

Throne of Magical Arcana

Chapter 8: Aalto

The notes were full of strange characters. And Evans, as a poor child, was uneducated and illiterate.

As a hopeless illiterate, Lucien could only helplessly stare at the notes and yearn for the amazing power. Although he had experienced a lot here, he still felt extremely depressed with the gap: He was a university student in another world, but now he was just a poor guy who couldn't even read.

Lucien made up his mind: He must learn how to read.

Even if Lucien could not be a pastor, learning how to read and write was not a bad thing in order to get rid of poverty. He had no physical strength. If there was a way out for Lucien, it would be something related to knowledge.

Feeling motivated by his decision, Lucien again picked up the notes, hoping to uncover any other hidden secret.

There were many strange but familiar patterns in the notes, like lines and geometric figures. Lucien guessed they were probably magic seals or circles because he saw them in the badge before. Then, he saw some formulas which might be used to make magic potions.

The characters in the second note were even more complicated. Actually, the two notes were of different characters. Fortunately, the third one looked more interesting and contained the same character as the second one. It was filled with assorted hand-produced figures like plants, minerals, and creatures.

After a new round of searching, he still couldn't find anything useful. Lucien stopped thinking and tried to fall asleep.

He strongly desired to change his life. So, he could not let his messy concerns and worries disturb himself. From tomorrow onwards, he must fight for his own life.

Lucien fell asleep quickly after the intense fight.

Meanwhile, in the dark sewers, a black rat with scarlet and cold eyes was moving around the ruins and quickly went in another direction. After a while, the rat found a hidden hole and disappeared.

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In the early morning, sounds of people speaking with bucket clapping broke the silence. The street was already livened up.

Lucien, who used to hate getting out of bed in the morning, forced himself to get up as soon as he woke up. He lighted the stove and boiled some hot water. While nibbling his last loaf of brown bread which felt like chewing a piece of wood, Lucien started planning his day.

This world was still unfamiliar to Lucien, thus his plan was difficult to accomplish. He first decided to find a job to feed himself before learning how to read.

“I gotta be careful. Cannot let anyone notice.” Lucien talked to himself.

Before he left, Lucien grabbed his seven coins to feel a little bit more secure. He locked the door and went directly to auntie Alisa’s place, who was the only one he knew there.

“Morning, Lucien.” A girl with black hair greeted him on the streets, filled with curiosity.

Lucien did not know her. Hurriedly, he made a smile and replied, “Hey. I’m gonna visit aunty Alisa, sorry but I’m running late.” And he quickly passed her by.

“Hi Lucien, did you really face the ghost?”

“How did you feel when you cast the spell?”

“I heard a guard lost his right arm. It was very dangerous last night, wasn’t it?”

It seemed that Lucien had become famous in the district overnight. Within three minutes’ walking, a few neighbors came and asked about his adventure.

Lucien knew none of them. He could only smile and head towards his destination.

Before Lucien knocked the door, he heard a familiar voice. “Little Evans! Good morning!” Joel was walking towards him.

“Good morning, uncle Joel!” It was such a relief for Lucien.

Dressing neatly, Joel was holding a classic harp. “Did you have breakfast? Don’t be in a rush to find a work until you’re fully recovered. You can always eat here. Don’t worry.”

Lucien appreciated his kindness so much. He started feeling he was not alone here. “Thank you, uncle Joel, but, I had my breakfast already. And... I got blessed by pastor Benjamin last night. So, now I’m completely fine.”

Joel nodded and walked with Lucien side by side. “Later you could go and find Cohn at Copper Coronet. He still owes me a bottle of Lesse wine. He will introduce a good job for you.”

Then he turned his face towards Lucien and said in a serious voice. “Evans, you’re already seventeen. It’s time you started thinking about your future.”

“Uncle Joel?” Lucien knew he was saying the truth.

Joel sighed slightly. “No one can make a living with only doing labor all the time. You know it. I’ve seen a few old labor guys with no saving and no children to rely on in their last days. All of them died in their fifties or even forties.”

He paused a little bit and continued. “I know learning will take a long time. But if you’re willing to work hard, you can always support yourself with a skill.”

During their conversation, they walked through a gate where two guards were standing on both sides. Lucien’s eyes suddenly lit up: Broad and clean streets, busy stores, and pedestrians wearing colorful and fancy clothes. Music was wafting in the soft wind. It was a different world compared with the poor Aderon district.

Lucien thanked Joel sincerely.

Joel started joking again. “Besides, sometimes a master only has a single daughter. Who knows, maybe, you can be promoted directly from an apprentice to the future owner. You know, a nice-looking promising young fellow is always in demand.”

Lucien replied with an awkward smile.

Joel finally stopped around a corner. He placed a hat on the ground and got ready to play his harp.

Lucien was a little bit surprised to find that uncle Joel was a street artist.

Joel pointed to the luxurious and magnificent palace in the distance and smiled. “That is the Hall of Chant. For me, I feel like I’m playing music in the hall.”

Before Lucien said anything, Joel continued murmuring as if something inside of his heart was triggered. “Four hundred years ago, guided by the Holy Heilz Empire, the church marched towards the west. Finally, they occupied the last central city of the old Sylvanas Magic Empire, Aalto. The army drove the dark creatures and demons away into the Dark Mountain Range. Since then, Aalto has always been one of the most famous cities across the whole continent.

“Three hundred years ago, under the guidance of the Pope Charles I, who was still a cardinal at that time, lots of famous scholars and artists studied and edited together the hymns and poems of past ages. After he became the pope, he promoted the singing style in every church and started regular choirs. Since then, Aalto has been enjoying the reputation of ‘City of Psalms’.

“Because we are close to the Dark Mountain Range, elves, dwarves and dog-headed men, or say, cynocephalus, often came in contact with us and some even became members of our duchy. Different kinds of music were mixed in Aalto and the polyphonic music was born here. Then followed formal symphony, gesu violin, etc.

“Countless artists and musicians inscribed their names on the pages of history. Playing inside the Hall of Chant is a great honor for every musician and bard.

“Although I cannot get in there, it’s also a pleasure for me to play my harp here.”

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After parting from Joel, Lucien took Joel's suggestion and started heading towards Copper Coronet. While asking the way, he was enjoying the wonderful music in the wind. As soon as he returned back to Aderon, he saw a busy pub with a coronet board hanging there.

Outside of the pub, from time to time, young girls and women could come and glance into it and then leave with disappointment.