

The Mafia 81

Chapter 81 More or Less Successful

Hearing Rory's words, Jax became even more annoyed. But he really had several opponents who could have easily attacked them tonight. Vicente's group was just the latest disagreement they'd had.

But something told Jax that these people were behind today's attack. "Don't play games with me, brat. Surrender now while it's still early, or don't come crying for mercy later."

"Jax, that's your name, right?" Rory smiled. They had already interrogated Brody. "Are you going to risk the life of the Peters family's hope like that? I don't think so, so shut up. I have the advantage here, damn it!"

"Fucking brat!"

Jax's younger brother held his brother so he wouldn't lose his calm and said, looking at Rory. "You're right, brat. But how long can you keep this up? This is going to end badly for you! There is no escape. You are just Apprentices!"

Rory looked at the other man under his mask but said nothing. "We have more time than you think."

Then he went back, took off his mask, and gave his men a worried look.

"What are we going to do? He is right. We can't keep this up for long." One of the men who had been with Rory and Vicente the longest asked in a worried tone.

"I know. For now, we will wait for Vice."

"What if he gets caught?" One of the younger men there asked as he looked at the young redhead.

"That hasn't happened. Otherwise, these people would be with him to negotiate a hostage exchange. Vice must have run into a problem, but I doubt he fell into enemy hands." Rory analyzed the situation calmly.

Rory had learned to be cautious, not from Vicente, but from his mother. This woman had survived the part of her life she had spent as a prostitute by being smart and careful.

He told his group. "We will hold our position and wait. If we turn Brody over to these people, we will be killed, so we just have to keep doing what we are doing for now. Sooner or later, Vicente will come back with new orders."

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A few hours later, Jax's group was still around the Fuller family's property, while Rory and his people were still in their previous positions.

Some of them had guns pointed at the street, keeping an eye on Jax's people to ensure they didn't infiltrate his property.

It was already dawn, and the area around the street was quiet, with no one around to follow this siege.

But a few blocks away, a girl and a woman were still awake in their apartment, worried that Vicente had not returned after so many hours.

"What happened to my brother?" Nina asked Eve as she hugged the woman lying on her bed.

"Don't worry, Nina. You should sleep. I'm sure your brother will be here by dawn." Eve replied, but she was quite worried herself.

'Vicente... What happened to you?' She looked up at the bedroom window and watched the moons in the sky, a little uncertain as she awaited the results of her group's first incursion.

...

Elsewhere on the Peters' estate, Vicente was still in the metal box where he had been hiding.

After several hours in the dark, he had lost track of time and wondered if it was daylight or dawn.

He had counted the time in his moments of waiting there, but after a while, he had lost his count and felt that more time had passed than he had counted.

Clever as he was, it was hard for him to ignore the spatial and luminous information in his environment.

If this were Earth, he was sure he could endure a similar situation for days without getting lost. But the mana of Polaris Realm changed everything you thought made sense. For lower-level humans, hours in such a situation were enough to disorient them.

Feeling that more time than necessary had passed, Vicente manipulated his ability and opened the metal box, the metals returning to the armor on his body.

Looking up, he noticed it was still night but did not manipulate his metals to hide his body again.

He immediately sensed the mana around the estate, noticing that the strongest were not around and that the Peters family had already slowed their observation of the surroundings.

'It looks like they didn't check their safe...' Vicente narrowed his eyes, a smile forming on his lips.

He had closed the door to this place before hiding, and since the family hadn't found anyone on this property, nor were there any signs of a break-in, those who stayed behind didn't bother to check the most valuable part of the residence.

Vicente liked that and decided not to risk himself there anymore. He climbed up the chimney without using his magical ability so as not to attract attention.

When he reached the roof, he saw some men standing around the fallen walls of this residence. He used the shadows of the night and the advantage of no lights on the roof of this house to get out of there.

For the first few steps out of the building, Vicente moved a little slower, despite his speed, but once he was in an alley behind the building, he ran at full speed.

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Twenty minutes later, Vicente confirmed that no one had followed him, and he made his way to the property where his men were supposed to be.

On the way, he considered the position of the strongest of his enemies, expecting to find Jax near his property. But trusting Rory, Vicente did not despair, figuring his friend would maintain the standoff with the Peters family.

Spotting his property from a nearby rooftop, Vicente paused for a moment, realizing he couldn't just walk in with what he had stolen.

He walked toward the property where Eve and Nina were, changed clothes on the way, and walked back through the streets without a mask on his face.

Who would identify him as the person who had just attacked and robbed the Peters family? A Junior Apprentice like him would not dare to do such a thing!

Even under the eyes of the guards around the house, Vicente had no problems and entered through the front door.

"Vicente?" Eve's voice reached his ear as this woman peered through the cracks of one of the doors on the second floor, a pistol already in her hands.

"It's me. I'm sorry to be back so late. I had some problems." He said, noticing Eve's nervousness.

"Did everything work out?"

"More or less. I'll have to come back to fix a problem." He said before placing his bags with the Peters' belongings on a couch. "And Nina? Is she asleep?"

"She's asleep... Sigh, but she was very worried."

"I can imagine. I'll go out with her tomorrow to make up for last night. Stay here for now. I'll try to come back as soon as possible." Vicente stated before leaving to sort out the situation with Rory and the company.

Chapter 82 'Negotiation'

Moments later, the day slowly began to dawn, but the darkness of dawn still covered Millfall.

As the group of Acolytes and Senior Apprentices surrounded the Fuller family home, Vicente appeared at the beginning of the street where his second local property was located.

Seeing the people around Rory's group, Vicente scanned the area under his mask and walked quietly toward them.

After a few steps, someone from Jax's group noticed him approaching and saw the way Vicente was dressed, immediately becoming suspicious.

"Boss, look who's coming at us." This man from the Peters family said, drawing the attention of Dax and his younger brother to Vicente.

Looking at the Junior Apprentice, Jax narrowed his eyes, and a smile formed on his lips.

This was what he needed to save Brody and take action against these petulant people!

He didn't know who this fool coming towards his group was, but judging by his manners, the moment, and the place he was in, it was probably a member of the enemy party.

"Haha, let's settle this quickly, big brother!" The level 1 Acolyte said to Jax, looking at Vicente and cracking his own neck.

"Hey, you there. Where do you think you're going?" Jax took a few steps towards Vicente, asking in a tone full of confidence.

Vicente said nothing, but still, his people inside the estate realized he was there.

Rory quickly appeared on a balcony on the second floor and looked out from under his mask to see where Vicente was.

Vicente was only 100 meters from Jax and getting closer!

When he reached 50 meters, Vicente slowed down but continued to walk forward. "You... What are you doing here, Mr. Peters? Do you realize my men will kill your nephew if you keep this up?"

"Oh? So you really are one of them, you bastard!" Jax's younger brother shouted.

Jax laughed. "If you do, I'll kill you, asshole!"

"Kill me?" Vicente continued to walk toward the spot as Jax and his men did the same.

"That's not so easy as you may think."

Immediately after these words from Vicente, a yellow glow appeared on his forehead, and a Red Pentagon appeared in front of one of his hands. Then, various coins and small metal objects in the area came under Vice's control and flew behind the men toward their vital points.

In a single instant, more than 40 sharp artifacts flew like projectiles against the bodies of the men in Jax's group, hitting them in their backs.

"Aaaaagh!"

"AAAAAAGH!"

Screams erupted in the area as all of the men felt pain in their bodies and noticed the sudden change that had happened just 4 seconds after Vicente's words.

Jax himself became much more serious as he lost control of his body and collapsed as if he had been knocked out.

His mouth and eyes were wide open as he looked at his chest and saw a coin-sized bullet protruding from his blood-covered chest.

He felt a sharp pain in his body and shivered in disbelief at this unbelievable situation.

"You..."

He was a level 2 Acolyte. However, the difference in power between his body and Vicente's attack was not that great!

Vicente's power was similar to his weapons. However, unlike his weapons that fired projectiles in a straight line, this black-haired young man could make his projectiles travel in curved trajectories!

Jax and all his men had not noticed Vicente's attack in time, let alone his power!

"Wretch!" Jax's younger brother yelled as he felt his body falling to the ground, tasting blood in his mouth.

While the Apprentices in the area screamed in pain, deadly hurt by Vicente's move, the Acolytes were badly hurt, but not enough to pose a threat to their lives.

Knowing this, even before he saw them fall to the ground in surprise from the initial attack, Vicente clenched his right fist, and the metallic objects in his possession changed shape and 'stapled' these bodies to the ground.

Vuup!

Several small steel 'clamps' rapidly flew until they clamped down on the wrists and heels of the strongest in the area.

In an instant, Vicente outran the group and reached the door of his estate, where Rory was already waiting for him!

"You're late," Rory said to his friend, sighing in relief to see Vicente back.

"I'm sorry, guys. But now that I'm here let's fix this situation." Vicente smiled under his mask but didn't get too active when he saw some of his key men standing there.

"Damn it!"

"You fucking bastard! We're going to kill you!"

The stronger men of Jax's group shouted as they felt their weaker allies die, unable to withstand Vicente's blows.

Meanwhile, the injured Acolytes had enough to stay alive, but they were all in too much pain to easily escape the "clamps" used by Vicente.

Jax shouted, even angrier than before. "Motherfucker, I'm going to fuck you up! I guarantee you won't live another day! I'll put the whole town on you!"

But when he heard that, Vicente stepped back, not wanting to be called that way. "Mr. Peters, control your words, or the cost of this day will be much greater for you and your family.

But I will forgive you for now. Losing a fight is a really annoying thing. However, I will not tolerate your comments. Say a single curse word in my direction, and I will kill Brody."

"You!"

Vicente said, speaking louder than him. "If you want to solve this problem peacefully, return to your family and bring me the mining agreement papers with the Symons family. I will exchange your nephew for those papers."

"What?" Jax's younger brother shouted when he heard such a thing, making a face as ugly as his brother's.

'Symons?' Rory narrowed his eyes as he heard the family name of the only Viscount in the area.

Jax yelled. "Where did you hear that?"

Arrangements like the one he had with the Symons family were not public knowledge. Usually, only the parties to the agreement knew it existed.

Given the value of the paperwork involved in such agreements, everyone preferred to keep them secret.

The fact that Vicente knew about it was a bad sign for the Peters family because it meant they might have internal enemies in their group!

At the same time, with this information, Vicente could easily motivate enemies of the Peters family to act against them!

Vicente smiled behind his mask and did not answer such a question, entering his property while saying aloud.

"You have until noon to decide!"

Chapter 83 Major Gains?

Upon entering his estate, Vicente was soon joined by Rory and the more powerful of the group.

"Vice, what's all this talk about the Symons family?" Rory asked as he sat down in one of the chairs in the family leader's office.

As he settled into his seat, Vicente smiled, now without the metallic mask from earlier. "When I went into the Peters family vault earlier, I saw the documents of this family's magical agreement with House Symons."

"Uh?"

"They have an agreement with this family?"

"But if that's true... Boss, why didn't you just steal them?" One of the men asked as Rory understood where his friend's speech had come from.

Vicente closed his eyes and said. "This is a society of appearances that doesn't work as easily as you think, Joshua. If I had stolen those papers, they would have been useless to me.

If I tried to use them in public, I would be considered a thief, and our whole group would be in trouble with the local guard. At the same time, would we still be a reliable group that could be hired to protect local businesses?"

Rory nodded and said. "We could never use those papers if he had stolen them. But trading them for that idiot..."

"Hmmm." Vicente smiled. "We can end this situation and get not only those papers but a way to use them without being publicly recognized as bandits."

The situation they found themselves in was not comfortable. It meant they were stuck in a stalemate, and there seemed to be only one battle ahead of them before the alternative Vicente brought.

With this exchange, they would not only get something useful and valuable for the group, but they could end the problem without a fight, without having to kill Brody and take bigger risks afterward.

This was the best alternative not only for them but also for the Peters family!

"Jax will take the deal I propose. He has no choice." Vicente said confidently. "With this, even after we release Brody, we will have a way to threaten the Peters family. That will keep us safe for the next few weeks."

"You don't intend to use this deal to take over the Peters family business with the Viscount?" Rory asked.

"We'll just wait for now. If we moved to steal that business from the Peters family, we would have a confrontation with Jax's people. But that wouldn't be so interesting for us right now." Vicente clarified. "If we stand still and show the public how we resolved the previous situation without any more fuss, we'll gain a lot of morale."

What they needed most now wasn't a mining agreement, for which they didn't even have people to take responsibility. What they needed most was to demonstrate their efficiency to the people who had seen the previous situation and to increase the attractiveness of their "territory."

They did not yet have a territory per se. But some of the nearby businessmen that Vice and Rory had already scouted over the past few days would definitely be more interested in doing deals with them after word of the events of the past few hours spread.

By preventing trouble at Zander's tavern and not suffering at the hands of Jax, their group was proving itself capable of doing what it set out to do!

"Let's keep Jax away from us while increasing our settlements in this area," Vice said, managing to make his less intelligent men understand the plan. "We'll revisit this in the future."

Rory agreed with this plan by nodding before he asked. "But Vice, how was your raid? Did you get anything of value?"

The others in the office, all very well dressed in dark suits, turned their attention to Vicente, the only one there dressed differently from the norm. "Yes, good values, I'd say, haha. In that family's safe, there were 7 gold coins, 526 silver coins, and 898 bronze coins. Not only that, but there was also a magic potion, two pills, and four jewels." He quickly summed up what he had counted in the chimney of the Peters' house.

This was an excellent result for a one-night raid that had not even resulted in any casualties for the group!

Counting Jax and his brother's belongings, what Brody had taken in River's Tavern twice, and what their group of guards had collected from bandits and troublemakers over the past few days, they had the equivalent of three gold coins.

But in a few hours, Vicente had collected much more than that!

Not only that, but he had gotten not just coins but magical resources, something rarer than coins.

Coins could be used to buy magic items. But magic items, like pills, could not only vary in price depending on place and time. They often had to be ordered.

Such resources sometimes had properties that were lost if they were not consumed within days or weeks. As a result, many alchemists only made items to order.

It was much more valuable to have pills and potions on hand than to have the coins to buy them!

Everyone in the room smiled, feeling the good feeling a thief would feel after a successful robbery.

"Not bad!" Rory commented. "This is the equivalent of what we made in profit in 6 days of trading..."

That might not seem like much for what they made in a month. However, their group's activities only generated this amount of coins because Andrew had spent years developing the foundation for them, and Vice had taken over several businesses from other merchants in Martell Village.

Vicente looked at Rory and said. "The potion won't be of much use to us for the time being. It is something that only Acolytes can use.

But the two pills will be enough for us. They are 1st-grade Enlightenment Pills."

Enlightenment Pills were one of the most common types in Polaris Realm. This pill provided mana and the ability to more deeply decipher the elements one had an affinity for, with the most obvious result being a better understanding of one's magical powers, with a possible level increase.

As for the classification of the pill, it followed the classification of magical artifacts, starting with the 1st grade and going up to the grade corresponding to the level of the magician it could affect.

A 2nd-grade magic item or resource could affect 2nd-stage magicians, and so on.

Knowing this, Rory clenched his fists, satisfied and eager to test one of these pills that should go to Brody if they had not moved.

"Excellent!" He commented to his friend.

As the group's two most talented and youngest, it was clear that these pills would go to them.

In the future, Vicente might even favor other of his men, depending on the situation. But now, where they both needed these resources, and there were none left for these men, there was no way either of them could think of giving them up for one of their stronger men.

"As for the jewels, we will sell them on the black market through one of our merchants," Vicente said, not wanting to implicate them directly.

The black market was supposed to keep the identity of its customers secret, but he preferred not to risk that.

In any case, he needed the coins, and he wouldn't keep those jewels.

At that moment, Jax's voice surprised some of Vicente's men, who still had doubts about solving the problem.

"Brats, I'll do whatever you want! Let's trade my arrangements for Brody!"

Chapter 84 Exchange?

Hearing Jax's cry, Rory was surprised at the speed with which the arrogant man had given in to Vicente's demands.

"That's fast!" He commented to his group, noting that everything had been settled in less than half an hour since Vicente's arrival.

Vicente stood up, put on his metal mask, and walked to the entrance of his estate.

His men returned to their positions, with Rory following at his side.

Arriving outside the facility, Vice found the street a little different, without the bodies of the men killed earlier.

Jax and his men had taken his dead men to his estate, where he had immediately gone searching for his contracts with the Viscount's family.

When he did it, he nearly had a heart attack when he discovered that more than half of what was stored in that safe place was gone!

He couldn't imagine who could have done it, but judging by the days he hadn't looked at his safe, the theft had happened in the last 3 days.

He had already ordered his people to start investigating the case. Still, with Brody's problem on his mind and the strange powers of that masked enemy, he couldn't be distracted at the moment.

Brody was the future of the family, who, in a few short years, could elevate them significantly. He was worth more than a few coins and even one of the Symons family contracts!

That was why he had accepted Vicente's condition without hesitation and was already there with his brother and sister to retrieve the precious Brody.

Vicente looked at the already blue sky, getting used to the brightness of the street. "You are wiser than I thought, Jax. But it'll be better for both of us this way."

Jax braced himself not to say something stupid and expressed. "Just give me my nephew, and I'll give you what you requested."

"Hmm, it's not that easy, Jax." Vicente smiled under his mask. "Give me the papers I asked for. I guarantee I'll release Brody after that."

"No!" Jax's younger brother shouted, not accepting this. "Who guarantees you'll give us Brody after? This kind of trade doesn't work for us!"

"What other choice do you have but to trust me?" Vicente asked, a few steps ahead of the stairs leading to his headquarters entrance.

There were few people around, as it was early in the day and this area was far from the city center. Still, a few witnesses were walking around, watching the situation unfold.

Vicente said. "These papers are enough for me to have the assurance that you will not act against my group. That is more valuable to me than having this guy in my possession. Let's get this done, Jax."

Brody's mother then pleaded with her brother. "Brother, let's do what he said. Please, my little boy is in more danger every moment that passes!"

Jax closed his eyes and swallowed his saliva, feeling so angry that his head felt like it could explode at any moment.

But Vicente's words made sense. Those papers would be what kept them away from this group. As long as Vice had them, he would have to stay away or risk losing his deal with Viscount Symons.

Brody would never be a good guarantee. He was just too valuable to be threatened indefinitely.

So Jax dropped the papers he had with him and let his sister make the exchange.

With the papers in hand, the woman quickly walked halfway down the path, where Rory picked it up and saw that it was indeed a Magical Agreement between Viscount Symons and the Peters family.

"Very well, bring young master Brody Peters to me," Vicente said in a good-natured tone, ordering his men.

Two minutes after receiving the papers of such an agreement, Vicente released Brody, who immediately ran to his mother like a dog who had not seen his owners for a long time.

"Mom! Those animals treated me like a stray!" He complained, quickly trying to get his people to turn against Vicente's group now that he was among them.

"Calm down, Brody. This doesn't end here." Jax said in a low voice, but knowing that Vicente now had something valuable to keep them away, he wouldn't do anything for now, nor would he make useless threats.

"Let's go!"

The two groups finished their business, and Vicente returned to his estate to celebrate with his people.

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Later that day, the rumor spread around the area of Vicente's estate, saying Brody had been released, but his captors were still safe.

The patrons of the two taverns run by the men of the Fuller family were already discussing the matter, theorizing about the strength of the group of guards and how they had resolved the problem with the Peters family.

But while the owners of the two taverns were feeling more confident about their dealings with Vicente and Rory, they returned to business in the morning and early afternoon.

They didn't expect to get immediate results from the action against the Peters family. Yet, both felt it was essential to get some area store' owners interested in them to speed things up.

They both visited three other shops that day and talked about where they were already operating, giving those people a reason to get to know the rumors already spreading in those two taverns.

Late in the afternoon, Rory returned to their group headquarters to deal with some issues with the group while Vicente went home.

He had been out all day, so when he saw Nina again in the late afternoon, he took her for an ice cream at a local plaza to make up for worrying her the night before.

After walking and playing with her, he ate dinner next to Nina and Eve before putting his little sister to sleep, as he had done many times since losing the rest of his family.

At the end of the day, Vicente sighed as he drank with Eve, so tired that he couldn't pay attention to the beautiful cleavage of this woman who had helped him so much.

"Eve, thank you for everything. I don't know what I would do without you taking care of Nina." He commented with his eyes closed, relaxing in an armchair in his living room.

"Don't worry, Vice. Taking care of Nina is a pleasure for me. For someone who could have had to go to bed with various strange, old, ugly men daily for years, taking care of a young girl like Nina is a real dream." Eve sighed and laughed, but inside, she didn't feel as good as she looked.

As much as she had escaped the fate of a prostitute, not everyone in her family had done so in time, which still bothered her!

Chapter 85 Intermediate Apprentice

Three days passed quickly...

Vicente's group continued to operate in the two previous taverns, with a few incidents but nothing as severe as Jax and Brody's visit earlier.

As far as the Peters family was concerned, no one, not even Brody, had been looking for trouble with Vicente's people.

They were even watching what those people were doing, but this family was not moving, just waiting to see if Vicente would try to approach the Viscount.

If that happened, it would be a worrying sign for them!

But as long as that didn't happen, they wouldn't do much more than keep an eye on Vice's group.

With something so valuable from them in hand, Vicente wouldn't have to worry about any attacks or problems with this family in the short term!

But apart from the people in Vice's group and many of the customers in the taverns he protected, who noticed the increasing peace around them, he and Rory had been working hard the last few days.

They still had more failures than successes in making new deals with businessmen in the area they were in, but they had gotten a new establishment to protect the day before.

With this new deal, the group's "territory" had increased by 50% from last night to this morning!

But it wasn't just the group's area of influence that began to increase!

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Having made several business attempts in the past few days and plans for the future, Vicente and Rory decided to take a day off today.

After the incident with the Peters family, Vicente's resources left at his house were brought to their headquarters, where he and Rory were at that very moment with their magic pills!

The whole building was in a state of alert, with the men in their positions to defend the property in case of need.

As a group that had already countered about a dozen people in the past few days by avoiding trouble on their territory, trouble could come their way at any time.

Knowing this, while their leaders tried to improve their forces, the men there quietly held their positions, watching the surroundings of their headquarters, guns pointed at the street.

Meanwhile, in the main training room in the basement of this building, Vicente and Rory were meditating in two corners of the area.

They were both sitting cross-legged on large cushions, shirtless, with only the clothes on their lower bodies.

A glow of various colors surrounded them as the mana and elements of the environment focused on them.

Rory was covered in an orange haze, but something colorless circled his body as if he were the center of a cyclone.

Where Vice stood, small bluish rays spread through the area while the ground beneath his meditation pillow seemed to melt.

The Magic Gems of these two young men glowed brightly as free mana flowed in the air toward their foreheads.

But something in their stomachs was also providing them with a lot of energy and different elements.

Enlightenment Pills were made with many minerals and ingredients, things with different elemental affinities.

Even if the alchemist behind their production did not have an elemental affinity for most elements, these pills could still help in terms of their elements, the one who consumed them.

Obviously, such a pill would benefit the most those with the same elemental affinity as the alchemist, but in general, any magician could benefit greatly from consuming such resources.

Vicente felt it now, noticing a chill in his stomach as he felt a stronger connection to his two elements.

While absorbing the essence of the pill he had taken 40 minutes ago, Vice felt something strange in his Magic Gem.

It was as if this gem was a vase of water, and he was slowly pouring more water into it.

As he meditated and felt the mana in the air and in the pill diffusing into his being, he felt the 'reserves' of his gem rising and felt more and more the sensation of being satiated.

But he tried to meditate as long as he could, feeling that he could reap better results by taking his meditation to the point where he could no longer bear to continue.

As the 'reserves' in his first magical gem became more abundant, spell ideas strangely began to pop into Vicente's mind.

'The academy teachers were not wrong. As we become stronger, our understanding of our own abilities will evolve!' Vicente thought excitedly.

The stronger and more talented one was, the better their understanding of reality and how to manipulate its elements to create fantastic effects would be.

Spells, for example, would naturally arise in the minds of magicians as they became stronger since spells were nothing more than ways to use one's power.

There were the more complex spells that could only be developed through years of study. Still, there were also many more straightforward spells that a magician would only need to get a little ahead of the 'game' to be able to think of something new.

Vicente realized new ways to use Earth and Lightning as he absorbed the essence of this pill, gaining far more than he had expected in this short meditation session.

But he didn't let that distract him and quickly focused everything he had on raising his magic level as much as possible.

As he did this with Rory in the room, time passed, and the pointers of the clock soon marked the middle of the afternoon.

At 3 p.m., the flames surrounding Rory's body calmed down and he slowly left his meditation state.

When one meditates for several hours, one cannot quickly leave the state of concentration.

It was dangerous to leave the state of concentration rapidly!

Meditation was something that was absolutely necessary for magicians to become stronger, but it was also a weakness for such people. During meditation, one could not be disturbed and could even become a cripple if one lost control over the elements and the mana penetrating one's being.

In simple terms, think of meditation as the process of filling a bucket with water. However, while water contains 'n' different kinds of substances, the bucket in question could not contain all of these substances, only a small part of them.

The bucket was the magical nature of these beings, while the substances were the elements.

During meditation, one would do the process that, in the case of filling the bucket with water, would be done through a sieve that would only allow what was compatible with it to remain in the bucket.

If you lose control of this selection, unfamiliar elements, sometimes even contrary to your affinities, could 'stick' to your essence and cause 'n' different problems.

Because of this complexity, leaving the state of concentration was something that had to be done calmly.

But after 2 minutes since the flames around his body had died down, Rory finally opened his eyes, satisfied with the results of his hours of hard work absorbing the essence of this pill.

But when he looked at Vicente, Rory's expression suddenly changed as he saw something he wasn't expecting.

"What? How is that possible?"

Chapter 86 Epiphany?

The moment he looked at Vicente, Rory saw bluish rays around his friend's body that were much larger than the ones he had seen earlier.

At the same time, the ground up to 4 meters away from Vicente was distorted, but not only that, the mana near the black-haired young man's body was violent.

Vicente's yellow magical gem was glowing brightly on his forehead, much more than before, while it seemed to be the center of a mana vortex.

Seeing this, Rory didn't hesitate to try to sense Vicente's power and soon opened his mouth in shock.

"Intermediate Apprentice! How is that possible?" He exclaimed in his mind, his eyes twitching as he saw Vicente cross the barrier between Junior and Intermediate as if it were a simple matter.

Rory had a Green-grade talent, but after absorbing a pill of the same type as the one Vice had swallowed, he had only reached the peak of his level.

Unfortunately, he still needed an extra boost to become an Intermediate Apprentice.

But when he awoke, Rory was satisfied because he felt that even without pills, he could increase his level in no more than a week of meditation.

However, when Rory saw that Vice could do this after taking just one pill like him, he couldn't help but be shocked.

People with different magical talents should absorb resources in proportion to their talents.

Someone with a high talent would use much more of the medicinal power of the pill they ingested. In contrast, someone with a lower talent would miss out on most of the opportunities such a resource would provide.

But even though Vicente's talent was lower than Rory's, he still managed to get more out of the pill than his red-haired friend!

'Could it be that these pills had different qualities? No, that's impossible! I saw what Vice took, and it was very similar to my pill.' Rory thought to himself, trying to understand the situation.

It didn't bother him that Vice was now at a higher level than he was. This was a very happy thing for Rory because he saw this black-haired young man as his brother.

However, seeing something illogical before he had made the red-haired young man curious.

'Maybe it's Vicente's elemental affinity?'

As Rory tried to find the source of this strangeness, the lightning around Vincent gradually decreased in intensity as he stabilized his magical cultivation at a new level.

Fully aware of what he had just accomplished, Vicente felt the mana under his control increase significantly.

It didn't compare to the difference he felt when receiving his Magic Gem, but he felt now at least 50% more powerful than before!

'Unbelievable! The amount of mana in one increases that much after a single breakthrough?' He wondered as he finished his meditation and slowly began feeling more than just his body again.

Indeed, breakthroughs would bring great benefits to magicians.

In the magical world, the difference between the peak of one level and the peak of the next level was not a difference between one thing and another.

If the peak of level 'x' was 10, sometimes the beginning of level 'x+1' might be 15, 20, in short, a value much higher than 10.

As one's level increased, one's strength, understanding of the world, elemental affinity, and so on would significantly improve. As for the advancement of the magical level, it was even more tremendous, and therefore, one would need a new Magical Pentagram, or one could die with such an uncontrolled increase in power.

Realizing this from his own experience, Vicente understood how important caution was in the magical world but also how absurd its powers were.

'My second magical form is behind this breakthrough... Incredible! It looks like it's even more impressive than I thought! He clenched his fists, feeling elated at his magical growth.

Opening his eyes, Vicente saw Rory watching him intently and immediately noticed that his friend had not been as lucky as he had been.

'How do I explain this?' Vice asked himself, sensing that this was going to be a problem.

'Vice... Congratulations, man. I don't know what to say! I wasn't expecting that.' Rory went over to him and said it sincerely before hugging his friend.

"Hmm, me neither. But I guess I had an epiphany while absorbing the magical essence of this pill. I got more than I expected." Vicente said, looking into his friend's eyes.

"Really? What luck, man!" Rory said, supposing that this was probably the case.

Epiphanies were special moments for magicians when, for some reason, they suddenly had a great moment of inspiration and could understand their own powers much more deeply.

In Polaris Realm, there were legends of great magicians who were able to create some of the most valuable spells on the continent during epiphanies!

"Anyway, you're an Intermediate Apprentice now, Vice. How does that feel?" Rory asked as he patted his friend on the shoulder.

"It's perfect. I feel like a bull about to explode." Vicente clenched one of his fists, revealing several veins on his arm.

"Good! As we go about our business, more dangers will come our way. Your growing strength will help our cause!" Rory said as he put on a shirt, his stomach rumbling.

Meditation might not seem tiring, but it was an activity that took a lot out of magicians.

After a single hour of meditation, a magician would be hungry. But after several hours, Rory and Vicente were starving!

Hearing the sound of Rory's stomach, Vicente started to get dressed and said. "Let's eat at Zander's Tavern. I'll pay for today's meal."

"Oh? Are you sick or something? I think your advance has affected your head, my friend!" Rory joked with his friend, who was usually very frugal.

Vicente didn't mind, and as he left the training room, he said. "Call one of our men to come with us. I want to hear the results of the investigation on these blacksmiths."

In the days since the meeting with Lukas, Rory, and Vicente had ordered their men to investigate the names of the three blacksmiths.

Earlier today, one of Vincent's men had come to him to report on their findings, but for the moment, Vice had left to deal with that after taking the last pill.

Rory heard this and quickly searched for that person while Vicente went to get some coins from his office.

With the daily work of his men at three local establishments, the group currently had 41 gold coins, 2,895 silver coins, and 15,956 bronze coins.

After picking up 256 bronze coins, he left with Rory and an Intermediate Apprentice, who were naturally shocked to learn of their leader's promotion.

"Boss, congratulations on your breakthrough!" That man said on the way to the tavern before they arrived at Zander's tavern and found a seat.

"Mason, tell me about your findings. Are any of these names compatible with our plans?" Vicente got straight to the point shortly after they sat down to wait for their food.

Chapter 87 Complex Relationship?

Upon hearing his boss' question, the robust and rustic-looking man sitting across from Vicente and Rory immediately began to report his group's findings.

"Starting with the blacksmith Landon Fraser. As Lukas Oak informed us, he is a level 4 Acolyte famous in Millfall.

Even though he is only a 2nd-stage blacksmith, he is already a Millfall Blacksmiths Association Council member. He is considered talented or more talented than his master, a 3rd-stage blacksmith.

He currently has openings for new junior blacksmiths. Anyone interested should go to his shop in the town center and pay for the assessment."

Some professionals charged for accepting new students. But even those who didn't charge for accepting new disciples wouldn't waste their time with curious people. So they charged for the examination.

Low-level practitioners did this in their shops, sometimes even in their homes, where they would receive interested young people at any time of the year. But the more powerful and renowned professionals had big events to welcome new disciples, with tests as you would find in a school competition on Earth.

These were attractions that could reveal great talents, connect masters and potential disciples, provide entertainment for ordinary people, and generate large amounts of coins.

A few of these famous events eventually took place even in the Seidel Kingdom, where more than one high-level professional would launch their openings for new juniors.

However, this only worked with more powerful people, and only 2nd and 3rd stage professionals usually did not dare to hold such an event.

Few people would show up, and few super talents would show up at small events, and there was something better on the continent.

Knowing this, Vicente and Rory did not find what the man said strange. They felt that it was pretty normal for them to simply go to this blacksmith's house and undergo a test if they wanted to, of course.

The man continued. "He seems to be an excellent smith, boss. He would certainly make a good teacher. But I wouldn't consider his name forward."

"Why?" Rory asked while drinking something, without a mask on his face, since no one in the area knew his identity, neither Vicente's nor that man's.

He answered. "Because he is a professional who is focused on the path of forging, who occasionally participates in competitions and the like with his students.

He is someone who is rising in the association and will not stand still. He will undoubtedly use his disciples and contacts to grow, bosses."

This was expected. In the magic world, one would use everything at one's disposal to become stronger, gain access to resources, and improve one's political power.

If you could not gain resources or advancement, you would try to gain status, because if you could not be stronger, being more influential was the key to having more power.

The ability to move other magicians was what separated an ordinary person from a powerful one, something that could make a huge difference.

The ranks of magic cultivation did not indicate who lived better in this world. There were certainly common Mages in this vast world who lived better than Paragons!

Depending on one's influence, even much more powerful beings would have to bow down before them.

Such was the case with the King of Seidel, a man who controlled so much power in the state that even men from sects outside the kingdom were wary of him.

Vicente heard this and agreed with his friend's analysis. "Hmm, someone like that won't be good for me. I don't have time to compete."

Hearing this, the black-bearded man said. "Considering that, I do not think the second name, Zane Smith, suits the boss either.

Zane is a blacksmith from a family that focuses on the path of forging. Not only would he not easily accept disciples outside of his family, but he was also expected to participate in various competitions and events with his disciples.

He's a rival of Landon's, so the boss would have pretty much the same problems I already said if you were Zane's disciple." The man said just as River stopped beside them with several plates and drinks.

River smiled subtly but said nothing to the group, acting as if they were just regular customers of his tavern.

Vicente's mercenary group was registered under a false name, and when he registered with the local mercenary guild, this black-haired young man had not revealed his identity to anyone.

At the same time, he had already made a deal and removed his name from the papers of the property where his group was operating.

That was why he and his people dared to come to this place in broad daylight without masks.

Vicente saw River and complimented him. "I see your tavern has improved a lot lately. It looks like those violent guards got results, huh?"

"Hmm, we do it for the good of our patrons."

Vicente said nothing more, soon sampling the fried chicken on his plate before drinking the establishment's famous ale.

After River left them, Rory ordered the Intermediate Apprentice to continue.

"As for Benson King, he is definitely the best name for the boss, not only because he is the only one left, but because of his track record." The fellow said while devouring his food.

"Blacksmith Benson is one of the four local 3rd-stage blacksmiths, but he is the least involved in public events such as competitions.

Even within the association, he is rumored to be a ghost, as he rarely attends the meetings of the Elders Council, of which he has been a member for several decades."

"That sounds interesting," Rory commented as he drank half a mug of ale.

"Yes, and from what my group found out, he's been a recluse forever. He doesn't have a family, doesn't date women, and doesn't leave his house much.

His disciples usually have a lot of freedom, and most leave town when they reach a certain level."

Becoming a disciple of a magician was not an everyday thing. It was not the same as having a teacher in a school, or even hiring a teacher to teach you individually.

Accepting a master was as complex as accepting a woman or man to marry such a person!

One could not casually become someone else's disciple, and even less could one disown one's master or lose one's status as a disciple.

It was difficult to separate from a spouse, but it was complicated to stop being someone's master or disciple.

In this complex relationship, the master had rights similar to those of the disciples' parents and could even restrict certain freedoms of their disciples.

This was not so strong that a disciple was like a slave. But as long as the master's order was not harmful to the disciple, even if the disciple was rebellious and wanted to do something else, he could be prevented or forced to do something else by the mere power of his master's orders!

That's why Vicente valued so much the possibility of having the freedom not to participate in competitions and similar events when he became someone's disciple.

He did not want to waste his time or be forced to expose himself for the sake of his future master's goals in forging!

So, he was naturally interested in the name of someone who did not prevent his own disciples from leaving and pursuing their own affairs.

Chapter 88 Inflation

"Where does he accept disciples? I think I'll stop by his place later." Vicente asked, interested in getting in touch with this person.

"He has a house on the south end of town. He offers his services there but also gives aptitude tests to new blacksmiths for the cost of 10 gold coins.

He does not have a set number of places for new students. From what my group has discovered, as long as you have a talent that interests him, Blacksmith Benson is willing to take you as a disciple.

But there's a catch, boss." The man said in a lower tone.

"There are no free lunches... What is the price for the freedoms he offers?" Vicente asked.

"That's not clear. It can vary. From what I've heard, some of his students have to pay Blacksmith Benson a fraction of what they make from their products. Others have to pay a monthly fee to study under his tutelage, and there's a case of someone who supposedly has to pay fees for every advancement he makes."

Rory frowned, realizing how strange that was. "What do you think of that, Vicente? To me, this guy must have a complicated past, and we won't just have advantages if you become his student."

Vice closed his eyes and made up his mind. "I'll see if it's worth it after I meet him. I'm not in a position to make demands, and of course, there will be a price for me to keep the freedoms I'm interested in."

Vicente didn't think the world owed him anything, nor did he think that just because he had transmigrated, he was special for the world to give him everything he needed.

For all he knew, there might be other transmigrants out there just like him!

Besides, he wouldn't think like an unreasonable person who would see problems in paying for other people's services. It was only natural that one would have to return the actions of others somehow.

An attack could naturally trigger a counterattack. A service, on the other hand, requires payment!

Only a person with a mind far removed from reality would think they did not have to 'pay' for what they consumed!

Rory agreed to look into the cost of Vicente becoming a disciple of Benson and said no more on the subject.

They soon ate everything on their plates and finished their alcohol.

When they finished what they had to do there, Vicente paid River and went alone to Benson's location at one end of Millfall.

Rory and the other man went off to solve their own problems, with the young redhead in his free time, but committed to continuing his magical training to reach the same level as Vice.

'I'll be back at headquarters...'

...

A few minutes later, Vicente was standing in front of a property that looked abandoned from a distance.

But upon arriving, Vice immediately heard a metallic sound coming from a part of the large structure that did not look like a house but rather a large warehouse.

A lawn surrounded this warehouse, while rusty railings marked the property's boundaries.

Darkness shrouded much of this property, so much so that only the streetlight from the nearby lamppost showed some of the contours of this place.

'This place looks a bit strange... Is this really the property of a Mage?' Vicente wondered, looking thoughtfully at the property across the street.

Millfall was a small city compared to the larger cities Vicente had seen in his life on Earth. But even though it was also a small place by Polaris Realm standards, there were Mages here.

However, aside from the fact that there were only a few 3rd stage magicians in the area, most of the Mages in Millfall were professionals who could not fight.

As a result, those who had reached this stage were among the wealthiest and best positioned in this place, and few could threaten them or even disrupt their business.

Vicente's common sense told him that Benson must be wealthy, so when he saw this place, he could not help but doubt that this was the man's property.

'Has my man made a mistake?' He thought as he crossed the street.

'Professionals have the great advantage of not having to fight to become strong. Therefore, most of them find it easier to progress in cultivation than warriors. Then how could someone like Benson

live in a place like this? He's not only powerful, but he must also be one of the wealthiest people here!'

Vicente was not an extravagant person, much less did he think that a person with coins had to live in an exhibitionist manner. But he did appreciate good quality things, a nice house to live in, good transportation, education, etc.

He would not waste his resources on a watch, for example. Yet, he was the kind of person who, with the resources at his disposal, would have good clothes, eat in the best restaurants, and so on.

As such, he found the place strange and dismissed the possibility of meeting Benson there.

But confident that his men would not make such a big mistake for anything, he decided to try at least to communicate with the person behind the metallic sounds coming from there.

He knocked on an iron gate of that place, making a sharp noise that spread to the warehouse-like building there.

The metallic sounds of moments ago stopped, and Vicente realized that he had the attention of whoever was there.

"Hello, good evening. I am looking for the blacksmith Benson King. Could you tell me if this is his property?" He asked politely, narrowing his eyes to see better in the dark.

His pupils grew bigger, and Vicente saw a shadow near the spot.

Then, a gruff voice of an elder reached the black-haired young man's ears. "I am Blacksmith Benson, young man. What are you doing here? Have you come to seek my services?" The voice asked, but Vicente still couldn't see this person.

Vicente replied, still looking around the dark part of this property. "Not exactly. I heard that the senior accept disciples. Is that true? I would like to show you what I can do."

"Oh?" A light emerged from the mansion, clearing the surroundings enough for Vicente to see what the shadow he had just seen was.

Seeing the place clearer, Vice almost jumped back when he saw a metallic doll just 10 meters away from him.

'What the fuck!'

While Vincent was startled by this apparition, Blacksmith Benson appeared at the entrance after opening the main door of that building and looked at the young man's forehead with interest.

'That's quite an unusual shape, huh? Your talent is not good, but let's see what you can do.' He thought before he said. "All right, kid, I want to see what you can do. But to come to me, give this old thing 11 gold coins. He won't open the door for you if you don't."

"11 gold coins?" Vicente asked, surprised.

"Yes, the price has gone up. Get used to it. Inflation is catching up with us all."

Chapter 89 Show What You Can Do

Vicente bitterly laughed when he heard that. There was almost no inflation in the magical world. If one were to try to classify this place, it was certainly a deflationary society, not an inflationary one like most states on Earth.

In Polaris Realm, you could earn a coin today, and in 500 years, the same coin could buy more than it could today.

It was an impressive thing that had struck Vicente when he first heard about it from his father.

However, the prices of some services, natural resources, and even magical artifacts could vary greatly depending on supply and demand.

For example, there were only a few 3rd stage blacksmiths in Millfall.

Therefore, artifacts created by blacksmiths of that stage would be more expensive in Millfall than in a place where there was a greater supply of blacksmiths of that stage for the same number of potential customers.

Somewhere in the kingdom, or even on the continent, there must be resources similar to those found in Millfall, with prices much lower or higher than those found locally.

The same was true for services, such as an aptitude test, like the one Vicente had to do to attract this man.

But he had nothing to say to Benson and simply did what he had to, handing the coins to the metallic creature near him.

After collecting the 11 gold coins, this metal figure moved as smoothly as a wooden training dummy would move and opened the front door of this estate for Vicente.

Vicente watched the metal creature walk toward Benson with interest, noting how complex it seemed.

But when he saw the man walking back into the building that looked like a warehouse, he soon followed him faster and found himself inside the building.

Upon entering, Vicente was surprised to find a large forge with several furnaces, piles of various metals here and there, unfinished artifacts, and even ores that still needed to be processed.

The area was quite large. Almost the entire first floor of this building was just a large work area for the blacksmiths. But from there, Vicente could see some rooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors where there were toilets, libraries, and study rooms.

'Obviously, Benson is a true scholar of his art, who must have had many students...' Vicente thought to himself, thinking that the internal structure of this place was very attractive to young blacksmiths.

As far as Vice knew, professionals of most specializations were more focused on themselves than on their students. And while many had teaching facilities, as far as the young man knew, they were not up to the level of what he saw at this estate.

This was supposed to be Benson's house. Still, it looked more like a small part of a college, not a house like the many others owned by blacksmiths and other local professionals.

That was another point in Benson's favor.

"This place looks great, senior. I imagine this place gets filled with your students occasionally, no?" He asked, still observing the area, while Benson was already standing beside an ore he was working on.

"No," Benson said dryly before voicing. "Come on, boy, show me what you're capable of. Let's see what your skills are like."

He pointed to the center of a circular area where there was room for one to use his forging skills and create artifacts from scratch.

There were all the necessary tools and materials to forge anything one wanted and could.

For blacksmiths, there was nothing better than putting their skills to the test and showing a higher-level master what they were capable of.

Perhaps some could not produce anything of quality without proper study of the craft or even the tutelage of a more skilled master. However, the very act of attempting to produce something could reveal much about one's ability.

Even a rough diamond would have its beauty in the eyes of someone who knew its value and could appreciate its potential!

But Vicente went against the expectations of this local expert.

"Senior Benson, I don't know how to work with this. I've never tried anything like it and don't know the basics of forging. But I made the armor I'm wearing. Would you like to analyze it?"

Benson's eyes narrowed as he became extremely serious.

Even though he had received the gold coins from this young man, he did not want to waste his time!

"You don't know anything about forging... Then how did you make the armor?" He asked as his face went dark.

"That's one of the features of my first skill," Vicente said without giving more details.

"Is it? Then let me see it up close." Benson stood up, and the Yellow Gem on his forehead shone brightly, making the drop design on his forehead very beautiful.

Next, a Red Pentagram emerged from his body, and blue flames appeared around Vicente's body, scaring him a little with its temperature.

But these flames did not touch Vicente's body under Benson's control and only surrounded his strange armor.

"Huh? That's quite strange, young man. Even though it is fragile, it has perfect connections, as if the metal had been melted over your own body rather than arranged together." Benson frowned as he felt everything about the armor.

"Also, it was made from a number of metals that would normally be difficult to combine..."

Not every feature in an artifact would combine well!

In the magical world, things could have their affinities, and as such, not every mixture was possible, be it in armor or other things like pills.

"But all of these metals are very common, and as a result, this armor does not have any fascinating defensive power."

He extinguished his flames and looked at Vicente, especially at the young man's Magic Gem.

Benson had never seen such a gem before, but as much as it was good and he was as talented as the black-haired young man, he was only interested in training young monsters who could surpass him.

So he said. "Will you show me how you made this armor? That alone is not enough for me to invite you to become my disciple."

The ability to create 'perfect' things without connections that could weaken parts of an artifact was exciting. Especially since with this ability, one could create things that were very difficult to make with only flame control skills, shape control skills, and specially applied power.

But without seeing more, even if he was interested, Benson still wasn't convinced to invite a young man who didn't even know how to use a hammer.

Vicente didn't make it difficult for himself and activated his ability, moving his mana as his Red Pentagon appeared.

At that moment, he felt a great weight on his conscience as he noticed a large amount of metal under his grasp.

Benson immediately frowned when he noticed this!

Chapter 90 The Master's Guidance?

"What a divine skill!" He exclaimed as he felt even the metal objects on his body tremble before Vicente's skill.

Vicente ignored the old blacksmith's comment and manipulated the metals only from his armor, leaving his body with only his social clothes and shaping spears, arrows, and daggers in his surroundings.

"Senior, this is my first skill. I can manipulate metallic materials to take any shape I want. Yet, I can also move them freely within a certain range." He explained the basics.

"This skill is made for the forging world! Little one, you are interested in becoming my disciple, right? Very well, I accept you as such!" Benson said, excited at the possibilities this Vicente skill would bring to his world.

Like any blacksmith, he sought the pinnacle of his craft. Some of his greatest dreams were projects he had never been able to complete for lack of skill, but he had not given up, confident that one day he would find someone capable of bringing his inventions to 'life.'

Seeing Vicente display this particular skill, he couldn't help but think that he had finally found the talent he needed to at least try to make progress on these projects.

Of course, Vicente needed to improve a lot, as his control over this skill was still fragile, and he was creating artifacts with many flaws.

But Vicente had also told him that he had never studied or forged anything. In that case, this boy could develop a lot with his guidance and eventually become a 2nd-stage blacksmith in a few months!

'If all goes well, I can show him one of my ideas to work on together in no time!' Benson thought to himself as he saw the beautiful Red Pentagram spinning around one of Vicente's hands.

Vicente smiled upon hearing this and immediately manipulated the metals back into his body.

"Hmm, but I heard that the senior makes demands on your disciples, right? I wonder what I must do before accepting you as my master."

Vicente was no fool. He would not sign a blank check with such a person!

Hearing this, Benson saw no problem with this young man trying to negotiate with him and quickly said what he expected from Vice. "Lad, the job of a master is to teach, and the very fact of teaching good seeds already has the potential to bear fruit for us masters. But I also have ambitions, running costs, and things I need.

Not every disciple returns to his master what he has willingly received, so of course, I charge my students something. But I won't charge you too much. You will have plenty of freedom to come and go, to study and train with me whenever you want, just like most of my students. But in exchange for the freedoms and what I will teach you, you will have to help me make some of my dreams come true".

Vicente narrowed his eyes. This was rather vague and could range from very simple to extremely complex things.

"What dreams?"

"I want you to help me build some artifacts when you become strong and skilled enough to bring some of my projects to 'life.' After you do that, you will owe me nothing but recognition." Benson said as he sat down beside Vicente.

Recognition was something that almost every master demanded from their disciples.

If one day a disciple became great, no matter how much greater than their master, by promising recognition, they would still have to be recognized as a disciple of 'x.'

Not only that, one could not become a disciple of a new master after accepting the first, so even if they learned from others, they would still have to recognize only one as their true master!

Vicente knew this and was not bothered by Benson's request. "If it is only that, I agree."

With these words, Benson quickly made a Magical Agreement with Vicente, sealing their new relationship before the 14-year-old man could greet his master for the first time under these circumstances.

"The student recognizes the master. Please take me to the top." Vicente said aloud as he bowed his head.

Nevertheless, the two drank alcohol together, a common tradition in this world.

When he saw the young man, who had little experience with such drinks, coughing and his face turning red, Benson laughed and wasted no time. "All right, boy, tell me what you want from the blacksmith's art. Do you want fame as a blacksmith?"

"Not at all, master." Vicente was sincere, knowing he could not lie, though he did not need to talk about his plans. "Like you, I have my projects. But today, I am unable to develop them due to my inability in front of the forge."

"So you will develop your abilities just to complete this project?" Benson saw a lot of himself in Vice and did not say anything like "what a waste." "Very well. I will help you achieve that without you having to participate in silly competitions and tournaments."

But as a blacksmith, you still have to join the association. This is not only an obligation for us but also an opportunity for you."

"All right." Vicente knew that the Association was much bigger than Benson and that it might be useful to him one day.

Benson then changed the subject, leaving it to Vicente to get to know him better in the many moments they would surely have to work together in the future.

Knowing what he wanted as a blacksmith was what mattered at the moment.

"But Vicente, now you have to work hard. You are 14 years old, right? I can see that you have only recently awakened your powers, so even though your magic level is not bad, you are far behind other blacksmiths of the same level." Benson advised.

One did not become a true blacksmith until one passed the test of the Association and earned one's identification in that organization.

But young people began studying blacksmithing as early as 10 years old, after the primary academy period.

By the time Vicente should have stayed at his father's side to learn his trade, many young people would have used those 4 years to develop a basic knowledge of blacksmithing.

They wouldn't be able to create anything without good mana control, something that would come only after Awakening. However, they could learn about different materials, forging techniques, how skills with an affinity for forging changed how blacksmiths worked, etc.

Even if he didn't want to compete with other blacksmiths, Vicente was far behind young people who did this from the age of 10 to 14. As a master, Benson obviously didn't want his apprentice to be so far behind at his age.

Vicente could be missing out on tremendous opportunities by not being as skilled as other blacksmiths of his age and level!

"Starting today, I want you to study the four basic volumes of forging and the use of a hammer," Benson ordered. "Your skills are excellent, and you must think you don't need a hammer. But until you understand how to make something with your hammer, you will find it challenging to make things with your skill."

Mastering the hammer and other forging processes will refine your control over your Magic Pentagram. So do that for now." He said as a pile of books appeared before Vicente, piling up to the same height as him.

A wooden hammer and some training items fell at his feet, along with the books.

"After you read them all and train with these items for 10 hours, return. We'll talk then."