

The Mafia 721

Chapter 721 5th Stage Blacksmith

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With his fifth skill, Vicente would now have several options at his disposal. It was only one power, but when used in different ways, it could produce different effects.

Vicente's newest power was Atomic Manipulation, something that would give him the ability to change the structure of atoms.

He could use this power to create or destroy materials, manipulate mana, could, with his fourth power, stimulate self-regeneration or healing, manipulate temperature, alter physical properties, and ultimately create artificial intelligence life.

How could he do all this? He could destabilize atoms to disintegrate a body or object. Conversely, he could assemble the components of atoms and create materials, or even change the properties of existing materials.

He could already transmute metals on a small scale. But by combining this ability of his first essence with his fifth essence, he could surely take this power to a new extreme.

Self-regeneration or healing, combining the fifth and fourth pentagrams, was also a way of manipulating atoms to produce the effect of self-regeneration or healing.

Different effects could be produced by subtle differences in the way something was manipulated.

By manipulating atoms, he could create special phenomena capable of attracting or repelling mana, or even creating organisms different from those already in existence, technically creating new life forms.

As simple as it seemed, his newest ability had an infinite range of possibilities. The outcome of his actions on the fifth pentagram would be more influenced by the boundaries of Vicente's imagination rather than the limits of his newfound power.

But besides his new pentagram, by developing his second pentagram to the cyan grade, he gained a new power related to his electromagnetic field!

By qualitatively evolving it, Vicente gained a new power, interference, something that would allow him to intercept, send or block signals from communication artifacts or even mental communications. With this new feature of his powers, he could more easily spy on communications in his vicinity!

Waking up to the good feeling caused by all his new abilities and traits, Vicente smiled in satisfaction as his senses increased their range by over five times.

His mana cultivation was still at the beginning of the 5th stage, and had changed little with the addition of the pentagrams. Nevertheless, all of his abilities had improved, a sign that he could finally be considered a true Paragon after completing his 5 pentagrams.

He moved his mana and released his pentagrams, causing them to appear one by one, while Onyx watched in awe as the most awe-inspiring scene on the continent unfolded before him.

'Green, cyan, green, cyan and cyan!'

The creature was thrilled and couldn't help but grab the rocks beneath him with his claws and destroy them with glee.

At 22, Vicente was already near the top of the continent and had become a monster among magicians!

Of course, he couldn't flaunt his powers casually, but now he had reached a level where it would be harder for anyone to threaten him.

As Onyx watched his master, Vicente understood some theories about the 5th stage for blacksmiths and felt his understanding at a much deeper level.

Without realizing it, he attracted all the metals around the cave, causing the robotic armor of his companions and the metal objects on their bodies to disintegrate.

He moved his hands, manipulating the large amount of atoms coming from the metal artifacts in his grasp, shaping them in a way that differed completely from what existed in nature.

This happened quickly, and within a few seconds, Onyx could feel the small particles controlled by his master absorbing mana as if they were living beings!

Gradually, the disintegrated objects, which for a moment became a cloud of dust surrounding Vicente, took shape, but now with much more subtle lines and much more powerful auras.

From the armor and magical artifacts that were in the cave moments ago, 5 new armor and 7 new artifacts emerged, all of them now showing magical fluctuations and the sensation not of 5th grade items, but of 5th stage living beings!

For a moment, these 12 items absorbed all the mana in the area, making even Vicente's companions, who were meditating, feel that something was wrong.

He acted, and 2 seconds later, the mana outside the cave moved and concentrated in that place under Vicente's manipulation, making the place even richer than before.

This phenomenon caused the 5 magicians to continue cultivating in peace, pursuing their breakthroughs, while Vicente looked at his creations next to Onyx.

"Master."

The objects moved by themselves, surprising Onyx, who was the only one watching this special moment in Vicente's journey.

Vicente looked at the five armors and said. "From now on, you will advise my friends Lina, Layla, Sarah, Rory and Casey. Your mission is to protect their lives and advise them in any situation."

The five armors quickly accepted Vicente's order, seeing these five as their 'young masters', those below only Vice.

"As for you, combine your powers with theirs as best you can," Vicente said to the seven artifacts, including defensive and offensive items.

What was the crucial difference between Vicente's creations and what they were before? Starting with the simplest, they were all more resilient than the previous items, even considering those that were already 5th grade items. But the most important thing was that they had all gained consciousness and the ability to cultivate mana!

They couldn't increase their level through cultivation like an ordinary being. Only Vicente could strengthen them. But they could cultivate their own mana to use in battle without relying on a magician, and they could cultivate to recover the mana they used after battle.

Previously, items made by Vicente could use the mana in the atmosphere for some basic functions. However, it was an inefficient process that caused beings of a certain quality to have powers below their level.

Now, these items could function as if they were 5th stage beings, meaning that they had plenty of mana to activate high level spells and could restore themselves over time.

They had also evolved to the point of them gaining individual consciousness, which made them capable of learning things and advising their users!

They were artificial life, so as long as their structures weren't destroyed, they could theoretically live forever!

This was the most important fact about Vicente's first creations after he became a 5th-stage blacksmith!

Chapter 722 Unexpected Conversation?

Following his orders, the armors and artifacts moved, each going to their masters according to the origin of the items Vicente had used earlier to create these special artificial life forms.

Each of the armors stopped next to their 'young masters', while three of the five magicians received artifacts, with Onyx receiving two items, a bird's body armor and something for his paws and claws.

He didn't need to hear about these artifacts to know what they were capable of. Onyx immediately felt as if he had the cultivation of two more Paragons at his disposal, with the armor giving him a defense as strong or stronger than his own body, and the item on his paws giving him the feeling that his attacks would be twice as deadly from now on.

'Hehe, things are going to get interesting from now on.' The big black bird perked up as he imagined the upcoming battles.

'We will do our best to advise you, master Onyx,' the two artifacts said the same thing to him, making him forget his surroundings for a moment and concentrate on the new artifacts he had with him.

Vicente looked at an old firearm he had with him, remembering what Benson had told him years ago, and now he saw the problem.

'I can't improve this weapon beyond the 4th grade. Artifacts at the 5th grade and above are special, the kind that can have their own intelligence and powers as good as those of cultivators. A weapon like this wouldn't be able to display such powers. Its purpose and structure are too simple for something more complex.' He put the item into his spatial ring.

His weapons had helped him a lot and were important to the weaker members of his family. But they had already served their purpose for him and his companions.

Fortunately, he had learned a lot from Benson and then developed his powers to replace those weapons with new types of artifacts to replace his old 'friends' of two lifetimes.

He sighed in satisfaction at having reached such a high point in his journey before turning his attention to the cultivation of his friends.

'It looks like I've turned this cave into a special cultivation place for Sovereigns...' He noticed the density of mana and elements compatible with his colleagues in this large cave. 'It is possible that Casey and Sarah will level up in the next two days.'

Sensing this, he decided it would be good to wait that long before continuing with the mission he had accepted earlier.

Vicente sensed the situation of Torne, who was exhausted after the battle against the Behemoth and was currently cultivating in Vice's consciousness space.

'I think these two days will be enough for old Torne to finish his recovery. Cultivating in such a space should be very good for his recovery.'

He then put Torne aside and turned his attention to the Throne of Darkness, making it appear in a miniature form in one of his hands, while a yellow pentagram with green lines and symbols appeared around it.

Vicente now had complete control over the Throne of Darkness, without the negative effects on his consciousness and soul that he had faced before.

'It has been a long journey. Fortunately, you've survived this far.' A voice without gender or age sounded in Vicente's mind, reminding him of the day of his Awakening.

'This voice... Are you the consciousness of my second Magic Gem?' Vicente recognized the source of the voice, remembering that Torne had told him that his gem, connected to the Throne of Darkness, had a consciousness of its own.

'Indeed. I've been at your side since you awoke. Unfortunately, you couldn't fully control my powers until you reached your fifth pentagram. Today, you have fulfilled all the requirements to use the supreme power of darkness,' said the voice as the darkness in Vicente's soul seemed to increase without limit, while Torne, Onyx and even the werewolf outside the cave felt the terror of this mysterious power.

'Do you have a purpose?' Vicente asked seriously, obviously uncomfortable with the situation.

'My goal is to reach the maximum level, young magician. Like every living being, I strive for the peak of magic. My maximum would be the best configuration of pentagrams you can get for the throne. So don't absorb pentagrams of a quality lower than cyan. I won't accept them,' the gem's conscience said, demanding the best for itself.

'Try to get as many naturally formed pentagrams as you can. I know it may be difficult, but avoid ordinary pentagrams. If you really want to reveal all of my powers, we'll need at least three essences capable of evolving before we leave this world.

Limit yourself to absorb only 2 ordinary pentagrams.'

'Leave this world?' Vicente frowned as he put aside the almost impossible mission of obtaining cyan essences formed by the phenomena of nature for his second magical form.

'Indeed. The key to leaving the Polaris Realm is the indigo grade, or the 7th stage. When one qualitatively advances to the indigo grade, or the 7th stage, they gain access to the Star Path to a higher place. In this special realm, you and I will be able to seek immortality!'

Vicente wasn't surprised, as he had heard that Magus disappeared soon after their breakthrough.

'That's what happens to beings who reach the legendary 7th stage? Do they go somewhere else in the universe?' Vicente thought, using some of his earthly knowledge.

He didn't go against the conscience of his second magical form. He knew how difficult it must be for him to complete the requirements of the Magic Gem and approach the quality of a Magus. That would be enough time for him to solve the current crisis, secure the future of his sisters and live on the continent for a while.

Leaving after experiencing everything Polaris Realm offered seemed like the start of a new adventure, but also the way for him to guarantee Nina's safety once she became a Magus.

Nina had a cyan talent, so she would certainly become an Archmage in the future and perhaps become a Magus. As her older brother, it was Vicente's duty to explore what lay beyond this world before Nina, to help her when she completed her magical journey in the Polaris Realm.

Vicente was also curious about what lay beyond Polaris Realm, if there was a possibility for him to visit Earth again, or if he was in some kind of alternate universe.

Considering all of this, he agreed to try his best, even though the path to getting two naturally formed cyan essences compatible with his Throne of Darkness was obviously difficult.

'For now, I'll focus on obtaining the pentagram that the werewolf pointed out. We'll think about these other essences later.' he commented with his Magic Gem.

'Do that. Our first pentagram will evolve to the green grade once you absorb the second pentagram from the throne,' the Gem's consciousness said before disappearing, leaving Vicente alone with his many thoughts about the present and the future.

Chapter 723 Before Departure

After the consciousness of the second Magic Gem of Vicente faded, he left the interior of the cave and went to where the werewolf was waiting for his party nearby.

"You made it, huh?" the furry creature sitting on a branch of a nearby tree said as it looked at Vicente, feeling a completely unfamiliar sensation from the magician in front of it.

"Thank you for the information. It helped me a lot." Vicente thanked it sincerely as he stopped next to the creature before looking up at the beautiful, large moon visible from there.

"Tell me about our destination," he got right to the point, making the magical creature next to him take a deep breath and turn its attention to the full moon.

"Our target is a Manticore. The creature has long been at the level of a Beginner Archmage, so it's very close to reaching the Intermediate level. It lives in a shadowy area in the far northwest of the Valley of Lightning.

Its powers are based on two elements: poison and shadow. With its sting, it can inoculate a poison that can kill even Intermediate Archmages, while its control over shadows can turn shadows into our enemies.

It is a terrible warrior on the battlefield for its enemies. It is very strong, with a very resilient body, unparalleled speed, and a high level of regeneration.

I've heard stories of creatures who challenged it and couldn't even scratch its fur... Everyone who faced it eventually died. Some escaped for a few days, but as I said, its venom is deadly. If one of us gets hit by it, we'll die."

The werewolf stopped staring at the moon and looked into Vicente's human eyes. "I'll be honest with you. If I hadn't seen your potential, I would never have gone ahead with my current plans. Everything depends on you."

"I understand... What do you stand to gain by taking such a risk?" Vicente asked curiously.

"It is a resource compatible with me. If I absorb it, I could become an Archmage in a few days. Then I won't have to worry so much about those damn vampires," the werewolf replied, unable to hide its displeasure at the current situation on the continent.

Vampires and werewolves had historically been enemies in the Polaris Realm. But the werewolf tribe was currently in hiding, weakened by the sacrifice that had led to the appearance of the first Archmage of the vampire race.

"How bad is the situation? I came from the south, so I still don't know exactly how things are here." Vicente asked, curious to know what the creature before him knew.

"Things are terrible. Since the fall of the magicians of the Dark Path, the vampires have become much stronger. Until about 3,000 years ago, the situation for the vampires was the same as it had been for over 100,000 years. There was a balance of power in the northern region.

But then more and more Dark Path magicians disappeared. The new ones that appeared after them could not live or were closely watched, restricted. This gave the vampires room to develop their plans for their current state.

Currently, the Archmages and Paragons you have seen or sensed in the Valley of Lightning make up over 30% of the magical beings at that stage on the continent.

Until recently, the vast majority of magical beings at these stages were humans or allies of humans. But with the rise of Demien Bloodthorne, most of them have fallen, leaving only a few high-level magicians on the continent. 80% or more of the Paragons and Archmages on the continent are now beasts or monsters." The creature summarized the recent history and couldn't help but show its regret.

"Who knows what will happen from now on?" It asked in a desperate tone. "Then I must take the chance I have now. This might be my only alternative to fight them!"

"I have a feeling the future is going to be pretty bitter," Vicente said, voicing his opinion. "I met some vampires on the way here and found out that the vampire leaders want to use the surviving magicians as cattle to strengthen them. They won't hunt us all down right away."

"As expected. It's a plan that makes sense." The werewolf looked meaningfully at Vicente and asked. "What are you going to do? Let's say everything works out and you get your next pentagram. What are you going to do?"

"Go to a certain place and save someone. After that, I'll go south to help my people prepare for the arrival of their enemies," Vicente said.

He wasn't naive enough to think he could go to the door of the vampires and challenge Demien Bloodthorne to end the current situation on the continent once and for all.

Vicente had become powerful, but against Demien, a superior vampire with Beginner Archmage cultivation, he still had a long way to go.

At the very least, he would have to add all four of his missing pentagrams to the Throne of Darkness or advance to the level of a High-level Paragon to challenge that vampire with any chance of survival.

Anything less in the face of Demien's power would be suicide!

The werewolf had imagined it, so it didn't find Vicente's plans strange. It made sense to hide and prepare for the future, even if this young man was so strong.

"Good luck with your plans. But maybe we'll meet again in the future. I, too, plan to head south sometime," the furry creature said while Vicente remained silent, thinking about how close he finally was to Lauren.

Since the two cyan pentagrams he had absorbed in the past few hours had enhanced his powers, he felt after obtaining the cyan pentagram for the second position of the Throne of Darkness, he would be strong enough to go to Nixlas' Shadows.

The headquarters of Nixlas' Shadows was close to this area in the Vinia Empire. This sect was in an area in the empire's west, less than a month's journey away from where Vicente and his group were at the moment.

Considering the stops for cultivation, recovering from confrontations that might happen in the meantime, or even the times they might need to hide, he and his group could reach such a place in two months at the most.

Thinking about it, Vicente couldn't help but imagine Lauren's face, how she looked after all these years and what it would be like to take her home to see Nina again.

About 12 years had passed, but given the wonders of magic, she should be exactly the same as she was back then, at least physically.

While he was thinking about it and planning his reunion with Lauren, Vicente left the werewolf after saying they would wait until his companions had finished cultivating.

This would take a little over three days, when those who had a chance of advancing could finally complete their advancement to the level of Sky Sovereigns!

Chapter 724 Leaving for the Manticore Hunt

By the end of the group's third day in the cave where the cyan pentagram had appeared, everyone in Vicente's group had completed their cultivation.

Those who didn't advance had developed their powers, and Casey and Sarah had completed their progress to the level of Sky Sovereigns.

Now the entire group, except for those at the 5th stage, was at the last level of the 4th stage!

Even those who hadn't advanced because they had improved their strength recently could take advantage of the 3 days of peaceful cultivation after the battle with the Behemoth.

Vicente could now turn ordinary areas into special cultivation grounds for 4th-stage beings. But the place where they had spent those days was no ordinary place. By taking turns with their new abilities, the place had further stimulated the cultivation of Vicente's five human companions.

This time was also enough for Torne to finish recovering from the exhaustion of the previous battle.

After everyone had finished recovering their strength, Vicente gathered the group that evening to plan their next steps, reunite his people with the werewolf, and discuss their next target.

An early 6th stage Manticore!

The werewolf told Vicente's companions what it had told him earlier and listened to the skills available in this group.

Together, they planned how to act and what to avoid in the upcoming battle.

The enemy was only a few hours away from the group, so it wouldn't be long before they were involved in another battle against a Beginner Archmage!

The group prepared well, with Vicente explaining to his people the new capabilities of the robot armor and some of their artifacts.

The five magicians took the night to adjust to the extra powers their armor or artifacts would give them, determined to set out in search of the enemy at dawn.

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By dawn, Vicente's five human companions had eager looks on their faces, full of the desire to fight after experiencing the changes in their armor.

To say they were changed was an understatement. It was as if Vicente had reinvented every part of his design, taking it to such an absurd level that the armor seemed to be a living being rather than mere objects.

When they wore them, the five of them were now completely certain that they could fight at a level similar to Low-level Paragons, but not necessarily just any Low-level Paragon, but a talented being close to becoming a Mid-level Paragon!

This was something incredible for all of them, something that would give them not only attack and movement power but also more solid defense than any of their powers could give them.

Seeing Vicente finish his meditation at the beginning of the day, the five were ready to leave.

Vicente walked among the trees in this area of the Valley of Lightning, feeling parts of his body vibrate as small blue rays shot out from them.

The area was truly perfect for practitioners with an affinity for the lightning element. He had only been meditating, but he felt as if he had "recharged his batteries" to a level beyond what he could normally go.

He said as he saw his companions eating and drinking. "Are you ready? Let's get on with our mission. If all goes well, we'll find our target at dawn tomorrow."

The werewolf, now dressed in a hood to protect it from the daylight, stood up, more anxious than anyone else, for this was the glorious moment of its life.

"Follow me," it said as it took the lead and made its way under the branches of the large trees in the area, the group following behind it without haste or delay.

As they set off, Rory asked Vicente. "Are we going after another pentagram after this hunt? You have four spaces to fill in your second magical form."

The others were curious as well and looked at Vicente to hear his answer.

"No. As interesting as it would be for me to add as many pentagrams as possible to my second magical form, the truth is that it can be quite difficult, time consuming and conspicuous," he said, without explaining some details about the fact that he was mainly targeting naturally formed essences.

"We've been away from home for several months now. There's a long way to go before we return, with necessary stops for our future preparations. If we go on a big hunt now, we may not return in time to help our family deal with the worst of the crisis."

"So you want to go after Lauren after absorbing the pentagram created by Manticora?" Rory asked.

"Yes. Depending on the situation in Nixlas' Shadows, we could return home in two or three months," Vicente confirmed, making his companions even more excited.

As much as the cultivation opportunities in the continent's north were incredible, they all wanted to return home, enjoy some progress, and help their families.

None of them were expected to become Paragons in the short term, so it would be a long time before they needed new pentagrams. Returning was what everyone there wanted most, despite all the strengthening they had undergone during these months of hunting.

"Nixlas' Shadows, huh?" the werewolf murmured when it heard that. "Are you related to them?"

Vicente said to the creature leading them. "They took my older sister years ago. I want to save her."

"That's how Nixlas' Shadows work. They take newly awakened magicians with elements of the Dark Path as soon as they become aware of it. But that's not the worst thing about them. The worst thing is their alliance with vampires."

"What?" Lina exclaimed in surprise, not expecting to hear something like that now.

"You didn't know that?" The werewolf laughed bitterly. "Nixlas' Shadows is just another organization of magicians who allied themselves with vampires even before The Purification. Some even say that the Temple Master of the Congregation of Revelations, who led his religion into a war of extermination against the Dark Path magicians, was an ally of the vampires."

"That can't be true!" Layla didn't like what she heard. "From what we've already discovered, the vampires dealt a fatal blow to the Congregation of Revelations. How could they be allies if they did that?"

"As I said, the former Temple Master was the one who supposedly had a relationship with the vampires. But he disappeared about 2,000 years ago, around the time the most recent Temple Master took over the temple. But maybe this may just be an unfounded rumor. However, it is a fact that Nixlas' Shadow is with the vampires." This creature confirmed what it had already said, speaking with unwavering firmness.

"If that's the case, then things on the continent could be even worse than we imagined," Torne commented to the group as he emerged from Vicente's body. "Perhaps other sects and clans of the Dark Path have betrayed humanity, master. In that case, it will be much more difficult for us to deal with the current crisis, as well as to rescue young Lauren!"

Chapter 725 Worries Before the Hunt

The entire group became more worried when they heard from the werewolf that some of the strongest magicians in the fight against the monsters were on the side of the vampires.

If the former Temple Master of the Congregation of Revelations had made a deal with the vampires, it no longer mattered. The temple had lost most of its high-ranking members and was already on its way to being destroyed by the war started by the vampires.

However, if Nixlas' Shadows and other Dark Path factions were associated with vampires, it was very important and worrisome.

Besides vampires and other types of powerful monsters, the continent's magicians would also have to deal with powerful Dark Path magicians!

This was simply terrifying!

"If that's true, maybe the resurrection of the Cataclysm Order won't be well received." Lina commented, having already thought enough about the order's secret posts to realize that Vicente's actions would lead to the resurrection of the order, eventually.

But would the magical community would welcome the people behind the new order?

"It doesn't matter. Our goal is not to seek approval from anyone. We don't need people's support. We'll do whatever it takes to achieve our goals, even if a part of society considers us allies of the monsters," Vicente got right to the point, not liking the reality of things, but having no choice but to follow this path.

He looked at Layla and said. "When we get back to Seidel Kingdom, I want you and Jasmine to find a way to join the strongest survivors of the temple. I want to know the truth about this group. I strongly suspect that the higher-ups are concealing some very troubling information."

Everyone looked at Layla, while she herself was skeptical and concerned about her religion. She believed in the things they had taught her. But after being attacked and now hearing the werewolf's comment, she couldn't help but be interested in finding out the truth.

Her goal was not to expose the corruption of the Congregation of Revelation, but to uncover the truth behind the rumors and perhaps separate these negative stories from her faith.

"All right, I'll do my best." She agreed and expressed her opinion. "But I'm sure there are reasonable explanations for all of this. I have a feeling it's all just a misunderstanding."

"I hope so." Rory sighed.

"Let's look at the positive side of the situation," Vicente commented after a sad sigh. "Now we can attack Nixlas' Shadows without mercy. The bastards deserve to die!"

Everyone there had to agree on that. For now, they understood more than ever that their action in saving Lauren would not only not harm the magical community in the fight against the vampires, but would also weaken the enemy's side.

The werewolf remained silent for most of their conversation, finding the origin of this group curious but not interested in delving further into their past. Its plans were to have these people as its allies until it got what it wanted. After that, they would all go their separate ways, and it sincerely preferred not to see them again.

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Several hours later, the group arrived at one border of the Valley of Lightning as night gradually took over the day, signaling the group's proximity to their destination.

As night approached, the werewolf moved faster, quickening the group's pace as it made its final recommendations.

The 6th-stage manticore they were hunting was especially powerful at night because it was a creature of the Dark Path, and it usually grew stronger at night. However, that was also the best time to attack it.

Why was that? The Manticora was so much stronger at night that it didn't take the same precautions as it would during the day. It was more accessible and vulnerable at night because it was in its strongest and most confident state.

Vicente's Throne of Darkness would also be stronger at night. Since they would rely heavily on his second magical form in the upcoming battle, the group had to attack at night.

Vicente's strength greatly increased after absorbing the power of the two pentagrams. He had improved two of his existing essences and gained two new powers. But not only that, he had also solidified his foundation and reached a new level with his first and second gems.

The present him differed completely from the young man who had started the battle against the Behemoth!

Still, Vicente was at the same level as when he fought the Behemoth, and he didn't have as many advantages over the previous battle. If he didn't focus on attacking Manticora with his second magical form, his chances of winning would be slim.

The enemy was stronger than the previous one, but it would also be more attentive to Vice and wouldn't give him the same chances as the Behemoth. Thus, as the group progressed, its members became more tense and focused on finding the enemy and surviving the battle.

After the night mission, there would only be one more stop in the northern region before they returned to the Seidel Kingdom.

So when the group approached an area of fog, where the elements associated with darkness were denser than in the other areas they had passed through during the day, they slowed down, walking in battle formation.

Vicente's robotic armor was more alert than ever, helping its wearers check their surroundings and act quickly if necessary.

Torne was in Vicente's mind space. Even though the others already knew about him and there was no need for him to hide, it was better for him and Vice to fight together.

Even if Vicente had become a Paragon, Torne's mana could still make a significant difference to him in a deadly battle!

So the ghost was in position, ready to merge his powers with his master's as soon as necessary.

"Keep your senses sharp. I can sense the enemy's aura," the werewolf said in a low voice, since it was the first to sense Manticora's aura because of its higher cultivation level in the group.

It became more tense, circulating its energies throughout its large body to prepare for the battle that was about to begin.

"I will say this one last time. Stay vigilant about the poison produced by Manticora. Do not let it sting you under any circumstances. Even I will die if I get hit! Otherwise, good luck in battle!"

With those words, it slowly stopped, making the group repeat its behavior before they gradually saw the monstrous body of Manticora circling its own territory.

Chapter 726 Battle Against 6th Stage Manticora

The moment the group stopped moving, everyone there saw a creature shrouded in dark mist, but they could fully see the outline of its large body.

Over 3 meters tall and 5 meters long, the Manticora had two pairs of huge wings on its back, very reminiscent of bat wings. It has a lion's mane, completely black, running from the top of its head to the middle of its back.

In the middle of Manticora's back began the three tail-shaped stingers of scorpions, each with its sinister stingers, one of the sharpest natural weapons of all.

Standing under its four legs, which had exposed external bones and claws as horrible as its stingers, the creature with a human-like face had the hideous look of a killer on its face. Its teeth, however, bore no resemblance to those of humans, but those of a thirsty dog in search of its next meal.

As soon as the group, led by the werewolf, got close to it, the Manticora turned its face in their direction, looking directly at the tall, furry creature in front of them.

The Manticore was even more intelligent than the Behemoth, aware it had something of great value in its small territory, something that would surely attract fools to take a chance on it.

"Another group courting death," It opened its mouth and muttered, then moved without hesitation, attacking with its stingers and claws toward Vicente's group.

The Manticore was not only more intelligent than the Behemoth; it was also more cautious. Knowing that many predators would target it if it displayed any sign of vulnerability, it couldn't forgive these intruders encroaching on its territory.

The moment it attacked, the pentagrams of all the magicians in the group appeared, while everyone there, even the werewolf, saw scenes from the future as they moved to dodge the initial combat attack.

The werewolf narrowly dodged one of the creature's stings, but couldn't help looking in horror at the brown exoskeleton structure in front of it and thanking the woman called Lina and the man called Casey. Without these two, it would have been seriously injured, marked for death!

Vicente did not hesitate to merge his powers with Torne's, realizing the fight there would not be simple. There was no room for him to test his powers individually.

As the battle began, he felt his mana more than double, as the darkness in the surroundings came under his control with the appearance of the Throne of Darkness.

A crown and cloak of darkness appeared over Vicente's body, as the Manticora stopped looking at the werewolf, turning its attention to its real opponent there.

"I see. You're here to hunt me," it said, sensing Vicente's darkness, even feeling a little of the elemental suppression coming from the young Paragon.

"Even if you are the king of darkness, this one in front of you will not lower its head, young magician. But I will give you a chance to leave with your group alive out of respect for your position," said the Manticora, while it was already in a defensive position.

Rory and the others used the moment to back off a little, distancing themselves from their opponent to only support Vicente and the werewolf, the real fighters, who had a chance of making the Manticora suffer.

Their armor could help them cause the 6th stage creature some discomfort. But even all of them together could do no more than the werewolf or Vicente individually.

They went into standard formation, with Lina and Casey focused on supporting their colleagues, while the others stayed in position to protect these two and try, on a smaller scale, to suppress their target monster.

"Trying to intimidate me? It won't be that easy, monster," Vicente said as he raised one of his hands, causing darkness to surround the creature, forcing it to the ground.

The five armors acted together to create pressure under the Manticora, while the ground shook, making weapons and conscious metallic beings appear in the surroundings.

Chains tried to catch the creature's legs, while metal structures appeared around the Manticora's stingers.

The creature felt Vicente trying to invade its mind, trying to divert its attention from the metal warriors and darkness forming around it.

As six pentagrams glowed around Vicente, making his heart beat differently and affecting the enemy significantly, the werewolf acted with some distance, attacking fiercely to help its ally weaken the opponent.

The creature felt pressured, noting that dealing with Vicente would not be easy. Not only did he have a darkness even stronger than its own, but the magician had two extraordinary powers and the help of several warriors who were weak on their own, but together could be a nuisance.

It opened its mouth and laughed mischievously as its cyan pentagram appeared outside its body amid the darkness of the area vibrating strangely.

"All right! Let's see who's stronger! If you win today, so be it. My pentagram will be yours. But if not, I'll devour your body!" it shouted as the shadows of each of them, but also of the surrounding trees and rocks, changed, forming shadow monsters.

Vicente's 4th stage companions hadn't expected that, but the moment the creature's shadows attacked them, their armor kicked in, making them move as they counterattacked.

Vicente saw the werewolf change its attack to defend itself, while he merely moved his right arm.

He grabbed the neck of one creature of darkness, causing it to dissipate immediately afterwards.

But that was all the time it took for the 6th stage monster to escape the joint suppression on him and move as fast as Layla towards him.

"Die!"

It yelled as it attacked Vicente with its three stingers, using its powerful aura to destroy Vice's metallic items, which, under the Metallic Symphony, were acting independently of him to hurt it.

Vicente felt all his physical features rise with the power of his fourth pentagram and moved, narrowly escaping the creature's poisonous stings.

When the Manticora least expected it, a metal trident broke through the rock beneath it, striking its abdomen, its most sensitive area.

The trident was made of metal, but it was shrouded in darkness, while the elements of darkness above the creature seemed to force it downwards, making it difficult for it to escape.

In this position, it saw a giant lightning bolt rapidly forming on its right side, while a huge hammer descended towards it at the command of the electric creature.

Its heart beat differently and it felt just how strong the young man it was fighting really was!

Chapter 727 End of the Hunt

In the blink of an eye, the dark trident struck the Manticore, while Vicente's enormous hammer assaulted its wings viciously.

Although Vicente's strikes did not mortally wound the 6th-stage creature, they inflicted significant injuries, leaving the Manticore with broken bones and deep lacerations at the primary points of attack.

The Manticore let out a scream of agony, its body pierced for the first time in ages, as a trail of dark energy invaded its insides.

External forces should never breach the body of a magical creature, being the sanctuary of the soul. It was far easier to inflict serious damage on the soul once another's powers infiltrated its body.

Agitated, the Manticore moved, leaving a trail of thick, black blood that shocked Vicente's comrades. Despite the ferocity of the attack, the creature was robust enough to maneuver across the battlefield, launching a counterattack.

Vicente watched as the Manticore, its three stingers aimed at him, passed by closely. After such a brutal onslaught, the beast was severely weakened and would not last much longer. In a desperate bid, it aimed a lethal strike at him.

Vicente's heart raced as he expected the enemy's movements, reacting just in time. Foreseeing his imminent future through Lina's skill, his eyes narrowed, and he positioned himself to catch two of the three stingers.

The creature's eyes opened even wider with this move, as it aimed the third stinger at Vicente's heart, viciously going for the young magician's death.

However, just as it was about to hit his body, the stinger bumped into Vicente's cloak of darkness, before the werewolf appeared beside the two of them.

The moment it appeared next to them, the werewolf raised its claws and attacked viciously towards the creature's tails.

In a single instant, all three tails containing the creature's stinger were severed, causing the Manticore to scream even more desperately.

Vicente's companions seized the opportunity to attack, all of them using the strength of their armor to put pressure on the creature again, as its darkness finally weakened.

"You will become my second pentagram," Vicente said as the creature looked at him in terror.

Vicente's body was powerful. The fact that he had held it for a few moments had shocked the creature. But more importantly, now, feeling more and more the elemental suppression, the Manticore lamented its end there, before accepting its fate.

"The master of darkness has beaten me. This is not an unfair defeat. Use my pentagram to strike terror in the Polaris Realm, young magician," it said in a weak tone, without Vicente having to give it the final blow, just before its body collapsed lifelessly to the ground and a cyan essence emerged from it.

"How peculiar... It gave you its pentagram." The werewolf muttered as it turned away from Vicente and the Manticore.

A creature could give up its life and willingly give its pentagram to a magician. When this happened, the absorption process became much easier, sometimes even allowing a bonus for the magician's side.

Vicente didn't find this result strange. By making the Manticore look pitiful in front of him, he imposed his dominance, making it accept him as its superior, as indeed he was.

As the bearer of the Throne of Darkness, Vicente would rule over the creatures of darkness, who owed him obedience and should be grateful if they had the chance to be part of his powers!

He sat down and allowed the cyan essence to join his powers, for the first time in his journey so far, absorbing an essence in his second magical form!

The werewolf watched Vicente for just a few moments, before moving towards the area protected by the Manticore in search of the resource he so desperately needed to advance a stage.

The members of the group approached Vicente, each of them exhausted, but much better than they had been at the end of the fight against the Behemoth.

Vicente's dark powers really were very strong, but not only that, his armor had absorbed most of the problems, helping them to reach this point without serious injury.

"It's finally over," Sarah murmured as she looked at the Manticore's body, while Onyx and Torne appeared to remove the corpse from the area.

In only 10 minutes, this place would be filled with magical creatures in search of that corpse, but also the item hidden in the area. However, to the surprise of some of them, Vicente didn't even take 5 minutes to complete the absorption of his second pentagram!

At the end of the 5 minutes, his yellow pentagram from the Throne of Darkness had advanced to the green grade, while the pentagram from the Manticore had stabilized in the second position of that Magic Gem.

As the Manticore had given Vicente its pentagram without him having to deliver the final blow, he received an extra benefit, feeling his mana rise beyond what he had expected from absorbing the pentagram from that monster.

His mana advanced 40% to the level of a Low-level Paragon, putting him close to the middle of this level. His senses became sharper and even his magnetic powers increased.

As he already knew, his magical forms were connected, so the strengthening of one side would lead to the development of the other!

His first power from the Throne of Darkness developed, gaining him a new ability, Creatures of the Shadow Realm, while his new pentagram gave him a field ability, Poison Veil.

His new ability from the cyan pentagram could create an extremely poisonous gas, capable of killing those up to 100% stronger than him. Meanwhile, the development of his first ability could give rise to creatures of darkness, capable of fighting physically and mentally against his targets.

Vicente realized his two new powers, as he felt his mana reaching its peak state. His abilities quickly regenerated all his injuries and exhaustion, while he noticed creatures approaching where he was.

"Let's go. There's nothing more for us to do here," he said to his companions, as his fourth and fifth pentagrams appeared, with him stimulating his companions' recovery.

"What about the werewolf?" Rory asked, as he showed where that creature had gone.

"It's already consumed the resource it wanted. Its advance to the 6th stage should happen quickly. I doubt anyone will try to attack it as it is now. And that's no longer our problem," he said dryly, while he couldn't help smiling at the thought of his next target.

"Let's go to Nixlas' Shadows headquarters!"

Chapter 728 Advance of the Vampire Forces

With the end of Vicente's planned hunt, his group began their journey towards the headquarters of Nixlas' Shadows, in a neighboring state to the west of the Vinia Empire.

Nixlas' Shadows was in an autonomous area between the Vinia Empire and The Ivory Desert, two areas contrasted by the Congregation of Revelations and the vampire tribes.

This was definitely the most dangerous area on the continent, so they moved on from the Valley of Lightning with caution, not at all arrogant because of Vicente's advances.

He was stronger than ever, but it would only take one superior peak 5th stage vampire to end their journey.

While trying to hide their aura by traveling west, the group would now use Lina's prophetic ability more than ever to predict their encounters with monsters, inferior vampires, or superior vampires.

Their journey to Lauren's sect could take between one and two months, depending on the pace at which they moved, but the group wasn't worried about time.

Having already done almost everything they had to do in this dangerous area of the continent, after completing Lauren's rescue mission, it would be time for them to return south, where they planned to strengthen the resistance to the monsters' advance.

...

Some more time had passed since the end of Vicente's group's pentagram hunt.

While he and his people headed for Nixlas' Shadows headquarters, Miss Death and her companions were currently in the Kingdom of Eternal Dawn.

After their passage through Seidel Kingdom, the group passed through three other states in the far south of the continent, where they had targets to neutralize on behalf of their dark coalition.

As much as the vampires' plan was to leave some Paragons and young people with the potential to become Paragons in the future alive to one day become a cultivation 'resource' for high-level vampires, that didn't mean they didn't have targets to die for now!

Demien Bloodthorne wouldn't waste his time going hunting in the continent's south. Not only that, he and his high-level subordinates were busy absorbing the powers from the large amount of blood they had got in recent months.

It would take months for them to finish their current seclusion and turn their attention back to the continent. Until then, their allies and underlings were the ones who were careful to neutralize any threats to their plans.

They would not exterminate the continent's magicians, but they were aiming to force the magicians' community, preventing it from having large territories under its control, leading the continent to fall under the majority control of monsters.

For this to happen, some Paragons from the south, such as King Seidel's former bodyguard, had to fall before the hordes of monsters arrived in that region!

Miss Death and her group had taken care of several such individuals in recent months and were now making their way back to their sect's headquarters, having completed all their missions.

Today they were standing by a stream, resting before continuing their journey north.

In another month and a half, two at the most, they would be back in the dark lands of Nixlas' Shadows headquarters. Being peak 4th stage Dark Path magicians, traveling across the continent was currently much easier for them than it had been for Vicente's group.

Not only were they stronger than most of Vicente's companions, they also had the vampires' authorization to move freely through these lands!

While Lauren was meditating in a small tent near that stream, two of her men were talking, sitting on stumps of fallen trees.

Next to them, a woman with a beautiful appearance but a terrible aura was telling them about the current situation in the central part of the continent.

"Our coalition surrounded The Hungry Canyon and The Pure Enclave weeks ago. In a few more days, the Kingdom of Eternal Dawn will fall and our troops will move on to the southern region," said a lamia in front of them, who couldn't help but smile as she spoke about it, imagining the amount of magicians she would devour in the near future.

"The plans are progressing. I thought it would take us two years to take over the continent. But it looks like that will happen sooner," said one man, who was human but looked more monstrous than the lamia in front of them.

"Our next targets are Trevora Kingdom, Andoria Kingdom, and the Gugia Empire. Once these three states fall, dominating the southern region will be as easy as taking candy from a child!" The Lamia commented.

"How many human domains are left in our territory already conquered so far?" The other man asked.

Their aim wasn't to take over everything, but to leave the humans stuck in small places, where they could continue to develop, but without leaving the monsters' control.

"We currently have 32 cities around the northern region and part of the central region where humans are trapped. There must be 5 million humans in these places growing up to be slaughtered in the future." She laughed.

"The south has more cities than the north, so it's possible that we'll have 100 cities and just over 15 million humans by the end of our plans. That's not bad. With those numbers, we'll be able to create several Archmages and a Magus or two." The group's deputy leader said, but he couldn't help smiling and showing his yellowed teeth, letting out a mischievous laugh.

...

While Lauren's group traveled back north to go into seclusion in their post-mission home, the situation in the south was not at all good, although the worst was yet to come.

Although the monsters were still expanding their domains in the central part of the continent, the magical beings who had come south on account of The Purification had already wreaked havoc in the area.

Not only that, besides these beings who had arrived in the area before the calamity even began, a few monsters were ahead of most of their troops.

Several cities in the south had already fallen, while migratory movements in search of safer places had begun in all the states in the area.

In the Seidel Kingdom, things were getting terrible, with villages around the entire state gradually being abandoned, with citizens of the kingdom mainly seeking the big cities.

Vicente's Metal City had grown a lot in the period of more than a year since his departure, having advanced quite a bit over its area. It now had over 170,000 inhabitants and every day, trains, carriages and wagons brought more people to live, or rather survive, in this place of metal.

But that was only the beginning of the calamity. In the coming months, the entire kingdom would face the actual terror of the vampires' plans!

Chapter 729 Arriving at Nixlas' Shadows

Six weeks had passed since Vicente's group left the Valley of Lightning after the Manticora's death.

They had traveled a long way within the northern region until they were very close to reaching their goal, the home of Nixlas' Shadows.

Contrary to what had happened so far in the group's journey, they had hardly faced any magical creatures during these weeks.

Perhaps because this territory is already under the control of monsters, who may have been neglecting the surroundings out of sheer confidence, or because of the group's caution, they had only had one fight on this journey.

It was a battle they had just left the Valley of Lightning.

As they entered the territory to the west of the Vinia Empire, they hadn't been involved in any trouble so far, and were now only a few days away from reaching the headquarters of Vicente's target sect.

They were standing still to allow Lina to use her powers and predict what lay ahead of the group.

...

While Lina was using her powers, the group was on the outskirts, positioned discreetly among the trees in the area, silently waiting.

Vicente was monitoring the terrain to the west, seeing nothing of concern from his position.

The others were in the same position, each of them breathing cautiously in anticipation of the end of Lina's vision.

While the group heard tree leaves swaying in the wind, but also the sound of tiny insects and animals far away, Torne was talking to Vicente.

'When we finish this current journey, you will be able to activate the altars of the order, master. With your current powers, I believe we can simultaneously activate 5 Awakening Altars. That will definitely give us some advantages,' Torne said excitedly.

They knew already that the continent was experiencing a new crisis amid the current problems, something to do with the non-awakening of young magicians who every day reached the age of awakening their powers, but because of the problems in the Congregation of Revelations, could not awaken their skills.

This would obviously be a magnificent opportunity for Vicente!

'That's good. But I have several doubts about how we're going to do this. How will people know that we can awaken their powers? More importantly, won't enemies be aware of our movements?'

Torne said with a confident tone. 'The monsters won't stop us, if that's what you're worried about. They might try to do something against you because of your powers. But they won't act like that because of the altars.

But we'll have to hire people to spread rumors in towns near the altars that we'll use to awaken new magicians. I think it'll be a while before we get what we want.

The order's altars could also awaken Light Path magicians, just as the temples of the Congregation of Revelation could awaken Dark Path magicians. As such, they wouldn't necessarily 'attract' those with an affinity to one path or the other.

The difference is that those with a negative elemental affinity might be more likely to subordinate themselves to Vicente after awakening their powers.

This was Torne's goal for the revival of his old religion/organization, while Vicente intended to use this to strengthen his domains.

From the news they had heard around the continent, states were falling and only a few large cities in these already devastated areas had held out so far. He imagined the same would happen in the south eventually, which meant he would have to take matters into his own hands and establish his own territory, ignoring old borders and even absolute families.

It wasn't Vicente's initial goal to become sovereign of his own domain, but as things developed, he would sooner or later become something of a monarch.

There was a limit to how far he could go as leader of the underworld, a limit he believed the continent had already reached.

Gaining more people through the awakening at his altars would be an important step for him to implement the plans necessary for his people's resistance against the vampires.

'We'll see about that in the future,' he murmured to Torne, seeing that Lina had just awakened from the vision she was having.

"There are no prominent dangers until we reach the entrance to Nixlas' Shadows. All the territory ahead belongs to the sect. As the area is shrouded in darkness and the vampires themselves seem to protect its boundaries, as well as this being the home of powerful magicians, there are hardly any vigilantes in our way." She explained as she looked at Vicente.

"The danger will be in entering the sect. There's a Beginner Archmage in that place, Vice."

"Oh? I didn't think Nixlas' Shadows were so strong... That must have something to do with his alliance with the vampires," Vicente said before asking. "Is this Archmage human?"

"Yes."

The group sighed in relief. It would be very different if such a being were a monster from the Dark Path, an inferior vampire or, worse, a superior vampire.

"Very well. Let's move on. We should reach our goal in less than a week. I'll take care of the Archmage and the Paragons of this sect." Vicente said in a decisive tone and added. "Our goal is to rescue Lauren. But if we can exterminate our enemies, that's our secondary objective. Be aware of that."

With those words, the group started moving west again.

...

As Vicente's group headed towards the Nixlas' Shadows headquarters, a woman and three men, all of them Sky Sovereigns, stopped in front of the entrance to the sect's headquarters.

In front of a gigantic castle, built around a mountain surrounded by dark fog, the group could hear a mixture of sounds that sounded like crying, screams of pain, but also laughter coming from the building.

Around the entrance to the place, where there was a fosse circling the entire area, a red liquid, similar to blood, highlighted the activities in which the group behind this place was involved.

From the bridge where the four magicians stood, they could also smell rotting meat, something that would put off any ordinary magician, but which to them was just a normal odor.

They didn't find the smell pleasant, but it was something they were so used to that they honestly didn't mind smelling it.

The giant iron gates in front of the castle entrance opened, revealing a passage into the sect, while a cadaverous-looking man welcomed the group back.

"Miss, it's good to have you back. How was your mission?" asked this Dark Path magician, a being with millennia of existence, the head doorman of the headquarters.

"We did well. I'm back in the sect to start my seclusion. I hope to advance to the 5th stage in the next few days," Lauren passed the gatekeeper, heading towards her training area, leaving her men in charge of taking care of the bureaucratic matters of the mission they had completed to the south.

As she walked ahead, watched by her companions and the old Mid-level Paragon, she clenched her fists, unable to stop thinking about her previous meeting with Vicente Fuller.

'At our next meeting, things will be different!'

Chapter 730 Better Late Than Never!

After Lauren's return from her mission to the south of the continent, she was soon in seclusion, pursuing her advancement to the 5th stage.",

At 26, she was one of the greatest prodigies of the northern region in the current generation, having earned her position after tens of thousands of deaths, but also a lot of investment by Nixlas' Shadows.

As much as they had forced her to come to this place, and brainwashed her to forget her past and become a killing machine, the sect had given her every opportunity to grow.

From magical resources to special cultivation sites, even targets for her to train her powers and stimulate her growth through challenges. The sect had made her path easier by making her the principal weapon among the organization's young generation.

Not only did Lauren hold the position of the sect's top prodigy, she was also the current heir to the sect master, whom she would replace once she became a High-level Paragon.

With the green scythe on her forehead—a very ancient symbol of death—her fate could not be any other!

As she went into seclusion, the sect master couldn't help but ask Lauren's companions how his chosen one had fared.

One of the three men who had returned with her sighed and said. "For the most of the time, everything went as expected. We dealt with the problems we had expected and carried out the missions with the same success rate as always."

The Beginner Archmage in front of those three men in a hall overlooking a cliff heard this and frowned. "What went wrong?" he asked, sensing the 'most of the time' related to problems.

"While we were heading south, we came up against a strange opponent. A man called Vicente Fuller. He was already an old acquaintance of the Miss. As far as we know, she had given him an ultimatum to join us. When he refused during our meeting in Andoria Kingdom, we acted against him, intending to avoid a future problem."

"So?" the sect master asked, not seeing how this had been a problem.

If they were there, it didn't mean that Vicente had died, or even if he had survived, that he had done nothing wrong to the group?

The man hesitated for a while, but eventually conveyed what had happened in that city in the south-central region of the continent. "We acted against him and the Miss wrote his name in the Book of Death. But he didn't die. His name was erased from her book and we all fainted afterwards."

They didn't remember such a thing. They remembered coming across Vicente, and Lauren had told them she had certainly written Vice's name in her book. From then on, they assumed what had happened, even though they didn't remember most of it.

"What?" The sect master stepped forward, clenching his fists tightly.

For something like that to happen, Vicente would have to have an even more refined, negative elemental affinity than Lauren's!

Lauren was already a monster within the universe of Dark Path magicians. Who could this strange boy be?

"What's most peculiar is that until that day, she was convinced he was a magician from the Light Path. However, even though his cultivation was on the same level as ours, he did it." Concluded the leader of the companions responsible for Miss Death's safety on the recently completed mission.

The sect master became even more serious as he sensed a monster had been born among humans.

"Investigate the name of Vicente Fuller. I want all the data on him in my hands within a maximum of six months!" He gave his order to one guard on standby in the hall.

Unfortunately for him, his group didn't know who Lauren was. To them, she was a girl they kidnapped about 12 years ago in the continent's south, and now she was the sect's heiress. As for her past, they had erased everything they could after verifying she had a common origin.

How could the sect master recognize the name Fuller today? To him, it was just a strange name that reminded him of nothing and no one.

Now he could only order Vicente Fuller's investigation, not being able to take any faster steps towards the truth because he didn't know that Vicente and Lauren were brother and sister.

As his men set off to carry out the orders of this Beginner Archmage, he couldn't help but worry about the hypothesis raised by his men.

'What could explain this strange encounter? Could this young man have fooled my disciple's senses at first?' he wondered, doubting it had happened.

It was possible for a Dark Path magician to use their powers to imitate the abilities of Light Path magicians, hiding their true nature. It wasn't easy to do, but it was possible for some elemental affinities.

However, one using such a method could never fool another Dark Path magician, especially someone as talented and sensitive as Lauren.

'Don't tell me he has two magical powers?' The Archmage swallowed his saliva in concern, having never heard of such a thing before.

'I'll communicate with the vampires. Perhaps they know something or can settle the matter with this strange young man.' He quickly approached his desk and wrote a letter.

In less than a minute, he had placed a small parchment in a special artifact, then attached it to the paw of a black-winged flying beast trained to come and go from The Ivory Desert.

...

A few days passed and today Vicente's group was close enough to the mountain where Nixlas' Shadows' headquarters stood for them to see the place.

At the sight of the gigantic castle, parts of which shrouded in black mist, Vicente stopped in front of his group, feeling thrilled to have reached this point in their journey.

A few minutes away from reaching that place, he was close to fulfilling his mission of revenge and completing all the promises he had made to himself in Saltstar City 12 to 13 years ago.

If it hadn't been for The Purification and the current calamity on the continent, his journey after today would have been more peaceful, with him being able to live without thinking about revenge and bigger goals.

But even if he still had problems to solve after today, dealing with Lauren's kidnapping would certainly remove a great deal of hurt from his heart.

'I hope you're still alive, Lauren. It took me a while, but I'm finally here!' he thought as he got moving again, leading his group towards the entrance to the enemy headquarters, where sect observers had already spotted the group approaching the enormous castle.

Vicente's companions were already aware that they had attracted attention, each of them stopping hiding as they circulated their mana to prepare for the conflict about to begin.

Their aim was to take Lauren and act brutally against their enemies before dealing with everyone in the area and then return to the south of the continent!