

# Throne of Magical Arcana

## Chapter 9: A Tough Start

It was interesting and confusing for Lucien. The morning was obviously not busy hours for a pub.

A slender blonde girl was peeking inside from the pub door. Then, she sighed and was about to leave, but was surprised to notice Lucien standing there, waiting for her to get out of the way.

"Oh! Lucien!" She exclaimed.

Lucien was already used to the situation. He smiled and greeted, "Morning! What're you doing here?"

The girl's tanned cheeks suddenly flushed, "I... I am just on my way. I heard there's a new bard here today in the pub...so...Anyway, I gotta go, Lucien."

Before Lucien said his goodbye, the young girl rushed away with her cheeks red. Lucien guessed the bard she mentioned should be very attractive.

However, it had nothing to do with Lucien. He was here to work. He gently pushed the door and stepped inside the pub.

Lucien's first impression towards the pub was not very good: a dusky space, with a strong alcohol smell and messy tables and chairs. It took his eye a while to get accustomed to the dark environment.

Several drunkards were woken by the noise. They emitted a few curses and went back to sleep on the tables. There was an hooked-nosed man in a tight black coat, probably in his thirties, sitting on a bar stool and was sipping his amber-coloured wine. Without saying anything he glimpsed at Lucien.

Lucien looked around. Soon, he found a dwarf snoring loudly behind the counter. He was sitting on a high bar chair with his round head leaning against the wall. His shining saliva was dropping on his blonde beard which was tied into a bow.

Knowing the dwarf would not wake up by himself, Lucien knocked on the counter loudly with his fingers.

The drunkards started swearing in the background. The old dwarf slowly woke up with sleepy eyes, "Oh, my Lucien! Finally, you're a grown-up now! Finally, you understand the wonderfulness of wine! Cheers! For our new customer..."

"It's already morning, uncle... Cohn." Lucien was hesitant about how to call the pub owner.

Cohn rubbed his eyes and looked around, "I'm not drunk... Don't lie to me. What a wonderful night!"

After quite a while, Cohn finally sobered up. When Lucien asked about the jobs, Cohn made a slightly pained look and said, "Um... I don't have really good ones now. All I got are some odd jobs. 9 o'clock tomorrow morning... Let me see. Three Fells for carrying stuff from the grocery to the gate zone. But you know, you have to give one Fell to the gangsters there at the end of the day. Then... all you can get from the work is two Fells, only enough for buying an old brown bread.

"Another thing... yes, here. The Musician Association's gonna do a cleaning today. You can rent a cart and help them with the garbage. You can get eight Fells after the rent. But also... three Fells to the bastards."

"There is something else too... No, I don't think you're qualified for that."

Lucien nodded, he only had seven Fells with himself. He did not really have many choices. Working for the association was the best one.

"Cohn, do you have jobs with better payment?" Lucien asked again with curiosity.

Cohn laughed loudly, "Yes, for sure, my boy. But those are for real men, as they require strength and courage, not for a young boy. You don't even know how to drink."

Then, he lowered his voice. "I've seen so many people setting off towards the Dark Mountain Range from my bar. They were mercenaries and experienced adventurers. But, very, very few of them came back alive." Cohn belched and continued, "Of course they all made a big fortune, though.

"Don't underestimate them. Many of them were High-Level Knights." A gentle but attractive voice came from behind Lucien. His tone was lifted slightly in the end, sounding elegant and seductive.

Lucien turned around and saw a silver-haired man walking towards them from one of the pub's rooms. He was wearing slim pants and a red jacket, covered with a black high-collared coat. Those formal clothes looked amazingly casual but elegant on him. He had quite refined features: silver eyes, tall and straight nose, thin lips...The man almost looked like a charming elf with his silky silver hair, like a full moon at night.

Holding a harp in his hand, the man picked a bar chair and sat down.

"Hey, Rhine! Want a drink?" Cohn grabbed a glass.

"Thanks, but I only drink at night." He smiled. "Peace has been prevailing on the continent for almost three hundred years. There are more knights than people need. The Duchy of Orvarit, the closest duchy to the Dark Mountain Range, is full of myths and mysterious treasures. Many new and honored knights come here to seek credits, honor, and fortune."

He fiddled with the harp and continued, "Besides, some of them were broken knights, some of them were convicted, some of them were travelers, while some of them were dark knights who were not admitted by the church."

Cohn was a little bit unhappy with Rhine's rejection. He murmured, "Lucien, this is Rhine Carendia. As a bard, he travelled a lot. And he just got away from the passionate Tria ladies in the Kingdom of Syracuse."

"The Kingdom of Syracuse?" Lucien asked.

Cohn burst out laughing. His long, blond beard swayed with his laughter. With an ambiguous smile on his wrinkled face, he replied. "Yes, The Syracuse. A passionate, romantic nation where love is the top priority."

A drunkard joined them when they started talking about Syracuse. He loudly burped, and asked with eagerness, "Rhine, the la... ladies and madams... there, there in Tria, were they really that beautiful... and... hot?"

Rhine smiled casually and answered with his unique tone, "Yes, they were. Their eyes were like morning stars, hair like silk, lips like roses, and their fair skin like milk. I can still remember the perfumes they wore and their wet, warm breaths. A few ladies and duchess even invited me to their secret manors..."

The drunkard cut in with excitement, "Did you go then?"

Lucien knew the most common topic within men was women. While he was listening, he was also thinking about his learning how to read.

Rhine, with the same smile, answered, "I told them I did not like dirty things that had been used by someone else. I love beautiful, clean, and pure lives, no matter men or women. They're the tastiest things in the world."

"Bullshit, Rhine. There was no way you dared to speak to them like that."

"Right, if you had answered like this, you would be in the famous jail in Tria by now! Come on, Rhine!"

"Those ladies, many of them could compete with the knights. Dare you!"

Rhine shrugged his shoulders slightly facing Cohn and the drunkard's laughter, "That's why I'm here now, not in Syracuse."

Pounding the counter, Cohn was laughing so hard that he almost got choked. Drunkards there were all wakened up by his pounding, looking angry but confused, "Such... such a good story from our beloved Rhine!" Cohn's face turned red, "Cheers! For the wonderful story!"

All the drunkards knew was ale. They pushed their ways to the counter to grab the free drink.

"Cheers! For... Rhine, the blowhard!"

"The blowhard!" They laughed and shouted.

A while later, when the pub finally quieted down again, Cohn was very surprised to find that Lucien was still there.

"What else? My boy?" Cohn asked.

"Um... yes. I've got a new idea. I... I'm thinking about...learning how to read."

"Ah? Read?" Now Cohn was even more surprised, "You talked with Rhine? You two are dreamers."

Several guys in the bar started heckling.

"Wooo... What a magnificent, glorious dream for our brave little pauper!"

While some showed their support, "Lucien, good for you! Dreams make a real man!"

Cohn laughed with them for a while and then turned to Lucien, "Two years, Lucien. It'll take you at least two years to learn how to read. You'll start from scratch. Do you have any idea how much money and effort it will cost you?"

Lucien looked into his eye, nodded firmly, "I understand. So many people tell me I'm too old for this or that. But Cohn, as people said, better late than never. If I don't make up my mind, there will never be a start."

As a university student in his original world, Lucien was confident that, with all the knowledge he mastered before, he would be able to understand the language rules and start reading very soon.

Twirling his big beard, Cohn nodded, "I see... You're too old to enter the church school... that's for sure. Then... There are two ways: either you become an apprentice for ten years, or you pay for a teacher. But, the first way... you know, it depends on whose apprentice you want to be. I don't see the necessity for a blacksmith to learn reading. They won't pay you for that. If you can afford a teacher... it will be five Nars a month. Five silver coins! And the price is same in the whole city."

Lucien did not want to become an apprentice. Ten years was too long, but he also had to make sure no one would possibly find out that he was trying to learn magic. Being an apprentice meant he had to live in his master's place. That would not be good.

"Five Nars. It's probably gonna take you half year to save five Nars if you work from day to night and eat the cheapest brown bread."

"And how much can you learn within a month?" Cohn added, "Are you still going?"

Lucien answered firmly, "Yes, I am."

A hundred Fells equaled to one Nar. It was a tough start. But still possible.