

The Mafia 991

Chapter 991 Rex's Change

When Vicente lifted Rex's small body into the air, the two men, protected by the four metallic creatures around Vicente, stood with their mouths open as they stared at him in silence.

For a moment, they couldn't believe everything that had happened and were sincerely doubting reality. To think that a 1-Star Magus had so quickly defeated a 5-Star Magus, a beast on top of that, was hard to swallow.

But reality could not be denied. In front of them was Liam, and a small kitten, who, until a few moments ago, was a large and powerful lion.

The metallic creatures in their surroundings falling apart showed that this couldn't be an illusion, which made them even more speechless. This was especially true for Garin, now pale as he realized how he had spoken to Vicente earlier.

'What's going on? Why is he so strong? And why would such a monster need our vigilance?' He wondered as he saw Vicente massaging the body of the sleeping beast, now in the black-haired man's arms as if it were a newborn baby.

Prisiche returned to her master's side, changing back into the glasses he had been wearing.

Vicente's metallic creations were largely made by his mana and because they weren't made from appropriate materials, they wouldn't last long in their natural state. As he didn't want to attract attention either, he didn't bother altering the material to keep them standing around him, forcing Prisiche back towards him.

"What were you two saying earlier?" Vicente looked at these two again, trying to remember where they had left off.

Bert immediately said to Vicente, his bearing different, but still speaking in the same, respectful tone, since he already regarded Vice highly even before such a show of power. "We're on a mission to observe you and, if necessary, take action to ward off trouble. We just didn't know we'd be totally useless... But I'm afraid we still have to complete the mission, Senior. Sect rules."

"Oh, that's right, we were talking about that when your companion warned me about the dangers of the forest and the beasts of this place." Vicente looked up with a smile, causing Garin to step forward and make a stance of greeting a superior individual.

"I'm sorry for my behavior earlier, senior," he said as he looked down at the ground, sweating even more now that Vicente was watching him than he had earlier against Rex. "I was rash and said things I'm ashamed of. As for what I said, the forests really are dangerous, especially for people like Bert and me. Maybe not so much for you, though..."

Vicente didn't want any trouble with these two and ignored Garin's ways. "Now that we're here, I'm curious. I know it could be dangerous, but we have our friend here with us, don't we? Let's see what he has to say before we decide whether to return to Ponddown straight away."

"Are you sure about that, senior?" Bert asked, not liking the idea at all. "I admit that senior is impressive. But there may be creatures stronger than the Flaming Lion nearby. There's no way of knowing."

"Of course there is. Rex is one of us now. He'll be able to tell us what's around here if he's so close to Ponddown." Vicente walked through the area, moving away from the site of their fight.

The two men followed behind him, both afraid, but much more afraid of being alone. After what they had seen, they felt it would be safer to be with Vicente, even while they were walking through the forest.

Vicente wouldn't walk for long and soon stopped when the creature in his arms showed signs of waking up.

When it woke up, Rex jumped out of Vicente's arms and looked at the three individuals who had fought it earlier. Of the three, it still felt a strong antipathy, but when it looked at the human with the long black hair, it couldn't help but feel something different, a sense of respect and devotion.

Recognizing what had happened, it lay down in front of Vicente, closing its eyes. "Master, Rex is at your disposal."

Naturally, now that it had Vicente's mark, it would be 100% loyal. But not only that, the beasts of Anicane were much more sensitive to power than the creatures of Polaris Realm. After being defeated so brutally by Vice, the creature was willing to bow its head even if it wasn't connected to Vice.

But as Rex could now perfectly sense its master's powers, it could see Vicente's real greatness, sensing the Throne of Darkness and Light.

It could even alter its body to its original version, but having been put into that form by Vicente, it preferred to stay that way.

Vicente asked. "Why didn't you answer me sooner? That would have avoided your current situation."

The two fellow sect members watched the creature out of the corner of their eyes as they surveyed their surroundings, standing guard where they had left off.

Rex shook its head in denial. "Then I don't regret the choice I made. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to serve my master."

'What a bastard!' Garin laughed bitterly when he heard the creature's reply.

"As for my master's question, beasts are the enemies of Light Cay magicians. We've been fighting each other for millennia and we know we can't live in peace. Either we defend ourselves, or the magicians hunt us down to become stronger. We prefer to move first and force them against their stone cities.

This is obviously the reality for ordinary magicians. Magnanimous individuals like my master are treated differently. If the master accepts, I will introduce you to my tribe. I am confident that you will be well received."

Bert and Garin looked at Vicente, hoping he wouldn't accept such a crazy proposal.

"I see. You're in a war against the magicians and from what I can see, you're winning." Vicente pondered, scrunching up his face.

"My master is indeed perceptive. After much effort, the beasts of Light Cay have become the true rulers of this island. We hold 60% of the island's territories and the magicians fear us."

"That's nonsense. If you were the rulers of the island, then Stonewall wouldn't have the method of receiving beings from lower planes!" Garin said as he argued against the golden creature.

Rex snorted at Garin. "You do this because we allow it. Although we are enemies and our side is the strongest, there is a necessary balance for all of us. An island ruled entirely by beasts would not be sustainable."

As much as Rex didn't want to admit it, beasts needed magicians to keep enemies away from this island. It knew very well that, with their wiles, magicians could do things that wild creatures like it never could.

Vicente listened to both sides with interest, while thinking about something he didn't understand. "Wait a minute... If humans and beasts aren't the parents of the island's hybrids, why are there people with animal body parts in this place?"

While staring at the ground, Vicente noticed the silence and voiced his thoughts. "What is the origin of the non-pure beings of Light Cay?"

"They are the Beastmen, my master," Rex immediately explained. "They are not beasts, nor are they related to beasts. They may have been our relatives in the long past, but they have long been unrelated to beasts."

Unlike us, Beastmen accept breeding with humans, which is why there are hybrid creatures with characteristics from different races on the continent, magicians for the most part. But as I said, they are not descendants of beasts. They are descendants of humans and races of Beastmen."

Chapter 992 More Information on the Nine Paths

"Beastmen, huh? I hadn't heard of them." Vicente commented with interest.

There were so many things about Anicane for him to learn that there was no way he could have learned even 1% of the most relevant topics of this great world in the little over a year since he arrived there.

{Beastmen are not like magicians—who use Magic Gems—nor beasts. They are an existence in between, with physical characteristics similar to those of beasts, but powers similar to those of magicians. They are not like hybrids, however, those who need Magic Gems to reveal their full power.

Beastmen can gain abilities naturally without absorbing pentagrams. But their natural pentagram cannot be absorbed by magicians after their deaths. This explains why they are friendlier to magicians and why many of them have reproduced with magicians throughout history.

In addition, they have the longevity of beasts and the rationality of magicians. Consequently, tribes of Beastmen are among the most powerful in Anicane and while beasts hate them, magicians see them as allies or even peacekeepers.}

Prisiche helped her master understand a little more about these special races of Beastmen, giving Vicente a broad context in which to think.

'Interesting. They are most likely hermits who control the game from behind the curtains.'

Vicente liked that. The idea of being away from the spotlight and in charge was what he preferred for himself, even though he had taken a different path to this day. But his wish was to one day be able to live with his family in peace and no longer have to fight to ensure their peace, with others who could do it for them.

While Prisiche was explaining to Vicente with his visual information, Rex told him, "The damned hardly exist in Light Cay anymore these days. Many left the island for other stronger islands in Anicane a long time ago.

But there are certainly some of them who stayed behind to keep watch on the island's lands. They are minions of those who control everything and everyone."

Vicente's eyes narrowed, remembering the conversations he had had shortly after arriving in Anicane, conversations about the truth behind the Nine Paths and how it had been largely damaged.

Unlike Prisiche, Rex was totally submissive to Vicente, and anything it spoke to its master would be like sharing a piece of knowledge with a superior part of itself. With nothing to stop it, as was the case with artificial intelligence, it spoke more than the glasses on Vicente's face thought prudent.

"The Beastmen are related to the end of the Nine..."

{Don't talk about it, master!} Prisiche displayed a large warning message, while Bert and Garin rolled their eyes, both in a cold sweat.

"Senior, you and your new beasts had better exchange information via the mind. That's the kind of thing Bert and I don't want to hear," said the 3-Star Magus.

Vicente stopped where he was and looked at those two magicians, once again watching such a peculiar reaction.

'Rex, why does everyone always get so defensive when talking about the Nine Paths?'

'You'd better not even think about that term, master.' Rex explained in Vicente's mind, aware that it wouldn't hurt it to explain what it knew, but that it wasn't good for them to risk it either.

'The Nine Paths was, and still is, Anicane's method of contact with the 10,000 worlds. Through the Sea of Stars, one can cross from the lower planes and reach our glorious and powerful world. But like everything else in the reality of cultivators, there is a group that controls it.

This is a group that is beyond anything you can quantify, capable of extinguishing all of us with a single thought just because we are speaking names related to them. In fact, I'm not so sure how safe it is to think about it...

In any case, nobody likes to talk about anything to do with them. But certainly the Beastmen are connected to such a group, master. They've been behaving like superiors ever since the partial destruction of the Nine Paths.'

Vicente could better understand the situation in this world, hearing the first hints about a subject so relevant to him.

'I see. I'll not talk about it now. Let's talk about it again in the future.'

Vicente could sense how nervous Rex had become amid its previous response.

Feeling a certain discomfort with the silence surrounding them, Vicente sighed deeply and ordered Rex to lead the way. "Let's get to know your tribe. I'm curious to understand the reality of the beasts of Light Cay."

Rex changed its countenance immediately, soon walking ahead of the group, with Vicente following it and the two Stonewall magicians having no choice but to go on with their journey.

With Rex leading the way, several creatures would stop to observe them, but without approaching them, alerted by the powerful aura of the 7th stage creature. Meanwhile, it talked about its people.

"You'll love my tribe, master. Our territory is close to here. We're actually one of the strongest groups on this side of the island, hehe."

"Is that so?" Vicente smiled. "Speaking of which, is your territory that close to here? Isn't that too close to the magicians' territory?"

"We're 300 kilometers away from my tribe. But I was passing through the vicinity because I heard that the Twilight Winged Guardian had passed close to the magicians' domain."

"Twilight Winged Guardian?" Garin couldn't ignore this information.

"What beast is that?" Vicente asked, identifying only that it was a magical creature.

Garin explained, "That's another name for the Primordial Goose. This is a beast that is said to hold the ancient secrets of Anicane. Some say they are messengers from heaven. But going beyond legend, they are powerful, known for their sonic cry, lightning flight and aura of serenity."

"More importantly, the body of a Twilight Winged Guardian is a potent stimulant for beasts. Devouring one of them can promote us at a whole level and even give us some of their abilities," Rex said what interested it the most about roaming around Pongdown.

"Then I'm in your way. You don't need to take me to your tribe now." Vicente said, thinking how interesting it would be to see such a creature.

"No, the Twilight Winged Guardian isn't that simple. If it's really nearby, it'll be in the area for a while, master. There's time for us to go back and forth from my tribe. Perhaps my elders can help you with tips on where to get your next pentagram."

Vicente smiled before letting the lion take him back to its tribe.

"All right. Let's get on with your plans."

Chapter 993 The Tribe of the Flaming Lions

Later that evening, Vicente, Bert and Garin arrived in front of an area where the sound of running water was loud.

At a distance of hundreds of meters, a cluster of bare black stones partially obstructed the view of an area with less vegetation. Standing watch in that direction were three creatures with striking golden fur, diligently keeping an eye out.

The three lions, however, didn't look as striking as Rex had been earlier. Standing where they were, the three had their mouths slightly open, their eyes wide in a way that made them look rather funny.

Vicente and the two magicians next to him understood the situation. As Rex walked forward, the three creatures immediately recognized his situation in relation to Vice.

As expected for the creatures native to the area, seeing one of their race subordinate to a magician was something bordering on sacrilege. At the very least, Rex had to explain himself. But they were in a different situation. Rex wasn't weaker than them, in fact, he was much stronger!

"Alard, what's going on?" asked one of the three creatures there, the only Magus among the three lions.

These were just lions guarding the tribe's perimeter. There was no need for much power given how respectful the surrounding tribes were and how unusual it was for a magician to appear so close to a beast tribe's territory.

Light Cay was not as simple as the Polaris Realm. Only the strongest on the continent hunted pentagrams from beasts, and even individuals like that would avoid the territory of such tribes. The target would always be a wanderer, a traveler far from the tribe.

Alard, Rex's old name, continued in his apparently harmless cat form and said, "This isn't something I have to explain to you, Elyes! Get out of my way. I'm taking my master to the council!"

"You dare blaspheme on our sacred territory?" Brandished the strongest lion in the group, raising his head in the air while using a stone in his path to get taller and stronger.

Rex opened his mouth and bared his teeth, with a single step forward, and then the three creatures felt a surreal pressure come over their bodies, each of them falling face-first against the ground.

Vicente saw for the first time a suppression of lineage between beasts of the same race. In the past, he had seen it between beings of different races, but he had witnessed nothing like it between the same race.

Seeing the three lions struggling to even breathe, he felt that, like Rex, he could make use of this special power.

'I feel that because I'm connected to Rex, I can use his bloodline factor and suppress everyone he could suppress.' Vicente remained silent, letting his beast deal with the situation.

"I will not kill you because I don't blame your ignorance. You will eventually learn of my master's greatness and be able to salute him on your own!"

With a comment full of confidence and a pious feeling unusual for him, Rex continued onwards, passing the entrance to the tribe, while Vicente, Bert and Gavin followed him more closely.

When they crossed the rocks, the group came across lion dens built between the rocks, some of them more complex, with mechanisms that showed off the intelligence and advanced capacity of some of these beings.

Vicente realized that the Flaming Lions were much more complex than the Polaris Realm beasts and ignored the strange looks in his direction.

Like the three lions moments ago, the dozens of creatures of different sizes and body markings in the surroundings knew what he was to Rex and vice versa.

But it wasn't long before, once again, a lion stopped Rex and questioned him. This time, a 7-Star Magus, more powerful than Rex, looked at the creature in momentarily diminutive form. The creature made a disgusted expression at Rex and said.

"You dishonor your parents and your tribe by returning here after losing your freedom. I find it astonishing, Alard, that you can be such a foolish lion," said the creature in the path of Rex and his group in an increasingly harsh tone.

A few lions quickly crowded around Vicente's group, even young, not very powerful ones, showing their courage in surrounding a loser like Alard and a group of magicians.

"Evrart, I request passage to speak to the elders of the tribe." This time, Rex spoke in a more respectful tone, obviously aware that they couldn't simply impose themselves against that lion.

"Oh?" The creature looked at him defiantly. "What if I don't?"

At that moment, Vicente took a step forward, raising one of his hands as sparks flew from it. "In that case, you will become my seventh pentagram."

With Vicente's words, an icy cold wind swirled around the place where the confusion was set to take place, each of the weaker people there feeling their bodies paralyze, while Evrart took a step back.

Looking at himself and feeling the instinctive move he had made, Evrart almost spat at himself in shame. How could he, a powerful Flaming Lion, instinctively retreat to a mere magician?

But as his golden eyes met Vicente's black ones, he saw a shadow of darkness, a cloak of death and darkness behind Vice, momentarily blinding him.

Not only that, but as he came face to face with the bringer of death, Evrart felt his skin crawl, his instincts telling him that this man in front of him was his superior and not his inferior.

"What's going on here? He and Alard are clearly weaker than me! Or is this magician hiding his real cultivation?"

It was possible for Vicente to suppress him on Rex's account. But for that to happen, the magician himself or his marked beast had to be stronger than his lineage suppression target!

"Enough!"

Then, as over 20 lions stood in awe of Vicente, completely losing their will to impose themselves against the group of newcomers, a sharp voice, capable of making even Vice go on alert, cut through the tense atmosphere, defusing the effects of Vice's abilities.

Not far ahead of Vicente and his group, a giant lion, bigger than any creature they had ever seen there, appeared from behind a small hill, changing the surrounding atmosphere.

Not only was the creature immense, but its cultivation was colossal. A 2-Star Grand Magus, the first of its kind that Vicente had ever seen in all his time in Light Cay!

Chapter 994 Agreement

"Tribe Elder!" Not only did the lions in the surrounding area against Vicente's group shout, but also Rex, naturally recognizing the main Flaming Lion of this settlement.

He wanted to introduce Vicente to the tribe's council, but Rex hadn't expected the strongest of the tribe to come to them like this!

Freezing where he stood, Rex didn't know what to say as the giant creature ignored him to look at Vicente.

As a glorious Flaming Lion, the Tribe Elder didn't like the idea of having one of his own taken over by a magician. It was offensive and dishonorable. It would have been better if Rex had died!

But he wasn't a Grand Magus by coincidence. Recognizing that Vicente was not normal, the Elder did not kill Rex immediately, as many would have done in his place. He ignored the beast in restrained form near Vice and looked straight into the eyes of the most formidable human he had ever met in his life.

This lion had seen many powerful magical warriors, but none newly promoted to the 7th stage gave him the sensation coming from the small body in front of him now.

It was as if Vicente's body was made of darkness and shrouded in light, something extremely contradictory to the old lion. He couldn't help wishing for a conversation with the boy who had overpowered Alard.

"Human, accompany me with your new beast. The rest of the tribe monitor our guests, but don't mistreat them." Ordered the creature, quickly making Bert and Garin break out in a cold sweat, while Vicente took Rex in his hands and moved on.

"Bert and Garin don't cause trouble. I'll talk to the Elder and we'll go back to Pond down later."

The 2-Star Grand Magus looked back with a peculiar look, seeing the absolute confidence in Vicente's words. A mere 1-Star Magus was sure that he would make it out of this powerful tribe alive!

'Interesting. That really is a unique entity.' He smiled as he ran into the depths of the Flaming Lions tribe, leaving the previous rocky area to reach a magmatic area in the depths of an underground volcano.

In this place, Vicente spotted other lions of high cultivation, late 7th stage and early 8th stage. But the Elder was the strongest of them all, with no one else in the entire tribe at the second level of the 8th stage.

Each step of cultivation at high levels was an almost insurmountable difference for most creatures. Reaching the beginning of the 8th stage was for very few and even fewer managed to go far during their lives.

Those who reached the end of the 8th stage or even the 9th stage were among the strongest and most talented in Anicane, creatures who led their islands and could even explore the Stars' Sea.

Vicente observed his surroundings as he heard the creature lying down in a crater. "Vicente is your name, right? Where do you come from, human Vicente? Creatures like you don't appear in Light Cay."

Vicente didn't intend to lie to a creature capable of reading his heart and killing him. He answered truthfully, "I come from a plane called Polaris Realm."

"A plane?" The creature immediately frowned. "How is that possible? That's even more absurd than being a native of Light Cay!"

Although individuals from lower planes have their advantages when they become stronger, most of them had weaknesses in their first moments in Anicane. It took time for someone like Vicente to become an insurmountable mountain.

The other lions remained silent, letting the Elder take care of the matter while they had their doubts about Vicente's origin, despite being aware that it was the truth. There was no malice in Vice's words, and he was being genuine in every physical and spiritual gesture.

Vicente continued, "Elder, I don't want to go into detail about my unique characteristics. But I will not pretend that I'm normal. On the plane where I was born, I was the strongest for my level, not only of my generation, but of the entire history of Polaris Realm.

Now that I'm in Light Cay, I know that I'll do the same here as long as I have the strength to keep moving forward. And that's why I'm here." He made a common Polaris Realm gesture of greeting, but one that represented his commitment well. "Having the support of the Flaming Lion Tribe will certainly take me to that step.

I didn't attack a member of your tribe on purpose, Elder. I met Rex by chance, a meeting of fate, I suppose. But now that we're connected, I don't wish for a bad relationship with your people. On the contrary, mutual support is what I seek."

The larger, stronger lion remained silent, eyeing the young man as he considered the variables. Vicente was a great unknown. Letting him live was very uncertain. However, the Elder had never seen or felt anything like the young magician in front of him. He was genuinely curious.

But more important than his curiosity, he had an unwavering commitment to his tribe. Looking at Rex, he considered.

"Losing to a weak opponent is a disgrace, and the loser is worthy of death," said the great lion in a harsh tone. "But losing to the controller of darkness and light is not the end. It is only natural for the weakest to serve the strongest."

That was the supreme law of the jungle!

"Born as Alard, now Rex, you have been given a new life at the hands of Vicente, The Singular." He softened his words, but still sounded powerful and hard to interrupt. "Go forward on your master's side and unite our tribe with his interests. May your relationship begin a journey of mutual benefit for us all!"

Vicente smiled as he saw the great lion's intelligence at work. The lion could easily kill him. But killing him would be of no benefit to the tribe compared to its current situation. Leaving him alive, however, could spell trouble, but also a favorable revolution for them.

Looking at Vicente, the lion said, "Well then, let's seal our relationship with the fire of Prometheus. May the Lord of Flames bless the path of darkness and light that awaits you."

Vicente felt one of his hands enveloped in a stream of magma, which connected him to the Tribe Elder, sealing their partnership agreement.

"Now we must answer your questions. Go ahead, Vicente, ask what you long for and we'll show you the truth."

Chapter 995 Next Destination

Vicente contemplated for a moment, but didn't dwell long on his doubts. He wanted to avoid any trouble for himself or the beasts, so asking about the Nine Paths was off the table. His primary focus was to get stronger, so he opted for a simpler question.

"I would like directions to find creatures compatible with darkness, light, earth, and lightning. I'm seeking my seventh pentagram, which must possess these elements and be of indigo grade. Can you guide me on where to find it?"

"Indigo grade, huh? Well, that's fitting for someone of your caliber," the Elder responded reflexively. But he didn't need to speak with his mouth, as he could communicate directly through his mind.

"You see, Vicente, indigo pentagrams don't naturally develop in 7th stage beasts. Some of the most gifted among them can generate pentagrams of that classification while still in the 7th stage, but they are in the minority. Most are only assured to form this type of pentagram upon reaching the 8th stage.

Be aware that your search may lead you to creatures at my level."

Vicente nodded, already aware of this, which is why he wasn't in a rush to hunt his two missing pentagrams.

"But given the elements you mentioned, there are some intriguing places in the central-western part of the island where tribes of compatible creatures live.

Go to Fallsor Bluff, there you'll find what you're looking for," recommended the old and powerful Flaming Lion.

"Fallsor Bluff?" Vicente asked.

Rex quickly explained in his master's mind, 'Fallsor Bluff is a place 12 days' flight east of the tribe. It's a dangerous place, though. Elder-level creatures are said to abound there, and magicians who enter the region are rarely seen leaving.

There is such a variety of beasts in this mountainous area that even creatures like me need to be cautious when going there. I went once but didn't get even 5 kilometers into the forest before I was forced to flee.'

In the dark about Rex's explanation to Vicente, the old lion Elder nodded affirmatively. "Yes, that's right. If you're unfamiliar with the area, seek information in your human city. There are certainly things you can find out there to prepare yourself well.

However, I recommend you wait a couple of levels before traveling there. Your foundation seems pretty solid, so don't take unnecessary risks."

Vicente nodded in agreement. He didn't plan to take that risk immediately, although he was intrigued, since such a place was among the options he had discovered that held methods of contacting the Dark Hands.

'Maybe I'll stop by Fallsor Bluff to check it out on my way back to Ravengarde. If the danger is too great, I'll leave it for the future and head back to the sect.'

With his training with Alicia still to finish in Ponddown, he wouldn't be going to see it tonight. But on his return to the sect, he was already interested in looking for areas where he could connect with the Dark Hands.

The great lion's recommendation went well with his plans, and soon Vicente's mind was made up.

"Thanks for the recommendation, Elder. I will certainly look for Fallsor Bluff in the future to strengthen myself."

"Hmm, be careful on your journey through the area. You are powerful, but not everyone will be as kind to you as I was. The idea of devouring you will be too tempting for most of the beasts that see you. If you don't have methods to protect yourself, your fate won't be promising."

Vicente thanked the old lion for his warning before waving goodbye to him and the other beings in the surrounding area.

He and Rex set off without looking back, soon reaching the place where Bert and Garin were nervously waiting for them.

Seeing Vicente and Rex back, totally untouched, the lions in the surrounding area knew they shouldn't prevent this group from leaving. If Vice and Rex were still alive and walking, it was because of the Elder's will.

The creatures of the tribe, disgusted though they were, made way for the group of three magicians and a beast, letting them continue along the path they had taken, heading towards Ponddown.

Moving on without caring about the feelings of most of the Flaming Lions towards them, Vicente led his group back to the city, which was not that far away.

Halfway there, he agreed with Bert and Garin that he wouldn't get in the way of their service. As soon as they returned to the city, he would continue with his plans, while the two of them should continue to observe him without making direct contact with him.

As for Rex, there was no problem taking tamed beasts into magicians' cities. Vicente wasn't the first to tame a beast with brute force. Many did it around the island every year.

When he entered Ponddown again that night, alongside only Rex, no one stopped him or looked at him strangely. Apart from the curiosity of seeing a Flaming Lion, he didn't encounter any problems until he reached the place where he was staying in this city, still with his identity hidden by the artifact on his face.

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For the next three days, Vicente maintained a routine similar to what he had since arriving in Ponddown, focusing on training with Alicia and exploring the area when he wasn't busy with his own cultivation.

He had finally imparted as much knowledge as Alicia could absorb from their sessions, and by the time he left the cultivation tower that afternoon, he was already planning to depart the city the following morning.

That evening, the local Manifold Family would host him once again, this time to bid him farewell. It would be 12 to 24 months before he returned, as Alicia would next have to travel to Ravengarde to meet him.

Alicia and her fiancé wanted to express their gratitude for Vicente's efforts before his departure, a gesture he welcomed.

Thus, his last day in Ponddown was peaceful and uneventful, allowing him to cultivate one last time in the local cultivation tower before preparing for his journey at dawn.

At dawn, Vicente and Rex would leave the city, opting not to use the majestic transportation systems available on the island's magical cities. Instead, they planned to traverse the dangerous forests of Light Cay, accompanied only by Prisiche, Bert, and Garin, for the next few weeks.

Chapter 996 Journey to Fallsor Bluff

A few days later, Vicente's group was traveling through the dense woods of eastern Light Cay.

While the journey between Ponddown and Ravengarde would only take a week by plane, the path Vicente had chosen would take over two months if he intended to complete it without extended stops.

However, Vicente wasn't in a rush. After departing Ponddown with Bert, Garin, and Rex, they were nearing the westernmost part of the expansive Fallsor Bluff area.

As they approached the large forested region indicated by the Elder of the Flaming Lions, Rex became increasingly cautious.

Vicente sensed his beast's unease not only through their spiritual connection, but also from Rex's tense demeanor.

Rex's behavior heightened Bert's and Garin's alertness and concern, leading to their current situation as Vicente paused for a refreshment by a stream.

"Rex, something is bothering you. You should share your concerns," Vicente said, noticing the little lion gazing in the opposite direction of the water stream before him.

It was a warm night, and the breeze from the waterfall, a few hundred meters away, provided a slight cooling effect for the group.

As Bert and Garin breathed more easily, despite their tense states, Vicente listened to his beast. "As I mentioned before, master, the last time I was in Fallsor Bluff, I was nearly killed. I had to flee without looking back and quickly return to the tribe. But I didn't even venture deep into that place. I believe this journey could be too dangerous for our group right now."

The little lion knew Vicente's abilities better than anyone. Connected to his master's essence, Rex understood Vicente's magical foundation well. Even so, he wasn't confident.

"Don't worry, I have methods to get us out of danger quickly. Not only that, I can also conceal our movements and avoid trouble before it even reaches us."

Fortunately, the Manifold Family had provided him with a very up-to-date map, highlighting territories to avoid. Using the digital device he had with him, Vicente could zoom in on different areas of the island and check the map for pertinent information.

Fallsor Bluff appeared in detail on the Manifold Family's map, marked with red areas and warning triangles. He didn't need to understand the family's methods to know this likely indicated tribes or areas dominated by 8th stage creatures.

'I will investigate areas with the potential to have the mark left by Dark Hands and the types of beasts in this forest. If I find something compatible with my abilities and within my limits, I won't hesitate to advance my hunt. Otherwise, I'll retreat to avoid unnecessary risks or after establishing a method to contact the group.'

With his decision made, Vicente led his small group back into the wilderness, embarking on a few more days of relatively peaceful travel with the two magicians and his beast.

Despite the dangers lurking in the forests of Light Cay, having a 7th stage beast of mid-level was a significant advantage. It would be challenging for a creature, even one at the late 7th stage, to approach such an unusual group without a compelling reason. As for 8th stage beings, they were confined to specific areas, making encounters with them outside those zones as rare as meeting Archmages traveling the roads of Polaris Realm.

...

Almost two weeks after leaving Ponddown, the three magicians and their beast reached the border of Fallsor Bluff and the independent area they had traversed.

In this border region, many signs and warnings to keep away were prominently displayed, a common sight on this island. While the magicians here weren't particularly formidable, their technology was impressive. Even in enemy territory, they maintained devices that alerted lost individuals or those hunting for pentagrams.

Vicente appreciated the well-developed forces of Light Cay for this, easily aligning the map he carried with his current location.

"We're inside Fallsor Bluff, master," Rex announced after crossing a dividing line that separated a greener, more tranquil area from a darker, more foreboding one.

Vicente narrowed his eyes, sensing his surroundings and feeling as if he were entering a familiar domain.

With a clench of his fists, the surrounding mana shifted, and the shadows of the forest enveloped their movements, muffling their footsteps as their figures blended seamlessly into the night's darkness.

"Let's move forward. Don't be afraid. We'll be safe," he assured the two magicians, who now realized that Vicente's powers ran deeper than they had imagined.

They did not know that Vicente could control darkness as proficiently as they were experiencing.

Suddenly, the dark surroundings seemed less threatening, and their figures melded seamlessly into the realm of darkness within the area.

Initially, they hesitated, moving forward with uncertainty and the same caution as before. But after passing close to powerful sleeping creatures—beings that would have posed formidable challenges—they gained the confidence to continue.

Even Rex, who was well aware of the origin of Vicente's powers, felt a twinge of concern, vividly recalling his experience of being chased by a creature intent on devouring him.

Beasts hunted magicians to feed and grow stronger. But when not preoccupied with pentagram hunters, they fought among themselves, vied for territory in the forests, and even for mates within the same tribe.

If human relationships were complicated, beast relationships were two or three times more chaotic and difficult to comprehend.

Beasts were even more cautious about venturing into the territory of other powerful beasts than magicians were. While magicians were naturally rebellious and inclined to challenge the prevailing order, beasts were much more respectful of the jungle's hierarchy of power.

Despite his background, Rex gradually calmed down as he observed creatures that would have easily noticed him letting him pass as if he were merely the night breeze.

Intrigued by this sensation, he momentarily let his guard down—a brief lapse, but enough for him to be startled by a firm hand grabbing his back and pulling him into a tight embrace.

Vicente's eyes widened as he clamped Rex's mouth shut, simultaneously using his electromagnetic abilities to paralyze Bert and Garin.

In front of them, a group of specters stared at them in an unsettling manner, clearly aware of their presence despite Vicente's best efforts to remain concealed.

Swallowing hard, Vicente felt his heart race as he faced 7th stage specters, even stronger than those he had seen his master banish from the realm of the living.

His companions grasped the gravity of the situation, becoming even more anxious than he was.

Specters were ten times worse than powerful beasts!

Chapter 997 Real Sorcerer

Seeing Vicente, the specters experienced mixed feelings within their essences. Part of them wanted to flee from this human as quickly as possible, while another part urged them to subdue him and possess his body.

Vicente appeared to be their antithesis, yet also contained the primordial essence of the specters within his being.

The four hideous creatures, white and intensely bright, stood still as they gazed at Vicente's group, uncertain of their next move.

The weakest among them was a 4-Star Magus, while the strongest was a 7-Star Magus, a confrontation Vicente sincerely hoped to avoid.

However, as a Real Sorcerer, Vicente not only possessed the power and curiosity to act, but he also had a duty to banish specters like these from the realm of the living.

Instinctively, Vicente summoned the artifacts needed for the ritual, forming golden and silver symbols around them with candles and other instruments.

Smoke poured from the candles as salt and a bell appeared in Vicente's hands, and he finally released Rex.

Rex, along with Bert and Garin, remained paralyzed, their eyes wide open as they watched Vicente demonstrate his Royal Sorcerer skills—something new and unexpected for the three of them, who were unaware of his profession.

Meanwhile, the specters realized what Vicente truly was and were taken aback. Aware of the capabilities of a Real Sorcerer, they flew towards Vicente, intending to attack.

'Absolute light!' Vicente raised his hands, forming special symbols that began to glow brightly, launching golden rays at the approaching specters.

The creatures opened their mouths and screamed in agony, their essences burning as the golden rays pierced them.

'Dark standstill!' Vicente invoked another power, causing black chains of darkness to bind the specters, momentarily suppressing them.

Real Sorcerers could handle specters much stronger than themselves. Moreover, Vicente was no ordinary person. Once he had restricted the space around the creatures, he prepared to consume their existences.

However, the specters were many. Had there been only one or two, Vicente could have easily defeated them, even with the difference in cultivation. But with more than that present, the creatures united, seeking a favorable outcome despite their predicament.

By getting into position to take Vicente's attacks, the weaker creatures paved the way for the stronger one to escape his area of control and fly at him.

Rex rolled his eyes at the thought of moving, while Bert and Garin broke out in a cold sweat from head to toe.

"Senior Vicente!"

"Master!"

They shouted simultaneously, moments before the spirit body passed through Vicente's skin and penetrated his body.

For a moment, Vicente stopped his outward movements, bringing all his focus to his soul space, where the abominable creature was at this very moment.

'That was your mistake.' He said to the creature as he stood behind it, facing the two magical forms, in particular the Throne of Light and Darkness.

As the creature lost its lust for Vicente's darkness, his soul space glowed brightly, and the throne turned completely white, illuminating its surroundings as if it were a star shining one last time before fading away.

Everything that wasn't natural to Vicente burned amid this glow, with the creature's essence being erased and transformed into pure mana for his temporary control.

He couldn't absorb that amount of mana, but he could use it in place of his own until the energy left behind by the creature consumed by his light was gone.

Back at the place where the other spectres were working hard to resist the powers trying to banish them from the realm of the living, Vicente laughed as he pitted all the energy of that creature against the other specters.

"Master?" Rex asked in doubt, but when he saw the specters suffering even more, he put his heart at ease by taking a step back.

He and the two magicians watched with Vicente as the outskirts of the forest became even darker, a tenebrous horizon even stranger than the ordinary darkness of night.

Once again, Vicente saw that scene unfold, with black clouds descending from the sky, while a desert appeared in the middle of the forest in front of him. From this place, a chariot with flaming horses and symbols of death emerged.

'The Gate of Hell... I didn't expect to see it today. Master Collins said it's not often that it appears. But it's my second time seeing it.' Vicente thought to himself as he felt the terrible sensation of this phenomenon.

'Don't look at anything that's going to happen here. Lower your eyes and avoid letting your curious sides get the better of you.' He advised his people as the executioner collected the unfit souls in this place.

He himself tried to follow this advice, remaining motionless while the two spectral creatures were easily swallowed up by the cells in the executioner's carriage.

But unlike what Vicente had experienced when he was next to Collins, the executioner this time stood still longer than he should have, staring at him.

Vicente was tempted to look to see what was going on, but before he could make any move, the being collecting the specters threw what looked like a dagger towards the ground, 5 centimeters in front of him.

"This is your second time. The third time you call me, you'll get your chance."

The hoarse and ancient voice echoed, causing Vicente to widen his eyes, realizing that the situation had escalated beyond anything Collins had ever taught him or prepared him for in rituals like this.

'What does that mean?' he wondered.

As the voice faded, the surroundings gradually returned to normal. The specters vanished, and the oppressive darkness from the Gates of Hell dissipated into the night.

Bert and Garin felt their souls returning to their bodies, but the experience had pushed them to their limits. Both fell to their knees, overwhelmed by the sight of the Gates of Hell opening.

Rex, though equally exhausted, maintained a dignified stance, observing as his master picked up the black dagger that had appeared before him.

Vicente took the dagger from the creature of the underworld, frowning as he examined it.

Chapter 998 Hell's Invitation

As he touched the dark dagger, Vicente felt as if part of his soul had been sucked into the blade of the underworld.

But an instant later, when Rex called out to him, he found himself once again in the place where the phenomenon of the opening of the Gates of Hell was rapidly passing.

"Has something happened, master?" Prische left her form and became the female version he normally saw her as.

"That creature marked me, or rather, gave me a soul invitation. His dagger has connected to my soul and may give me access to something."

"Something?" Bert asked from his knees, still trying to breathe properly. "What?"

"I'm not sure..." Vicente broke out in a cold sweat, imagining something. "The Gates of Hell? Did he invite me to hell?"

The idea itself made him shudder, wondering what would happen if he went to such a dimension. Would he die? Would he go body and soul? Or perhaps only his soul would pass through the Gates of Hell?

He had no idea, and the thought scared him a little.

'I have to be more careful when using my abilities to banish creatures... From the words of that existence, this was my second time facing him. But previously it was Master Collins who performed the ritual. Could that have been because I was there?'

His negative powers were like the whole idea behind the underworld and the Gates of Hell. Despite the threatening energy Vicente felt today and months ago, he couldn't deny that there was an attraction between him and such a dimension.

Now he was almost certain that if he launched another ritual like today's, he would come across that existence again and he would have to deal with a third encounter with such a being.

'This is way beyond me. Even if it's an invitation, it doesn't mean it's going to be good. I have to prepare myself better so that I don't have to use my ritual skills again. Also, I urgently need to become a more powerful Real Sorcerer!'

He felt an unusual urgency, something he hadn't experienced since he had Demien Bloodthorne as his major threat.

The only silver lining was that now he didn't have to worry about this threat reaching his wives and daughter. He could deal with these problems on his own in Anicane, or wherever the hell it was.

"Anyway, wherever I've been invited to, it's not something immediate." Vicente tried to take a deep breath and step back. This was no time for despair. They had other plans in mind, and it was unlikely that he would have to deal with such a concern any time soon. At least, as far as he could imagine, he had some power to avoid that situation again.

"As long as I can stay away from rituals, everything should be fine. As for what happened, we'd better not talk about it with anyone." He looked specifically at Bert and Garin.

"Certainly, Senior. We'll keep it a secret," the two said simultaneously.

Their fear of Vicente was only growing as time passed!

Looking at Rex, Vicente asked, "Do you know anything about specters? As far as I've studied, these creatures exist throughout Anicane, but they shouldn't be this common. I've been here for a few months and this is the second time I've encountered this type of being."

"About specters, they are quite common, master. But most of them hide in the darkness, possess bodies and avoid coming face to face with people like us... Or rather, when they act, no one is left to tell the tale. This results in the apparent situation that they are not common. But they are one of Anicane's prevalent types of magical beings."

"About specters, they are quite common, master. But most of them hide in the darkness, possess bodies and avoid coming face to face with people like us... Or rather, when they act, no one is left to tell the tale. This results in the apparent situation that they are not common. But they are one of Anicane's prevalent types of magical beings."

In a way, that made sense. After all, specters comprised resentful souls who had escaped from the underworld. Since every kind of creature with magical power could form such essences, there were too many souls in the underworld for a fraction that escaped to be enough to place many specters on each island of Anicane.

"Hell is a unique place in the universe. It gathers souls not just from one world, but from the 10,000 worlds that exist," Rex explained the underworld. "All those who are sent to hell from all planes and from our planet, end up in the same dimension. But there are only methods of escape to Anicane and some worlds... Can you imagine where that leads?"

"A bunch of specters on Anicane." Garin added in Vicente's place.

Rex shook his head, already used to Vicente's two human companions.

"Is there any method of controlling these specters?" Vicente asked.

Rex shook his head. "I don't know. I personally can't say, but there are rumors of individuals who are said to be capable of it. But these are stories that come from a long time ago, from other islands, master. It could just be a mix-up, mistranslation, etc. We can't know unless we see it happen in front of us."

Vicente scrunched up his face as he thought about what his beast had told him, but something in his heart told him that these were not mere legends. 'I'll see the next time I meet them... I just hope they're not as strong as this group today. I exhausted myself by destroying that guy who invaded my soul space.'

With a sigh, Vicente drank a recovery potion, before moving on to lead his group in pursuit of their goals.

He had almost lost interest in moving on after what had happened, but being so close, he didn't give up and continued towards his target.

But in the middle of their night's journey, Vicente continued the conversation. "Since there's a hell, there must be a paradise, right?"

"Paradise?" Rex asked, not understanding.

Vicente had made the mistake of thinking that his earthly notion worked with these creatures from Anicane. For the first time, he found himself in a translation problem with the magical beings.

"Hell, as I see it, is a terrible world, the underworld where those who have failed or committed serious crimes go after death. Paradise, on the other hand, is like a divine place where the blessed are destined after their mortal journey is over."

"Oh?" Rex opened his mouth, never having imagined such a place.

Prisiche answered her master, still in the feminine form from before. "Your description sounds like what we call Argardus."

Bert, Garin and Rex looked at her, identifying the name.

"Argardus? What's that?" Vicente was curious.

"This is a mythical and majestic dimension, master," Rex explained. "Those capable of entering it are at least 9th stage magicians. Not even the strongest of Light Cay could enter there, just to give you an idea. But Argardus is not as you described. You seem to see paradise as the opposite of hell. But that's not what Argardus is. It's more like the most likely home of the Nine Path controllers!"

Vicente narrowed his eyes, liking what he heard. "Is there a method of getting there?"

"If you're able to become a Sorcerer, certainly. But only someone like that would know how to search or answer your questions about this place... What we know is only a distant legend."

Chapter 999 The connection between Sorcerer (stage) and Real Sorcerers (profession)

Sorcerer, a title designated for those who reach the 9th stage of cultivation, is often confused with the profession of Real Sorcerer, practiced by Vicente and Collins.

However, Vicente was well aware of the distinction between the two terms and would not mistake one for the other. Early in his tutelage under Collins, he delved into the history of the profession, learning about its name's resemblance to the 9th stage of magical cultivation.

The profession of a Real Sorcerer was nonexistent in the ancient history of Anicane. At that time, the possibility of creating rituals for specific practices was unknown. The profession only came into being with the emergence of the first beings who achieved the 9th stage of magical prowess.

These Sorcerers, as they were known, possessed inherent abilities to conduct rituals of various kinds. They could command and manifest their intentions without auxiliary artifacts or the need for mana. For example, if Collins were a 9th stage magician, he would only need to think about banishing specters, channel his mana, and the effects of a ritual, like the one he demonstrated to Vicente, would manifest.

Inspired by these Sorcerers, lower-level magicians devised methods to harness such magical capabilities, thus establishing the profession of Real Sorcerers.

Why were they given this name? According to legend, Real Sorcerers were deemed worthy of the title because they used their skills and knowledge to purify the world. Those who did not, regardless of whether they were 9th stage beings, were not deserving of the title Real.

In essence, this was an age-old intrigue between the professional practitioners of sorcery and the ordinary 9th stage magicians. Despite the confusion, the distinction between the stage and the profession has persisted, which explains their closely related names.

"Become a Sorcerer, eh?" Vicente chuckled, confident that he would one day reach that level. He certainly had the aptitude and talent. Given the opportunity, he was determined to achieve such heights.

"That's good to know for now. I don't have any immediate prospects of reaching that level, but it's interesting to hear about Argardus."

"But would you like to go to Argardus, master?" Prische inquired.

"Why not? If it's such a fantastic place, shouldn't it be the ultimate goal of every magician?" he responded with a question.

"That would be a challenging journey. But I don't doubt you." Prische smiled at him, her confidence in the man bolstered by what she had witnessed.

As they continued their journey, their conversation gradually dwindled until they traveled in complete silence.

...

Eventually, they ventured deeper into Fallsor Bluff, traversing areas Rex had once passed through before his escape, until they neared a majestic waterfall.

In this area they were now passing through, they could feel the presence of high-level creatures of the 7th stage, and were probably not far from beings like the Elder of the Flaming Lions tribe.

Even though he was quite brave, Vicente slowed down his pace and as more and more strong creatures were around, he saw it would be complicated to go deeper into this magical region.

Unfortunately, none of the 7th stage beings they spotted had what he was looking for, indigo pentagrams compatible with him. Either they were compatible with him, but had cyan pentagrams, or they had indigo pentagrams and weren't compatible.

Vicente wanted to walk around this forest strip and led his group of fearful members through this extensive area. But after a while with no luck, he himself was beginning to think that it was better to put aside the hunt for his pentagrams for when he was stronger.

In a few months' time, he could have a higher cultivation and could better prepare with his faction for a well-organized hunt.

Although he didn't have companions as strong as Bert and Garin in his faction at the moment, his group mates were young and talented. They could certainly grow in power along with him before his eventual hunt.

Thinking of giving up a few days after entering this area, Vicente was already leading his group away from Fallsor Bluff, having found nothing of Dark Hands, when he suddenly came across something curious at the end of a night's travel.

While his companions were feeling better about the possibility of heading away from the area and then having a chance to go to a human city to catch a plane to Ravengarde, something caught Vicente's eye.

Looking at a rock that neither reflected nor absorbed light, Vicente felt it was unnatural, the only part of their surroundings that was so unique in the area.

At first, he hadn't noticed. There were many stones and strange sentient plant beings in this forest.

Over the days of travel, Vicente had grown accustomed to them.

But upon second analysis, it made little sense. Either it was related to some wild creature in the area, or to a magician, which was more likely, given the presence of magical items, even in areas dominated by beasts.

Approaching the rock, Vicente caught the attention of his companions when he suddenly narrowed his eyes.

"That symbol..."

His eyes opened wide when he recognized the Dark Hands crest, a design in the shape of two human hands on top of each other, with white inner boundaries and black outer boundaries.

Remembering the conversation he had had at the Manifold Family estate in Ponddown, Vicente brought his two hands closer to the symbol while circulating his mana through them. As he touched the black stone, he felt an unusual electric current run through his body, just before he felt something appear in his soul space.

'That...'

But this item didn't try to corrupt him. It merely provided him with a screen of information, almost like the system of machines available in various parts of Stonewall.

He saw blue screens appearing in his vision along with the options to view {Available Missions}, {Contract Service} and {Negotiation}.

His eyes lit up as he didn't want to waste any time and immediately chose one of them to see if he could complete his objective.

Chapter 1000 Convenient

{Available Missions}

Choosing the first option that caught his eye, Vicente came across a list according to magical cultivation. From what he understood, given how the information was presented, one could do missions of any level, regardless of their cultivation.

{Paragon}

{Archmage}

{Magus}

{Grand Magus}

Out of curiosity, Vicente chose the last option.

{1-Star}

{2-Star}

...

{9-Star}

'There are missions even for peak magicians on the island?' He was surprised and opted for the most advanced option.

{Information mission on Sir Hanequin}

{Escort mission to Virduin Isle.}

There were only two missions in that section and when he clicked on them, Vicente saw a warning message alerting him that if he proceeded, he would have to go all the way with the mission.

This was the limit of his curiosity. He went back to something simpler, choosing {1-Star} from that same stage to see what missions were available. For this level of cultivation, there were dozens of quests, including quests outside of Light Cay, something he hadn't expected at first, but which made sense.

The strongest people in Light Cay were peak Grand Magus. It made sense that, when wishing to leave the island, one would assemble a group not only with powerful Grand Magus but also those of medium and low level. Not by chance, the same mission Vicente saw for 9-Star Grand Magus, he saw for 1-Star Grand Magus.

{Escort mission to Virdurn Isle.} (3x)

With this mission, the (3x) symbol showed that there were three vacancies remaining for this mission, meaning that three different individuals could accept it.

'I see. This system has missions that are both individual and collective. Once someone accepts an individual mission, that mission disappears from the system.'

Despite the temptation to accept a mission to get an idea of what they were like, Vicente resisted the urge in his heart and went for the {Negotiation} option.

In {Negotiation}, one could, as the name suggests, trade. This was basically a virtual barter store, where one side could connect to those with items, information, or other things to exchange. You didn't need to have anything specific to trade to access the tab. When you entered it, a list of names would appear and you could click on those names, nicknames as it were.

{Virginboobs}

Vicente found the name strange and immediately chose it.

{Information about the {Escort Mission to Virdurn Isle.}}

{Shiamune Wine.}

...

{7th Class Sword.}

Virginboobs had an extensive list of items, information and things to trade. By clicking on each thing on the list, Vicente could see examples of what he could offer to convince Virginboobs with the exchange.

The entire process was like an auction. You could place your bid and if there was nothing better, and the seller was willing to accept it, you'd make a deal.

That was all he could find out without going in depth with any negotiations.

'I'll explore that later. From what I understand, this is a gold mine. I can easily connect with people who have very relevant resources or information without having to move around the island.'

"I see. That's why Dark Hands is so big and difficult to control." Vicente muttered, but only Prische heard him. "Those people actually have something convenient on their hands."

"Master?"

"Prische, how easy is it for one to get connected to the Dark Hands system?" He asked curiously, realizing the value of what he had achieved.

"It's certainly very difficult, master. Firstly, according to the information I have, getting what you've just obtained is almost impossible. The method of getting what you've obtained is in dangerous forests like the one we're in, but less than 1% of the most powerful magicians on the island would come here.

Besides, the master's soul is one of the strongest I've ever felt. Even though you're just a newly promoted Magus, your soul is as solid as that of a Grand Magus. If it weren't for that, you probably would have felt your mind fry a few moments ago and would have been forced to reject the system in order not to die.

There are other implications that prove how difficult it is to achieve what you have obtained, but these are the main justifications, master."

Vicente asked. "If that's the case, why are there missions for Paragons here?"

"It's possible that one can send others to carry out missions on your behalf. It's also possible that some things useful to powerful beings have low levels of difficulty."

Thinking about it, Vicente understood. A specialist could do many things, but with a few exceptions, most magicians could only be in one place at a time. Assigning functions to weaker individuals was one of the methods of having all their objectives completed.

'I see... If I were with Annie here, I'd probably hire some Paragon to teach her something, observe on my behalf, among other things.'

"It makes sense." He whispered.

'If that's the case, then I've just tapped into a network accessible only to the strongest and most talented in Light Cay.' He realized the implication of what he had just learned.

He then finished his exploration, choosing the most prominent option for himself from those available.

{Contract Service} was basically a method of creating {Available Missions} and also analyzing existing missions. In other words, if the mission you were going to launch already existed, {Contract Service} provided you with information about possible similar missions that already existed.

Vicente immediately launched the service {Mission Information from Vicente Fuller} and received the result he was expecting.

{28 similar missions in progress or on hold at the moment.}

"Sigh! As expected." He opened his mouth and turned his attention back to the real world, returning to Bert, Garin and Rex's side.

'What was I supposed to do with that? Try to complete the mission myself to surprise those doing the research for me?'

The problem with that would be that he would have to complete the mission or suffer the consequences of failure. Dark Hands wasn't something cute that one could just benefit from. If one

broke the rules of the missions, one could lose access to the system or even be hunted down and killed.

'No. If I'm going to use Dark Hands, I need to launch a mission that forces someone to follow my rules. In particular, I need to create a mission to disrupt the collection of information about me.'

Although it didn't seem that difficult, he needed something more—resources.

But Vicente didn't have enough resources to create missions right now and just started to plan better how to use what he got today to his advantage.

'I have to go back to the sect. In the sect, I can build up assets and allies, but also methods of using {Negotiation}. Through this tab, I can get closer to creating the missions I need!'