

EARTHS G MAGUS 41

41 Silva

The planet's history was filled with strife and civil wars between its previous billions of inhabitants. The wars between those who had the Blood of the Serpent and those who didn't, continued warring for more than ten millennia that had sunk entire landscapes of this once intercontinental planet. It only ended when the race of the serpent had finally struck a decisive blow against the head of the human purists faction that wished for the demise of all half-breed humans. Alas, the 1% minority of the cunning serpent's race had won the unending war. A thousand year of peace followed the remaining populus and they had regarded the serpent's race as the new ruler of the planet Oroboros.

In this lasting peace of the millennia, every year, the galaxy's Magus Academy hand-picked a single talented young person to be trained for the higher war happening inside the known galaxy. When the time of the selection occurred, Silva was the exceptional young talent selected amongst her million peers training with the elements like her. So, she couldn't help but always think how fortunate and blessed she was to be chosen. She was determined not to waste this opportunity.

In the first year of her training in this most prestigious academy, however, she was facing the most dangerous event that had happened in her 15 years of existence. She cursed her luck when she had decided to follow a boy who had the smell of a weak bloodline coursing through his veins. One event led to the other and after she had thought they were going to escape with their lives after encountering a legendary beast and a high-leveled elf magus, things just kept getting worse and worse.

Silva opened the potion her clan leader had given her who had instructed to only consume it in a life or death scenario in not more than half portion.

[Bloodline power growing]

[Battle power has increased by 18 points]

She had also already used the life-saving artifact her parents had given her as a send away gift but even after using these gifts, she still wasn't strong enough to fight the foot soldiers of the magus elves, the orcs. Losing consciousness she was as she tried to break free from the burly hand of the hulking orc clutching her neck. But then, when her mind was about to go blank, its grip loosened because its head was cut off by the stupid young man, who was the sole cause of her increasing misfortune.

Silva turned her head and saw an orc jump from behind a tree's shadow with its spear directed straight at her. She rolled away, hoping to get out of the spear's aim, but the sound of flesh being pierced entered her ears. She looked at the direction of the sound and there, the stupid brat, whom she had been cursing, was standing just above her with his chest pierced by the metal tip of the spear that stopped just a few inches away from her head.

"Emery!" she shouted, her eyes wide open at the sight of him. She stared at him, mouth agape; the boy looking back at her with a cheeky smile.

"I'm glad it didn't hit you," he said before he did something that made an impression to her. The boy turn crazy and screams like a wild animal breaking the spear in half, pulling it out of his body like it's nothing, and thrusting it into one of the orc's eyes.

The orc and the stupid boy both fell on the ground. Silva had to make sure this orc was dead through and through so she mustered her strength rose up, walked over and chopped down the orc's head with her bloodied sword. At the same time the potion's effect ended.

[Serpentine's Bloodline lowered. Returning to normal.]

With the death of the two orcs, the danger to their lives had finally passed. She had fallen back down once again and gazed at the dense leaves covering the starry night sky. Silva said underneath her breath with a slight hint of joy, "We survived, Emery. We're alive."

But the stupid boy didn't respond. She turned her head sideways to see if he was still breathing. She tiredly got up again, felt his pulse and noticed how it was weakening with every beat. Her own heart then sped up, staring at the boy who had just risked his life to save her. For the first time in her life, someone had looked after her, someone outside of her family, her clan members. It was a bizarre experience out of the culture she had been raised with. Then she remembered how much she hated people with idiotic beliefs like Emery.

"W-Why should I care about this selfish, stupid, boy!" Silva shouted to herself as she ran with all the strength her legs could still muster. Not toward the direction of the institute, rather, where she and Emery had tried to escape from. The battlefield where several magi were fighting against the legendary dragon and its master, the elf in red armor. She ran in a hope that the battle would have ended. She ran and ran, not stopping even for a moment to catch her breath hoping to find a magi in the area who could heal the stupid boy.

Meanwhile, After Silva had left, a black wisp drifted out of the old elf's corpse who had died. It seemed to hover for a moment as if it was checking its surroundings before entering through the hole in Emery's chest.

42 Shadow

The dark responded with silence as his voice seemed to echo among unseeable walls.

"What's going on... on... on...!" he shouted.

Then in front of him, a shadow moved and formed a figure, the image of a man he so dearly missed. Emery's eyes moistened as the man opened his mouth.

"What are you doing here, Emery?"

"Father! You're alive!" Emery said but an unknown force prevented him from walking closer.

"No, my boy. I am dead. And you shouldn't be here," his father replied with a dark tone in his voice.

"W-what do you mean? You're here, and we're talking to each other!" Emery's voice was shaking.

"Don't be silly, my boy. Remember what I told you?"

Emery tried hard to remember before uttering, "G-grow up and b-be strong. But how can i? I am so weak?"

"No excuses!" His father said with the strict look that Emery had always received whenever he was being reminded. It didn't last long though as the image of his father gave a warm smile and added, "Find a purpose, my boy. I believe in you."

"Father? Father!" Emery reached out the fading silhouette of his father dispersing into the darkness, leaving him in solitude amidst this gloom. "Purpose?"

Not long after, another shadow arrived, forming a beautiful girl with blonde hair. A glance from this girl made his heart skip for a moment.

"Princess Gwen," he said.

But a smile from the beautiful girl never came out, on the contrary the girl seemed to seethe with anger. "We can't be friends, Emery!"

A pang of pain pierced his heart. Words he didn't wish to ever hear again reverberated in the silence of this dark, empty room. He picked up the courage to ask the words he never had a chance to say.

"Why not?" he shouted back.

As if this girl was looking at cow dung, she recoiled away from him and said, "It-it's because... you are not one of us! You are just a filthy poor noble who can't even save your father!"

"But..." he said, underneath his breath. He looked back at her. "I-I can be different!"

"You are different! You are not even a human!"

The girl's figure merged one with the shadow, disappearing. From behind him, a wild beast's roar erupted. He turned to look and see a giant single horned wolf with thick white fur and greenish hide that made him feel like an ant while he looked up.

"What the—what are you?"

The wolf glanced straight into his eyes before visibly exhaling its steaming breath and returning to the darkness.

An amused laughter rang in his head as it said, "Hahaha. You are more interesting than I thought, kid."

From the corner of the darkness, a figure with no face except for the mouth that didn't move approached Emery.

"Who are you?"

The figure hovered closer and said the following without moving its mouth, hearing the voice directly in his mind, "Me? You'll soon forget about me, kid. We'll meet again soon. More importantly, it's time for you to go."

After it had spoken, it waved its hand and a door with a bright shining light inside appeared. Emery felt drawn into the light as he reached out and stepped closer.

He passed the blinding door and the first thing he felt he needed to do was to suck in all the air around him like there was no tomorrow. Emery opened his eyes and the face of the woman who introduced him to this world of magic greeted him.

"M-Magus Minerva?" he said, throat perched as dry as a desert.

"Good, your memory is intact. You are safe now," she replied.

Emery tried to sit up but after the slightest inch of movement, a sharp stinging pain coursed through his whole being, more strongly in his chest. He subconsciously tried to feel the hole in his torso, but it was solid; the evidence that he was in fact pierced through could be seen by how his uniform had ripped hole in the middle and the large round scar.

He moved his head around and realized he was still lying in the middle of the forest. Around him were two other magi in uniforms. Then his head pounded, he could vaguely tell he had just gone through something bizzare but just couldn't put two and two together.

"This one is gravely injured! She needs to be taken in the nearest infirmary! Her hands are as cold as ice!" shouted a magus whose palms were emitting a light toward another young lady acolyte.

Emery, released his hands from his head, tried to sit up again and said, "She's going to be alright, right?"

"Stop right there, tough guy! Think of yourself first and foremost!" Minerva said.

He didn't listen, however, and asked another question. "Magus Minerva... What about my other friend? Is she okay?"

An irritated voice sounded behind him and said, "Whose friend are you talking about? I am certainly not friends with no one here!"

Emery gave a small snort with half a smile. At the very least, knowing she still had enough energy to try and pick a fight was enough for him.

"Ararara... teenagers... you just can't be honest, can you? You arrived here, barely on your toes, pointing toward where he was lying like a lunatic. Now that he's awake, you speak as if he's better dead than alive! Teenagers..." Minerva sighed, checking his pulse once more. Silva turned away, and if Emery had known better, her cheeks were as red as an erupting volcano. Minerva didn't mind Silva anymore as she said, "Your injuries though don't seem as bad as they look."

Emery's brows twitched. "What do you mean, Magus Minerva? I had a hole in my chest just now."

"Well, whatever it was, it's gone now," Minerva dismissed, standing up.

Silva, after calming herself, took a closer look at Emery's chest and said, "It must be an effect from activating your bloodline. It must be!"

"Anyway, he's fine now," Minerva said while checking her wrist's information. "You kids should head back to the academy now. We don't know if there are still others around so—"

Minerva called out to another magus, who was taking a look at the orc's headless corpse, and ordered him to open a portal leading to the academy.

"Don't forget your stuff," Minerva reminded.

Emery received the bag and sword from another magus before entering the portal. After they stepped out, the warm, orange glow of the sun peeking from the horizon welcomed him. It was almost dawn. Now that he had a better look at the bag he was holding, he realized it wasn't his and was Cole's instead. He opened it, Silva leaning over, and a bountiful bunch of four-leaf moon clovers lay still in it.

Silva's eyes beamed as she looked at him, made a palm and said, "Time for you to pay me for my services."

43 Last Day

Today was the last day he would be staying in this magical place and in order to be able to return here and keep his memories of this place, he first must break through the required spirit power and receive admission in one of this academy's institutions.

He opened the bag that belonged to Cole and found eleven pieces of four-leaf moon clovers, which he needed to submit to the plant's institute and receive the Green Essence Potion. When he looked up, Silva had her hand stretched out, palm wide open.

"Time for you to pay me for my services," Silva said, making it sound like a matter of fact.

Emery closed the bag and kept it close to him. "This isn't ours."

"So you really are a selfish brat! You're planning to keep it all for yourself, aren't you?" Silva accused.

"What? No! I would have never thought that. This rightfully belongs to Cole, Topper, Fatty, and Mags," Emery defended himself.

Silva had a look like she just couldn't believe what she was hearing. "Are you being serious right now? Gosh, you're even more stupid than a cow! Why do you even care about those two who left us to die, especially that arrogant bastard! Even if he's alive, I guarantee you these plants are the last thing in his mind. Having said that, until dawn is what they have given us. Corpses and that dying chick won't make it before the submission ends. So, tell me how are you not being stupid?"

Every word Silva said made perfect sense to him, but he remained doubtful.

Silva shook her head and sighed. "It's no use arguing with such a buffoon. How 'bout this, first, you submit the plant and share the reward with them later"—she pinched her nose—"Please, tell me you can at least do that."

Emery gave it a thought and said, "Sounds reasonable enough."

She then swiftly grabbed the bag from Emery's hand.

"Hey! What are you doing!"

"Relax, I'm only taking what's rightfully mine as compensation for those who had left me to die," Silva explained before throwing the bag back to Emery.

Emery caught the bag and counted nine four-leaf moon clovers left. She had taken one in exchange for her killing the angler vine and the second for leaving them, he guessed. It didn't still sit right with him but he convinced himself.

"Alright, now that I have been compensated, it's time for me to go," Silva said, turning back and walking away.

"See you around, Silva," Emery said, bidding her goodbye.

"W-Why would I want to see you again, stupid!" Silva exclaimed as her walk suddenly turned into a jog and disappeared into one of the floating islands.

He noticed his clothes seemed to be a bit tighter and chest and biceps buffed up. He switched his mind off of that and checked his palm instead only to look baffled.

[Emery Ambrose]

[Battle power 15]

[Spirit power 28]

Emery rubbed his burning eyes and confirmed his battle power had indeed increased by four points, the only reason he could think of was probably the side effects of the bloodline potion he drank. He dispelled his status and went out of his room, feeling a bit better with the good news.

As soon as he walked out, he was surprised to see Klea, Julian, Thrax and Chumo had already gotten up and were preparing to eat on the table in their living area.

"You look like a mess, what happened?" Klea commented.

Indeed he was, even though he had taken a bath, he had seen the dark circles beneath his eyes while changing in front of the mirror in his room.

He gave half a smile, took a seat, drinking a hot beverage that somehow revitalized him, and spent a couple of minutes retelling what he had experienced, not including how he had almost died of course, about an attack and how several acolytes died in a battle between humans and elves.

Klea and Julian added up the information they had heard during their six days training. Now that they had heard what happened last night from Emery, they arrived at the conclusion that they still didn't know a lot about this world and what this higher war was about.

They discussed a few more things and agreed to always share if they get other information that could tell them more about this world since their world didn't have any of this knowledge. They also decided to find ways how they could get in touch once they returned to their planet and how this could be relayed in the future.

"What are your plans for today?" Klea asked.

Emery had considered today's agenda earlier. He had two options on what he should do for today, the first option was that according to his first plan he would head to the dark institution to gain half a day's

access from the origin stone of darkness while the other was to submit the four-leaf moon clovers like Silva had suggested.

Emery thought about it carefully; he couldn't just choose one and resign for the day. After all, he had to work on both. Emery decided it'd be best to spend half a day at the institute of darkness just to get some time meditating in front of the origin stone. After that he only hoped that he was still not too late to exchange the rare plants to Master Grom for a Green Essence Potion.

Emery glanced at Chumo. "I'll go with Chumo at the institution of darkness."

Emery and Chumo went to the plaza and entered the portal heading toward the institution of darkness. Emery kept yawning on the way and when they were finally in front of the magus guarding the room, the gate was tightly locked.

The magus guarding the room said, "The origin stone room cannot be used at this time."

44 Compensate

They then entered another cave-passage, the steps changed from gray dark stone into marbled-floors, took many left and right turns, which Emery failed all to remember, before finally seeing a large ominous black gate where the origin of darkness seemed to be stored.

Chumo led Emery to a magus talking to another acolyte. Chumo exclaimed, "Magus Xion!"

The magus had a dark cloak with a hood that almost covered up to his nose. Xion spoke with a rough and raspy voice, "Chumo, I see that you're eager to train and you've brought a friend."

"Yes, Magus Xion. His name is Emery, he also has a dark affinity and it's his first time here," explained Chumo after he had made a fist and a palm before his chest.

"I see..." Xion turned his attention to Emery and said, "And I assume you are wanting to cultivate for half a day in the darkness origin stone room?"

Emery copied Chumo's palm and fist and nodded. He said, "Yes, Magus Xion."

Xion glanced at the origin stone room before shaking his head. "I'm afraid you can't. The origin stone room is not available."

"Why not?" Emery asked.

"It is being used and no one is allowed to enter," Xion replied.

After going through so many misfortunes since yesterday, Emery still couldn't catch a break. He had hoped things would be back to normal now that a new day had arrived but apparently not. Expectations against reality always bit him in the back.

Emery put his hands together, determined to enter this place since if didn't he wasn't entirely sure he would pass the required spirit power after he had taken the potion from Master Grom. "Please Magus this is probably my last chance to pass the academy requirement!"

Magus Xion checked Emery's status and commented, "Aptitude B, no wonder."

Xion observed Emery from head to toe and finally sighed. "It would have been no issue giving you access to it since all first year acolytes have the privilege to enter it, however, Grand Magus Zenoia is using the room right now."

"But Magus Xion—"

"No amount of pleading will work, Chumo"—Xion then sounded a bit gentler this time—"Like I have mentioned, we can't let anyone enter the room right now but your friend's privilege to cultivate still stands in the future."

"Emery, I understand your needs but—"

Xion stopped talking and beckoned Emery to come closer. "I see... I feel some odd connection with you now that I got to take a closer look at you. I wonder what it is."

Emery was also confused as Xion. Xion said, "Emery, there's something about you that wants me to help except my hands are tight. If you manage to pass, find me next year and I will surely compensate for what you have missed today."

"Thank you, magus," Emery and Chumo said at the same time.

He left the institute after being guided by Chumo through the maze-like cave-passages. Now, he only hoped the Green Essence Potion would be more than enough to make him break through to second level acolyte and he still needed to find an institute that would accept him.

Emery found the portal heading to Elder's Respite open once more and confirmed from the knight nearby it was safe again to enter. He entered the portal along with the crowd and arrived back at the hall where master Grom was indeed still waiting and accepting submissions for the four-leaf moon clovers.

The dwarf caressed his long overgrown beard as he said to one of the acolytes just handing over their rare plants. "Ah, I know the west location had encountered some undesirables last night but really? Just one plant for the four of you?"

The acolyte, who seemed to be the leader of the four, looked like he had taken a bitter pill before walking away without saying a word. Whispering comments then about this dwarf traveled amongst the first year acolytes saying how he seemed to be underestimating the danger of last night's event. After all, the magus that had introduced him was nowhere to be found, magus Erica had been severely injured and was now recovering in some place Emery didn't know.

Master Grom could hear the acolytes murmurings about him but heed no mind into it. He knew last night's incident forced most of the acolytes to leave the location too early. As for those who didn't, it was a shame to hear what had happened to them. He also felt regretful that this moon clover only grew on that night once a year. Hence, he couldn't help his disappointment. He called out to the remaining crowd, "No other?"

Emery immediately rushed forward and passed over Cole's bag filled with the clovers.

"Let me see how many you got." Master Grom then counted, "1... 2... 3..."

His eyes glowed and said, "Not bad kid! Not bad at all! Here, nine potions for you as a reward. Now, if there's no one else, I'll take my leave and start work."

Emery hadn't participated in this gathering from the start, so he didn't know how many moon clovers the others had exchanged it with. But seeing the master's reaction, it seemed that he didn't win this challenge.

At least, Emery was quite satisfied with the nine tiny bottles in his two hands. He planned to drink a bottle or two and keep the rest for Mags and probably Cole since he had joined them in the last few hours or so. As soon as he turned around, however, the look on the faces of the other acolytes appeared restless. He couldn't but wonder why they looked like that when a woman he knew came rushing forward.

"Wait, Master Grom!"

Grom turned around and Silva said, "Master, you forgot to announce the winner of this challenge!"

45 Golden City

When the bunch of little potions were passed onto Emery's hands, he hadn't expected he would get nine of them. He could remember Master Grom saying 'we'll give you a potion in return for each of you who will return with the plant we require'. Emery had assumed they'd only get one per acolyte but did this dwarf change his rules at the last minute to at least make them feel better?

Emery turned around and saw how the others appeared confused. He wanted to know why they looked like that when Master Grom decided to walk away. Silva then appeared from the masses and stopped the dwarf.

"Master Grom, please wait! You didn't announce the winner of this challenge!" Silva exclaimed.

Grom stopped on his tracks and seemed a bit embarrassed. "Oh dear me, that totally slipped my mind. I appreciate you reminding me, dear."

Silva turned to Emery and said, "You, where were you?"

"I had a prior plan this morning, so I had to do that first," Emery replied.

Silva muttered something under her breath, but Emery didn't hear a word she had just said. "Anyway, the most a student had submitted was five while I exchanged two. Not even a total of twenty moon clovers had been found, so your submission of nine makes up to half of the rest."

Emery was astounded. "What?"

Silva nodded, looking proud, and said, "Yes, you are supposed to be the winner."

Master Grom faced the crowd and looked thoughtful. "I, indeed, had promised that whoever exchanged the most number of moon clovers shall have a spot within our ranks. However, with the amount I have just received, this is the least I have collected in a century. Therefore I am unable to accept any apprentice this time"

The acolytes nearby grumbled. Emery could vaguely hear the words they used to describe the dwarf: nasty, hypocrite, opportunist, etc. Grom still paid no attention to it and turned away once more but when he was about to leave, he almost bumped into a woman whom Emery recognized.

"Magus Minerva," said Emery.

Minerva returned him a glance before bending forward, face almost touching with the dwarf's, and began to play with his beard. She said, "Master Grom, you are not thinking of going back on your words for my student now, are you?"

Master Grom seemed to puff smoke from his ears. He tittered as he said, "Ehem, is he really your student Magus Minerva?"

She nodded in response and said, "Of course, Master Grom. In fact, he almost died trying to find those plants. Surely Master Grom is not that cruel, right?"

Minerva stroked the dwarf's beard again and a big smile filled his face. "Ehem. Alright. Alright. Boy, you come with me now."

Magus Minerva winked at Emery before leaving herself.

"Boy, what's your name," Master Grom asked, his voice sounding indifferent.

"Emery, Master Grom," replied Emery as he walked behind the dwarf.

"Emery, is it? Hmm. What's your connection with M-Magus M-Minerva?" Master Grom said.

Emery paused for a moment, he thought he had heard Master Grom sounding a bit excited for a moment before placing it on the back of his mind. He answered, "She... she's my class instructor,"

Master Grom looked thoughtful for a moment and said, "Then why did she take special attention to you boy? Who are you actually?"

"I..." Emery had no idea how to answer the dwarf. It never had occurred in his mind he was special or what.

Seeing how he had hesitated to answer, Master Grom's voice suddenly raised with his nostrils seemingly flaring. "Whatever it is—remember—always talk good things about me to her okay! Okay!"

Emery was taken aback and responded without thinking, "Yes! Yes! Yes! Master Grom!"

Master Grom tried to regain his composure with a cough and then said, "Excellent, boy."

They then took the return portal from the Elder's Respite to the plaza, then to another portal. As soon as Emery stepped out, he was visibly shocked once more to see the location they had just arrived at. The place was full of tall, straight structures with transparent windows on its surface, flying boats, moving carriages on the ground without being drawn by any animals, sprawling crowds, straight roads that had trees on the side. This place was certainly much bigger compared to the combat institution.

"Welcome to Golden City, boy," Master Grom exclaimed. Emery, still wide-eyed, looked over for as far as the eye could see the whole place was filled with bustling people and buildings.

"Come on now, we don't have all day, do we?" Master Grom urged as he walked ahead of Emery, who was still gawking at such an unbelievable place.

They walked for a good five minutes or so, when Master Grom stopped on his tracks and invited Emery inside another towering building that had flying objects inside like giant boats with wings made of wood or iron entering and exiting. After going inside, Emery couldn't help notice the large greyish-black staircase with yellow lines on the side that seemed to move on its own leading upstairs. Master Grom called out to him with an irritated voice.

"What are you doing, boy? This way!"

They entered a small room that seemed to only fit four to six people. Master Grom pressed a button on the side and the door hissed closed. Emery wanted to voice out his thoughts why were they inside such a cramped space when the room trembled and Emery experienced a tingling, weird sensation in his head, making him dazedly look in front of him. There, he saw through the slits of the door, they seemed to be moving upwards since the light outside descended.

The door hissed opened this time and Master Grom exited the small room with Emery following closely. Emery glanced back at the door and it closed on its own without any other person in the room. Not long after they walked out, Master Grom led Emery to a place where there were a lot of the same flying boats. They stopped in front of a wooden boat-bird.

Master Grom looked at him and said, "Oh boy, don't tell me you come from a lower world, do you?"

"I...umm... That's what they say."

Master Grom let out a big sigh and said, "You'll have a tough time ahead of you then, boy. It seems your beautiful instructor isn't doing you a favor and is wanting to make me suffer at the same time."

The dwarf entered the boat-bird object and beckoned Emery to sit on the back. Emery hesitated for a moment before steeling himself and trusting this small, old man with an overgrown beard.

As soon as Emery had taken a comfortable position and strapped on the safety leash Master Grom had asked him to wear, the boat-bird began to shake and then sped off over the city, and the wave of fresh air rushed into Emery's face, making him feel unsure whether to focus on the refreshing air or the gnawing feeling in the pit of his stomach at the thought they were hovering a hundred feet off the ground with nothing solid below them except for the cold, hard ground. It was a world of imagination that never existed in his mind.

It didn't take long for them to arrive at their destination and the boat-bird to go inside a much larger building than the one they had come from.

Master Grom looked back at him with a wide grin and said, "We have arrived at the Apothecary Institute."

Author announcement

Dear Earth's Greatest Magus Readers,

First, let me introduce myself. I am a father of two young daughters and I own and run my own small business. With these in mind, I must tell you that I do not have as much time to write as unlike other full-time authors.

Nevertheless, I love to create stories. If you checked my profile, you will see that I have also written another book for more than a year. So, I could confidently say that I do not abandon a story.

This book won first place in the WPC event and winning it meant the novel received a contracted deal. Like all the other contracted novels, this novel must go to premium.

I hope you are all enjoying this novel so far and are trusting me as the author to do my best to give the best experience in the world of magi.

Wishing for your continuous support.

Sincerely, Avans.

46 Path of Crafting

The gnawing feeling on his stomach didn't last long as he found the sights around him were worth it. Soon, they arrived at a much towering building where there were also lots of flying boats entering and exiting. They landed on one of the balconies and when they got off the boat-bird, Emery followed Master Grom and was greeted by another acolyte wearing a slightly different uniform that had an emblem of a triangular container on the chest.

"Welcome back, Master Grom," the acolyte said, slightly bowing. Just like Master Grom, the acolyte faintly smelled of herbs and earth.

Master Grom nodded in response and said, "Cedric, this is the new recruit. His name is... just ask him his name and give him the standard orientation into the institute"—the dwarf then turned to face Emery and added—"Boy, you don't need to be the best student or anything, just make sure not to embarrass me okay? And... and... remember what I told you earlier, understood?"

Emery chuckled in his mind seeing how the dwarf had turned slightly red again. He kept his face innocent and said, "Yes, Master Grom."

The dwarf cleared his throat again. "Good, good. Oh yes, I almost forgot."

Master Grom grabbed Emery's wrist, placed his palm on top of Emery and both symbols glowed for a moment. He said, "Okay, check your palm now."

[You are hereby invited into the apothecary institute]

[Accept?]

Of course Emery would accept the offer, he needed this!

[You are now an Apothecary Apprentice rank 1]

"Now, that is settled, until next year then."

Emery was over the moon now that he had completed one of the objectives to pass the first year's requirements, to be accepted in any institution. All that he needed to accomplish was to increase his spirit power by using the potions he had received.

Cedric sighed after the dwarf had left. He commented, "Master Grom thinks he's so slick and could whisper without anyone hearing them. I presume he had asked you to do something for him about a certain woman, had he?"

"How did you know, senior?" Emery asked, stupefied.

"It's no secret the master has a huge fondness towards beautiful women. And since you're a first year acolyte, I also presume she's your advisor. That'd make sense the most. Anyway, we shouldn't burn any more daylight. Let us start now, shall we?"

Emery took out a bottle from his pouch hanging on his waist and Cedric nodded.

"Ahh, green essence potion, the reward for collecting four-leaf moon clovers."

Emery couldn't help but think how smart Cedric was as he popped open the container.

"Could that not wait though? I mean, it's best we get the orientation done first."

Emery shook his head.

"I'm still a first rank acolyte, senior. It's better I get this one done first before doing anything else," Emery said before chugging down the bitter green liquid up to the last drop. He thought the potion didn't have an effect on his body after he had placed the empty bottle back in the pouch when his guts suddenly warmed and sent a wonderful electrifying sensation throughout all parts of his body, including the tips of his toes and fingers.

He then checked his status and read the following:

[Spirit power has increased by two points]

[You have succeeded in reaching second rank acolyte]

[Battle power has increased by one point]

[Emery Ambrose]

[Battle power 16]

[Spirit power 30]

[Rank 2 Acolyte]

[Rank 1 Apprentice - Apothecary]

[Congratulations! You have passed all the requirements for first year acolytes in the academy]

[All first year acolytes who have passed will gather first thing tomorrow morning]

Just by drinking one bottle, Emery felt revitalized for the day and the dark circles underneath his eyes had disappeared. The breakthrough to second rank had also increased his battle power since when a person crosses a certain limit of spirit power so does the physical attributes.

Emery twiddled the remaining bottles in his pouch. Even though he was determined to share it with Mags, he became tempted to drink all of them at once thinking if he drank the eight, would he break through to third rank?

Emery imagined it with a smile and forgot for a moment where he was when he realized Cedric was still waiting for him.

"I see, reaching your second rank on your last day. You are probably the most untalented acolyte I've ever seen. Looks like you're finished though? Let's go, it's already noon at the moment."

Emery didn't mind Cedric's remark and said, "Yes, thank you for waiting."

"Don't worry, I'm on my fourth year here and I have more time to spend. It's actually your time that's limited." Cedric then invited Emery to walk through the Institute of Apothecary. The senior proceeded to explain that even though it was the people on the frontline that won the war, without the support of the path of crafting, no troops would simply dare to just go to the battlefield.

"The path of crafting is the art, the creation and the core of everything. There are dozens of institutions in the path of crafting, but apothecary is one of the three major crafting institutions" Cedric said.

"How long till be able to create something like this green essence potion?" Emery asked.

"Well, it all depends on the potion's strength. Tell me, how many points did you receive?"

"Two points, from twenty-eight to thirty."

"That's low. I guess master Grom gave you the low-level one" Cedric said as they walked into one of those moving stairs. "That potion isn't hard to make, but its issue is the main ingredient."

"What about a potion that can increase bloodline power?" Emery asked, remembering last night's event.

"That one is much harder to make. On top of its rare ingredients, it needs to be brewed for months and requires special tools to make."

Finally, they arrived in a large hall like a palace library that was filled with imposing shelves and rich book collections. After Cedric spoke to the receptionist, the receptionist summoned several items and he passed them to Emery. "These are the starting equipment for a rank 1 apprentice."

Emery received a set of clothes that is slightly different from the acolyte outfit he was wearing. This uniform had the same emblem Cedric had but with the number one underneath the emblem. Emery also received two scrolls and when he opened it:

[Universal flora knowledge rank 1]

[Analyze flora rank 1]

47 Contribution

Cedric was taller than Emery by at least a head and had the typical air of a handsome and fresh aura, which matched with his long wavy hair. On top of that, the acolytes Cedric had greeted seemed to be respectful of him even though they seemed to be of the same age.

After they had reached the receptionist, Cedric talked to the dwarf, and the receptionist summoned a couple of items from his dimensional ring, which Cedric handed over to Emery after.

Emery received the items and as he stared at the new set of uniform along with two scrolls sitting on top, only then it somehow dawned on him that he had actually reached the second rank acolyte and became an apprentice in an institution; he had made it.

He shook off his thoughts and when he unrolled the two scrolls, the parchments vanished into thin air while a new notification popped out in his mind.

[Universal flora knowledge - rank 1]

[Analyze flora - rank 1]

The circle with a straight line cutting the symbol in half on his hand glowed and formed new tiny images of markings on the edges. Emery focused his thoughts on the symbol and saw a variety list of plants along with their uses and where to find them, including the four-leaf moon clover he had been tasked to gather last night.

"Do you have any crafting or potion making experience?"

Emery was about to answer yes but decided against it. Although he had experimented with concocting potions with the ingredients he had found and equipment back home, it was severely limited. Mainly, he was only able to create potions that warmed their bodies during the freezing winter. Hence, Emery felt his experience need not be conveyed. "Not really, senior."

"That's understandable. Normally, our institute doesn't allow apprentices to touch the cauldron until reaching rank 3," Cedric answered in reply, while nodding.

"Then senior what are we doing until then?"

"You will be assisting the senior apprentices and collecting enough contribution points to increase your rank."

"Contribution points?"

Cedric's eyes twitched. "I see. I understand now. Since you don't even know about this, I'm assuming you came from a lower world, yes?" He then sighed and added, "I wonder how you're going to succeed in this academy."

"Certainly, Adept Cedric." The apprentice then placed a translucent crystal similar to the one Emery had in his private quarters.

"Please," the apprentice said, gesturing at the glowing ball. Emery lay down his uniform on the counter first and then touched it as instructed. New information appeared in front of him.

[APOTHECARY STORE]

[Herbs] [Tools] [Potions] [Knowledge]

A long list of items was shown and almost everything written had a number written on its side. Of course Emery couldn't understand most of the words. Emery selected the knowledge tab and immediately saw the names of the two scrolls he had received before. They were situated on top of the list under the basic scrolls for beginner apothecary apprentice.

[Universal flora knowledge - rank 1 - 500 spirit stones]

[Analyze flora - rank 1 - 500 spirit stones]

Emery had no prior knowledge of what a spirit stone was but he felt like this would be an important thing to keep track of. He asked, "What are these spirit stones?"

Cedric no longer appeared surprised, but Emery could tell he was getting slightly tired of explaining every single thing.

"That's the universal currency the whole academy uses as well as other magus academy's in the galaxy. Spirit stones are the culmination of humankind's ingenuity. They can be exchanged into contribution points in a 1:1 ratio, think of it as a reward whenever you are finishing a task or a mission. Just note that you can exchange contribution points into spirit stones but not the other way around. We don't want spoiled rich nobles buying their way into the top now, do we?"

Cedric then showed Emery how to access the point counter by using a tattoo on his hand.

[Emery Ambrose]

[Contribution point: 0]

[Tasks and missions are not available for first year acolytes]

"The best thing about being selected into this magus academy is even if you don't have spirit stones or any contribution points, the academy will pay all these starting items for you. Just like the items you receive just now and it's all the same with all institutions and paths; crafting, combat or the elementals."

Emery suddenly realized something important. He wanted to ask Cedric that even though he had already passed the academy's requirement, he still hadn't succeeded in being accepted into any of the elemental institutions; hence, he was still unable to do the basic spells of the elements he had an affinity with like the others.

His mind wondered what would be the best way to receive these benefits on his last day. Emery had been going around from Darkness Institute to Plant Institute and then this Golden City. He was concerned that even if he were to take portals, he wouldn't have enough time to pass the tests and get acceptance for those spells. He reluctantly asked about his problem to Cedric as well.

"I don't think you will be able to do so. As you've said, each institution has their own unique examinations before they accept you. I am not sure whether they'll allow you to do it on the last minute, especially on the last day, but of course you can try your luck."

Emery remembered about the earth institute test on moving the rock, there should be other similar tests with all the other institutions. Not only was the time short, he wasn't even sure he could move the rock.

He was starting to feel helpless again, he still hadn't slept and even though the potion gave him a burst of energy, his mind was drained to the most it could muster. Should he just give up hope on learning spells before returning to Earth?

"Dear me, you are so hopeless. I can't help you much about the other things outside the apothecary, however, this is Golden City. You can find the answer to almost anything in here," Cedric said, proudly.

Emery liked where this was going as Cedric answered what he seemed to have on mind.

"Alright, since I'm feeling a bit generous today, I'll take you to a place where they can help magi such as you."

Cedric took Emery out of the building and walked amongst the varying people in the city until they soon arrived at a building that was no less crowded than the crafting institute building.

[Golden City, Magus Guild]

48 Incomplete

A lot of traffic was happening as Emery and Cedric neared the building made of stone and steel. Various people with all sorts of appearances, wearing different uniforms and some of which Emery didn't recognize, entered and exited the building non-stop.

"What place is this?" he asked.

"This is one of the representative branches for all magi and acolytes in our galaxy specific to this city. We mostly come to this place to accept missions or use facilities that are similar to the elemental institutions," Cedric answered.

When Emery entered the building, the smell of ale, noisy clanking of cups and plates and the chattering of gossiping men and women on the side all welcomed him. It was just like one of the taverns the peasants loved going to after their day's work situated in the middle of his father's estate, but this place appeared more sophisticated with its classy tables, colorful curtains by the windows, and shiny floorings. Many people who looked like magi and acolytes were busy with their own activities; when they saw Emery and Cedric's uniforms, it fell silent for a moment before returning to its usual liveliness.

"Walk proud, Emery. Many of these people dreamt to be a part of our prestigious academy even more within the crafting institution. Follow me," Cedric briefly explained.

After passing through the main hall, the noises died down when they entered another room. Cedric said, "This is the highlight of this place for all acolytes and magi alike."

They made their way toward behind a counter in the corner, which was manned by what appeared to be a half-breed, red-skinned human with two horns protruding upwards from his head.

The man greeted the recently arrived Emery and Cedric with a sour face. "What do you want?"

"It is also nice to see you again, Aeon," said Cedric, not minding the rough tone of the horned-man. "I am hoping you can help my friend here from the apothecary who has just reached rank two acolyte today. We're looking for you to confirm and give him his starting package."

"I can do the test here?" Emery blurted out with a tint of happiness in his voice.

"Well, not exactly but that's what the guild is for. Do you know how many magi are in our galaxy? Too many to count, that's for sure. With that in mind, can you imagine all this magi and acolytes from other worlds or planets returning to a centralized headquarters every time their rank got upgraded and finished a task or a mission? It'll be too much, but fortunately, there are thousands of these guilds over our galaxy. And with our academy being the top amongst all of them, it shouldn't be that surprising our Golden City has its own," Cedric explained with a haughty look.

"So, are you just gonna stand there and chat in my face or what?" said the horned red-skinned acolyte.

"You want my job easier? Easy... just leave!" Aeon exclaimed, but Cedric didn't budge nor looked offended. Aeon turned his attention to Emery and said. "You, let me see your palm."

Emery did as Aeon asked. The man then said, "First year acolyte four affinities with a B aptitude. That's a terrible combination for the academy's acolyte. You must have been very busy the last few days. And although you've reached rank two, it's unfortunate that you're not eligible to receive the starting pack."

"What? Why?" Emery asked.

Aeon moved closer, his protruding horns that looked like a goat's horns was only an inch away from Emery's face. The grumpy face of the half-breed seemed to have wrinkled further as he inspected Emery's stats further before showing the stats to Emery, himself.

[Emery Ambrose]

[15 years old]

[Battle Power 16]

[Spirit Power 30]

[Spirit Aptitude B]

[Spirit affinity: Earth, Water, Plant and Darkness]

[Earth Spirit - Initial Stage - Incomplete]

[Water Spirit - Initial Stage - Incomplete]

[Plant Spirit - Initial Stage - Incomplete]

[Darkness Spirit - Inestimable]

Cedric opened his mouth for a brief moment as if he wanted to say something, but Emery caught the sharp look of this red-skinned man looking at Cedric, making him close his mouth once more.

"Bahh, it's just a basic mistake of young acolytes coming from lower worlds. I believe you didn't achieve the spirit power breakthrough with a natural way, right? The reason why I believe that is you have the

required spirit power needed, that's good, but your understanding of the elements is low. I don't have to explain what incomplete means, do I?"

Emery shook his head and said, "I understand, senior. But what about inestimable?"

Aeon gave a thought before answering. "It's quite odd but also not uncommon, it would often show from young acolytes who have a very bad understanding or no understanding of the element at all."

Then it clicked in Emery's mind. He indeed hadn't meditated in front of the darkness origin stone yet and it had indeed been true that his breakthrough in spirit power was due to a green essence potion, not from the understanding of the elements. It was understandable that his darkness would be inestimable.

Aeon continued speaking, "For a B aptitude acolyte, it should take you a couple of days to learn each element, but with your four affinities, I reckon it'd be much more difficult than usual. If you are diligent enough, however, you should be able to master any one of your elements in two weeks. Once you have sufficient understanding of at least one elemental spirit, return here to receive your invitation and starting pack."

However, Emery didn't even have two days, especially two weeks. He would have plenty of time to train back in Britain but what's the point in mastering the elements but not having the spells to use?

Emery became disheartened again when Cedric, standing next to him, said, "Looks like horny boy has finished his explanation."

Aeon grunted.

"I guess it's my turn to speak." Cedric looked at Emery with a wide smile, and said, "I have a proposal for you, Emery."

49 Proposal

"Since that is out of the way and since he looks busy again, I guess it's my turn to speak." Cedric looked at Emery with a wide smile, and said, "I have a proposal for you, Emery."

"And may I know what's on your mind, senior?" Emery asked, facing Cedric now after removing the status screen from his view.

"Ok, I know today's your last day and I'm guessing you would like to acquire some spells before returning to your world, right?" said Cedric as if he knew everything going on in Emery's mind.

Emery confirmed Cedric's deduction with a nod.

Cedric kept his wide smile before turning to Aeon once more, who was busy writing some stuff in the ledger. He said with a teasing look, "Oh my wonderful friend, may I use the magus crystal... please?"

"Whatever..." replied Aeon, not looking up.

Emery realized that even though Aeon treated Cedric harshly, Cedric didn't seem to mind it as if they were good friends. These two people might be closer than he thought.

Cedric then proceeded to touch the crystal ball and information appeared similar to the one in the Apothecary store.

[Magus Guild Crystal]

[Mission] [Store] [Network]

The mission tab, as the name implied, was a list of missions where an acolyte or a magus would be able to take once they were eligible and receive contribution points or other compensations after turning over a completed mission. Network was similar to a facility where people could communicate over long distances while the store was a tab to buy magus equipment.

"Look at this," said Cedric, clicking the store menu. "This is the list for the hundreds of spells that's available to buy for all acolytes and magus to buy under the ten elements. All of them are basic spells, but this should be more than enough for you. The guild doesn't have the higher or much more powerful spells because those are exclusively retrieved from the institutions."

Emery began to browse the list Cedric had pulled up all to his heart's content.

[Stone Skin - rank 1 earth spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Mud Wall - rank 1 earth spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Glow Stone - rank 1 earth spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Spiritual Seed - rank 1 plant spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Nature Sense - rank 1 plant spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Entangle - rank 1 plant spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Cloud Mist - rank 1 water spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Hydraulic Push - rank 1 water spell - 100 spirit stone]

[Water Whip - rank 1 water spell - 100 spirit stone]

Cedric's eyes beamed and said, "It's simple as a matter of fact. I'll buy it for you."

Emery expected that Cedric would want something in return. After all, nothing was free in this world. He cleared his throat and asked, "What do you want for in exchange?"

The adept alchemist smiled broadly, apparently waiting for this question. "Every year, Master Grom always gives the same mission to all acolytes in the plant institute who are not part of the path of crafting. And seeing how you felt your pouch after taking one, I know for sure that you have more than one of those potions. I'll trade you one Green Essence potion for one spell, so what say you?"

Emery then realized why Cedric had bothered to go out of his way to accompany him here. If he knew any better, Emery would think this was Cedric's goal from the moment Cedric had witnessed him drink the green essence potion.

"As my junior from the Apothecary Institute, I am willing to help you and trade that low quality green essence potion with a spell that could be useful for you back in your own world, what do you think? Let's seal the deal, shall we?"

It had been a few days since Emery had been thinking about what to do once he returned to Britain. He didn't have a home to call anymore and only seven days had passed after he had been transported to this magical place. It still was highly possible those marauders who had burned his house and murdered his father might get wind of his return and that'd mean he'd be in danger once again; even though it was true he had better physique than before, he knew he didn't have the capability to fight or maybe outrun them again.

Now that a few days had passed, he had a much clearer view of that event and could somewhat figure there was a stronger power behind that attack since the marauder's specifically attacked them while shouting 'kill the chrutin lovers!'. He had never heard of that term, much less about hearing how his father's estate, the home of the renowned knight with the title of the Lion's Fang, had been attacked with such reasoning behind it.

Emery determinedly opened his small pouch from his waist and took out the eight small green containers. He had received nine bottles, and if he shared the remaining with Mags or Cole, whose status was still unknown, at the very least he felt entitled to three of these bottles. One of them had already been consumed, so he could only exchange at least two bottles at most.

His eyes switched between the bottles and the list of spells. Believing that his needs for the spells were more urgent, Emery decided to hand over two bottles. As he kept two of them and put the rest back in the bag, he stretched out his hand to Cedric when Aeon shut his ledger loudly, startling Emery.

"Hold it right there!" exclaimed Aeon, taking a look at the potions. "Don't be stupid, kid! That potion is worth at least five times of a single basic spell!"

50 Rare Spells

"Hold it right there!" exclaimed Aeon, glancing at the potions Emery had withdrawn. "Don't be stupid, kid! That potion is worth at least five times of a single basic spell!"

Emery stopped midway and noticed how Cedric clicked his tongue on the corner of his eye.

Cedric immediately tried to defend himself and said, "Oh, no, no, no. If it was a normal potion perhaps, but these are low quality green essence potions, they're worth at most two spells."

Aeon ignored Cedric and asked Emery to hand over the potion to him instead. "Kid, let me see those potions."

Emery did as Aeon had requested; Cedric, on the other hand, appeared to have furrowed his brows. Cedric said, "Okay, okay, I'm willing to exchange you two spells for one potion. That should be a fair deal."

Aeon closely examined the green essence potions. He gave it a twirl and a sniff after opening one of them before striking a sharp stare at Cedric. He said, "You are really shameless, aren't you?"

Emery thought it'd be better to stay silent as two people argued with each other. He hadn't spent enough time in this academy and knew too little to make a well-informed decision. If he were to study in this place for a longer time in the future, he would need to be careful from being taken advantage of easily as well as people whom he could trust and rely on. He wouldn't get far if he only had himself to rely on.

Emery received the potions back from Aeon and laid it down on the table, prompting the adept alchemist and the red-skinned, half-human, from bickering. "Respected senior, I have these two potions to spare, could you please help me choose a few spells you think that'll be suitable for me. I think two or three spells will be sufficient without having to incur too many losses for my senior alchemist here."

Aeon gave his first smile since the time Emery and Cedric had walked in here a few minutes ago. He smirked at Cedric once more and said, "Don't worry, kid. Cedric here is a successful craftsman and a shrewd businessman. Like I said, even with just one of these potions, he wouldn't lose anything since he has so many spirit stones."

He opened the spell list and began to give suggestions to Emery. "For rank 1 spells, I recommend [Stone Skin] for your earth affinity. It boasts the most physical and magical defense amongst all other defensive types of spell. Not only it gives you protection, but it also increases your physical strength.

"No questions about the defensive spell because it's the best that you can have. Next thing you need are offensive spells; I recommend [Leaves of Steel] or [Whip Splash], which are both rank 1 spells for your plant or water affinities. It costs a bit more than the basic skill since they're a bit more complicated but more powerful."

Cedric was about to say something when Aeon gave him a deadly look, making him hold his tongue, so Cedric had to make do with a sigh instead.

Aeon returned speaking to Emery giving his last bits of suggestions. "Lastly, since you have the three spirit manuals from the institutes, except for the [Darkness Spirit Manual - Initial Stage], I'd highly recommend getting it since it's inexpensive. Not to mention, you'll need this to start connecting with the element of the dark all around us. On top of this, better also get a utility spell like [Dark Smoke], which will be useful for running away from undefeatable opponents. The smoke not only disturbs your opponent's sight but it can also confuse their mind for a brief moment."

He clapped and started to select each of the spells in the list he had advised for Emery to get. "One spirit manual [Darkness Spirit manual - Initial Stage], one utility spell [Dark Smoke], one defensive spell [Stone Skill], and two offensive spells [Leaves of Steel] and [Whip Splash], all of them should amount to...650 spirit stones. What do you think?"

Cedric mumbled as he checked his palm, probably checking the stones he had on him. He gave an annoyed nod, indicating he was somewhat fine with this transaction when Aeon remembered something and asked them to wait a second.

Aeon went inside the door behind his counter and returned with a box with intricate greenish carvings on the edges. He said, "Actually, I think you'll like this better than the offensive plant spell."

[Fragmentation - rank 1 plant spell]

After Aeon had opened the box and the name of the scroll came into view, Cedric slammed the counter and said, "Hey, hey, if you include that then, the total amount should be a thousand spirit stones! I'll basically not get a profit for bringing him here! I won't do it!"

Aeon smirked wider than he had earlier at Cedric and said, "Oho, two can play this game, pretty boy. If you don't want it, then I'll buy these spells for him. What do you think, kid?"

"What does the spell do?" Emery asked.

"It's a rare basic spell for plant magi. Since you're an apothecary apprentice, this would help you tremendously since the spell will help you dissect a plant and separate their components. Of course, you'll still have to practice the actual deed but having a guideline where to separate parts of plants will make your apprentice work much easier."

Emery indeed was grateful to Cedric for bringing him here. However, since Cedric was no longer to pay for his spells and Aeon was offering, he better grab this opportunity for himself. He only gave two words to Aeon, "Thank you."

Even though he no longer had two bottles of green essence potions, which he could confidently claim as his own, Emery was quite satisfied to get four spells out of it as a replacement. Emery took scrolls, used them on the spot, Emery thanked both Aeon and Cedric, who was still brooding about Aeon stealing his client, and decided to return to his resting place.

The sun had started to set as he stepped out of the magus guild building.