

Earths GMagus 221

Chapter 221: Observe

In a special enclosed room within the Magus Academy, dozens of uniformed people were each standing next to a cube, staring at it with paramount seriousness. The cube was reflecting a bright light split into several screens that showed different moving images.

Each of these uniformed people seemed to be concentrating on their personal screens, while taking notes when their eyes caught something relevant.

Meanwhile, in the middle of this circular room, there were 5 people who appeared to be of a higher rank and were supervising the others. In the center of these five people stood a woman wearing some kind of glasses on one of her eyes. Looking at the luster the glasses gave off, one could guess they were an artifact.

"Show me group 3, cube 8." the woman said with an authoritative tone.

Right as the woman finished her words, a much larger screen could be seen flying across the room, along with half a dozen much smaller screens around it.

One of the five people around her quickly gave a report. Inside the screen, a girl was seen fighting against three acolytes.

"That's acolyte Trish. She is the top elite acolyte of group 3. She had also ranked first on the first year's exam."

Casting her gaze at the screen, the woman ordered, "Show me the record of her combat accomplishments."

In an instant, another huge screen opened up in the air, showing her battle prowess and record.

Seeing the exceptional statistic, the woman nodded her head, "With her skill, it's no wonder she ranked first in group 3."

The people in these rooms were the one in charge of examining the data collected during the games. They are currently re-evaluating all the top 50 from each of the groups. Within the screens the most attention was reserved for all the top ranking of each group.

Group 2 was dominated by Zach the dragon bloodline acolyte and there was also Vida Themari the female Bird of Prey bloodline achieving rank two in group one.

The woman with the glasses artifact was not surprised seeing a few of the half blood acolytes were able to reach the top of the group. "These acolytes are on a different level, it becomes unfair for any acolytes to meet them in the game, they should have been in the privilege class" She said to herself.

A moment later, another person walked in the room, which shouldn't have been possible unless said person was an important member of the academy. The person who entered was a middle aged man with greyish hair and dressed in a Grand Magus robe.

Seeing the arrival of this man, all personnels inside the room immediately dropped their tasks and gave the man their greeting, "Welcome, deputy head."

It turned out the man who just arrived was the second highest ranking person of the Magic Academy, Deputy Head Delbrand. This man was in charge of the academy operational and administration matters and, of course, in the selection of the acolytes of the elite and privileged classes.

Deputy Head Delbrand waved his hand and immediately made his way to the center of the room, "No need for the formalities. Can someone tell me what just happened in group 7? How could the elite class be beaten? Give me the report! A complete and thorough report regarding the situation!"

A moment later, the images on all 6 huge screens immediately changed and showed the recordings of the group 7 battles.

Seeing the image of two acolytes diving right into a lake, the deputy head pointed his finger at the one who reached the lake shore and asked, "That's the one who got the first place?"

"Yes, deputy head."

"Show me his profile!"

With a few seconds, another screen showed up in front of the deputy. Inside it was the complete information of said acolyte.

"An acolyte from the lucky class who managed to make it into the first place of the second Magus Game... It's the first time in 300 years!"

He then continued to pore over the profile, "Lower world, 4 element affinities, B aptitude and a mid grade bloodline... "This is such a mess ..." Turning his head to the side, he asked, "What is the reason he was able to get the first place?"

Immediately, an image of a grey beast rampaging among the acolytes at the last minutes of the game shown in the screen.

"I see... no wonder. A 16 years old rank 6 acolyte, but was able to evolve into rank 3 bloodline is indeed quite special. Moreover, that transformation is really outrageously strong." As he said that, the deputy checked the bloodline name and was stunned, "Fey wolf is a mid grade bloodline? Is this data correct?"

"Yes, deputy head. The data is retrieved from the Bloodline Institute's database."

Deputy Head Delbrand scoffed when he heard it, "That is a 2000 years old database. Who knows when those old fogeys updated the database last time? There's nothing accurate with those bloodlines anymore. After all, they just evolve and mutate like rats."

After saying that, he quickly backtracked the recording from the moment of the beast rampaging to the start of the game, as he needed to be quite thorough with his examination.

"Hmm... oh? He beat Lodos too? Pretty amazing." The deputy head commented when he saw Lodos getting thrashed. "This boy fights with both wits and tenacity, no wonder the crowd likes him. However, the reason he managed to achieve first place was merely because of those people around him and his fortune."

At first, Deputy Head Delbrand felt excitement, as he watched the said acolyte fighting his way through countless trials. But when he returned to the profile and saw the spirit core the acolyte had, the expression on his face changed to disappointment.

"Spirit core of darkness? Poor kid..." The deputy head said, sighing quite deeply.

"So, should I put a report on the boy, deputy head?" The woman in the center of the room asked.

"No... no need to give a report about him. Instead, go and give report about that Hartlight boy."

"Roran Hartlight?" The woman asked again, for confirmation.

"Yes, him. It is him. He was the cause of all this commotion. And also, make sure to write the need for further investigation of the matter. The academy board needs to know about this."

"Alright, deputy. We will do it right away."

"Make sure there is no error in the report." Deputy Head Delbrand once again admonished. He then turned away and was about to walk away when he suddenly stopped in his tracks.

"So, all the new 500 acolytes have been decided?"

"Yes, deputy head. A total of 82 regular acolytes managed to jump into the elite class."

"I see. Alright then... keep up the good work."

Deputy Head Delbrand walked out of the room with new weight on his mind.

'82 regular jumps up? That's twice the usual yearly number. Which means twice of my yearly hassle to explain this matter to those nobles whose kid didn't made itit. The dragon boy case already gave me such a headache and now this...' Sighing deeply, the man could only shake his head.

'AHHHH!!! All this because of that Hartlight! Is that family trying to rebel?

Chapter 222: The Plan

Passing through the grand and majestic gate situated near the Combat Institute's arena, the group made their way to Lord Izta's palace, the place where they spent days training before the second Magus Game.

Walking past the familiar courtyard and usual pathways, the group reached the palace and began walking up the stairs until they finally arrived at the magnificent grand hall, where one of the 5 guardians of Combat Institute could be seen waiting for them.

As they walked into the familiar hall, the short bearded man in golden armor, Lord Izta, once again sent his guards away. Emery and his friends quickly made their way through the hall and gave Lord Izta their respects.

Currently, Lord Izta was closing his eyes in silence. He didn't even open his mouth when Emery and the others gave their respect. The strange attitude Lord Izta showed made them nervous.

When Emery was about to open his mouth, Lord Izta finally moved. He took a deep breath, opened his eyes, and said, "My dear friend Enkidu said I should congratulate you all and not be emotional..."

Lord Izta then turned his gaze towards Emery and continued, "You... did extremely well. Emery. Well done... well done... and also you, Klea... not too bad. Good.. good..."

Lord Izta took another deep breath and released a very profound sigh. Before Emery could ask what was wrong to the sighing lord, he suddenly stood up from his throne and shouted loudly to the sky.

"#^*@ Son of a MOnkey poop on a Thundercunt!! Why!! Why!!!"

The abrupt booming shout contained countless indescribable curses shocked the entire group, without exception. Emery and his friends could only stand there frozen, as they watched Lord Izta walking left and right around the throne, cursing non stop.

A few seconds later, Lord Izta finally stopped his series of curses and instantly calmed himself down, after noticing Emery and the others stood there frozen stiff with their mouth wide open, clearly dumbfounded.

"Ah, I am sorry, everyone. Pardon my sudden rage... y-you guys did well.. really well... it just.. only a little bit more and all of you could get in... ARGH!!! I was so angry when I watched the game!"

Understanding the situation, Julian swiftly voiced his thought out, "I am sorry, lord. It was my mistake."

"No, no, no, you all did really well... really well. You all are talented... Yes!" Lord Izta then walked over to the group and approached them one by one.

In front of Chumo, "Yes, you definitely have the necessary talent to be in the elite class..."

Thrax, "You... although you are dumb... you are full of bravery."

Klea, "And you... you are a very special girl. You surely don't understand how lucky these boys are to have you with them..."

And finally, Emery, "You... you.. Arrghh!! I really don't know how to deal with you!"

Upon hearing Lord Izta's sort of compliments to them, Julian was unsure on how to respond. But then, he slowly said, "Lord, we know we have failed you and disappointed you. But we still received a lot of rewards from the game, and.. I am sure we can manage ourselves, even without entering the elite class."

"Ahh, you have no idea..." Lord Izta then talked to the empty space next to him, doing his usual practice of talking alone. "We thought the same as them, didn't we?"

Lord Izta then returned his gaze towards the group again, "Listen... It's not just the class you're missing... But also what the title of elite class is entitled to!"

Suddenly, Lord Izta turned his body facing towards one side of the palace, causing Emery and the other to turn their head too. There, a figure was flying in, crossing through the hall. It was a young magus in all black clothes. His unexpected presence made Emery startled.

"Master Xion!?"

Magus Xion landed inside the majestic hall, a few feet away from Lord Izta and gave him his respect.

"My utmost respect for the Senior. I am Xion, a magus of the Darkness Institute."

Lord Izta was tense for a moment when he saw Magus Xion enter the hall. But when he heard Xion's name, he immediately calmed down.

"You are the magus who has been helping Emery while I was away for my mission. Hence, there's no need for such formality. Moreover, I have heard of you, young magus Xion. What is your purpose in coming here?"

"Here's the thing, Magus Izta. I am here to offer my aid for your plan."

Upon hearing that, Lord Izta's face quickly changed for a split second before turning straight again, making it almost unnoticeable. Then, as if he didn't hear anything, Lord Izta responded calmly, "What do you mean with 'my plan', Magus Xion?! Don't talk nonsense."

"Magus Izta, I already know all of you came from the same origin. Therefore, it was easy for me to connect the dots and guess what you planned to do."

Lord Izta swiftly shifted his eye to Emery and gave him a sharp gaze. Returning his gaze back to Magus Xion, Lord Izta said, "Huh! Just tell me what do you want..."

As he said that, Lord Izta suddenly took out his massive golden ax from his ring and rested it horizontally on the ground. The sudden appearance of a weapon made everyone uncomfortable.

"Calm down, Magus Izta! I came here as a friend... I-"

Before Magus Xion could finish his words, Lord Izta cut him off, "Friend..? I... hahaha, I have no friends! Never had for a while and I definitely don't need one now!" Lord Izta said, gripping his ax.

Realizing the situation would turn bad if these kept going, Magus Xion immediately turned serious and released his card, "Senior! You need one if you want to succeed on your plan! At least, I can help you with Emery's case!"

Emery startled when he heard his name was mentioned.

Lord Izta slowly loosen his grip on the ax and calmed down. He then walked back and sat on the throne again. "Emery... Yes, If you can help out Emery, the plan will have more chances to succeed."

Annoyed for being spoken of, but not being included in the conversation, as if he didn't exist, Emery quickly interrupted them, "Master Xion, Lord Izta. Please tell us what is going on? What plan?"

Turning his gaze towards Lord Izta, Emery noticed the senior magus didn't seem willing to say anything and only lowered his head to the floor. But then, Magus Xion said, "I believe you should explain it to them now, Magus Izta."

Lifting his head, Lord Izta gazed at all of them one by one. Seeing their confused expressions, Lord Izta took a deep breath for the umpteenth time, he then opened his mouth.

"We are going to take back our home!"

Chapter 223: Caretaker

Upon hearing such a shocking yet questionable statement, Emery and the others didn't know how to react to that.

Wasn't Earth already theirs? Why should they take it back? What did Lord Izta mean? These thoughts were swirling inside Emery and his friends' minds.

After unleashing such a statement, Lord Izta ignored the confusion of Emery and the others and took out a certain cube from his ring. The cube was transparent blue and looked like it was fragmented into pieces, but something held those pieces together, creating a unique construct never seen before.

Lord Izta then gave the cube a slight touch. In the blink of an eye, the whole hall suddenly turned pitch black. Tens of thousands of small motes of lights could be seen coming out of the cube, illuminating the dark hall. It was then followed by hundreds of spheres with different features and colors.

The current view inside the hall was similar to the one shown by Magus Minerva on the first day Emery arrived at the academy.

While Emery and the others were still stunned by the sudden spectacle before him, Lord Izta began to explain about The Universe.

The Universe was separated into nine quadrants, and each quadrant had its own galaxies and planets, which numbered tens of thousands for the former and billions for the latter. Humans and elves each controlled three quadrants in The Universe, while the remaining three were considered chaotic quadrants that weren't dominated by either.

Every year, the Magus Academy would select 10,000 acolytes from tens of thousands human planets. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the planets were lower worlds, with 20% of them being mid level worlds and only 1% being considered high level worlds.

It was proved by the statistics that the high level worlds would breed much better magus than the lower ones. Therefore, influenced by the war, the Magus Academy created a system that prevailed thousands of years.

A system that favored those from the higher level worlds. The low level worlds would only have 10% of the placements in the academy every year, while the remaining percentage was divided equally between the mid and high level.

As a result, the high level worlds would receive abundant yearly placements into the academy, while the lower worlds would be fortunate to receive placements every one thousand years.

The candidates who showed better stats would also automatically receive better treatment and resources during their time in the academy. Hence, the creation of the elite and privileged classes. They were the groups that were considered much more worthy of the resources provided by the academy.

After all, talent and resources were treated as the most important commodities within the universe.

If the high level worlds were seen as places where to find talents, then the lower worlds were 'resources' points, which were energy, food and manpower or slaves.

"This is outrageous!" Julian shouted loudly, when he heard Earth was just a resource point.

However, as a Roman soldier whose country had been actively conquering its neighboring nations, Julian fully understood this. Now he knew there were bigger hands at work and Earth was just a little tiny dot

in the universe, while he, himself, couldn't probably be counted even as a microorganism in the grand scale of the picture. Julian couldn't help but turn emotional.

Emery himself couldn't help but think about the current way the academy worked, less placements and less resources... How could the lower worlds acolytes ever compete with the higher ones? Even if they were more talented they would always fall short...

This time Magus Xion added his thoughts, "You all must understand we are currently at war. In fact, many believe the headmaster has already been too kind for giving 10% placement to the lower worlds. Some factions even tried to lower the percentage even more for their own benefits."

The depressed atmosphere increased even more when they heard that. But then, Magus Xion continued, "However, your performance today might give some significant meaning for the headmaster. A lower world acolyte able to reach first place almost never happens. Your achievement prove to others there are talented people among the lower worlds."

Lord Izta then dragged his hands through the air and zoomed into one particular blue-colored sphere, "This is Earth, our planet and home."

Emery and the others were mesmerized, as they saw how their planet looked. Meanwhile, Lord Izta sighed deeply, as his eyes landed on this particular sphere. The sight of it somehow made him bitter.

Lord Izta then stretched his finger and touched the blue sphere and a screen immediately appeared, showing the information about the planet.

[Planet 1002 - Earth]

[M - class planet - lower world]

[Sovereign - Nephilim faction]

While the others were still amazed, Emery realized Klea looked shocked. Hence, he asked what was wrong.

"That name... There was this written record from an old civilization located near Egypt. The record mentioned about the gods who came from the stars. Nephilim was the name written there, they also have another name... It's the Annunaki. But it was a thousand year old record and most details about them were lost in the great flood."

"Who or what is this Nephilim faction?" Emery asked.

Upon hearing the question, Lord Izta looked at Emery and slowly answered, "They are the first settler of our planet, the ones who brought civilization to our world."

"Then... they are the good guys?" Thrax asked, sounding unsure.

Lord Izta suddenly laughed, "Hahahaha!! Yes, they are!" But then, the expression on Lord Izta's face instantly changed, "But they are also responsible for killing billions of our people."

Seeing the clear shock on their faces, Magus Xion said what he knew about the faction, "The Nephilim are known to be not only one of the major factions, but also one of the cruelest. I knew of a lower world

that was turned into blood overnight because of a simple dispute with this faction," Magus Xion stopped for a second, hesitant and then continued, "And one more thing... Lord Izta here is one of their greatest generals."

"!!!" Everyone was further shocked by the revelation and they simultaneously turned their head toward Lord Izta.

"Yes, he is right! It was a choice I made and I had to live with it for the past 2,000 years."

For a split second, Emery swore he could see great sorrow and regret on Lord Izta's face.

Magus Xion then continued his words, "The human alliance had trusted your planet, your home, to the Nephilim faction. They can do anything they want with your planet, as they are the 'caretaker'. They could also simply destroy your planet using the cover of 'benefit for the human race'."

Magus Xion took a glance towards Lord Izta and said.

"The Great Izta Champion of the Realm, the Bow of the Banished will never admit it, but I am sure he joined the faction to make sure that they would leave your world alone!"

"That's enough, Xion!!"

Xion instantly showed his respect towards Izta.

"I am sorry Senior, I believe the more they understand this fact, the better they will improve."

"Yes, I understand..." Lord Izta replied wearily.

Lord Izta then turned his body facing towards Emery and the others, the expression on his face was extremely serious. "It's been 2,000 years since I last set foot on Earth. I was a king, a ruler, the champion of our people. The Great Gilgamesh! But regrettably, I have already reached the end of my time. For years, I have lost hope in my cultivation, as I couldn't break through into the Grand Magus realm. And due to that, I am sure the days of peace on Earth are numbered."

"Me and my friends didn't manage to do it, but you! You all are the new generation of Earth's Magus. Hence, you must show to those people Earth isn't just a farm. Do you all understand?!"

As they stood in front of the great man, who exuded such formidable aura, Klea, who knew what the name entailed, swiftly knelt on the ground and gave respect. Emery and the others also unconsciously follow her gesture.

Lord Izta walked towards Klea and Emery, "If one of you could make it into the privileged class, then it will all be much simpler. Therefore, Emery, Klea, I will give you all my support to help you win the next Magus Game's trial."

Upon hearing of this revelation, Emery suddenly felt a huge burden on his shoulder. After all, a lot of stakes were placed on the incoming game.

Meanwhile, Lord Izta turned towards Chumo, Thrax, and Julian, "As for you three! you will not leave the fate of our world to a girl and this dumb-looking boy, right? Hence, I also have prepared a plan for you three!"

Chapter 224: Purpose

While still kneeling on the ground, Emery felt the many questions that have been bothering his mind about the academy, since he entered until now, had been mostly answered.

After all, there were a lot of questions popping up during his time in the academy and they had been bothering him for a while. One of them was the strange and somewhat antagonistic attitude the instructors and other acolytes' showed towards them.

And also, the way the academy did the game that looked like a test, which was held at the beginning of the year and not at the end. This practice was truly in contrast with what a normal educational institution should do. After all, which educational bodies held an exam at the start of the school year?

Now he finally knew the reason, Emery realized the Magus Academy wasn't only an ordinary educational institution, where people came to learn and graduated. Due to the ongoing war, it would be more appropriate to think of the academy as more like a recruitment center for military purposes. Hence, it was no wonder there was a lot of power, struggles and agendas involved behind it.

The information just revealed was quite overwhelming for Emery and the others. Even though he wasn't clear about the magnitude of the situation, knowing his 2,000 years old senior was having difficulties regarding the matter surely made him concerned.

Emery and his friends didn't have any reason to not believe or doubt Lord Izta's story. The person standing in front of them was proven to be their great great predecessor and his plan was centered with them five being successful in the academy. Therefore, Emery and the others would have to take the torch, as this plan instantly became their plan too.

The five young yet very determined teenagers swore to take over the Sovereign of Earth position for themselves. All of this would begin by getting the best grade and acknowledgement from academy by the end of the year.

Even though Chumo, Julian and Thrax didn't regrettably manage to enter the elite class, they still had one of the five combat magus champions of the Combat Institute becoming their direct master. This should have given them the same benefit as those who were in the elite class, only minus the title of elite acolyte.

However, the same couldn't be said for Emery and Klea. Being able to succeed in the third trial would reward the winner the opportunity to become a disciple of the esteemed Grand Magus. This reward would guarantee the winner's place to become a magus and many more other indirect benefits. Therefore, this was what Emery and Klea needed to aim for.

"The third game is a one on one tournament between all the 500 passing elite acolytes and 50 privileged acolytes. And at the end of the game, there will be around 100 acolytes that will be picked by dozens of esteemed grand magus." Lord Izta said.

There were only 10 days for Emery and Klea to prepare themselves for the game, thus they needed to immediately practice, improving their prowess as much as possible.

Lord Izta could help the three boys increase the finesse and mastery of their combat techniques, courtesy to his title of champion combat magus. He could also help out Klea immensely, as he was a wind element magus too, the same as her.

Unfortunately, Emery wasn't that lucky to receive direct guidance from Lord Izta, as the champion knew he was not the best person to help the young boy. Therefore, Lord Izta left Emery under Magus Xion's care.

Hence, Magus Xion would personally guide his training and supervise his improvement for the next ten days, just like the old times. Before the five teenagers separated and did their own training, especially Emery, who would go together with Magus Xion, they gathered together.

"This is suddenly turned into such a huge matter, guys. Do you boys have what it takes to do this?" Klea teased the boys.

Unsurprisingly, Thrax was the first one who opened his mouth. It seemed he had been burning with excitement, as Emery and the rest swore they could see flame blazing above him. "My blood is actually burning! I had never been so alive before! I can see a big war coming and what does it mean? It's a chance for glory! Hahaha! I surely have what it takes!"

Chumo, still in his usual quiet demeanor, made a hand sign and said he would be the number one. Meanwhile, Julian was unexpectedly more quiet than usual. From the looks on his face, it appeared he had many thoughts going through his mind.

Emery was worried when he realized Julian was deep in thought, "What's the matter, Julian?"

Waking up from his contemplation, Julian waved his hand, flashed a smile and said, "Don't worry about me, Emery. Just do your best and make us all proud!"

Before Emery could ask him anymore, Thrax quickly replied, effectively cut him off, "Yes, Emery. The roman is right! If you are slacking out, don't you dare cry when we catch up to you!"

Chumo nodded his head in agreement.

Even though the three of them didn't make it to the elite class, each and every one of them knew and understood this was far from the end. They still had a long way to go and there was no need for them to lose themselves in their current failure. After all, they just found a new goal to strive for, giving them a new purpose to improve themselves even more.

Klea grabbed the shoulders of the two closest boys, which were Chumo and Emery, and forced the rest to do the same to the person beside them. They swiftly huddled together and made a small circle, then shouted their group name out loud,

"We will become the Earth's Greatest Magus!"

From far, Lord Izta who saw this scene couldn't help but reminisce about the past. Without anyone knowing, a drop of tear silently fell to the ground.

Immediately after, Emery left Lord Izta's palace and followed Magus Xion to the Darkness Institute.

As they walked their way to the portal, Emery couldn't help but ask his master, "So what's the plan, master? More darkness infused blade training? New spell training? Oh, new spells sound really great!"

Magus Xion only glanced at Emery for a brief moment before turning his head to the front again, "If you are planning to go against the Nephilim faction, you need to aim bigger. Actually, my master was interested to see you again"

"Master's master?" Emery asked, confused. Then, the expression on his face changed, "Grand Magus Zenoia?!"

Chapter 225: Fans

Emery and Magus Xion made their way into the Darkness Institute. And just like the last time they went here, Emery passed through several tunnels and staircases until they finally reached the destination. A majestic-looking cliff with a grey palace standing on top of it

As they climbed the staircase that reached out to the palace entrance, Magus Xion turned his head to the side to talk to Emery, who was behind him. "Remember Emery, be respectful and only talk when being asked to do so. No matter what she says or wants later, just bear with it and maintain a respectful attitude. Do you understand?"

Looking at the seriousness on his master's face, Emery quickly nodded his head, "Yes, master. I understand, you don't need to worry."

Magus Xion then turned his head back and added, "If you could earn her favor, you basically already halfway into the privileged class. So, once again, be respectful."

Right as Magus Xion finished saying that, the two of them finally arrived in front of a giant dark wooden door. Emery could see a pair of decoration figures made of stone depicting unknown monstrous creatures at the sides of the door.

Ignoring the intimidating statues, Magus Xion swiftly reached out for the metallic door knob and slammed it hard a few times, causing sharp sounds to echo through the air.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

"Master! It's me, your disciple, Xion!"

After waiting for a few seconds, the massive door slowly opened by itself. As Emery stepped into the palace, his eyes were instantly greeted by the sight of a massive hallway that stretched into the far distance.

Magus Xion swiftly entered the already opened door and stepped into the grand lobby, followed by Emery. The magus stood in the middle of the hall, without any intention to open his mouth. Hence, Emery could only wait beside him.

The two of them were waiting in silence when a loud ear-splitting scream could be heard from another door inside the lobby.

"W-What is that, master? Should we go and check it out?" Emery quickly asked

"No, no! Don't worry, Emery. Just wait here. That's her... chamber."

Emery asked again, confused. "Then shouldn't we go and check her?"

Magus Xion only kept his silence, showing he already said what needed to be said. Therefore, Emery shook his head and sat down again.

A few minutes later, the door where the scream originated was opened, attracting the attention of Emery and Magus Xion. A pale-skinned beautiful female magus quickly came out of it. Seeing the figure, Magus Xion swiftly knelt in front of her, followed by Emery.

The female magus didn't say anything and just walked right towards them. Emery saw her heels coming closer and stop right before them. The magus slowly touched his chin and lifted his head to face her.

The beautiful magus face was so close to Emery's that he could vaguely smell the pleasant fragrance emanating from her. After all, there were only a few inches separating them.

Emery could vividly see the crimson pupil in her wistful eyes that were currently staring straight at him, examining him. Her red cherry lips down to her voluptuous form, Emery could see them all. However, one thing caught his eyes the most, exceeding and causing him to ignore all those beautiful aspects, was the blood mark under her lips.

As the two of them locked gaze, Emery felt the grand magus' stare seemed able to reach into the deepest parts of his mind and body, nothing could escape it. She then broke the gaze and walked around the kneeling Emery in a circle.

"I have to say, I am impressed with your last fight... But don't get me wrong, I'm not talking about the part where you turned into a filthy dog. I'm talking about the darkness spell you used in the fight."

The grand magus stopped in front of Emery and stretched her finger forward. Emery could only stare as her finger inched closer and touched his forehead. And suddenly, a rush of energy seemed to course through his body, causing it to jolt mildly all over.

"Your darkness core is pretty compelling... I see..."

The grand magus turned around while saying, "Come and see me again when you reach rank 7." She then walked away before stopping and glancing at the kneeling Magus Xion, who was ignored, "Oh, and Xion, take good care of this acolyte." After saying that, she swiftly went back to her chamber.

The encounter with Grand Magus Zenonia was definitely a short one, but it was a very intense experience.

The two of them swiftly made their way out of the palace, passing through the long hallway and exiting the already opened entrance door. They then proceeded to head towards Magus Xion's residence, which was not far from there.

The Darkness Institute itself was situated under the cliff of a mountain by the sea. Hence, the two of them walked through the mountain terrain passing through dark woods. As they walked, the previously silent Magus Xion finally opened his mouth.

"Actually, I am surprised my master took an interest in you, Emery. But still, this is a really good opportunity for you. After all, Grand Magus Zenoia is one of the top grand magus of the academy. Moreover, she is close to reaching the Supreme Magus realm."

Upon hearing that, Emery was shocked. Even Lord Izta, who was a renowned combat magus champion, was having so much difficulty to break through into the Grand Magus realm. Hearing about Grand Magus Zenoia almost reaching the Supreme Magus realm certainly showed her power.

Emery then suddenly realized Magus Xion looked a bit distracted, "What's wrong, master?"

"Someone has been following us for a while now." Magus Xion said softly, still keeping his stoic expression.

Emery quickly became alarmed when he heard that. Before he could say anything, Magus Xion suddenly leaped towards a direction and went into the trees. While surprised, Emery swiftly gave chase to his master.

After a minute of running, Emery finally caught up to Magus Xion and found him just standing between two trees. As he approached Magus Xion, the magus turned towards him and said, "It's quite amazing. I can't really pinpoint their location. Either he or she has a higher realm than me or has a very good ability. However, from the looks of it, they are already gone."

Emery became a little worried knowing the perpetrator could hide himself from a magus.

"Who could it possibly be?"

Checking his surroundings once more, Magus Xion said, "I have no idea. They could be checking you or me... But don't worry about it, Emery. I can somehow feel their intent, and it didn't feel hostile. It could probably be one of your new fans." The magus casually said laughing.

Alas, there was no way for Emery to be casual about this. He immediately casted [Nature Sense], but didn't perceive anything from it. He felt extremely silly to have thought his spell would bring better effect than an official magus.

However, before he could follow Magus Xion, who already walked away first, Emery suddenly remembered another skill he had, the Fey Wolf's innate skill [Wild Hunt].

When activated, Emery was able to sense a certain unique smell and nothing else. Before he could tell Magus Xion about this, the magus beckoned him with a loud shout, "Come on, Emery! Let's forget about this. We don't have all day. Let's go!"

Trying not to think too much about the smell, Emery swiftly ran to Magus Xion.

Chapter 226: Status

Inside the familiar small hut at one of the hills of the Darkness Institute, Magus Xion once again was preparing tea for both of them. After a few minutes of waiting, Emery was finally served a cup of fragrant tea, this time it was a different one from the one he had drank before.

Thanking his master for the hospitality, Emery took a sip and felt the similar refreshing sensation coursing? passing through him. He felt his body being rejuvenated by the tea. Emery finds this hot bitter

beverage that soothes his body to his liking. Looking at the blissful expression on Emery's face, Magus Xion faintly smiled.

"So Emery, let me see your stats."

Awakened from his somewhat ecstatic state, Emery swiftly tapped the symbol on his palm and showed Xion his information.

[Emery Ambrose]

[Battle power 43]

[Spirit force 150]

[Plant Spirit - early foundation]

[Water Spirit - early foundation]

[Earth Spirit - early foundation]

[Spirit Core of Darkness - stage 3]

[Fey Bloodline - rank 3]

[Acolyte Rank 6]

Looking at the striking rank 3 Fey Bloodline, Magus Xion couldn't help but nod his head, "Ooh, rank 3 bloodline. That is indeed quite an achievement for your age. Moreover, you are coming from a lower world, which makes this accomplishment even more exceptional."

Emery took a look at his information when he heard Magus Xion say that. To his surprise, Emery found out that his base battle power had increased by another 5 points, which was quite substantial.

It seemed the evolution his bloodline had gone through, not only gave him an apparent improvement on his strength, but also continuously strengthened his body. Emery wondered if the growth would go on without limit or stopped at a certain point. Well, no matter which one was it, it would only bring him benefits regardless.

Suddenly, a weird thought flashed through his mind. Emery swiftly lifted up his clothes, revealing his upper body. And damn, he is no longer that frail weak boy anymore. Emery could clearly and vividly see his whole body had grown strong and compact muscles. And also, his abs looked fantastic.

Magus Xion could only wryly smile, when he saw Emery examine his own body with such concentration. He immediately coughed on purpose, causing Emery to stop his 'inspection'. When he realized what he had done, Emery couldn't help but be embarrassed.

cough

Emery awkwardly coughed to ease the atmosphere and swiftly changed the topic in hand, "Ehem. Master, I have a question regarding the third trial of Magus Game. No, rather than a question, it is a confusion."

"Hmm? Do tell, Emery." Magus Xion replied, taking a sip of tea.

"If it's a one on one duel format, then should I be at a huge advantage already? I could just transform into my fey wolf form and beat my opponents through sheer power, am I right? Even though I would lose my awareness, the only other person near me would be the opponent. Hence, there would be no chance of friendly fire, right?"

"Well, you could indeed do so... And maybe you would win. But hear me on how the duel will go first..."

Emery quickly perked his ears up when he heard that, ready to absorb any information Magus Xion blurted out.

"There will be 5 fights to decide the winners of the game. If you win one fight, you will fight another person who has also won their fight. Therefore, if you win all the fights, which are 5 matches, you will be placed in the top 20 of the group and be considered as a champion."

"Lose two times and you are out of the game. You will need at least 4 wins to be considered to enter the privileged class. However, the final decision, if they would take you as a disciple, still lies in the hands of the grand magus."

"Hence, there is a lot of uncertainty. However, there is one thing I can guarantee you will happen."

Emery turned serious when he heard that. After all, the expression currently seen on Magus Xion's face showed he wasn't kidding.

"I guarantee you that if you win the fights using your bloodline power, you will not be chosen to enter the privileged class. Even if you won all 5 fights and became the champion."

Upon hearing that, Emery was flabbergasted. Why? He was confused as to why Magus Xion was so sure he would not be even considered as an option if he used his bloodline power.

As if he knew what Emery was thinking, Magus Xion continued his words, "This place is after all a Magus Academy. Therefore, it's your talent in magic that matters the most, the grand magus will not be interested in an acolyte who only depends on the power of the bloodline. Do you understand?"

Emery swiftly nodded his head, indicating he understood the matter. Looking at Emery vigorously nodding his head, Magus Xion flashed a smile. And then, he continued, "Therefore, you need to wholly focus on improving your spells for the next 10 days."

"Based on what I have observed from your previous games, you already have a decent control on your spells. However, your casting speed is still too slow and there is still so much more room for you to improve your spell effectiveness."

Upon hearing that, Emery nodded, as he recalled what Gerri told him before, which was the same.

Magus Xion proceeded to explain what he should do for the next 10 days and Emery was gratefully listening to his explanations. It really was a big advantage to have a teacher to guide you in the right direction, especially for an acolyte from a lower realm like him, who knew nothing advanced.

"But, your current number one priority is getting to the rank 7. It will be an embarrassment to me and to the game, to have a rank 6 acolyte competing for the chance to enter the privileged class."

"Alas, you have one problem, one big main problem. Your awful B aptitude and your four element affinities. I still don't know if your situation is counted as extremely lucky or unlucky."

When he heard that, Emery could only release a long deep sigh. After all, he fully understood that having B aptitude and several elements would force him to spend more time in the origin stone rooms compared to other acolytes. Right now, Emery could only hope that 10 days would be enough to break through all his other three elements.

"You should have plenty of contribution points as rewards from the previous game, right? Hence, this is what we will be doing. You will be practicing your cultivation in the respective origin stone rooms during the day, while at night, you will be studying and improving your spell capabilities with me. Any questions or objections?"

"I have no objection, master. But I indeed have one question."

"Ooh? Ask away." Magus Xion said, reaching out of his hand and taking another sip of tea.

"What about sleep, master?" Emery asked with a grin on his face.

"Of course you can sleep, you are still human after all."

Magus Xion said, rolling his eyes. Emery was about to feel his burden was lifted, but then, he realized Magus Xion still not finished his words yet.

"You can sleep as much as you want after you break through rank 7."

"..."

Staring at Emery's dumbfounded face, Magus Xion asked with a flat expression, "Is there a problem?"

"Yes... I mean no! No, master. No problem." Emery replied with a wry smile.

"Good" Magus Xion nodded in satisfaction, "Alright, I need some time to prepare something for your training. So you better not waste any more time and go to one of those origin stone rooms today. I will see you at night for practice."

Emery was then swiftly shooed away by Magus Xion. As he walked out of the hut, Emery fell in deep thought, thinking from which element he should start.

From the remaining three elements he possessed: Water, Plant and Earth, Emery was the most proficient and confident with the plant element. Hence, he chose to start with that and swiftly made his way to the Plant Institute.

Emery spent half a day inside the Elder's Respite, home of the plant institution. And, as predicted, half a day was far from enough for him to have a breakthrough. When Emery walked out of the plant origin stone room, the day was already dark and he could see stars shining brightly in the sky.

Emery immediately returned to Magus Xion's residence and found the magus already preparing a cage with a small rat-like creature inside it. Sensing Emery had arrived, Magus Xion turned his body around and Emery can see the Magus's serious expression.

"Alright. Your training starts now!"

Chapter 227: Training Start

[Enfeeble Blade]

Emery channeled his spirit energy towards his darkness core, recited the spell command and directed the spell towards his hand. As a result, a familiar crescent black line started materializing in front of him, before it shot where his hand was aiming to. The darkish blade rapidly flew through the air and landed on a large boulder in the distance, creating deep gash on it.

Seeing the result of the spell, Emery nodded his head before a frown appeared in his head. It was unknown what he was thinking at the moment. Next, Emery proceeded to cast his water element offensive spell, [Steam Lance].

First, Emery concentrated his mind and slowly delved his consciousness deep inside him, as he tried to connect his will with the water element spirit energy within his body. When he found the energy, he quickly guided it towards his darkness core and made it flow through his core. Just like before, Emery immediately activated the spell command and casted the spell.

This time, billows of water vapor quickly emerged out of thin air before they coalesced together. The vapors rapidly formed into a sharp-looking lance-like construct. When the construct was stabilized, Emery threw it towards the same boulder he struck before. The lance zoomed in the air before it struck above deep gash on the boulder, causing only a small dent on it.

It was extremely clear Emery's darkness offensive spell was several times more powerful than his water element spell, this revelation made him frown deeply. Fortunately, the frown didn't last long, as Emery quickly relaxed his body. But still, he shook his head dejectedly.

Emery had tried to combine both spells in an attempt to create a new combined water and darkness elements spell. Alas, the previous attempts resulted in failure. So did this time, where the same result showed up. Indeed, not all spells could be easily combined.

As the pitch-black darkness of the night was illuminated by some kind of magical items, Magus Xion and Emery could be seen at the large courtyard in the forest behind Xion's hut. The magus told Emery to cast all the spells he was able to cast from his repertoire. All of this in order to let Magus Xion review his current capabilities.

"To cast a spell faster is all about concentration, Emery." Magus Xion stated, as he took a sip of tea he brought out of nowhere together with a table. "You need to focus quickly and cast it without hesitation."

Magus Xion calmly put the tea cup on the table. He then rose from the chair and approached Emery. "After seeing all your spells, it is obvious to me your combined element spells will be your most valuable asset. Hence, our goal will be training them to make sure you can cast those spells much faster. Much, much faster."

The magus walked past Emery and lowered his body, as he grabbed the small cage where the rat-like creature was trapped. He then calmly opened the cage door and took out the animal before he shoved it to Emery.

"This cute little thing is called Thundermouse."

As Magus Xion said that, Emery could see a palm-size rat-like creature dangling in the magus's hand. It had short, thin fur that looked soft and a tail shaped weirdly like a lightning. At first glance, it indeed looked cute. Heck, Emery even wanted to cuddle the little thing.

But when the animal spun around and faced towards Emery, it suddenly turned agitated and bared its mouth, showing dozens of sharp teeth. Emery was so shocked he unconsciously took a step back. He swiftly wiped imaginary sweat off his forehead and looked at Magus Xion, only to find out the man was smiling.

"I-Indeed... Such a cute animal..." Emery replied, laughing nervously.

Xion deliberately ignored Emery's attempt to look tough and took another item from his storage ring. It was a small brown-colored cube with many exotic engravings on its surface.

Before Emery could ask what it was, Magus Xion swiftly threw the cube to the ground. When it landed, it immediately transformed itself and swiftly grew into a cube-shaped structure around 5 meters tall and 50 meters long in a matter of seconds.

While Emery was amazed by that sight, Magus Xion stepped forward first as he beckoned Emery, "Don't freeze and stand there. Let's go inside."

Emery finally got out of his stupor and swiftly followed his master entering the cube. As he stepped inside, Emery was surprised to see the interior being brightly lit, as if there was a sun inside it.

Emery tried to find the source of the light, but he gave up after several seconds.

He swept his gaze around as he scanned the interior. The inside was empty and there were several windows on the walls made from a transparent material, but Emery didn't notice the windows from the outside. So, they must have been made of a very special material.

"Emery, this will be your training room." Magus Xion said, as he looked at the curious Emery.

The magus then released the thundermouse. In the blink of an eye, before it could land on the floor, the creature rapidly flew around the room at a breakneck speed, so fast Emery almost couldn't see it. At one moment, he saw the creature on the floor at the other end of the room. When he blinked his eye again, Emery found the creature gone.

"Let me guess, master. You want me to catch the creature?"

"Exactly, Emery."

At first, Emery thought the training would be hard, looking at the stake of the game. But seeing the creature, even though it was able to fly and really fast at that, Emery was very confident with his speed. Especially with this confined space, Emery believed he would eventually catch this rat-looking creature.

"Okay. Should I start now, master?" Emery said, as he took his running pose. He was about to speed forward when Magus Xion suddenly stopped him, causing him to comically stop his leg and stumbled to the ground.

"No, no, no, Emery. You will not catch it with your hand." Magus Xion said with a smile. "In fact, you aren't allowed to move a step at all. You will try to catch it using one of your combined spells, your favorite one, [Shadow Root Binding]."

Emery was startled, no, stunned. The difficulty of the training had just become a dozen times harder. Fortunately, Emery understood Magus Xion's goal, so he didn't complain.

[Shadow Root Binding] was indeed the best spell he had to practice his concentration. It would train his spirit power, as it needed continuous channeling after casting and it would also train his concentration a lot, as he had to use his will to order the roots. This spell was also a combined element spell, therefore he could also get used to channeling his spirit energy through two elements.

"Do you understand my intent now, Emery?"

"Yes, master."

"Good." Magus Xion said, as he took a sip of tea that had appeared without Emery noticing. "Now let's see how long it will take you to catch it with the spell. When you are able to catch it, you will release it and repeat the training again. Remember, don't hurt the little thing."

After that, Xion walked out of the place, leaving Emery with the creature flying around.

When Emery turned his body around, he saw the creature had stopped several meters away from him, observing him. He could also swear the creature seemed to understand its purpose here and deliberately taunted him, before it disappeared again.

Imaginary veins popped on Emery's forehead and without further due, he started casting the spell. [Shadow Root Binding]

Chapter 228: Thundermouse

After countless attempts, Emery found that catching the little creature was apparently much harder than he thought. Emery already gave up trying to catch the thing only using one root. It was simply impossible with his current proficiency of the spell.

Hence, he attempted the task with two roots instead of one. The roots came from both sides of the creature, trying to trap it. Alas, the little thing even managed to slip by with that setup, proving the job was extremely difficult.

Emery needed a lot of focus to just channel the spell and order one root into moving, and it was even harder for Emery to control both at the same time. The lightning fast speed the little creature exhibited also did not help in his endeavor.

While Emery was tortured by the little creature, he couldn't help but think that fighting against Lodos or Micah was preferable to this.

Without Emery realizing it, the sun was already rising at the horizon and slowly making its way up the sky, signifying the end of today's spell training. Even so, Emery was still unable to catch the little creature. Not even one time.

Emery laid down on the ground, beaten up and exhausted due to the training. He closed his eyes and rested for a while, before he rose up and walked towards the door. Emery turned his head to take a last glance, only to find out the little creature was five meters away from him.

The gesture the little creature showed annoyed Emery, as he was sure the creature was still taunting him. Emery also swore he could hear the slippery creature laugh at him with its piercing squeaks.

Calming his mind and dragging his somewhat exhausted body, Emery immediately went to Elder's Respite and spent the entire day cultivating inside the origin stone room.

[1000 contribution points used]

With today and yesterday's used contribution points, Emery still had 86,650 contribution points in his pocket. That amount was abundant enough to let him use the origin stone room until the last day of his second year at the academy. But currently, instead of resources, Emery's main problem was time. There were only 9 days until the third game and he needed to reach rank 7 acolyte with that amount of time.

-

Emery spent 8 hours in the origin stone room, sitting in lotus position and learning to absorb and cultivate his understanding of the plant element.

Plant Element, an element that was associated with life. Emery concentrated his mind, as he tried to delve into the true meaning of the element, hoping he would reach an epiphany.

Alas, despite spending the whole day inside the room, Emery was still unable to break through. But he surely increased his understanding of the element by a large amount.

Emery immediately returned back to the training cube and once again practiced with the thundermouse. And to his surprise, Emery felt he was able to control the roots faster and more precisely. However, he was unsure if it was his increased proficiency with the spell or his increased understanding of the plant element that allowed him to do so.

Even though Emery was still unable to catch the creature, at least this time he was able to wipe away the creature's arrogant attitude.

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Day 3

After three days of continuous cultivation in the origin room, Emery finally broke through the next rank in the plant element.

[Emery Ambrose]

[Plant Spirit - mid foundation]

[Water Spirit - early foundation]

[Earth Spirit - early foundation]

As he reached the mid stage, Emery could perceive the power and control he had over the plant element had increased by a huge margin. And with this increased power, he was ready to catch the slippery rat.

During the night practice with the beloved rat, Emery felt the [Shadow Root Binding]'s roots were much more easier to control than before. Therefore, Emery swiftly casted the spell and ordered the roots to move upon his will, surrounding the thundermouse.

Within five minutes, the little creature was finally captured, as its body was entangled by two darkish roots emerging from the ground. Slowly, Emery ordered the roots to rise into the air, until the captured mouse was at level of his eyes.

As he walked closer to the now helpless creature, to his surprise, the once arrogant and annoying little creature has turned into a pitiable, asking for mercy with its two big eyes.

"Good job, Emery." Magus Xion, who had just appeared out of nowhere, said with a smile.

"Because of your breakthrough in the plant element, the challenge has become too easy for you. Therefore, we will increase the difficulty."

Emery realized the magus had come with another cage and released two more identical thundermouse. Emery reluctantly released the captured thundermouse and it immediately ran again, followed by its two new companions and started taunting him again. The three small creatures looked exactly the same and it seemed the newly two also shared the first's arrogant attitude.

Emery wonders with its annoying attitude, this creature really is the most brilliant training partner.

Immediately after, Emery casted three shadow roots, one for each of them. Unfortunately for Emery, the three creatures were heading towards different directions. Shaking his head, he could only order the roots to split up and go after them. Thanks to that, it became even more difficult for Emery to catch the creatures.

Emery immediately casted the spell to his current maximum ability. Two more roots emerged from the floor and chased after the creatures. But when he tried to control all five, the speed of the roots decreased by a lot.

Moreover, the thundermice were zooming all over the confined space making the difficulty of catching them shot to the sky. There was even one time his roots were entangled with each other because the thundermouses' paths intersected with each other. A new level of challenge that Emery needs to solve.

On the morning of the fourth day, Emery once again lay flat on the ground, defeated. Meanwhile, the three thundermouses already stopped their crazy streaks and watched the laying Emery with arrogant posture, including the first thundermouse.

Emery was so exhausted he unconsciously fell asleep. An hour later, he was woken up from his sleep by a notification.

[Apprentice, the apothecary exam will be held today, if you wish to participate, come before noon.]

Emery slapped his forehead as he read the message. All these matters of the game surely made him forget about the apothecary exam. It was said to be held once every month and it had been three weeks since Cedric told him about the exam.

This announcement did give him a headache. After all, currently he was really busy with his training in preparation of the game. Should he just wait for the next month's exam?

Emery swiftly walked out of the room and looked for Magus Xion, as he wanted to consult with him on this matter. Surprisingly, Magus Xion's response to the matter was not what Emery expected.

"You can go, Emery. Actually, you should go." Magus Xion answered calmly.

"Eh? Why, master? Isn't the game important?"

"The game is indeed important. But if you are able to become a successful artisan, your value would be even higher than becoming a magus."

Emery nodded his head, showing he understood. He turned around and was about to walk away when a question suddenly flashed in his mind, "By the way master, will there be limitations on weapons or equipment in the third game?"

"No, there aren't. You are good as long as you don't use anything higher than tier 3."

"What if I use potions? Will it be alright then?"

Magus Xion thought for a second before saying, "It should be fine as long as it's still no more than tier 3 classification. But if it isn't your own making then it's the same case as the bloodline, it will not catch the attention of the grand magus."

Upon hearing that, Emery looked even more forward for the exam. At the end of the day, Emery always found the apothecary to be what he enjoyed the most.

Today, on the fourth day, Emery decided to take a break from his training and go to Golden City for his apothecary exam.

In the end, thank you all so much for all the support you guys gave me!

Chapter 229: Apothecary Exam

Golden City

As he walked out of the portal and entered the massive and magnificent city, Emery couldn't help but be amazed. Despite already having visited this city several times, Emery always found himself gasping in wonder by the bustling and lively spectacle it offered.

Unfortunately, Emery would not be able to enjoy the sight today, as he had very limited time. He needed to rush for the exam appointment that would be held in a few hours. And, as if that wasn't enough, he knew nothing about the exam's rules nor procedures.

Emery indeed learnt a lot from his mother's book collections and from granny's medical expertise during his time with her. He also did a few of his own experiments on the subject. However, apart from those things, Emery had no real study or formal education about apothecary.

During his time in the academy, Emery had been so busy as his attention had been split up between his cultivation, spells and acolyte competition, leaving him no time to think about other things. If Emery didn't receive the notification regarding the incoming exam, he would have probably missed it completely.

Therefore, he had no improbable expectation, like succeeding the exam with a good score on his first try. Even though Emery thought of that, barely passing was surely better than failing in his book.

Emery swiftly went through the rowdy streets and headed straight to Institute of Apothecary. When he arrived at the place, Emery's eyes were greeted by three towering buildings situated like a triangle.

Emery made his way towards the one on the back, the apprentice building. As he walked inside the building, to his surprise, Emery found there were nearly a hundred or more people gathered in the main hall. All of them looked extremely focused and tense.

These people were most likely apprentices like him who came for the exam. However, Emery noticed something odd among them, to be more precise their attire. Only one third of the people here who wore the same uniform as him.

Not sure what to do amidst this sea of people, Emery decided to roam the seventh floor to find Cedric. Alas, his effort only resulted in finding only another apprentice who told him Cedric was currently going through his exam. Only then Emery recalled the fifth rank exam Cedric wanted to take was scheduled today.

Shaking his head inwardly and thanking the apprentice, Emery returned to the main lobby. As he looked at those people, who wore a different attire from him, he couldn't help but turn worried.

Hence, to make sure he didn't do anything wrong, Emery went to the reception desk where a dwarf was seen attending it.

"Excuse me, I came for the apprentice exam. Am I in the right place?"

"Yes, you are. You and all these people here want to take the exam. That will be 10,000." The dwarf said with a smile.

Emery's brain short-circuited for a moment when he heard that number. "W-Wait... What? I'm sorry. Did I just hear that wrong? 10,000? As in spirit stones?"

"Yes. hand me 10,000 spirit stones for the exam fee."

"Why is the exam fee so expensive?" Emery asked in disbelief.

"The exam fee is determined by the ingredients used for the exam and they aren't cheap at all. So pay up if you want to take the exam, or bug off." The dwarf sternly said.

Emery was flabbergasted, as he knew nothing about this outrageous exam fee. To make matters worse, he didn't have any spirit stones. He spent most of his spirit stones purchasing the spirit serums and he had only 300 of them left at the moment.

Noticing the awkward expression on Emery's face, the dwarf seemed to know what was going on and said, "You can also pay using your contribution points."

When he heard that, Emery hesitated for a moment, as he understood that contribution points were worth much more than spirit stones of equal value. However, he was swimming-, no, drowning with contribution points at the moment. Hence, he thought it would be fine to do so.

Emery was about to pay the exam fee when a young man with a similar uniform approached him and tapped his shoulder, "Don't forget to say you are in the elite class." the young man said with a smile.

Upon hearing the young man's words, the expression on the dwarf's face changed a little. "Aah, you should have said so from the beginning, young man." the dwarf hurriedly said, earning him a confused gaze from Emery.

"An elite class acolyte's first rank exam will be paid by the academy. In short, it's free."

Emery was dumbfounded when he heard that. Meanwhile, the dwarf checked his identity through the database. When it proved Emery was an elite acolyte, the dwarf quickly gave him a metal slip, as a symbol of his participation in the exam. Emery was still stunned, as all of this was happening.

When the dwarf handed out the metal slip to Emery, who received it absentmindedly, he also added, "You can also receive your tools for the exam from the apothecary store. Oh, it's also free."

Emery was shocked, truly shocked. Such a different treatment and he was only an elite acolyte! This event made him wonder what kind of treatment he would receive if he became a privileged class acolyte.

Turning around, Emery did not forget to thank the young man for his reminder. If the young man didn't indirectly tell the dwarf Emery was an elite acolyte, Emery would have spent his contribution points meaninglessly. True, the amount of points spent wouldn't be much compared to what he had now. But it was still resources and they weren'tt easy to get.

"Thank you for your help."

"No problem, it was a simple matter. By the way, I am Sabil, from class 92, a regular acolyte just like the previous you."

Hearing that, Emery was startled. The youth before him seemed to know him, but Emery did not remember meeting him before.

"Do you know me?"

The young man laughed when he heard that, as if Emery's question was the funniest joke. "Hahaha, of course I know you. Right now, you are the hot topic among the regular acolytes circles. You are Emery, the savage acolyte."

Emery's mind froze for a second when he heard the last part, "S-Savage acolyte?"

"Yeah. That's your title, given because of your feats in the last game."

Emery was unsure about his feelings regarding this new title of his. It was also the first time for him to be considered famous. So, he could only make a wry smile.

A moment later, Emery spotted a little girl walking towards the reception desk while shouldering a worn-out bag that looked full of something. When she reached the counter, the girl opened the bag and Emery could see yellow spirit stones, lots of them.

The girl looked at the stones very carefully, then gave the bag to the dwarf with much caution. When the dwarf finished counting the stones and went ahead to process the girl's data, she breathed a long sigh of relief.

Noticing Emery's gaze at the girl, Sabil explained, "She is a participant from outside the academy.

When he noticed Emery's puzzled gaze, he continued, "There are only 30 acolyte from academy who will be joining the exam, the rest are people from outside the academy."

Finally, Emery realized why there were so many people with different attires. Apparently, they weren't from the academy. No wonder.

Emery then bid goodbye to Sabil and headed towards the apothecary store. There, he received his free apothecary tools, courtesy to the benefit of the elite class.

[Beginner Cauldron]

[Beginner Mortar and Pestle]

Emery himself already bought these tools before, so this was his second set. However, having an extra was always a good thing. When he was about to walk away, Emery realized the same little girl was crying and begging to the acolyte who attended the store.

"Please! Can I borrow the tools just for the exam? Please... Please... Please..." the little girl begged, bawling her eyes out.

Alas, the acolyte only coldly glared at her and said, "No! You country bumpkin should know this rule. You can always come back next month!"

"Bu- But... I already paid for the exam! Please, please, please..."

Suddenly, a set of tools she was asking for was put on the table, startling her. The girl then turned her head to the side, only to find Emery who was already turned around.

"You can have that one." Emery said, before he left the store.

"Thank you, brother. Thank you..." The girl was grateful and etched the figure of the young man who just helped her inside her mind.

The 100 participants were gathered inside the hall and the exam was about to start. Emery was completely clueless about what the exam will be about.

Chapter 230: Identification

The group was taken to the top of the apprentice building, where the exam was going to be held. There was nothing other than them and the subtle sounds of gears turning around them, nonetheless the cage took them to their destination without a hitch.

Every time Emery went to the Golden City, he couldn't help but feel utter amazement. It must have taken a significant amount of effort to create such marvels with machines.

For most of his life, Emery was always interested in crafts. He always wanted to take the things he saw here apart and saw firsthand how each component interacted with the others to create the results he currently saw.

On one hand, Emery did realize he really needed to get used to the wonders he saw here quickly to not embarrass the other lower world acolytes every time he came. However, as if fate itself wanted to give an answer to his decision, Emery ended up gasping again when he arrived at the top floor of the building.

The top of the building contained a magnificent garden in the form of a huge, circular room. Windows formed from clusters of glass sheets could be seen throughout the ceiling, some of them were opened, while some others closed in order to regulate the light of the area. The place was so huge; Emery was unable to spot the corner of the room. He was sure the place was much bigger than the ground floor area of the apprentice building.

His mind scrambled to think of ways to achieve this feat. Did he and everyone else get transported here without any of them realizing?

The room was divided into several different biomes, each with different climates. From here, Emery was able to see the entrance to the tundra, forest, grassland and desert. The diversity was enough to give Emery the impression of the room being a way to create a miniature planet within an enclosed space.

One hundred participants were all gathered in a small hall standing right in front of the entrance to each biome. When they arrived, there were already some senior apprentices, people with artisan uniforms and one person wearing a master's clothing waiting for them.

After everyone gathered, the person wearing the master's clothing finally introduced himself. "I am Master Anmir, I will be your lead examiner today. For this session's rank 2 exam, there will be 105 participants."

From the information given to them, it seemed all the participants were either already members of apothecary institutes, or they at least had a master or sponsor supporting them.

"The first exam will involve identification. From this test, we will see how much each of you know about herbs, their uses and how they interact in a concoction."

Emery frowned upon hearing the explanation of the exam. He was confident of his abilities, but knowledge of herbs clearly was not his strong suit.

"Do not worry, for the exam will be easy and simple, relatively speaking." Anmir waved his hand and within moments, a table with a hundred storage rings appeared right in front of them. Each ring looked identical, without any distinguishing features separating one ring from the other.

"In this exam, each of you will take one ring and examine the kind of items put in there. Each ring has several items and your task is to find all the necessary plants required to create the items you have. You will be required to find about 20 different plants and your passing grade for this exam will be 90%. Do you all understand?"

Ninety percent grade. In other words, those who wanted to pass the exam were required to find at least 18 out of the 20 different ingredients used to create the item. The number sounded high for Emery, but it seemed all of the apprentices within the group found it easy, as they sighed in relief. Among those relieved at the requirement, Emery saw Sabil, the young acolyte that helped him before.

"Emery, I know you are stronger, and you are a much more talented fighter than me. However, remember I was born for this. I will never, ever admit defeat to the likes of you."

In face of competition, Sabil appears to change completely. Before Emery was able to utter a retort, the head examiner shouted. "The participants who manage to find all 20 required items will be given rewards! Your time is three hours, if there are no further questions, the exam starts... now!"

Right as the words left Master Anmir's lips, the surroundings instantly became much noisier. Like rabid dogs released right in a field full of meat, every participant rushed forward, grabbed one ring and jumped inside one of the four biomes without stopping let alone considering their next move.

The situation seemed to affect Emery, as he found himself rushing to grab one of the rings. However, unlike them, he took the time to examine the ring carefully and took out its contents. From inside the ring, Emery was able to retrieve five items, with three in the form of potions, and the remaining two in the form of pills.

Each and every rank one apprentice was given the spell [Analyze] and [Universal Flora Knowledge] right as they joined the institute. With the help of those two skills, the exam would be a bit easier.

[Analyze]

The first potion took the form of white liquid, with a surface that bubbled and exploded without a pattern, similar to boiled water, though not quite as fast.

[Babbling Beverage – Tier 1]

[When imbibed, this potion causes an uncontrollable urge to speak nonsense.]

In contrast to the first potion, the second potion was black with a consistency similar to melted rubber or even tar. When Emery tried to tilt the bottle, the liquid inside took some time to tilt along, as if the laws of physics did not affect it at all.

[Dogbreath Potion – Tier 2]

[When imbibed, this potion would give the drinker a fiery breath.]

The third potion seemed to gleam under the light, reflecting brilliant gold into the room. However, under closer scrutiny, the liquid seemed to be transparent even though it was able to reflect light with such intensity.

[Wideye Potion – Tier 2]

[When imbibed, Prevents the drinker from falling asleep. Also awakens from drugging or concussion.]

Emery glanced at the last two items. They were a pair of differently colored pills, each a stark contrast from the other. As with the potions, he used his [Analyze] skill on the two pills as well.

[Memory Pill – Tier 2]

[When imbibed enhance the drinker's memory.]

Emery tried to analyze the last one, but then he glanced at the notification from his mind in slight shock.

[? – Tier ?]

[No information received. To receive information, you require rank 2 [Analyze] skill along with rank 2 [Universal Flora Knowledge].

Emery furrowed his brows, worry crept into his thoughts. Was he supposed to buy those two aforementioned items before he came for the exam?

From how a similar unreadable text would appear when Emery tried to use his skill for analyzing the tier 3 plant before, Emery was able to conclude the item ingredients must be a tier-3 one. The realization, if anything, made him even more anxious. He was unable to analyze any part of the ingredients required to create the fifth item. Meanwhile, even among the four lower tier items he could use his Analyze skill on, he found out that two ingredients were also listed as 'unknown'.

Not all was lost, for luckily Emery knew [Fragmentation], a powerful and rare plant element spell.