

Earths GMagus 131

Chapter 131: Observe

After an or so hour of resting, refreshing themselves with drinks, and eating, the group of eight senior acolytes went back up the hill to the spot where they had last mined.

Upon arrival, unfortunately, they found that the dumas were still busy melting the skyglazers carcasses in their gooey, semi-transparent, bodies. Due to that, as they had agreed during their break, they went to the farside of the hill where they hadn't been to, which also meant, a place wherein they hadn't eliminated any skyglazers yet.

Soon enough, they found another clump of large black rocks that had the titanium in it. As previously discussed, Emery was the designated miner since he was able to gather much faster than any one of them. Of course, Emery had someone alongside him, anyone of them, taking their turns after one deposit had been finished. They did this so that they could put more emphasis in defending the mining area from any beasts that would be attracted by the sound of the clanking pickaxes.

"How come you're able to gather more, Emery? These stones are quite hard to break down," said Chumo, Emery's current partner in mining. Klea of course was on the defense team, it seemed she preferred shooting out lightning bolts out of her hands to burn the horrible, worm-headed, skyglazers to a crisp more than doing physical labor, hence Chumo was able to speak.

"I probably am just luckier in finding more, that's all," said Emery in-a-matter-of-fact tone.

The real reason why Emery had been able to gather more was due to his keen eyes and dexterous hand. When he had returned to their world, he had spent months farming, grafting, doing all sorts of stuff relating to alchemy and some experience relating to crafting items. In potion-making, for example, a small mistake, such as a small twig or dead leaves could affect the potion's quality as a whole. So, his eyes and hands had been trained. Due to those traits, he was able to find the right spots where to strike with the pickaxe, making sure he hit the weaker parts of the black rocks, and this in return, resulted in him being the person who had the most titanium in storage. Not to mention, he actually had one of the highest battle powers among them. That helped a lot too.

Emery focused on striking the rocks to finish this mineral gathering task as soon as possible. While doing this, he actually couldn't help but sometimes think he was being labeled in the others' mind as the weakest member of the group. Still though, as he gave more consideration in this line of thinking, this 'weak act' might have its benefit in the future. Therefore, he decided to stay quiet and went along with it. Also, after more mining occurred, it was confirmed that he really was the most efficient miner compared to the others. In a way, he was contributing a lot and was benefiting everyone, including him, to get this task done faster.

Occasionally, Emery took a break by sitting and observing the others. From what he had inferred so far, among the eight of them, Thrax still seemed to have the highest battle power. This was evident by him being able to break the hard black rocks almost as fast as Emery. The difference between them, however, was that Thrax seemed to be expending a lot more effort than Emery. Thrax was probably venting out since he had always complained how he wanted to be on the front, fighting with the beasts rather than mining.

As for the three acolytes from Zaiueo, Emery reckoned they were a bit lower than Julian in terms of battle power, again based on how fast they mined. Therefore, Emery figured that in terms of raw strength, they were probably on the 'okay' side of things once the magus game started, assuming Emery and his friends decided to let the three join.

In regards to the spirit force, Zuna, the one who had thrown the tier 3 [Wind blade] spell, was the person who had the same rank as Klea. His windblade spell wasn't much stronger than Klea's, according to what Emery had seen so far, hence, Zuna most likely had an equal or lesser spirit force in comparison to Klea's. In fact, Emery hadn't seen Zuna use other types of elements except for the wind one. He probably only had one elemental affinity while Klea, on the other hand, had three elements, wind, water and lightning. In some way, this made her a better magus than Zuna.

The other two acolytes, Zaku and Zidi, are rank 5 acolytes. The two of them stored their firearms and started using spells. They had ice and metal affinity, respectively. When Emery watched them throw their attack spells, Emery felt they had a similar spirit force compared to him or Chumo, Therefore, Emery concluded there wasn't much special about them. Still, the three of them gave the team a more balanced strength with their long range attack and good coordination, they were a good addition to the team. Emery just wasn't sure if they could be trusted.

One more advantage of these Zaiueo acolytes was their better equipment. The firearm was surely impressive but their melee weapon also seemed to be made of material that wasn't steel, the strongest metal he had encountered so far. Which couldn't be compared to the weapons used by Julian or Thrax or any of them, actually.

Emery had seen Julian's sword and Thrax's spear. The weapons they had been wielding seemed to be made of the same material as the old knight's. That wasn't surprising though, considering the old man had mentioned the chains and the sword he had been using were Roman steel. As for Chumo, he had been using bow and arrows. That seemed to be the weapon he was most proficient. And regarding Klea, she wasn't using any weapon, rather she kept using [lightning bolt] as her main offensive spell.

Thrax was no longer Emery's partner in mining. He was replaced by Julian, who sat beside Emery, taking a break as well. Currently, Thrax no longer summoned another pila, he was using another spear, which looked a bit different from the first one. This spear was actually something Thrax had received as a reward before they went back to their own world. As he fought, he refrained from using [Fire Infusion] since the one he had used against the duma earlier had melted and most likely wasn't sure if this spear would meet the same fate.

Emery asked Julian why didn't Thrax try to retrieve the pilas he had thrown. According to Julian, the Roman pilas that Thrax had used were a one time use weapon. It broke at the moment of impact so that the enemies of Rome wouldn't be able to throw it back in case they had the idea of pulling it out.

Once Emery felt he had sufficient rest, he went back to mining and the whole cycle of finding new deposits, fighting off the attracted skyglazers, repeated countless times. Eventually, the skyglazers carcasses were piling up and started to attract the dumas. Hence, the team moved to a farther area once more.

Several hours had passed, and only now had the group noticed this planet's time cycle was different from the Magus Academy. It had been more than twelve hours since they had arrived here, and this

planet's sun was still striking high above them. Eventually, at the eighteen hour mark, Emery and Chumo threw away their pickaxes and smiled at each other with great satisfaction.

Inside Emery's inventory, they confirmed they had eight tons of the titanium. They also had recounted the spirit stones, and the final result was they each received 150 spirit stones.

The group once more rested for another hour at the foot of the treeless hill where they had hid earlier. After resting, the group jogged back to the two erect structures, where the portal was, and got transported straight to the hub.

They had been fighting and mining for the last 24 hours, it wasn't surprising that they returned looking exhausted. Klea was asking if they could do this tomorrow instead, but when they arrived at the window counter to report to the beautiful lady taskmaster, she mentioned she could hold the item and deliver it to the person from the blacksmith institute who had made the request. However, it could take a day or a week for her to do that, since the people who were doing the delivery of items had a lot of pending requests. Regarding their reward, it would only be given once the blacksmith had confirmed the receipt.

The first magus game would be held in nine days from now. Only then did the lady behind the counter mentioned to the group that they could deliver the requested item to the person who had requested the task.

Not wanting to put this off for another day, the group unanimously agreed they'd do it and on the way, they would inquire about upgrading their equipment. Hence, the group decided to tell the lady they would deliver the mineral personally.

The taskmaster bowed and once she received confirmation that the blacksmith was willing to meet with them, she gave them the location of the meeting. The place of meeting? It was the Blacksmith Institute inside the Golden City.

Chapter 132: Master Blacksmith

Once the group arrived at the city of wonders called Golden City, Emery and his friend was filled with a sense of awe seeing the crowd of people, flying boats, as well as the countless mighty buildings that stretched to the sky.

Emery had been in this place once, and it seemed like the Zaiueo acolytes as well based on their reaction or maybe they had something similar to their world.

The last time Emery had been here, it was with the company of Master Grom, hence, he still hadn't had the chance yet to fully explore this place. In fact, when he had been walking in this strange city, he got lost and with the help of a good samaritan acolyte, he was able to get back home.

This time, the three weird acolytes led the way, they didn't go to the place where the flying boats were, rather, the Zaiueo acolytes guided them to a place where there were other people waiting on a line.

Emery and his friends noticed a large yellow carriage stopped in front of them. The people climbed up the door that hissed open, the three acolytes followed them and although hesitant, Emery and his four friends went inside after.

The inside of the yellow carriage was filled with people, sitting on both sides in groups of three each. Once they had found empty seats and sat themselves, the yellow carriage groaned as it moved forward.

It was a surreal experience, except for the acolytes from Zaieuo, Emery, Chumo, Julian, Thrax and Klea were wondering how this carriage moved without horses or anything pulling it from the front.

Zuna, sitting in the aisle chair, leaned over and explained to them that this carriage was called a bus. It drove around the city in a specific route wherein one of its stops was the Blacksmith Institute. Their destination would take a couple of minutes, so, Zuna mentioned they better enjoy themselves as well as lower their guards since this carriage was safe.

The five youths understood and did what Zuna had asked. Sitting by the window, Klea, who was beside Emery and Chumo on the aisle seat, beamed as she enjoyed the wondrous locations of the Golden City. They passed numerous locations, one of which was like a plaza where lots of people were walking around an erect smaller version of the purple building, where the Supreme Magus had first greeted them, surrounded by groomed trees with its lawn filled with cut grass. They enjoyed the rest of the ride.

After 15 minutes or so, the yellow carriage went into a tunnel and they felt themselves descended. It continued further deep down and fortunately, the area was lit by lamps or torches providing lighting inside the tunnel. Eventually, they saw the end of the tunnel. It was getting brighter and brighter with orange lights from a distance, and when they came out, a whole other city greeted them!

The sun's light didn't reach this place but the whole place was illuminated by the orange fire-like lights from the distance inside the countless buildings as well as the shining white lights coming from the rock-ceiling. This place seemed to be as huge as the city above.

Finally, the carriage stopped in front of a building that had a great signage of a hammer and anvil. The group of eight got off and there were also lots of people moving about in this place, possibly equal to the number of people above.

As they all went inside, everyone from the group started sweating. The heat in this place seemed to pass through the black uniforms they had. The whole place seemed to be made out of metal, Emery couldn't find one spot where stone was used to create this place. Finding the reception desk, the receptionist gestured to the left where the person they were looking for was stationed.

It looked like they had arrived in the right place since the searing sensation seemed to permeate even stronger to their skin and the bashing of a hammer against the anvil reverberated to their bones. There they found a workshop full of humans, some dwarves, and when they asked for the person, they were guided to the Master Blacksmith named Tahoggum Oreheart.

"You lot from the hub, aren't you? Aye've been expecting you acolytes. Come 'ere, let me see it," gestured the small man at the desk, which was a bit lower than him. This dwarf was about the same height as Master Grom but with his beard was shorter. In fact, some parts of Master Tahoggum's beard seemed to have been burnt.

Emery stepped forward first and took out the silvery metal from, which still had some black rocks around it. The rest followed suit.

Master Tahoggum grunted. He took out a hammer and smashed the mineral Emery and his friends had presented! At first they thought he was ill-tempered, what kind of a person would smash something out of the blue, especially something that they had worked on for almost a full day. But then, they witnessed why the dwarf had done that. The remaining bits of the black rock still attached to the silvery substance of titanium all crumbled and became dust, the only thing left was the mineral titanium itself.

The dwarf scooped it with his rough and burnt-looking hand into a container and placed it on a scale that had numbers on it. "Let me see... Ahh... yes... One, two, eight tons of titanium as requested. And most of them are high quality too! Good, good!"

Not far from them was a flying cube. The dwarf raised his hand and pressed it. Suddenly, the symbol on everyone's hand issued a notification.

[200 contribution points have been received from the task "Gathering Minerals"]

[Task completed]

"Thank you," said Emery with a respectful bow. They were about to leave so that they could rest their weary bones and come back here tomorrow to build a relationship with the dwarf, however, the dwarf seemed not keen on letting them leave simply for he offered the same task.

This time, they would gather twice the amount of what they had gathered for a bit higher reward of contribution points. Master Tahoggum mentioned he was extremely pleased about the quality they had given him and didn't have a problem providing more contribution points as compensation.

[Gathering mineral]

[Contribution point 500]

All of them looked at each other, hesitant. Aside from wanting to rest and the reasoning of them taking this in the first place was to test their synergy within themselves for the upcoming Magus Games, they were about to reject the offer. However, the dwarf sweetened the deal by offering them a tier 2 weapon of their choice as a bonus and giving it in advance.

Now, it had become more favorable; it was an interesting offer into which they finally agreed to accept. The time limit would be for three days. Since they were confident with Emery's gathering speed and would be better prepared once they returned, they weren't worried too much if they rested and burned half a day or so.

The dwarf then led the eight acolytes into another room where there were thousands of weapons and armors placed on racks.

Emery grabbed the nearest sword from a rack that had a label of tier 2 and inspected it.

[Long sword - tier 2]

[Length 1.2 meter , weight 1.3 kilogram]

[Increase sharpness]

The description somewhat made Emery confused. Increased sharpness? To make sure he wasn't seeing things, he grabbed another and read it.

[Broad sword - tier 2]

[Length 1.1 meter, weight 2.4 kilogram]

[Increase strength]

From this, he inferred that all tier 2 weapons had some kind of spell that made the weapon or wielder receive a little increase in their abilities.

This made Emery remember the old knight for some reason. Shaking his thoughts away from that man, Emery then tried out the swords, which he felt would be suitable for him. He was looking for a sword that wasn't too long nor too heavy.

There seemed to be at least a hundred of these swords upon his estimate, and for him, these swords were like gems in his eyes, but apparently, after Master Tahoggum's explanation, these swords were still considered common weapons in the world of a magus.

Finally, after trying out the tenth sword, Emery figured this sword was the right for him. It was the right size, the right grip and most importantly, the description had the other thing he was looking for.

[Long sword - tier 2]

[Length 1 meter, weight 1.2 kilogram]

[Increase speed]

Based on Emery's experiences, speed was the most important factor in any battle. It didn't matter how strong you were because as long as you couldn't deliver a fatal blow to the enemy by out maneuvering them you wouldn't win. Hence, the speed trait was both useful for attack and defense. And in case of an unwinnable fight, running away was an option. Better to live the next day and fight again than die there.

Emery couldn't wait to test the buff it had as he put the sword inside his ring. The others seemed to have been finished with choosing as well: Julian chose a heavy short sword, Thrax wielded a spear, Chumo grabbed a bow and set of quiver and Klea held a staff. That wasn't surprising since there were probably not many women who would like to see blood being splattered beside them or their clothes or faces.

After taking the weapons, the group decided to take a half day break to rest before meeting up at stone platform again.

But when they were about to get on the yellow carriage, Emery mentioned he wished to drop by the Apotechary Institute. Klea asked if she could come with him, but Emery explained not anyone could just go inside the institute.

Once the yellow carriage had left, Emery actually decided to return to the blacksmith. He wished to ask about his tier 3 dagger. He had done this because he wanted the dagger to be his hidden weapon in case of an emergency. Emery felt a little bad to do it behind his friends' back.

Chapter 133: Magic Artifact

Emery went back to the sweltering workshop of Master Tahoggum. He found the small, stocky dwarf sitting on the corner, checking out the titanium he and his friends had brought. As Emery walked up to the dwarf, the man seemed to have noticed his presence for the dwarf looked up and said, "You're back! Did you forget something?"

"Yes, Master Tahoggum," answered Emery with a nod, "I would like to ask if you can appraise an item for me."

Master Tahoggum played with his burnt beard after Emery had laid down the tier 3 obsidian dagger he had taken from Granny on the table.

[Moon Dagger - Tier 3 Artifact]

[Weight: 0.9 kilogram, Length: 35 centimeter]

[Spell unavailable - bound to owner]

The dwarf took the dagger with his rugged hand, full of burnt marks. He summoned a floating cube and the cube shot out a ray of light, scanning every nook and cranny of the obsidian dagger. Once the cube had finished, Master Tahoggum squinted his left eye, which seemed to magnify it through the glass, while he twisted and turned the dagger.

After a few moments, the dwarf laid it back down, stared at Emery and said, "Did you find or steal this artifact?"

Inwardly, Emery didn't like the sudden accusation. However, outwardly, he kept his face straight and answered, "Does it matter?"

Master Tahoggum was silent before suddenly bursting into a laugh. "Hahaha! Not really, you're right, it doesn't matter at all! Welp, I had a feeling you were from a lower realm, and this item confirmed it. Don't worry, I can explain and tell you more about this stuff."

No longer looking at the dagger made from obsidian, the dwarf heartily said, "This item here is a tier 3 weapon, which I believe you already know about. But the interesting part here is this is a magic artifact. No doubt you want to ask what the spell is for and what bound to owner means. The bound to owner means the magic inside it is connected by blood with its master, like the storage ring you have right there" — pointed the dwarf to the ring Emery was wearing — "well, for us to be able to see what the spell is inside, we either need to have its current master give up ownership willingly else you'd have to wait until its master is dead."

"Is there any way we can take off the ownership aside from those two methods?" asked Emery, looking at the obsidian dagger remembering Granny, its master.

"Yes, there is. You will need a powerful unlocking formation spell and as well as potions. The higher the artifact tier, the more powerful the spells and potion required. You'll need to see a magus from the Formation Institute to break the spell binding it to its master and protecting its blood, then an alchemist from the Apothecary Institute to cleanse the blood of its master. Both are available here in the golden city with a cost of course," answered Master Tahoggum.

"How much does it roughly cost?" asked Emery, touching his ring to check how many spirit stones he had.

"For tier 3 artifact like this, I reckon a hundred to two hundred spirit stones," said the dwarf.

Emery felt wanting to punch the air in joy, as long as the price wasn't over 165 spirit stones, the total number of stones he and others had received each in collecting from the skyglazers, he would be able to rid that cursed woman of a weapon that had almost taken his life. That was though until he heard the next sentence from the small, stocky dwarf.

"Ah, not the white one though. The yellow spirit stones. If you only have white spirit stones, it'd be around 10,000 – 20,000," said Master Tahoggum, stroking his short burnt beard.

Emery was dumbstruck. All the fighting he had done with the others spanned for almost 24 hours. They had eliminated about more than a thousand skyglazers and the eight of them had received 165 stones each, which was 1,320 white spirit stones. That wasn't even near the minimum of 10,000 white spirit stones. Emery then calculated the number of days he would need to reach the maximum 20,000 white spirit stones. That was about 15 days of nonstop fighting against those skyglazers! And that was assuming he would receive all of it. Of course the spirit stones would have to be distributed to everyone, and if that was the case, it would take him, Emery, about 120 days or 4 months just to get it unbounded from Granny! He didn't have the time to do that!

"Hahaha! Good news though, is at least you'll still be able to use the dagger's raw power. Tier 3 weapons are stronger than the tier 2 long sword you received. If you want, we can do a trade, instead. I'll take that off of you, and I'll show you some of the tier 3 weapons in exchange for that. Of course, it'll be up to me if I think it's a fair trade. I'll have to unbound it before I can resell it," said Master Tahoggum.

The dwarf then offered Emery to check out his wares. But first, Master Tahoggum, stored the titanium on his storage ring with a hum, before leading Emery to another room, which seemed to be as expansive as the room with tier 2 weapons.

Emery checked the prices of the weapons and he was shocked to see that the simplest looking dagger already had a price of 10,000! He checked the other weapons and found nothing lower than that and the highest seemed to be about 30,000 white spirit stones.

From this, the cost of taking over Granny's moon dagger was almost the same as buying a new tier 3 artifact. Interestingly enough though, the properties or spells of these weapons were pretty much the same as the tier 2 weapons. Increased speed, sharpness, etc. So, this had gotten him thinking, maybe it would be worth it to have this dagger unbounded in the future. He had almost died from this dagger after all. For now though, he decided to use the dagger in case of emergency, maybe in his three months here, he would have the necessary knowledge about the potion needed to dilute the blood and the formation to break the protection of the weapon. He would have to go to the Formation Institute anyway, remembering Killgragah's request.

After having his fill of browsing the blacksmith's stock of tier 3 weapons, Emery gave his gratitude to the blacksmith and left.

Seeing all those wondrous craftsmanship and his natural curiosity in working with his hands and crafting; for a moment, Emery thought about joining the Blacksmith Institute, but then again, he had too much on his plate at the moment to think about. Maybe next time, he thought.

Emery stood at the spot where he had gotten off the carriage with the others. He checked the list of destinations pasted on the side of the waiting spot and found that the Apothecary Institute was one of the yellow carriage's destinations. As soon as the yellow carriage arrived, he went inside, and took one of the empty seats.

He sat beside the window and the carriage went through the tunnel they had first come from. Sitting inside the carriage, he watched with curiosity all the places the yellow carriage passed through. Definitely, this Golden City was a hundred times bigger than Venta City or even Lionarch. He also observed that most people on the street were humans, like him. Although not everyone had the uniform of the academy's acolytes. Only then did it dawn on him that he probably had just seen not even a fraction of what this city had to offer.

As he gazed at them, including the people coming in and out of the carriage, unconsciously, Emery became wary of his surroundings. The feeling of wonder and curiosity seemed to have been changed with skepticism and reasoning lately. And even as he got off in front of the massive building Apothecary Institute, which had countless floating boats entering and exiting from above as well as people moving at a brisk pace on the ground, he couldn't help but feel this way now that he was alone again.

Emery then began to wonder if his experiences the year before had changed something inside him or was this a part of becoming an adult.

Chapter 134: Apothecary

Emery got off the carriage and stretched his neck in an attempt to see the top of the three majestic buildings of the Apothecary Institute. The two buildings on the front were for the artisans and masters alike while the apprentice level had its own building behind the two.

Once he was inside, Emery walked up to a dwarf sitting behind a large table that had the signage receptionist on it. He then laid down the emblem, which had a triangular container and a number one on it, to the dwarf, and explained to the receptionist if he could see Master Grom.

The badge was enough to show Emery's association with the Apothecary Institute, but the dwarf didn't seem impressed as he unflinchingly told Emery the highly-respected apothecary alchemist was preoccupied at the moment. The dwarf also mentioned Master Grom had a busy schedule and if Emery wanted to meet with the master, he would have to make an appointment.

This made Emery frown. Based on how this receptionist had treated him, this dwarf sounded as if he was trying to shoo Emery away. Was it because he was a rank 1 apprentice, hence, this dwarf had taken it upon himself to block such meeting requests? Should he mention Magus Minerva's name? Emery remembered that the alchemist dwarf seemed to have fancied her... Thinking about it though, no that probably wasn't a good idea.

Magus Minerva seemed to be distant and quite different from how she had first introduced herself. Remembering Emery still had another person he could try to ask for help, he asked the dwarf receptionist if Cedric, his senior apprentice in alchemy, was still here.

The dwarf receptionist had a grumpy look at him as he pressed something and the floating cube appeared. He ran his finger down with what seemed to be a list. Once he had clicked on something, the dwarf turned his attention back to Emery and mentioned that Cedric was in the practice room on the fifth floor.

Emery still gave a respectful bow to the dwarf and proceeded to enter one of those doors that opened and closed on its own as well as go up and down after pressing which level he wanted to go to.

Ding! As Emery watched the door hissed open, he grabbed the edges of the door, feeling a bit lightheaded just like how the first time he had ridden this thing. It was only for a moment though for he got his bearings back already. He found Cedric among the many apprentices working on their concoctions.

Walking in the middle of the room, various kinds of scent, bitter, sweet, salty as well as a multitude of other things wafted into his nose as he made his way to the other side of the room where Cedric was stationed.

When he neared, Cedric noticed Emery's presence and appeared a bit shocked, evident by his furrowed brows before saying, "You... Your name was... Emery... wasn't it? I'm surprised to see you're alive and still in the academy."

Ignoring Cedric's remark, which sounded a bit offensive, Emery said, "Why is that?" with the intent of gathering as much information as possible.

"Well... if I recall correctly, you have a spirit aptitude of B with a quadruple element. That should've meant barely passing the required acolyte rank for your first time here. And as for returning, only those who have reached rank 5 are allowed back here. You must've worked extremely hard for them to consider your return since as far as I know, no one with that spirit aptitude, even less with your four elements, passed the threshold of returning back. In addition, I believe you're from a low world, aren't you?" Cedric said, laying down the potion he had been holding before looking at Emery with inquisitive eyes and adding, "I wonder what kind of secrets you have."

With just this single meeting, Cedric had deduced a lot. Truly, he was the smartest person Emery had known in this place. Nevertheless, Emery had no intention of confirming or sharing his experiences, unless forced to.

Emery answered with the most casual tone he could muster, "No secrets. Just fortunate, I'd dare say,"

"Fortune has favored you, huh. I wonder what kind of fortune have you received? Hahaha. So, what do you need, Emery?" Cedric said, gesturing to Emery to take the other open seat.

Emery took the seat and said, "I returned here the other day. We were told about the upcoming Magus Games in nine days. I'd like to know if you have any pointers or something you or the institute can help me with to win the games?"

"I see..." said Cedric, thinking. "I may have something. However, what is in it for me then?"

Last year, Emery had caught Cedric in a ploy to scam him. Fortunately this time, Cedric was being more straightforward and somewhat Emery appreciated this. Still, Emery decided to do something similar just

to test the waters. He said "Well, aside from having my gratitude, you'll be known as a caring senior to his young junior."

Cedric snorted as he said, "Huh! I don't need gratitude."

Emery was half-expecting that. However, this seemed to have some effect on Cedric for he stared at Emery with great curiosity showing in his eyes. Cedric said, "Having said that though... ooh boy, Emery. I think there's something about you that's making me want to befriend you. For now, let's just say I want your fortune to rub on me."

Cedric smiled. He then started giving Emery some pointers but not about the Magus Games, rather how to get the help of the Apothecary Institute. Cedric mentioned that right now, Emery was still a rank 1 apprentice and hadn't contributed or shown any talent within the institute. That meant in the eyes of the institute, he was a nobody and not worth helping. This would be the case until he proved himself by increasing his rank or made an extraordinary achievement, which would give him more access to the institute's resources or help from the institute.

According to Cedric, the only way to increase the ranking was through the Apothecary exam, which was held only once a month. Unfortunately, the next one would be in three weeks. Cedric himself was an apprentice rank 4 and was preparing for his advancement exam to become rank 5, which would give him the artisan rank.

Since Emery wouldn't be able to do that, Cedric suggested that Emery practice making potions and see if he could make an original new potion. He would receive reward from the institute contribution point or spirit stone alike.

Emery then thought about the cleansing potion, healing and strength paste he had made in his world. He had them on the three items in his storage ring. Somehow, he hoped the healing paste would still be registered even though there was little left of it after he had used it on Morgana's wound. Emery took out the cleansing potion, what remained of the healing paste and placed one strength paste, placed it on the table and said to Cedric, "Let's try that then."

"Oh, you have some you want the institute to check? Alright, I also want to see what it is that you have made." Cedric then took him to the second floor, which didn't have any kind of scent like in the practice room.

Emery was getting a bit used to using the room, which moved up and down since he no longer felt as lightheaded as earlier. He then saw five big white stone panels including what appeared to be large diamond-like objects floating on top of it.

Behind the panels, which acted like a counter, there were a mix of humans and dwarfs, sitting and in front were a few other apprentices waiting in line, holding containers with varied colors.

Once it was their turn to present Emery's healing and strength paste, Cedric said, "Okay, place your prized potion here to be analyzed. Who knows, maybe a person from a lower realm will receive the highest authentication level and receive crazy amounts of contribution points as a reward! Haha.

Chapter 135: Recipes

Emery had received a contribution point of 200 from Master Tahoggum from the exhaustive hard work of gathering minerals he had done with his friends and the three weirdos, which took almost 24 hours. In addition to the 2,510 contribution points he had accumulated back in his home world, from his understanding, such an amount could be considered high; still, he was willing to increase that amount just to give himself additional leverage from those who were on top of the acolyte rankings.

Currently, he had four original recipes. With his current knowledge, he believed they were all in their maximum potential, hence, he was expectant and curious as to how this analyzing machine worked and how many points would he get.

He first laid down the healing paste, the one could be used to heal open wounds at a faster rate, on the white stone panel. Waiting for a few seconds, the floating crystal-like thing hovered above Emery's healing paste, shot out a ray of light, scanning every nook and cranny of the item, just like how Master Tahoggum floating cube had done.

After the crystal finished its scan, it hovered in front of Emery and showed a projection of the healing paste's properties. The symbol on his hand also glowed for a moment and he read:

[Healing paste]

[Maximum Effects - tier 1]

[Originality - rank 1]

[Do you want to share the recipe to the Apothecary Institute's database for 50 contribution points?]

Emery was quite shocked to see the number of points it gave. He took back the healing paste and said, "Wow, the recipe is worth only 50 points?"

Cedric, standing on the side with his arms crossed, said, "It's good that you even received points at all. In fact, most tier 1 recipes, especially items that only cures outside wounds won't even get 10 contribution points. I believe you receive extra point because of the originality, the simplicity of the process needed or the ingredient"

Emery issued a hum as he placed the next item, which was also green in color, to be analyzed on the white stone panel. After the crystal thing did its job, it gave Emery the next result, which read:

[Stamina potion]

[Maximum Effects - tier 1]

[Originality - rank 0]

[Do you want to share the recipe to the Apothecary Institute's database for 1 contribution points?]

"See, told you. Tier 1 recipes only garner a miniscule amount of contribution points. Such as this one, only one contribution points," remarked Cedric on the side, looking a bit smug.

Seeing the points the analyzing machine had given his stamina potion, Emery wasn't that surprised considering he had consumed it himself. The effect of this potion on him hadn't been groundbreaking or beneficial to the extent where it gave him an actual advantage. Hence, he had come to the conclusion

that the stamina potion would most only be useful for ordinary people, those who were not a magus or an acolyte, as for those who were, they would find its usefulness value little to none.

The third one, Emery placed the strength paste, which had content. This paste would be red at first usage but as more one spread it, the enhanced parts would eventually become blue.

[Strength paste]

[Maximum Effects - tier 1]

[Originality - rank 2]

[Do you want to share the recipe to the Apothecary Institute's database for 150 contribution points?]

One hundred and fifty contribution points this time. Three times the amount of his healing paste. Cedric didn't say anything. Emery tried to get a glance of Cedric's expression on the corner of his eyes, and when Emery saw it, it was just a plain straight face.

Emery figured this was a bit satisfactory, considering the strength paste had helped him in certain situations.

Lastly, he shared the blue potion called the cleansing potion.

[Cleansing Potion]

[Maximum Effects - rank 2]

[Originality - rank 2]

[Do you want to share the recipe to the Apothecary Institute's database for 200 contribution points?]

The cleansing was equivalent to the gathering of mineral work he had done for the blacksmith.

Emery turned to Cedric while letting the notification of acceptance await his decision. He said, "So senior, should I share all these recipes?"

Truth be told, Emery was actually quite reluctant to share the recipes. For him, these amounts were too little, remembering how much work and hours he had put in to create these recipes back in Mistshire.

Cedric was silent for a while. He cleared his throat, regaining his composure, and then said, "Hmm, honestly for the last two items, I am quite amazed you managed to get rank 2 originality even for a tier 1 recipe. As you can see, those are worth more and the institute has offered you more points. I guess the main ingredient you used for these recipes are very hard to find or limited in your world, isn't it? Anyway, yes, go ahead and share them. In fact, you can also sell those too, I think. Even though there are just too many recipes that can give the same result and properties of your 'original' recipes, you can actually sell them."

There was no reason for Cedric to lie about this, Emery figured. Hence, albeit still hesitant, Emery decided to share his recipes with the institute since he needed all the points he could get his hands on. The next he did was to check how much he can sell the item for.

The crystal shone and sent him the following information:

[Stamina potion - no value]

[Healing paste - 10 white spirit stones]

[Strength paste - 200 white spirit stones]

[Cleansing potion - 100 white spirit stones]

Seeing the numbers, Cedric commented, "Hmm, not bad. The price of similar items in the market are two to three times that, Anyway though, let me tell you, it's a lot of work and hassle to try selling it yourself. You'll never know when it'll be bought."

Emery, on the other hand, was speechless. He was trying his best to keep himself from shouting because his strength paste was worth two-hundred white spirit stones! That meant by just selling five of them, he could get a tier two weapon or armor!

He checked his storage ring, right now, he had about a dozen or so of that strength paste. Of course he would have to save at least five of them for him and his friends. So, he still had some spare, which he could sell. Also, he had a considerable amount of blue powder left and ingredients from which the strength paste was made from. Another option was that he could look up the ingredients with similar properties with the one he had used to make the strength paste and could make or experiment with some time later.

At the moment, white spirit stones weren't much use, but he could use them to buy items which should be more useful for his current situation. Inwardly, he smiled at this information as it gave him more reason to create better potions and bring a lot more... but then he thought of something. Although he couldn't bring the storage ring and the items here back to his world, what about bringing a whole cart of the same stuff or even better concoctions on his third return here, could he do that?

Thoughts of getting more spirit stones was filling his mind. But, calm down, Emery. He was getting too excited. Calming down, he checked out the list of items available for sale, which one of the receptionists on this second floor, showed him.

There were three items he was interested in, so he asked. The first was about the potion for his dagger, which was called the artifact absolve potion. It could remove the blood of Granny on the moon dagger, but cost 1,000 spirit stones but such potion needed to be used together with the formation spells. So, Cedric told him to better check a formation expert to be sure.

The second was about the information he heard that spirit stone could be consumed but somehow it needed to be processed first. Apparently, it was common practice for low-level apprentices to do that. The process, however, wasn't going to increase the potency of the spirit stone itself, but it would be easier to consume and faster to absorb.

"But Emery, do you have that many spirit stones laying around? Normally, it should take like a thousand or two of processed white spirit stones only to increase one spirit force," said Cedric.

"No, I don't have it," Emery quickly responded.

Lastly, Emery told him about the level 5 creature called Duma on the savage planet he would be returning to and its abilities. Emery wondered if there was an alchemy solution for it. Cedric hadn't heard or seen such creatures yet, but told Emery some ideas as to what kind of potions might work.

"Well that's part of being an apothecary practitioner, Emery. You need to do some experimentation," Cedric said.

Emery didn't realize he had spent two hours already with this senior of his. He was about to leave but then he realized his question about the Magus Game hadn't been answered yet. "Senior, thank you for the guidance. But if you have any tips about the upcoming game, it'll be really helpful for me."

Cedric's expression suddenly darkened. He said, "You know... you probably shouldn't worry too much about it. The games are rigged from the start."

Chapter 136: Backed Out

"Rigged? What do you mean?" Emery asked Cedric after the confusing advice Cedric had given.

Cedric suddenly looked like he had said something he wasn't supposed to. After he looked at his surroundings and made sure no one could hear them, he leaned closer to Emery and whispered, "You'll understand what I mean later, Emery. If you're observant, I'm pretty sure you have already noticed some stuff by how the advising magus treats your class. People like you and me, or probably even your friends, have no place to be the academy's elite. Just be grateful you've been selected to attend the Magus Academy for the second time."

Indeed, Emery had noticed some change of attitude after his return, like Magus Minerva for example. She seemed to have become distant all of a sudden. "Please tell me more, senior," Emery said.

Cedric drew back to his spot and said with crossed arms, "It's really not my place to say what you should or shouldn't do. But what I can say is that I was in your position before, and my advice is to evaluate yourself, know your limits, think about what your goals are and what's best for you or your world."

Cedric was becoming more and more mysterious in regards to his explanation. Instead of answering questions, this actually raised more questions in Emery's mind. Emery tried to get this cunning Cedric for more information. However, Cedric raised his palm to stop Emery from asking further and decided to give some excuses such as he needed to get back to work on his upcoming examination and he would help on some other day instead. Emery considered his excuse, after all the man had already helped him a lot today. So, Emery once more gave a respectful bow, as he didn't feel to push more the issue.

Emery and Cedric parted ways in front of the moving door inside the Apothecary Institute. Emery took the door going down, while Cedric took the door going up.

Once Emery was alone, a budding sense of exhaustion was springing up inside him. On top of the 24 hours he had done with the others and the few hours spent with Cedric, Emery hadn't had any good rest yet. Hence, he decided to go back to his personal residence.

Taking a carriage first, then a couple of portal trips, he arrived at his home with the attendant floating cube greeting him. It asked Emery if he wanted any services, Emery mentioned to the attendant to wake him up in a few hours. All he wanted to do now was to sink into his soft crisp bed that overlooked the magnificent view of the amazing stretch of mountain and waterfalls by the window.

As he lay on it and stared at the view, Cedric's advice, which sounded more like a warning, kept echoing in his mind, making him wonder what was it that wasn't Cedric's place to say. The thought only disappeared when his eyelids became as heavy as a log and he fell into the darkness called sleep.

A few hours later...

The floating attendant cube came into Emery's room and woke him up with a horn-like sound. Emery jolted awake and readied his stance. Seeing that he was still in his room, he lowered his guard and mentioned to the floating attendant cube to never use that sound again.

He looked up at the time, there was still an hour before their designated meet up. After refreshing himself with a meal and washing himself, he still had thirty minutes before the meeting, but decided to head out already.

Emery arrived fifteen minutes earlier at the plaza, and to his surprise, everyone was actually already there. However, the situation didn't look good since his four friends looked to be quite upset at the three acolytes from Zaiueo.

"What's going on?" Emery asked, walking up to Klea who didn't seem too keen to answer. If Emery remembered correctly, that was the first time Klea had ignored him, the situation seemed to be dire for her to behave like this.

Emery looked at Julian and Thrax, whose face was becoming redder and redder by the second, seemingly arguing with Zuna. He then turned his attention and walked over to Chumo who was standing not far from them.

Since Klea didn't seem to be looking at them, Chumo was able to speak and explain what was happening. "They've decided not to join us. The three Zaiueo said they've already joined another group."

"What? Why?" Emery asked in surprise, trying to think why they had backed out since he had thought their collaboration had gone well.

"We are sorry, we think it's best to join another group instead of yours" said Zuna, the one in the middle.

Thrax raised his voice so much that the passerby was staring at them. The vein on his head looked as if it would pop out any moment as he said, "Who was it that said before that we are destined, huh!"

Zuna remained expressionless not minding Thrax's loudness. However, he bent his back with apology.

Klea finally moved forward and said, "I thought we made a pretty good team, and we still have a task together. Please reconsider."

Zuna, whose back was already straightened, answered, "I am sorry, but it is final. We will still do 'our' task, don't worry. However, we have chosen a different planet, so we won't bother you."

In contrast to Thrax, Julian remained calm and collected, but he was tapping his finger as he asked, "Can you at least tell us the reason or which team you are joining with?"

Before any of the three Zaiueo was able to answer, an arrogant voice from behind them said, "They're are joining our team."

Emery and his friends turned around to see a group of acolytes heading toward them. The voice belonged to the prick named Rowe, he was with his fellow acolytes from Kalios. Seeing this group of people, Emery began to wonder why the three acolytes from Zauieo, whom they had thought had hated this bunch, would join them? Was this related to what Cedric had mentioned?

"What the fuck is going on here!" Thrax demanded.

Rowe returned Thrax's rage with a smug face. He said, "Hahaha! I can explain, however, I don't think your lower realm brain, which is comparable to a shit, can understand."

"You damned prick! You're doing this to mess with us, aren't you!" Thrax roared, summoning his spear, ready to fight.

Zuna stepped in between them and said, "There's no need for a fight. We just thought we could get better results by joining them, that's all."

Thrax lashed on Zila by saying, "That would mean that you think that we're weak, aren't you?"

Rowe burst out laughing even harder. He mocked Thrax and said, "That's exactly what he means! Hahaha!"

Thrax, no longer taking any of this, stomped the ground with his tier two spear. He pointed it to Rose and said, "You Kalios shit! Let's see who is weak right here, right now! Come and fight me! We're not the same as last year. Fight me if you dare, you scum!"

Klea was about to step forward, looking to stop this farce, but Emery grabbed her by the arm and shook his head. He whispered to her, "Let it happen, Klea. This is a chance to see how strong they are before the Magus Games start. Also, I'm sure they wouldn't dare kill Thrax, it's against the academy's rule."

This seemed to have convinced Klea. Although she was still hesitant, she did as Emery asked and backed down. Meanwhile, Thrax waved his tier two spear and readied his stance. There were a lot of onlookers now and it looked like it wasn't just Emery who had the same idea of wanting to see how strong these people from Kalios indeed were.

Thrax gritted his teeth. He began by using his [fire infusion] spell, lighting up the whole spear into flames. Roaring, he ran at his full speed and delivered his most powerful blow as he shouted, "Take this!"

Rowe didn't move at all, he stood his ground with a smug face and took the full power of Thrax's thrust. A loud clunk resounded the whole area! Thrax's spear hit Rowe squarely on the middle of the chest, making the acolyte from Kalios take back three steps. However, the arrogant young man wasn't injured.

Thrax looked as if he couldn't believe that his strongest move hadn't made a dent on Rowe's body. Emery noticed that Thrax's hand was trembling a bit. He guessed this was due to the rebound of Thrax's attack.

Rowe dusted off his uniform. With a smirk on his face, he said, "Oh don't look so shocked, wormbrain. In fact, be proud since your attack was stronger than I thought. You are probably the strongest worm I've ever seen. Hahaha! Anyoneelse wants to try?"

Chapter 137: Pledge

Emery, his friends, including some onlookers were shocked to see Thrax's fire infused spear thrust not even make a small dent on Rowe's black uniform.

Thrax, still holding the tier two spear, trembled in anger as he once more rushed the arrogant young man from Kalios.

Contrary to Rowe's earlier action, he took out a round shield and met Thrax's once more fire infused spear! Clank! Clank! The two thrusts were ineffective, Rowe stood still, not even moving from his spot! Thrax gritted his teeth, he continued on with his relentless thrusts until he gathered all his weight, spun and swung spear. A deafening clash of shield against spear resounded as a wave of air blew onto the onlookers faces.

The dust settled, Thrax was gasping for air, but, as he looked up, Rowe was still standing on his feet, five paces away from his previous unmoveable position, showing an ugly expression as if he had stepped on dung.

Thrax, seeing his attack had somewhat rattled the young man, breathed in and charged the young man once more.

Rowe then took out a pitch-black one handed hammer. He placed the shield in front and once Thrax's spear met the shield, Rowe waved his shield to the ground, along with the spear, and smashed Thrax's spear. Everyone saw the spear issued a violent vibration as a wave threw back Thrax ten paces.

Thrax had to release his spear. He grabbed his purplish spear-arm and when he looked back at his spear on the ground, his eyes widened in disbelief for his tier two spear had been bent at a weird angle.

"That's enough!" said Rowe with a commanding tone. He leaned his pitch-black hammer on his shoulder and kicked the tier two spear to Thrax. "You cannot defeat me, wormbrain."

Thrax didn't answer, he picked up the spear with his other hand since his spear-arm seemed to be trembling so hard that it had gone numb.

Rowe then pointed the hammer to Julian and said, "Do you want to try too?"

Emery could see Julian's eyes were raging inside. He looked to be raring for a fight too, however, Julian kept silent. Emery figured Julian wouldn't fight since Julian knew it would be in vain. Julian was already at a disadvantage against Thrax in terms of physical combat, but that wasn't the only reason. The most evident reason why Julian hadn't been willing to fight this arrogant, young prick was due to the insurmountable gap between their equipment.

First, Rowe had met a full-on attack from Thrax with no visible shield or weapon on hand. That meant that Rowe most likely had an armor equipped beneath his uniform. It should be at least tier two from the look of it, while Emery and his friends all had a single piece of tier two equipment. Such advantages meant it was futile to fight against this acolyte named Rowe.

Not receiving any responses from Julian, Rowe pulled back his pitch-black hammer once more and faced Klea. He gave her a smile and said, "What about you, pretty lady? Do you want to spar?"

Everyone's eyes landed on Klea. She looked reluctant at first but went ahead anyway, replacing Thrax who had returned to Emery, Chumo and Julian with no spear on hand.

Klea stood before Rowe about ten paces away. She raised her palm and sharp crackling emerged along with lightning sparks, which seemed to be wanting to be released.

It looked like she had been expecting Rowe to fight her, however, Rowe's shield and pitch-black hammer disappeared as he said, "Wait, I'm not going to be your opponent." He beckoned for a guy with short white hair and added, "This is your opponent. Let's see who is better amongst the two of you."

The white-haired guy got into a stance and readied the same spell as Klea. The lightning sparks on his hand looked wilder as if it was begging to be set free.

"Are the two of you ready? Excellent. Begin", said Rowe, looking at Klea with great interest.

[Lightning Bolt, Tier 3 Lightning Spell]

Klea and the guy with white hair waved their hands at the same time and the blue-purplish lightnings escaped their cages meeting in the middle with a thundering crash like two beasts devouring each other! The power of the two lightning spells made all the onlookers' skins tingle as if hundreds of ants were crawling on it.

Both spells of Klea and the guy with white hair seemed equal for a moment, until the lightning from Klea's palm thinned and the guy with white hair became thicker, dispelling hers as it headed toward her! The lightning's tip was only two paces away when Julian had managed to dash in time and block it with his tier two shield.

The shield seemed to be made out of metal, and once Julian saw it creeping, Julian immediately casted [Stone Skin] and roared as he pushed the lightning away up the sky before striking the shield on ground, dispersing whatever of it remained on his body and shield in ripples.

Julian got on one knee. Klea hurried to him and checked if he was injured. Fortunately, it didn't look too bad save for the burnt arm, which held the shield. With that, it was cemented Klea's tier three spell was inferior to the guy with white hair.

Rowe clapped twice and said with a smile, "Like I have mentioned, beautiful lady. You are wasting your time with these losers. Let me introduce you to one you fought. His name is Varo, a friend we've recruited from a lower realm world, just like yours. Currently, he is our weakest member by having only a single affinity, which is lightning of course, an A spirit aptitude of rank. He was weaker than you beautiful lady. However, with our guidance, he was able to surpass your talent. What a shame."

Emery and the others were shocked hearing such a statement. If it was indeed true, being friends with them had a lot of benefits. In fact, last year, Klea had been the pride of the class due to her three elemental affinity on top of being one of the few people with rank S spirit aptitude. Now, a person of the same class they never met or heard about, who was coming from a lower realm world like them, was stronger than Klea. They just couldn't believe it.

"So, beauty," said Rowe, looking at Klea from top to bottom. "What do you say in joining us? My offer is only for you and you alone now. If you join us, like my friend Varo here, you'll be able to maximise your potential."

Klea didn't say anything. She was still checking Julian's burnt arm and after she doused it with water, she stood up, looked at Rowe, and said with a tone full of resolve: "No, my decision still stands. I want to be with my friends."

Rowe became disgruntled, he stomped the ground and shouted, "I know you've been invited to join the elite class! I really don't understand why you are wasting your time with these people!" — he turned to Julian, Chumo, Thrax and Emery — "The four of you! You should know that you are all dragging her down!"

Emery looked at Klea, wondering what Rowe meant by elite class. But, before he was able to ask, Rowe immediately said: "Fine! If that's what you want, here's my new proposal. The four of you listen to what I say! We, from Kalios, value her so much that I, personally, will offer the same privilege to you four. Give my offer a thought. We'll give you enough resources to push your spirit force to the next level and even provide you with tier three equipment."

Rowe then threw his pitch-black hammer with a loud thud before them. "Here, take this. It's a tier three hammer, consider it as my good will. If you join us, I assure you, you can have other tier three weapons like swords, shields or spears. On top of that, I'll also give you a tier two protective artifact like the one I am wearing right now. In return, we want you to pledge yourselves to our Kalios Faction".

The act of casually throwing the tier three artifact really show how resourceful they are.

"Lastly, don't even think about participating in the Magus Games. With your current condition, you won't even stand a chance to win. Almost everyone there will be rank 6 acolytes and the equipment will be tier 3 for weapons and tier 2 for protective gears. As you all have witnessed the power of these items, you won't make it without our help", declared Rowe as he turned away.

Now, Emery understood why the three Zaiueons had decided to team up with them. This was also what Cedric probably meant by saying that the Magus Games were rigged. 'People like you and me, or probably even your friends, have no place to be the academy's elite', those words kept repeating in Emery's mind. In other words, those who had come from a lower realm like them wouldn't be able to win against those from the higher realms due to a lack of support.

Emery gazed at his friends. He could tell everyone was actually considering the offer.

Chapter 138: Our Answer

All four of Emery's friends, including him, stared at the pitch-black hammer that had bent Thrax's tier two spear. The prospect of receiving a weapon that was on par with this hammer and tier two protective artifacts, which rendered Thrax's attack useless, surely sounded enticing. It was akin to buying a horse, but receiving a palace instead. However, offers like that were too good to be true, hence they were suspicious at the same time. Pledging themselves to the Kalios Faction? What did that entail from them?

Emery could see some of his friends, as well as the onlookers, were considering the offer. He was sure that, if the onlookers were given the chance, they would jump at the opportunity. On the contrary, Emery was self-assured that he wouldn't accept such offers.

First reason, he already had a tier three weapon, Granny's Moon Dagger, he would have the Apothecary Institute help once he received higher ranking of course. Moreover, his main advantage was Killgragah, who was waiting for him back in rock formation.

Eventually, he believed, he would have the items being offered by the Kalios. But what about his friends? He would have loved to win the Magus Games with them on his side.

So far, what he knew was those who performed well in the games would be guided by a powerful magus. But what about Cedric's warning and Rowe's ominous wordings? There should be something more that they weren't being let on. In the unlikely situation that they did win the Magus Games, what would happen afterward?

Emery didn't have the answer. He needed more information. For now, his main concern was his four friends. Would they be tempted by the offer?

Thrax picked up the pitch-black hammer, and threw it back to Rowe. The heavy pitch-black hammer thud in front of Rowe who had his back turned against them. He said with full determination! I will never join you! Over my dead body!"

He spat on the ground and turned to the others shouting: "If you guys want to join them, do it! But if you do so, our brotherhood ends here!"

"Barbarian!" Julian roared suddenly.

"What?" Thrax retorted.

Julian stood up and gave a defiant smile. "That's one thing we can agree on. I am with you in this."

Chumo and Klea nodded to each other and all four of Emery's friends had the same heart on this matter. Emery gave a smile that everyone was on board.

Julian continued, "There is your answer, Rowe. You'll never make us join you. Zuna, I think you've made the wrong choice, still in respect of our previous companionship, I hope you three get what you want. Let's go, everyone."

The group turned around and left, leaving a bewildered Rowe.

After Julian and Thrax received treatment for their minor injuries in the Magus Hub, they continued with their original plan of finishing their task for Master Tahoggum. They went to one of the portals in the Magus Hub and made their way to the tree less hill, where they had found titanium.

As they went up the hill, Thrax who still hadn't calmed down said: "Argh, those fuckers really irritate me."

"Don't worry about them. To tell you the truth, I prefer doing the tasks and the upcoming games with just the five of us. Trust, after all, is the most important. Don't you agree?" Julian said, leading the way with his shield on guard against the occasional skyglazers that swooped down.

The rest of the group didn't say much. Although what he had said was half true in its own right, they were thinking about what they could accomplish with just the five of them. Participating in the games without a full team would surely make things difficult. Especially if the ones participating were mostly

people with tier three weapons and tier two protective artifacts, and rank 6 acolytes on top of it. They would be outnumbered, outgeared and outclassed.

Emery said: "Everyone, since we're aiming to win, after this task, I suggest we try digging for more information about the Magus Games. What does it mean for the winners, as well as what kinds of games will be held. The more we know about it, the better we can prepare and the higher chance we will succeed."

"Agreed", all of Emery's friends answered simultaneously.

They had decided that each of them would find details about the upcoming Magus Games from the magi in their respective institutes. Thrax in the Fire Institute, Julian in the Earth Institute, Chumo in the Darkness Institute, and Emery, mostly in the Apothecary Institute. Emery glanced at Klea, his expectations of her were the most since she was favored by a lot of people, including the magi in the institutes she was affiliated with.

Then he remembered Rowe's words regarding Klea. She was supposed to be in the elite class and she didn't deny it. It seemed like she refused in order to stay with them. He thought about asking Klea what was this elite class, but since she hadn't mentioned anything, he figured it'd be better to wait until Klea opened up to them. Forcing someone to tell them something they didn't want to share felt hypocritical of him, since he had his own secrets as well.

Once they were at the first spot where they had mined the titanium, like they had expected, the dumas were no longer there. All that remained were countless bones reminiscent of the skyglazers.

After finding a huge clump of black rock, they did pretty much the same strategy except with a few changes. Chumo and Klea were their main defenders this time, since they both had the most effective ways to eliminate the enemies, while Emery was still the designated miner. Thrax and Julian alternated in helping Emery and defending. With their stronger weapons and the enhanced spells of Klea using the staff, they found it easier to kill the ugly skyglazer creatures.

Of course, once the carcasses of the skyglazers piled up, the dumas started arriving. The group tried different approaches in their attempt to eliminate these level 5 creatures.

Klea was the first to try out other spells. She used her three offensive spells which were namely: [Lightning Bolt - Tier 3 - Lightning Spell], [Windblade - Tier 3 - Wind Spell], [Aqua Lance - Tier 3 - Water Spell]. However, all the spells were only able to make the dumas wail in pain. They didn't die. Either they were weaker by a large margin or the gooey body provided a powerful resistance.

Since the others hadn't yet reached rank 6, they were only able to use tier 2 spells. Chumo only had [Shadow Step - Tier 1 - Darkness Spell] and [Hide in Shadow - Tier 2 - Darkness Spell]. He didn't have any offensive darkness spells.

Julian was a dual element wielder, earth and fire respectively. He had [Stone Skin - Tier 1 - Earth Spell] and [Mudwall - Tier 2 - Earth Spell] both were defensive spells. For fire, he actually only had learned [Fire Flash - tier 1 - Fire Spell]. It was an attack spell and as its name indicated. It sparked fire from his hand for a split second, which was effective in surprising the enemy, however, it wasn't enough to injure anyone, much less the duma.

Everyone already knew Thrax's [Fire Infusion- Tier 2 - Fire Spell]. Previously, he had tried it and it didn't work. Still, Thrax asked for Emery's tier two sword and wanted to give it a go again. He had to ask since his tier two spear had been bent, so it was useless at the moment.

Thrax lit Emery's sword on fire and attacked the creature, but even though it was a tier two weapon, it didn't do much anything.

After a few encounters with these dumas, the group realized that the most dangerous thing about this level 5 creature was its shrieking attack. Like Thrax's experience, the noises these creatures made whenever a threat came close were able to affect the mind, stunning them for a second.

Hence, they came to a decision that close combat must be avoided unless they couldn't help it.

This time was no different though. Thrax didn't seem to learn from his reckless attacks and ended up in the same dangerous situation he had been. Chumo once again had to use his shadow steps and to pull Thrax away from the creatures.

When they landed however, the ground suddenly cracked and trembled, sending the two young lads down a large hole.

"Thrax! Chumo!" Klea shouted.

Chapter 139: Unexpected Fortune

Chumo and Thrax's figures disappeared as they fell into the large hole. Thick dust blew upward and stung their eyes. They swatted away the dust and once they regained some of their visions, Emery and the rest then rushed at the large hold.

"Thrax! Chumo!" Klea called.

The only response they received were the shrieking dumas closing in on them. Klea simultaneously cast her [Lightning Bolt] and [Aqua Lance], stopping a couple of dumas in their tracks. After her spells were released, Julian immediately followed with his [Mudwall], blocking the crawling dumas.

Emery shouted, "Chumo, Thrax, if you can hear me, say something!"

Then hard coughing from the hole resounded. Emery was somewhat relieved hearing they were still alive. However, the dust was so thick that even if squinted his eyes hard, he couldn't see them.

Seeing the situation Klea used [Gust of wind - rank 2 wind element]

As soon as she started her spell, the wind picked up the dust and converged it on the top of her palm. The dust-filled cavern began to clear up and Emery could see Thrax and Chumo stuck under a pile of rocks, coughing. The moment Klea's spells burst toward the sky, Emery said, "They are alright! Let's go down there, they need our help"

Klea and Julian nodded. Julian made another mudwall to block the dumas that had just appeared behind them before following Emery and Klea down the hole.

The moment Emery landed, he didn't waste time and pulled the rocks away from the stuck Chumo and Thrax. All five hastily readied their stances, however, after waiting a while, the dumas didn't appear. It

looked like the mudwall had served its purpose or when it dissipated, since they were no longer in sight, the dumas became uninterested and started eating the hundreds of carcasses of the skyglazers in the area.

"Are the two of you alright?" asked Klea.

"Well other than my pride, everything is fine," said Thrax dusting himself off. "Thanks again, Chumo."

Chumo nodded as he also cleaned himself of the remaining dust.

Julian said, "You barbarians really need to learn to think with your brains not your swords."

"And you roman pigs should learn how to fight with your swords and not with pretty words," retorted Thrax.

There was still some dust floating around. Klea casted another gust of wind toward the sky and once the dust had cleared, their surroundings were filled with black rocks that had large veins of silvery substance which they presumed to be titanium.

"Now this is unexpected fortune," said Emery, looking at the place.

It was quite dark but, due to the light coming from above and reflecting on the silvery substance, they could somehow see the area. Still, Julian used his [Flash Fire] and the area revealed quite a number of tunnels. They didn't know what lay ahead there but, to avoid any bad surprise, Julian once more covered up the entrances with his [Mudwall].

Now that they were inside the hill, Emery tried mining. He struck the titanium with the pickaxe and the whole place echoed with the clash of metal against metal. They waited a while and since they couldn't hear anything coming from the tunnels, all five of them started mining after convincing Klea that they didn't need to fight for the meantime.

Since they were inside the hill, the sound that escaped up the hole didn't reach the skyglazers, so they were able to mine with full focus, no longer having to worry about the skyglazers that swooped down. The dumas above as well didn't seem to hear them and because of these, they were able to work unhindered and gather the titanium at a much faster rate with all five of them.

While mining the mineral, Klea wiped off her sweat and said, "Hey, do you guys think it is possible to sell titanium for some spirit stones or trade it with higher tiered equipment? Clearly Master Tahoggum didn't see it as a loss when he offered us a larger amount of contribution points and provided us tier two weapons in advance. So, I think we can get away with tier three equipment if we gathered more than enough titanium. Just look at the amount of titanium we have here!"

The others considered that for a moment. Maybe they should really try that, since they did in fact need better equipment if they wanted to compete in the Magus Games.

A couple of hours passed. They were all taking a break and Emery, who was taking a look at the tunnels, said, "Guys, look at that."

In the distance, they all could see a bright red light shining. Emery's curiosity got the better of him and asked Chumo to accompany him. Emery still hadn't mastered the spell [Blink] since it had proved harder to even activate. However he had his spell [Black Smoke], which he could use at a moment's notice in

case there would be any danger, while on the hand Chumo had the spell [Shadow Step], which could pull them back like what he had done for Thrax twice.

As the duo neared the end of the tunnel, the red light revealed itself to be some grass of sort that was stuck in between two huge chunks of titanium. They peered on the edges to check if there was anything and indeed they saw hundreds of dumas. The two noticed the gooey bodies of the dumas to be contracting and relaxing in a rhythmic manner, they seemed to be asleep since other than that action, they weren't doing anything.

Emery's eyes beamed while staring at the unique plant. He said inside of him, 'Please be a rare plant, please be a rare plant.'

Then, Emery had an idea. Since the dumas were sleeping soundly, walking in the middle would still be stupid. However, he had Chumo with him. He looked at Chumo with a cheeky smile and said, "I'm glad that you're here with me, Chumo. Do you want to test if your hide in shadow spell would work against these sleeping dumas?"

"What?" Chumo said in a surprised voice. Emery hastily made a gesture at Chumo to lower his voice. In a quieter voice, Chumo asked, "Are you sure about this, Emery?"

Emery nodded. He said, "The dumas seemed to be asleep right now. I really need you to grab just a few of that plant there. If they took notice of us, I'm sure we can outrun them. They're quite slow. Lastly, we can have Julian close this tunnel with his mudwall.

After that convincing explanation from Emery, Chumo reluctantly covered himself with his [Hide in Shadow] spell. He became darkened and appeared to be covered by some sort of smoke that blended with the shadow of their surroundings.

Emery saw the moving shadow figure cautiously make its way toward the closest plant and grab a bunch of it. The noise somehow woke up the closest creature which made the shadow figure quickly return to the tunnel.

After making sure none of the Dumas followed Chumo, Emery didn't waste time in using his apothecary spells.

[Analyze]

[Caracas Flower - Tier 3]

Emery became even more excited seeing the tier three label on this flower. He then used his other spell from the Plant Institution.

[Need universal fauna and flora rank 2]

Emery cursed in silence reading this information. Why couldn't things just be more simple for him, he thought. He signaled to Chumo that since he had gotten what they had come for and there wasn't much they could do unless they were ready to fight dozens of Dumas in a close space. They went back to where the rest were.

Once they were back, Emery had mentioned that he and Chumo had found a lair of dumas and that there were hundreds of them. The group became worried, so they checked for more tunnels around

their area, and once they believed they'd found all, they asked Julian to also use his [Mudwall] spell on the tunnel entrances.

Even if the dumas were still asleep it would be dangerous if they let them open. The inside of the hill and these tunnels must be the things the dumas were using to navigate the hills. Nevertheless, once they had made sure everything was all good. The group once again focused on mining.

Klea was starting to complain why a woman like her had to do such heavy labor, so they allowed her to be the person to handle the counting of the titanium. All the boys knew she was just being lazy to do the chores, but, for their peace of mind, they allowed her to do what she wanted. Apparently, Emery's prediction that Klea would be the queen among them turned out to become true faster than he had expected.

Because of the lucky site, it took them only 18 hours to finish twice what they did yesterday. To get out, they placed the rocks of which they had mined as well as the rest of the ones that fell with Thrax and Chumo on top of one another, making a mountain. Fortunately they were able to get out and the dumas seemed to have finished eating the hundreds of skyglazers, since there were no longer any carcasses, just some bones left here and there.

The group quickly returned to the portal. It was time to plan the next step to prepare for the game.

Chapter 140: Potions

When Emery and his friends arrived at the Magus Hub, the symbols on their hands issued a notification. They all looked at it the same time.

[Five days left until Magus Games starts]

Realizing that it was also past noon upon their arrival, it meant that they only had 5 days left to prepare and gather all they could until the Magus Games began. Although they had managed to finish the Master Tahoggum's task of gathering one ton of titanium each faster than what they had first expected, seeing the time dwindling by one second each, a sense of urgency sprang up inside them. Time was of the essence.

The group decided not to waste any time by grouping together in everything they do, so they divided their tasks. Emery, Thrax and Chumo would travel to the Golden City and would go their separate ways after Thrax and Chumo got off the carriage.

They would meet with the blacksmith master to collect reward as well as to fix Thrax's bent tier two spear. They would also ask Master Tahoggum or any other blacksmiths if they had any tasks that would reward them with tier three weapons, while Emery would go to Apothecary Institute to analyze the newfound plant and also to gather more information from Cedric.

Klea and Julian would go find more information about the Magus Games from their respective institutes. Both of them have a good relationship with their magus guides, they are confident to find more information about the game. Especially Klea with a few institutes that she can inquire upon.

The group then agreed that once they spend the whole day doing these, tonight they would meet at Klea's residence to discuss tomorrow's plan.

After saying goodbye to Thrax and Chumo, Emery stayed on the carriage until it reached the Apothecary Institute. He asked the receptionist if Cedric was in the building, however, the receptionist replied that he wasn't. Emery then inquired if Master Grom was now available, however, again didn't blink as he coldly replied that Master Grom was still unavailable and if he needed to meet with him, Emery had to set an appointment in advance.

Emery squinted his eyes. His initial suspicion of this receptionist was doing this on purpose was getting stronger. Nevertheless, he let it go and went to another receptionist on the other side of the room.

This receptionist was more accommodating than the other person. Emery asked to see the apothecary store. And like his experience with Aeon, this receptionist tapped on the counter and a translucent crystal hovered in front of him, showing information.

[APOTHECARY STORE]

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

Emery pressed the projection that had the word knowledge and it immediately responded with showing him a list of spells. He browsed through the list and when he saw the names of the knowledge he was looking for, he muttered, "Damn," under his breath.

[Universal flora knowledge - rank 2 - 5,000 white spirit stones]

[Analyze flora - rank 2 - 5,000 white spirit stones]

The rank two spells cost 10 times more compared to the first rank. Emery then asked if there were other ways to get these spells or if there was a service to get a plant appraised; the receptionist replied that the skills could be given as a reward for the institute's apprentices if they succeeded in reaching rank 3 apprentice.

As for the plant function appraisal, the receptionist mentioned that he, being a member of the Apothecary Institute as well, could provide a service like that. Emery showed the tier three plant, and the receptionist gave it only one look to recognize it was a tier three plant. For the cost of 300 white spirit stones, the receptionist offered to analyze it for Emery.

Since Emery only had 300 white spirit stones, he figured it would not be helpful even if he knew more about the plant because he still needed some tools to actually concoct this tier three plant.

Emery looked at the projected light coming from the crystal and pressed the tool tab. He found what he was looking for.

[Beginner Cauldron - Tools - 1,000 white spirit stone]

[Beginner Mortar and Pestle - Tools- 500 white spirit stone]

Once again, Emery muttered a swear underneath his breath. He calculated what the total cost would be spending. And he arrived at the conclusion that even if he sold all his strength pastes, and cleansing potion, it wouldn't be enough to cover all his expenses. Not to mention, he still needed to do some experimentation with the plant in order to make sure he would get something out of it.

He then checked out the potions tab to see if he could find anything under tier one or tier two that may help them with the upcoming Magus Games.

[Blazing Potion - Tier one] [Freezing Potion - Tier one] [Sparking Potion - Tier one]...

[Fire Resistance Potion - Tier one] [Ice Resistance Potion - Tier one] [Lightning Resistance Potion - Tier one]...

[Strength Potion - Tier one] [Speed Potion - Tier one] [Perception Potion - Tier one]...

The first set of potions were the offensive positions. Emery noticed the number on the side indicating how many they had on stock. Since it was such a high number, they were all available. However, these offensive potions started with a price tag of 300 white spirit stone for tier one and 1,000 white spirit stone for tier two. The resistance potion was twice the price of the offensive potions, while the utility potions, the ones that could increase a person's strength, speed, perception, etc, were even more expensive. At least twice the amount of tier one resistance potions.

Reading through all the price tags, Emery shook his head to clear himself of shock. It seemed like whether he was in his own world or in this Magus Academy or anywhere else, money was everything and in this case, spirit stones. On the other hand though if he succeeded to become an apothecary master then he wouldn't need to worry about spirit stone isn't he?

Seeing Emery's reaction, the acolyte then said, "Since you are an acolyte of the Magus Academy, you know you can buy these with contribution points."

Ah yes, he had quite plenty of those. Since Thrax and Chumo had gotten off earlier than him, the symbol on Emery's left hand had notified him that he had received an additional 500 contribution points, bringing his total contribution to be more than 3,000. Since the exchange rate of contribution points to white spirit stone was 1:1, Emery figured he could buy all the tools he needed and more.

Just before he was about to trade it, a thought came into him. Contribution points could be traded for spirit stones, however, he couldn't exchange it the other way round. He suddenly changed his mind to buy using the contribution point. His instincts said there were more to it.

After careful consideration, Emery decided just to analyze the rare plant with the 300 spirit stones he had. He really hoped the rare plant could open doors for him to get leverage in the upcoming Magus Games. If the plant turned out to be useful, then he would find the spirit stones he needed to start experimenting and concoct it.

Emery placed his palm above the receptionist's palm.

[Trade 300 white spirit stones?]

He said 'yes' on his mind and the white spirit stones from his storage ring disappeared.

Now that he had paid the acolyte receptionist took the plant, the receptionist placed it on the counter to be scanned. The floating shot out a beam of light and after a few seconds later, the light dimmed. The acolyte asked Emery to open his palm once more and the information of the plant came to his mind.

[Analyze]

[Carcass Flower - Tier 3]

[Herb cost 50 white spirit stones apiece]

[Main ingredient to create tier 3 acidic potion]

[Acid is a liquid that can melt an item or object that it touches]

Emery was surprised that he was carrying something dangerous. Based on its description, it sounded like the way the dumas dissolved a carcass into bones. This was also probably the reason why the dumas could do such melting of flesh.

On the flipside though, he was happy. The risk of getting this flower was worth it because he had something that was used for concocting an offensive potion. Once more reading the description, Emery wondered how many of these potions would he need to destroy Rowe's shield.

A short moment after his inner laugh, he remembered about the price of those tools, other ingredient to create it and also just hundreds of those duma that he doesn't yet know how to kill

After Emery asked around the institute and received all the information he could find, he then returned to Klea's residence to meet with the others.