointingly, "Will you attend our next meeting two weeks from now?" The other apprentices present were also waiting for Lucien's answer eagerly.

"I don't know yet," Lucien's attitude was ambiguous, since he did not want his attendance to be regular, "I might be in Melzer Black Forest at that time, preparing some experiments. Anyway, I'll

let Owl know in advance.” But Lucien’s vague answer was good enough for the members. At least this great sorcerer didn’t refuse them directly.

After Smile made sure that it was safe outside, Lucien and other apprentices left the basement in succession. Having the suitcase in his hand, and some new magic materials in his pockets, Lucien walked home with no companion. On his way home, Lucien spread his spiritual power which covered a certain range to detect if there was anyone following him. And all he found was a raven.

He didn’t feel even slightly relieved until he was finally back in his shack.

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One week later, using the magic which could turn stone into soil and mud, Lucien successfully dug a pit very close to his place. The three meters long, two-and-a-half meters wide pit connected to his shack with a small stone stairway was Lucien’s new and also his first magic lab. Standing on a small stool, Lucien was carving lines on the wall with a silver dagger which came from the labware set. He was creating a magic circle in order to block energy waves caused by spell casting or magic experiments.

In addition to that, Lucien cast some more magic circles to protect the lab. Using “Echo Elimination”, no one would notice that there was a basement under there by simply stamping on the floor. Other magic circles were used for placing magic traps which could be triggered when necessary.

After the carving work was done, Lucien pulled out a small bag of black powder. The powder was made from Black Curving Vine and it could quickly stick to almost everything. Carefully picking it out with the dagger, Lucien colored these lines with the black powder, and then he poured mercury on them little by little. Amazingly, the mercury did not drip at all, instead, it was instantly absorbed by the power. Now the outline of the magic circle was very distinct.

Pressing his palm in the centre of the pattern, Lucien spread out his spiritual power and activated the magic circle. The silver lines were lit bit by bit. After a burst of silver light, the magic circle completely disappeared in the wall as if nothing ever existed there at all.

Lucien stepped down from the stool, feeling exhausted. Building a magic circle could be very tiring. The more troublesome part was that, ten days later, it had to be replaced with a new one when the power of the circle was gone. For real sorcerers or sorceresses, they could maintain their magic circle using their own spiritual power, or building much more complicated ones which could recover the power automatically by themselves. Some parts of magic creatures, like their fur, horn or blood, could also do the job.

Then it was the last step. Casting the spell in an opposite way, Lucien built a long stone table from the soil. Placing all the glasswares and small stoves on the table, Lucien was more than happy and satisfied.

The lab was ready. From now on, Lucien finally had his own place to practice spells and conduct experiments. Obviously, this basement, although not very spacious, was much better than the cold, stinky sewers.

Standing on the stairs, Lucien nodded with great satisfaction. Then Lucien went back to his place upstairs and locked the entrance with magic after making sure the magic trap circle was also in position.

It was already in the early morning. As soon as Lucien's head hit the pillow, he fell asleep. He had to go to work in the library a few hours later.

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“Like I said...” Pierre stared at Lucien with concern, “You gotta control yourself a bit.”

“I just didn’t sleep well last night.” Lucien shook his head slowly.

“By the way, what musical instrument are you learning, Lucien?” Pierre suddenly switched the topic.

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Chapter 46: Silvia

“Piano,” Lucien answered, “Mr. Victor has improved his harpsichord and renamed it ‘piano’. Soon he will register the new musical instrument in the association.”

While Lucien had made some progress in learning magic, he never slacked off in studying music. After all, he needed a decent job to make a living, and more importantly, to disguise his identity. Being a musician would be ideal enough. After all, no one would easily suspect an elegant and young musician to be an evil and notorious sorcerer.

“Harpsichord... Piano...” Pierre repeated thoughtfully. Suddenly he became excited and dashed into the bookshelves. A moment later, Pierre came back with a book in his hand, “You’re gonna need the book! I gained a lot from it! By the way, did I ever tell you that in four months I’ll take the qualification test of the association? If I can pass it, I’ll finally be a qualified musician!”

Like other associations, the Musicians' Association also practised monopoly. The evaluation of musician was completely controlled by it.

“No, you never mentioned it,” Lucien took over the book titled The Art of Harpsichord Performance, “but I believe you can do it, Pierre,” said Lucien sincerely.

In the next hour, Pierre did not give Lucien any time to study the book. Since he knew that Lucien was also a music student, Pierre tried to seize every chance to share his thought on music with his buddy.

However, today was definitely not a good time for discussion since Lucien was too sleepy to follow Pierre. His eyelids were so heavy that he could barely keep his eyes open. Lucien did try to stop Pierre many times, but Pierre never let him have a chance to cut in.

Fortunately, at this time, a lady wearing a long white dress and a black pillbox hat walked into the library. She was a very elegant lady, her waist was slender and her legs rangy, as if she just walked out of a fine picture.

Lucien also noticed her long white stockings, which made the lady's legs looked even sexier. However, that was not Lucien's focus. Instead, he was thinking about where that rayon-like material came from. Probably it was a byproduct of alchemy?

“Good morning, Ms. Silvia,” suddenly switching his attitude, Pierre greeted the lady politely and slightly nudged Lucien, “Anything I can do for you today?”

Lucien then realized she was the Silvia that Pierre was talking about all the time. Her long black hair was like silk, shiny and soft. Under her small lovely nose, there were cherry-like lips. For sure, she was very beautiful and graceful.

“Morning Pierre, I need to borrow several books. They are...” said Silvia with a sweet smile on her face. She had got used to people’s special attention, so Lucien’s long stare didn’t bother her.

Pierre’s face instantly flushed with excitement, since he never expected that Silvia would remember his name. He nodded several times and dashed into the shelves again to get the books for his goddess.

Lucien stayed behind the counter. A sweet and familiar fragrance slipped into his nose. Not until a few seconds later did Lucien realize that the smell was very similar to that of the black veil he found in the dump site, the expensive cloth called Black Nightingale.

But Lucien couldn’t make sure, and there was also no need for him to figure out whether Ms. Silvia was the veil’s owner or not. After all, the smell was still slightly different.

Out of nervousness and excitement, the more Pierre wanted to impress Ms. Silvia, the more clumsy he was. After a few minutes, he started feeling embarrassed.

“You need my help there?” Lucien turned around and asked. Then Lucien walked directly toward a bookshelf and pulled out one of the books Ms. Silvia was looking for in front of Pierre’s face. Of course, it was not because of Lucien’s good memory, but his amazing spirit library, which could even store the arrangement of the whole library.

“Lucien!” Pierre’s mouth dropped open, “When did you become so familiar with the place?!”

With a pile of books in his arms, Lucien came to Silvia and asked politely, “Ma’am, do you want me to take these books to the reading room?”

Of course, Lucien couldn't claim that he had no man's thoughts when he was looking at such a beautiful woman like Silvia. But Lucien knew that a romantic relationship was too luxury and impractical to be put in his future plans for now. Therefore, Lucien's indifferent attitude contrasted sharply with Pierre's nervousness.

"Just leave them on the table, please. Someone else will get them later." Silvia's voice was husky and sexy, "What's your name? I never saw you before."

"My name's Lucien Evans. I'm new here." answered Lucien slowly. Then he added, "I'm Mr. Victor's student."

"I see." Silvia smiled sweetly, "No wonder... I heard that Mr. Victor had successfully improved harpsichord and named it 'piano'. Please tell him that I'm really looking forward to his concert, Lucien."

The quick change of Lucien's attitude was a bit strange for Silvia. When she just walked in the library, Lucien was staring at her legs like a pervert, while now it seemed that Lucien was not interested in women at all.

After Lucien finished registering the borrowed books, Silvia thanked them and left the library. Lucien noticed that there was a lady wearing a black pillbox hat waiting for Ms. Silvia. Standing there straightly like a spear, the slim lady was taller than Lucien by about half a head. Behind the lady stood a beautiful young maid and an elegant middle-aged woman.

Noticing that someone was looking at them, the poker-faced, middle-aged woman instantly threw Lucien a cold eye. At that moment, Lucien felt he was suddenly thrown off a cliff and all the colors of the world faded. As if the woman had a rough ocean in her eyes, Lucien couldn't stop trembling in front of the huge waves of the ocean.

Lucien lost his ability of thinking. He didn't fully recover until he could only see the woman's back. The woman and the slim lady changed a few words and the latter looked back at Lucien with some amusement in her eyes. But Lucien could also feel the great pressure in it and her authoritative aura.

"Who are they...?" Lucien was astonished. He had never met someone like them before in this world, especially the middle-aged woman. It felt like her gaze could easily disarm Lucien completely.

Pierre came close to Lucien and made a long sigh, "Silvia, she's my goddess. I know... I was not very impressive though." Then he nudged Lucien, "But buddy, you can't just stare at Ms. Silvia's legs like that. That's... too much."

But Lucien paid no attention to what Pierre just said.

"...Wait, why do you look even paler now, Lucien?" Pierre asked, surprised.

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Chapter 47: Victor's Trouble

Weakly, Lucien asked in a trembling voice, “Pi... Pierre... Do you know who the other three madams are?” Lucien found himself only being able to recall the eyes of the last young lady, of her dangerous, blue eyes.

“Nop, but I could imagine what happened.” Pierre shrugged his shoulders, “Ms. Silvia has many noble lady friends, and some of them are knights who have awakened the Blessing. Well... you were staring at her legs so impolitely, so one of her friends probably just gave you a lesson using her knight power.”

“I see... I wonder if the younger lady was Princess Natasha. Her power was so overwhelming. Except Princess Natasha, I don’t think there’s another female knight in Aalto who has such power. And the middle-aged woman standing beside her might be her guard...” Lucien said to Pierre thoughtfully.

“No matter who they are, my friend, the noble ladies have nothing to do with you, and never will.” Pierre patted Lucien on his shoulder, “Noble ladies would never waste a second on common folks like us.”

Although everyone was endowed with the Blessing, offsprings of nobles always had a better chance of awakening the power. Therefore, nobles would never marry common people but only nobles in order to keep their blood pure.

“Ms. Silvia is my goddess but is too far away from me. All we can rely on is music, buddy,” said Pierre earnestly, although he was the one who flushed his face just now.

In the following several hours, Lucien was being tortured by his sleepiness. At noon, Lucien refused Pierre’s invitation of having lunch together and was going back home to get some rest.

When Lucien was walking downstairs, he saw Elena was talking joyfully with a tall and young man who had shining blonde hair and a very well-featured, pretty face. From his fancy clothes, Lucien could tell the man was a noble.

Soon the man bid farewell to Elena and walked upstairs, passing by Lucien. He was really a very good-looking man.

Lucien came downstairs and talked to Elena half jokingly, “You have feelings for him?”

“Come on, Lucien... You’re my friend, and you can’t tell that was fake smile on my face?” Gently rubbing her face, Elena answered in a low voice, “He’s Mekanzi Griffith, the second-in-line of the Griffith Family, Director Othello’s student, and also, the no.1 playboy in our association.”

“The Griffith Family?” Lucien heard the name before.

“Yes, Griffith.” Elena nodded, “If I’m not mistaken, you know Lott, right? Mekanzi is his elder cousin. He’s very good at playing harpsichord and violin.”

“I see... but why you don’t like him? And why were you still pretending?” asked Lucien.

“Well... I know I shouldn’t talk like this about a noble, but he’s a bastard. As a notorious playboy, Mekanzi is known for his misbehavior. He especially enjoys conquering women who do not have interest in him, who treat him coldly. It is said that once there was a girl from a common family who refused Mekanzi a few times, in the end he, he...” Elena pursed her lips with strong disgust.

“Be careful, Elena.” He said with concern, “But in a couple of years, you’ll be married, I guess.”

“Get married...” Elena slightly sighed and her eyes looked sad, “After seeing so many elegant musicians and gentlemen in the association, now it’s impossible for me to marry an ordinary guy.”

What Elena said was true. Once a person had enjoyed many delicacies, plain bread and water became hard to swallow.

“Then what’s your plan, Elena?” As a friend, Lucien did care about her.

“Well... probably to be a mistress of a noble or famous musician...” Elena laughed when she saw Lucien’s astonished face, “I’m just joking! I’ve saved some money and I’m gonna learn music like you, Lucien!”

“Wow, that’s really cool, Elena.” Lucien was impressed. An independent and hard-working girl was always impressive.

“I know! Ms. Silvia is my idol. I wish someday I could also be an elegant and beautiful female music master like her. For such a music goddess, nobody would say that staying single in her age is a big deal, because she doesn’t need a man at all — she has the world of music! Although I know many musicians in our association have a crush on her... well, Mr. Victor is not included.”

Mr. Victor’s wife had passed away almost ten years ago. Since then Victor remained single and put all his passion into music. Everyone in the association knew that, including Lucien.

“So are you gonna be Ms. Silvia’s student?” asked Lucien.

“I’ll try, but Ms. Silvia rarely looks for new students.” Elena nodded. Her green eyes were filled with happiness and excitement, “Or I can be your student, Lucien, when you become a good musician!” she smiled.

“It will be my pleasure.” Lucien also laughed.

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With plenty of magic materials, Lucien didn’t attend the apprentice meeting for the following several times. He had copied the journal Arcana in his spirit library before he buried it at the foot of the wall to let Smile take it back.

From the marks left by Smile, Lucien could tell they were pretty disappointed and were still looking forward to his presence. But Lucien did not want to rush — he still needed a few more weeks to fully absorb the knowledge that he gained from both the journal and the last meeting.

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Time went by. When Lucien was able to cast nine apprentice-level spells consecutively at a time and was very close to moving to the next level, intermediate apprentice, there was only one month left before Mr. Victor’s concert was held in the Psalm Hall.

Being uninspired, this musician again became anxious and fretful. The tune of the fourth and also the last symphony just wouldn't come in Victor's mind. Soon he got too stressed to teach so many students, so he had no choice but to suspend the class for those non-music students for a whole month.

But his unusual testiness was still very obvious in the music students' eyes.

“Bang!”

Something that sounded like an ink bottle fell on the floor and all of the students downstairs raised their heads. It was not the first time that day.

“Well... we gotta do something. Breaking stuff definitely can't help with getting inspiration.” Lott shrugged his shoulders.

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Chapter 48: In the Hall

Since the success and reputation of a teacher was also directly related to the students, Lott and Felicia were also quite worried.

“Do something?” Felicia rolled her eyes, “Do what?”

Frowning his eyebrows, Lott answered thoughtfully, “A symphony is a quite long piece of music and usually consists of four parts. For a concert, four symphonies are enough. I don’t understand why Mr. Victor insists on creating new symphonies, after all, he got so many good ones he wrote before to choose from.”

“Mr. Victor did pick out the best one, and it will be one of the four symphonies.” Standing beside, Athy joined their conversation, “But it is also the only ready-made one from the four symphonies. Mr. Victor felt all the others are nowhere close to the best one. In order to present an excellent concert, Mr. Victor has to make sure all the pieces of music are equally impressive.”

Rubbing his eyes, Herodotus sighed, “Mr. Victor always want to be perfect. His previous works were actually very popular among many musicians and nobles, or he would never be qualified to give a concert in the Psalm Hall. If we try, probably we can persuade him.” He looked at Lott and Felicia, while Lucien, a poor student who could only play the simplest music for now, was subconsciously ignored by him.

“What do you think, Mr. Athy?” asked Felicia. She knew that, among all the people in the sitting room, Athy was the one who knew Mr. Victor the best. After all, Athy had been taking care of Victor for almost thirty years.

“Unfortunately, I don’t think so.” Slowly, Athy shook his head, “The concert is of great significance for Victor. He wants to fulfill the wish of his late wife, which is to have a perfect performance in the Psalm Hall, thus he won’t make any compromise.”

“Probably... we can look for some potions that are helpful for him to relax.” As an apprentice, Lucien’s first idea was seeking the help of potions and drugs.

“No we can’t. Those drugs will slow down one’s mind and cause the inhibition of inspiration.” Athy denied Lucien’s proposal seriously.

“But we can’t just let Mr. Victor torture himself like this,” said Lucien with concern.

“Then what can you do, Lucien? Come up with a new masterpiece for Mr. Victor?” said Herodotus with clear sarcasm. He never liked Lucien, “If you cannot, please shut up.”

Lucien didn’t feel really offended, instead, what Herodotus just said gave him some new thoughts. Mr. Victor needed his help, Lucien knew.

When they were talking, Victor opened the door and walked downstairs, looking very tired. The students stopped their conversation instantly and looked at him.

Victor’s hair was messy, and his eyes red. “I’m going to the association to practice the first three symphonies. All of you come with me to see how the different parts of the orchestra cooperates. ”

Although all of them were a bit relieved to see that Victor’s mood had returned to normal, they knew the trouble still remained unsolved.

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On the fifth floor of the association, the orchestra was playing a magnificent symphony. The four parts of the symphony were integrated perfectly and together provided the audiences with a grand acoustic feast.

As soon as the orchestra finished playing the last part, a cold applause came from behind. All the students looked backwards.

It was Wolf.

“Good, very good. It looks like you’re ready for the concert, Victor.” Holding his chin high, Wolf still looked the same, arrogant and mean. Victor enjoyed a period of peaceful time when Wolf was out of town, and now apparently the happy time was over.

Victor’s face instantly darkened since he knew Wolf must have heard something. Before Victor said anything, Wolf asked with a fake smile on his face, “I remember you asked for my advice before I left. Now I’m back, so let me see your work.”

“You just heard it.” Victor just wanted to cut the conversation short as much as he could.

“No, I mean... all the four symphonies.” Wolf lifted his eyebrows.

“Wolf, you...!” Victor was very pissed off. Before his rage took over, two men walked into the hall. One of them was a white-haired old man, wearing a decent black suit and with a black cane in his hand; The other was the good-looking blond that Lucien met a few weeks ago, Mekanzi, who was Lott’s elder cousin.

“Director.” Putting their argument aside temporarily, both Victor and Wolf slightly bowed to the old man.

Victor's students also bowed following their teacher. It was Lucien's first time meeting Baron Othello, director of the association, who was also Mekanzi's mentor.

In the law among nobles which was constructed over a long time, those noble offsprings who managed to awaken their Blessing in their blood and thus became royal knights were more qualified to inherit their titles, but it was not to say that the rest of them who failed to awaken the blood power could not be the next head of their houses. As a gifted musician, Othello was also the only son of his house, thus he rightly inherited the title of his family and became the Baron.

"Victor, I heard that you're having a hard time with the fourth symphony?" Othello walked to Victor and asked him seriously.

Victor nodded his head, his eyes lowered, "Yes, sir..."

Othello slightly raised the cane in his hand along with his voice, "You must know how important this concert is. You're representing our association to play in front of Grand Duke and the princess, and you gotta make sure nothing will go wrong. Do you understand?"

"I do, sir. I will make sure every piece of work will be really impressive..." answered Victor in a low voice, "...at least I'm trying my best."

Wolf gave Victor a loud snort on the side.

"No, I'm not asking for everything to be that impressive, Victor," nodded Othello, "I'm asking for a safe and smooth performance. I understand your pressure, but you cannot keep delaying like this. You have to hand in all of your music as soon as possible to give the orchestra enough time to practice." Then Othello paused a bit, "Well... let me give you a deadline. By the last week before the concert, I want to see all of your work laying on my office desk. Any problem, Victor?"

Victor shook his head with great effort, “No... sir.” He knew that if he still could not come up with the last symphony, someone else in the association would replace him very soon.

“I hope you understand why I’m pushing you.” Othello looked less serious now, “I believe you can do it, Victor.” The director nodded to show his encouragement and then walked out of the hall.

At this time, Mekanzi approached Lott with a smile on face, “My dear little cousin, I hope you won’t have any trouble with the musician qualification test like your teacher is having here. Although I’ll be one of the examiners in the next three years and I’m very looking forward to your violin performance, my integrity will never allow me to lower my standard.”

“I don’t need you to lower your standard.” answered Lott, clenching his teeth.

Then Mekanzi turned to Lucien, “You know what? As a pauper, how lucky you are that you may have the chance to be a musician. It’s not really wise wasting your time on fooling around with girls instead of practicing your skills.”

Lucien was very confused when he just heard Mekanzi’s comment, but soon he realized he was talking about Elena. Recently, Elena spent some time with Lucien in order to learn more about music.

Then Mekanzi left and caught up with Othello with a lovely smile on his face. In the family of Griffith, as the second-in-line to inherit the title, Mekanzi always spared no effort to please the house master.

“Oh my... Victor, you’re still racking your wits about your last masterpiece?” Pretending that he didn’t know the fact before, there was a smile of triumph on Wolf’s face, “Enjoy, Victor. Enjoy your first play in the Psalm Hall, cause it may as well be the last.”

Before Wolf left, he glanced at Lucien, “Is this your talented pauper student, Victor? Well... wish him good luck with his qualification test in the future. After all, your reputation is directly related to his. What a poor young lad!”

Wolf was amused by his own words. Laughing, he went out of the hall. While Lucien noticed that Victor’s face was flushed and the blue veins on his hands stood out.

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Chapter 49: Symphony of Destiny

Victor didn’t loosen his fist until the gate of the hall slowly closed. With a long sigh, he turned around and said to Rhine and the rest of the orchestra, “I’m going back to my office to finish my work. Everyone, keep practicing please.”

“Mr. Victor, please don’t push yourself too much.” Rhine put down his violin and walked to Victor. His face looked serious, “I don’t think you can come up with a good melody with your current mood.”

Victor’s mind was being bothered by fatigue, depression and anger at the same time. He nodded, “Thank you, Rhine. I just... need some rest.”

“Lucien, Lott, you two accompany Mr. Victor to his office. Felicia and Herodotus, you two keep practicing.” Rhine said to the students.

On the way to the third floor, Victor didn’t say anything. Neither Lucien nor Lott knew what to do, so they just followed him silently.

Before leaving the office, Lucien noticed that Victor was looking at a lifelike portrait hanging on the wall. On the portrait there was a beautiful young woman with a smile on her face. She had black hair and black eyes.

When Lucien closed the door, Victor was still staring at the portrait like a statue.

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When Lucien and Lott came back to the practice room on the fourth floor, they saw Felicia and Herodotus were lost in thought.

“Well...” Lott tried to break the silence, “All director Othello asked was to give a smooth concert, Mr. Victor might feel less stressed now.” Apparently, his words didn’t help.

“Come on... I care about Mr. Victor’s performance very much, okay?” Lott hurriedly added, “You all saw my cousin Mekanzi. If Mr. Victor’s concert can be a huge success, I can call myself the student of a top musician, which will help me with my qualification test.”

Felicia puckered her mouth a bit, “Yes, we are all linked to Mr. Victor. I’m worried about him. If the concert goes wrong, I can’t imagine what is waiting for him.”

On the other side, Herodotus leaned his forehead against his violin, murmuring.

Lucien got ignored again, but he didn’t care at all. He was also busy with thinking. In order to repay Victor’s kindness, Lucien was looking for a musical masterpiece from his world as a plan B. Before that, he had gone through all the songs in his spirit library to make sure there was nothing similar to what he was going to choose. The work was actually easier than Lucien thought, since all the songs were stored in Lucien’s spirit library and he could easily search them in his storage. Then Lucien had to find a proper way to give the music to Mr. Victor.

Fortunately, Lucien had finished the difficult part – translation. When Lucien was practicing reading music here, he marked many masterpieces from his world with the notes he had learned here.

During this period of time, Lucien had a better understanding toward the music trend in this world. Being affected by the church, music in Aalto featured traditional structure and religious style. Lucien wanted to choose one that fitted the trend. Therefore, Bach came first to his mind since his music also had some religious taste.

However, after comparing Bach’s work with many musical masterpieces in this world, Lucien found they were somehow too similar to each other! He was glad that he was cautious enough.

Then Lucien turned to Beethoven. Fortunately, none of Beethoven’s work overlapped the music from this world. Lucien didn’t want to waste much time on selecting, and thus he soon decided to use one of Beethoven’s most well known masterpieces—Symphony No. 5. Lucien still remembered when he first heard it, he was shocked by the great momentum of the symphony.

The most difficult part that Lucien had to think about was how to “give” it to Victor. Lucien couldn’t just directly hand Victor a piece of paper with such an excellent music masterpiece on it, telling Victor that he found it in a book in the library. On the other hand, it would be even more suspicious if he claimed that he came up with the melody by himself, since a beginner like him writing a piece of symphony like this would obviously make no sense.

Lucien wished he knew how to do hypnosis, but his current spiritual power was not enough to infuse a whole piece of symphony into Victor’s mind.

Finally, he decided to rewrite Symphony No. 5, but instead of revitalizing it, Lucien was going to “degrade” it. Lucien needed to destroy the whole structure of the masterpiece but leave some fragments for Victor. Lucien was hoping that his teacher could get inspired from these fragments.

After writing a small piece of melody down on the paper, Lucien sat down in front of the piano and heavily pressed the keyboard with his hands.

“Dang dang dang dang!”

It was so loud that Herodotus almost fell off his chair. Following the magnificent beginning, the rest part of the melody was like a disaster.

“What the heck are you doing?” Lott asked while frowning his eyebrows.

“I want to help Mr. Victor. What I saw today made me feel depressed but also angry, and this combined emotion just gave me some inspiration. I’m going to write it down.” Lucien explained.

“What?” Lott almost laughed, “Are you saying you are writing a symphony?”

“How long have you been learning music? You don’t really understand how to play piano yet!” Felicia’s voice became higher.

Spreading his hands, Lott replied directly. “No, you’re not able to help Mr. Victor, Lucien. I understand your will but you are just a beginner.”

“You think everyone can write a symphony just because they have so-called ‘inspiration’?!” Herodotus sneered, “What you just played was rubbish. Stop showing off in front of Mr. Victor to please him, you jester!”

“Lucien, please stop.” Felicia shook her head with depression, “Can you just stop? Don’t make the situation harder.”

But Lucien also shook his head firmly, “No. I’m inspired. I can write a good one.”

Lott, Felicia and Herodotus were staring at Lucien as if he was a madman.

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 50: Composing

Lucien kept playing. He could only press the keys one by one since the skills required in this symphony were far beyond his beginner level. Lott, Felicia and Herodotus felt there was a heavy hammer knocking on their heads. Their anxiety and anger were accumulating.

“Enough!” Herodotus and Lott cried out at the same time.

“What?” Lucien turned his head and looked at them innocently, “Mr. Victor asked us to practice. And I am practicing. Then what are you two doing here?”

“Lucien!” Gripping his fists, Herodotus’s face flushed with anger. However, he was too short and thin for a fight. Lucien had been practicing fighting for a while and was half a head taller than him. A few seconds later, Herodotus shook his fist in the air, “I don’t want to be punished by Mr. Victor for beating you up.” Then he turned around and burst out of the practice room.

“Sorry about the noise.” Lucien shrugged his shoulder but had no plan to stop. He grabbed his quill again and wrote more music notes down. The melody now only contained small pieces of the masterpiece but most of it were Lucien’s stupid creation.

“Are you serious, Lucien?” Lott was looking at the ceiling of the room, rubbing his forehead.

“You wanna have a look?” Lucien was about to shove his piece of paper into Lott’s hand but the latter directly rejected.

Lott looked at Felicia, “Let’s go. Staying here for one more second will drive me crazy.”

She nodded, “You’re right. I need some fresh air...”

Finally, as he wished, Lucien was left alone in the practice room. After locking the door, Lucien went back to work. He started adding more pieces from Symphony No. 5 into the melody, hoping that he could come up with a degraded version of Symphony No. 5 with lots of imperfection, and thus Victor could improve it to restore it to a real symphony masterpiece.

In order to show the progress, Lucien had to provide many drafts. Also, Lucien needed to practice lots of times to make sure his poor playing wouldn’t completely ruined the music, at least he had to show some of the value of the music in front of his teacher.

In the following several hours, the drafts of many versions piled up on the desk and the pile was growing taller and taller. Playing many parts of the music over and over again, Lucien was sweating all over.

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When the sky became darker, Lucien stretched himself a bit and then left the practice room with a thick stack of paper in his hand.

Lott, Felicia and Herodotus were sitting in the hall, watching Mr. Victor conducting the orchestra. When Lucien came in, they rolled their eyes simultaneously with antipathy. However, Lucien in turn gave them a big smile. Felicia shook her head with a long sigh.

Sitting in the soft audience seat, Lucien closed his eyes and continued thinking about his work. Half an hour later, the rehearsal finished. Victor and Rhine came down from the stage and walked in front of them. Mr. Victor now looked much better.

“How was the practice this afternoon, everyone? Any problems?” asked Victor.

“Lucien is the biggest problem, Mr. Victor!” Herodotus answered instantly, “He... he was writing a symphony! A beginner! The noise was so horrible that all of us left the practice room in the end!”

Rejoicing in secret, Lucien almost couldn't hold his smile back anymore. He had to thank Herodotus for letting Mr. Victor know what he was doing.

“Is that true, Lucien?” Victor looked at Lucien with great surprise, “You're composing a symphony?”

Slightly raising one of his silver eyebrows, Rhine was looking at Lucien with great interest.

Lucien nodded seriously, “What I saw today and what I've experienced before brought me some inspiration, so I wanted to write it down.”

Gentle and kind as Victor, he didn't immediately scold Lucien for being too arrogant. Instead, he asked his student, “Can I have a look at it?”

“Me, too.” Rhine cut in with great curiosity, “If you don't mind, Lucien.”

“No problem.” Lucien handed Victor the whole stack of paper.

When Rhine was reading Lucien’s work, his thin lips closed tightly as if he was going to burst into laughter at any time. While Victor looked pretty serious.

“Lucien,” Victor gave the drafts back to him, “I know you’re doing this for me and I appreciate your effort. But Lucien, writing a symphony requires much more solid knowledge foundation than you thought. As a beginner, I suggest you start from the most basic theories for at least a few years before you actually write anything.”

Victor was gratified to see his student was trying to help him, at least the intention was good. Furthermore, the rest of the students just realized why Lucien did all of these. They suddenly felt Lucien was even more crafty and sophisticated than they thought.

“Well... although your work is still very... say, immature, there are a few highlights in it.” Rhine was trying to comfort Lucien, “For example, this part.” The exactly few bars that Rhine was pointing at came from Symphony No. 5.

“Thank you, Mr. Rhine.” Lucien nodded to him with appreciation, then he turned to Victor, “Mr. Victor, I know you do not agree with what I’m doing, but I still want to finish it. No matter if it turns out to be good or bad, or even horrible, it is the first piece of music work in my life.”

Similar situations had happened more than once before. Victor knew how stubborn Lucien could be, and at the same time, Victor was very tired with his own concert stuff. Finally, he made a compromise, “Don’t let it affect your daily practice.”

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After having Victor's permission, Lucien started working on his composing task almost every day. Adding more and more parts of Symphony No. 5 into his work, Lucien's gradual progress was hidden in the disturbing noise.

In these days, Lott, Felicia and Herodotus were avoiding him as much as possible, while Mr. Victor was trapped in his office working on his last symphony. No one paid attention to Lucien.

By the last week before the concert, after countless times of practice, Lucien was able to completely play his version of Symphony No. 5, although it was not exactly the same as and was much easier than the original masterpiece.