

# To Raise A Black Mage

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*A Red Mage named Vincent helps a White Mage named Lucrecia, and then finds himself becoming a father figure to her younger brother, an inexperienced Black Mage named Vivi.*

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**Chapter 1 - My Name Is Lucrecia**

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# 1 - My Name Is Lucrecia

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The small tavern in Cornelia was almost empty, with only a few patrons at the smooth tables. Vincent lifted the edge of his brimmed hat from his eyes and looked around. Must have dozed off, he thought to himself. He stood up and stretched, then looked out the window to see a newly risen moon. Traveling last night had tired him out, but he didn't think he would have actually fallen asleep in a tavern.

He placed a tip on the counter for the bar tender, then stepped outside into the cold night air. Winter was coming on, the chill in the air was a clear sign, and when the winter hit, Vincent hoped to be back home on Crescent Isle.

He turned a corner to get to the inn, and was about to reach the door when he heard the sound of voices nearby.

"Please, this money is for his birthday! Don't take it!" a young woman's voice said.

"Now, now, my little poppet," a rough voice answered, "I'm sure that your brother would like for me to have this money. See, today's my birthday too," it answered with a nasty chuckle. Vincent rolled his eyes. He knew that he should just walk away and let the situation play out on its own, but he couldn't help but feel a little sorry for the victim, so he looked around the building and saw a young woman backed against the side of the building, with a brutish man in front of her. The man had a small dagger against her throat, and his hand extended towards the small purse in the woman's hand.

Vincent drew his rapier from under his red cloak as he approached silently, and tapped it on the shoulder of the crook. The brute turned around and saw Vincent standing before him.

"What you want," the man demanded, "Can't you see's I'm busy `ere?"

"I can see that you're busy, so I'll make this brief," Vincent said quietly, the pulled back and punched the man squarely in the jaw, knocking the man back on his rear. The woman quietly said thanks, then ran and hid behind a barrel.

"You gonna regret doing that, mate," the man said, standing to his feet. He ran at Vincent, his dagger waving wildly. Vincent just stood there, and when the man got close, a quick flick of his own blade knocked the dagger away. The man found the tip of Vincent's blade against his heart, and he gulped hard.

Vincent said nothing at first, and lowered his blade. The man started to back away, but Vincent wasn't finished. He extended his left hand, then simply said, "Burn." A large ball of fire sent the man sprawling to the ground, smoke rising from his unconscious form.

Vincent sheathed his sword, then turned and saw the woman he had saved. In the light of the inn's windows, he saw her clothes. She was dressed in a long white robe, trimmed in blue, with long brown hair that fell down around her shoulders.

"You're a red mage aren't you," she asked, looking at Vincent's clothes and hat.

"Yes," he answered, "And you're a white mage?"

"Yes," she replied, "but enough about that, thank you so much for saving me. I don't know what I would have done if he had stolen my money. If there's anyway I can thank you, just ask. I would even be willing to offer you a place to stay for the night. It's the least I can do for saving my skin back there."

"I suppose," Vincent agreed, then followed her back to her home. As they walked, Vincent felt somewhat obligated to ask her a question.

"So, what are you doing out this late? It's not exactly safe."

"I know, but, it's the only time I could a gift for my brother without him knowing."

"I thought I heard you say that. Is he away?"

"No, he's at home, probably asleep. He's only thirteen."

"Really," Vincent said. "So what were trying to get him, if I may ask?"

"Well, I was going to get him some texts. You see, he's a black mage, but he's just started, so he doesn't know many spells, so I was going to get some books for him to study."

"Well, you're not going the right way," Vincent pointed out as they approached a small house. It had two floors, and looked like it belonged to a wealthy family, though it seemed a bit under-repaired and run down.

"Yes, but I could get them tomorrow," she answered as she unlocked the door and opened it. "I'll just have to go before he wakes up."

The two stepped inside the humble abode, and a small, dying fire in the fire place greeted them. The house was cozy, and very clean, with bunches of dried lavender and rosemary hanging from the rafters.

"I've never met a red mage," she said as she took of her cloak and hung it on a rack by the door. Vincent did like wise with his cloak and hat as he looked around at the bare surroundings. There were only a couple small stools and a table in the living room, and just a few pots and pans near the stove in the open kitchen.

"Is it hard to become a red mage," the woman asked as she sat on one of the stools and took a kettle from above the fire.

"In a way, because it can be difficult to mix the powers of healing and destruction, so one must

strengthen their body to withstand the harsh energy mixtures.”

“How fascinating,” she said as she poured some tea for herself. “Tea?”

“Thank you,” Vincent answered politely, though he didn't particularly like tea. She offered him the other stool, and as he sat down, he noticed a stack of papers on the table. The papers were covered with symbols, most of which were smudged or unreadable.

“By the way,” the woman said, “My name is Lucrecia.”

“Vincent,” Vincent answered, “Lucrecia, that name sounds familiar.”

“It was my mother's name, and she was a royal black mage, whereas my father was a royal white mage. So you may have heard her name at some point.”

“That's interesting,” Vincent said after taking a sip of tea. It wasn't too bad, but he would have preferred a glass of wine.

“They died together in the last war,” she said quietly, “So I was the one who took care of my brother for the past five years.”

“Where did you get these texts,” Vincent asked, putting down his cup and picking up the stack.

“Those are just bits and pieces of books that were our mother's. She had a small collection of spells, but they were lost during the war. These were all the soldiers that knew her could find. My brother uses those to study with, though they are very difficult for him to read because of the damaged text.”

“I may have some he could use-“

“No!” Lucrecia said suddenly, causing Vincent to jump slightly. “I mean, no, that's not necessary. I'm sorry, but people have been offering us sympathy acts for years, and I'm tired of it.”

“Understandable,” Vincent nodded. He knew the feeling, when people think you aren't capable of taking care of yourself, you feel like a child.

The two talked long into the night, and when Vincent had retired to the small spare room, he felt sorry for Lucrecia and her brother, not because of their circumstances, which Lucrecia seemed to have a handle on, but because of the way they were forced into the circumstances.

Vincent slept peacefully that night, and awoke before dawn the next day, hoping to sneak out before the siblings were awake. He still had a way to go, so he didn't have time for good-byes. He left a note of thank-you on the pillow, then crept downstairs. When he came around the corner, he was met with a surprise.

In the kitchen, drinking a cup of milk, was a young boy, about thirteen. His face was completely overshadowed by the brim of his steeple-point hat, and he wore blue robes that seemed almost too big for him. He also had on a pair of green and white striped breeches and brown boots.

When the boy saw Vincent, his eyes widened and he dropped his cup.

“Who are you?” The boy shouted, scared out of his wits.

“I’m just-“ but before Vincent could answer, the boy cried, “Fire!” A small group of sparks flew from his hands and died harmlessly in the air before ever reaching their target. The boy stood there, frustrated at the failure of the spell, but tried it again, seeing, once again, the same results.

By this time, Vincent had crossed his arms and watched the boy try his best to cast the simple spell, but when the boy saw that this was not working the way he had hoped, he gave up and ran towards the stranger. Unfortunately, he had spilled milk on the floor, and when he ran forward, he slipped on the puddle and fell on his face, right in front of Vincent. His hat flew off and landed at Vincent's feet, while his knees were still in the milk.

“What's going on down here?” they heard Lucrecia's voice call as she came down the stairs. She turned the corner and saw the mess, then looked at Vincent, then at her brother who was standing up slowly so he wouldn't slip again.

“Sister,” the boy cried, “there's a burglar!”

“He's not a burglar,” she explained, coming over and helping him clean up his mess, “He helped me last night and had nowhere to stay, so I let him use the spare room. You were asleep last night when we came in.”

“Oh,” the boy said sadly. “I was hoping I would get to protect you for once.”

“It was a good try,” Vincent lied. He picked up the boy's hat and gave it back to him. When his hat was off, the boy had a head of wavy, dark brown hair and almost golden looking eyes.

“Vincent, I would like for you to meet my brother, Vivi. Vivi, this is Vincent.”

“It's nice to meet you,” Vivi mumbled embarrassedly. He brushed off his robes and pants, then turned to his sister. “Sister, may I please go practice? I've already finished my breakfast and my chores. Please may I go? Please?”

“Very well,” Lucrecia sighed, sounding like a mother, “But don't wander too far from town, and if you see any monsters, you know what to do.”

“Thanks sis',” Vivi said, then bounded out the door.

“Sometimes, I don't know what to do with him,” Lucrecia said quietly as she watched him go out the door.

“He seems like a good lad,” Vincent commented as he put on his cloak and hat.

“Where are you going?” Lucrecia asked, startled by his leaving.

"I have a long road ahead of me," he explained, "So I need to get started immediately."

"Well, alright," she said, sounding somewhat disappointed, "If you must. But, don't you want something to eat before you leave?"

"No, I'm fine," Vincent answered. He started to walk out the door, when Lucrecia approached him. She stood close, and spoke quietly.

"Vincent, do you think you could help him?" she asked.

"Who?"

"Vivi," she said, "You're a red mage, so you know some black spells. I can't help him, because I'm a white mage, and he really needs help."

"I could tell," Vincent said, trying to find the right words to say, "That fire spell was...weak."

"Tell me about it," Lucrecia sighed, "Now I don't need you to stay long, just long enough for you to teach him the absolute basics. Please, will you do this? It would mean the world to him."

Vincent looked at his hat, and thought about it. One more day wouldn't put him behind schedule, and the kid was pretty sad when it came to magic.

"Alright," Vincent agreed, and Lucrecia's face brightened considerably.

"Thank you so much," she said happily, "This will also give me time to get his books. Thank you so much."

Vincent placed on his hat and stepped out the door into the dawn's light. He sighed when he thought about what he had gotten himself into this time, but decided that it would be for the best. Who knows, Vincent thought to himself, this kid may become a great sage someday, and then I can say I'm the one that got him started. Vincent smiled at the thought, then went to find Vivi.

Lucrecia watched the man walk out the door. She thought about how strange the whole thing was, her asking an almost complete stranger to teach her brother, but then decided that it would like getting a tutor for him. She shrugged her shoulders and headed off to the Black Magic shop.

"Fire," Vivi shouted again, this time only getting wisps of smoke from his hands. He had been trying this for fifteen minutes straight, and each try had been worse than the last. Finally, he threw his hands in the air and sat down against a tree, pouting at his inability.

"You'll never get it if you give up," he heard a voice say. Vivi looked around, then saw Vincent leaning against the other side of the tree.

"Easy for you to say," Vivi replied, "You're all grown up, and have had lots of practice, and probably had someone to teach you."

“True,” Vincent nodded, “But, so do you.”

“Who? My sister doesn't teach me.”

“Me,” Vincent said, “I'm going to teach you.”

“You!?” Vivi asked, excitedly, jumping up from the ground.

“Indeed,” Vincent said, “And we can start with the number one rule in magic; Never cast until you can't.”

Vivi looked at him with a confused gaze, and Vincent saw he would have to explain. “What I mean is, when you're spouting smoke, it means you're out of mana, a situation you never want to be in when in battle.”

“Well, even when I have had a good night's rest, I wake up with no mana.”

“Then we need to try and strengthen that first. Now, to do that, we need to stretch your mental prowess. Everyone has mana; the determining factor on how is available is your mental strength to control it.”

“Well, how do we do that?”

“Have you ever played chess?”

“What's that?”

“It's an old game that helps you think. The more you think, the more mana, understand?”

“Oh, I get it,” Vivi answered, understanding the idea.

“Well then,” Vincent said, reaching into his pack. He had brought it with him when he left Lucrecia's home, knowing that the books he carried with him would be valuable in the lessons, but beside those, he also carried with him a small, wooden chess set. It had been a gift from his father, a black mage, who had taught Vincent everything he knew, at least in terms of black magic.

As he explained the game to Vivi, he noticed how attentive the young mage was. He asked questions, made comments and seemed very interested in the whole concept. Vincent recalled how bored he had been with chess, and how his father had tried so hard to teach him. Now, he was more than grateful for the lessons.

“So now, we start a game,” Vincent finished. He set up the pieces and Vivi where to place his, and then they commenced. Vincent had to explain the movement of the pieces a couple more times, and Vivi made some huge mistakes, but Vincent was very patient. He won all three games they played, and played, perhaps, a bit more difficult than he should have against a beginner, but he knew that Vivi had to stretch his thinking.

After they had finished, Vivi was smiling, even if he had lost miserably. "Now," Vincent said, reeaching into his pack again, "I want you to take this Ether, then try the spell again."

"Alright," Vivi said, gulping down the bitter mixture. He stood to his feet and outstretched his hand. "Fire," he cried, but did nothing more than a small spark.

"I think I see your problem," Vincent said thoughtfully. "You don't focus, you just cast. It's very important that you gather your mana first before trying to cast. Otherwise, you'll get minimal results. The more mana you put behind a spell, the better the results."

"Okay," Vivi said, starting to get fidgety. He wanted to get on with it, but knew that Vincent knew what he was talking about. He raised his hand again, but this time, closed his eyes and focused the mana within himself. He felt it, a small bit of energy around his heart, then it started to build, growing with each heart beat. It kept growing, and soon, he felt like his heart was going to pound out of his chest. Before it got any larger, he spoke the word, "Fire!"

A blast of flame shot from his hand, sending him backwards. The blast just missed Vincent and continued on until it struck a tree. The fire went out, but the tree bark that was struck was singed almost black. Vivi had rolled backwards, slammed against the tree behind him. He gazed at the stars in front of his eyes, then saw the blurry form of Vincent walking to him.

"You held it a bit too long, right?" he heard Vincent ask.

"Did I?"

"Yes," Vincent chuckled, helping the young man to his feet. "That amount of energy is meant for a Fira spell, so using that much for only a small Fire spell could be dangerous to someone who is unexperienced. You're actually pretty lucky."

"More then lucky!" Vivi added excitedly, "I'm a mage! I cast a spell! It worked, it worked!"

"It did, but now you need to learn how much is too much when it comes to mana release."

"I didn't realize there was so muany things to remember," Vivi pointed out, letting out a sigh.

"That is true," Vincent agreed, "But if you can do it, you will be a great mage."

The two continued on with the lessons until the sun started to set, and when they got back, Lucrecia had a small spread of food on the table by th fireplace.

"Happy birthday, Vivi!" she cried as he came through the door. Vivi's eyes grew bright, and he smiled up at his big sister.

"Oh, thank you, sister!" he said happily, running to the table. Vincent smiled at the pair, then turned to leave.

"Where do you think you're going?" he heard Lucrecia ask, "I made enough food for three, so you're



not leaving and let my cooking go to waste.”

“I really couldn't intrude,” Vincent answered, feeling that he had stayed long enough.

“No, really,” Lucrecia insisted, “Please stay.”

“Yes, please stay,” Vivi added.

Vincent sighed, then smiled. “Alright, I guess I can stay.”

Vivi cheered and Lucrecia smiled gratefully. The rest of the night was spent eating and talking, with Vivi and Vincent describing the lessons to Lucrecia. Finally, Lucrecia stepped out of the room for a moment and came back with a small cloth bundle. It was tied together with string, and a quite heavy, and Lucrecia sat it in front of Vivi. He carefully undid the string and cloth wrapping, and jumped with joy when he saw what was contained within. There in the center of the cloth was a stack of books, each one labeled with a different spell symbol. His face was turning red, and Vincent and Lucrecia smiled at one another. Even though he had known this family for less than a day, he already felt like a member. He felt a certain pride in seeing the young boy's enthusiasm and in Lucrecia's joy. So this is what a family feels like, he thought to himself. It seemed it had been so long since he had a family, he had forgotten the feeling.

“I have some good news as well,” Lucrecia said when the initial excitement had ended. “I have found work up north, on Crescent Isle.”

“What?!” Vivi and Vincent asked simultaneously, both equally surprised.

“Yes, it's true! The owner of the White Magic store up there is unable to run the shop anymore, and he had sent his son down here to find help. The son said that his father wanted someone from Cornelia, because of the royal mages here. Well, I told him that my father was a white mage and that I was looking for a job, so I got it!”

“But, how do you intend to get there?” Vincent asked, startled by the turn of events.

“Well, I thought we'd go on foot until we found a port. Then we could sail the rest of the way there.”

Vincent was shocked. This was awfully strange to meet someone going the same way he was, almost scary.

“When do we leave,” Vivi asked, “I heard there are sages there on Crescent Isle. I want to meet them!”

“Tomorrow,” Lucrecia explained, “If we hurry, we should be able to get there before winter.”

“Oh sister, this is fantastic!”

“Finally, a real means of income!” Lucrecia sighed happily as the two embraced. Although the scene was happy, Vincent felt sick.

As he got ready for bed, he thought once again on the turn of events. The only thing that really concerned him was the idea of what he should do. He knew that those two probably wouldn't be able to last very long in the world. He didn't doubt Lucrecia's healing abilities, but with only one person to defend the pair, they might not make it. It would be right to offer his companionship, but he really enjoyed traveling alone, and didn't want to have the other two hanging over him. He sighed as he fell asleep, his decision clear in his mind.

"So, because I'm traveling that way myself, I think that it would be best for me to accompany you; at least, if that's alright with you."

Lucrecia listened to Vincent's proposition the next morning, as she packed her few articles of clothing into a bag. He had come to her about this first thing, and it surprised her at how he was going to Crescent Isle himself. Still, it would be nice to have another person around for protection, for she knew she couldn't do it herself.

"Alright," she nodded, "I'm sure Vivi will be happy to hear it."

Vincent smiled, and she did likewise, then went to see how Vivi was coming along with his own packing. She found him in his room, sitting with his bag next to him on his bed. His face was down, and though she couldn't see his eyes under the brim of his hat, she could hear him crying. She sat down next to him on his bed and put her arm around him.

"What's wrong?" she asked quietly.

"It's...it's just that..," he sobbed, "I'm going to miss this place."

"Oh, I know," she comforted, "I will too, but this move is better for us. We can live in a nice house, with nice furniture now, and besides," she said, playing her trump card, knowing that this little bit of information would bring him out of his sad mood, "Vincent's home is in Crescent Isle, and he'll be traveling with us on the way there."

Vivi looked up at his sister, his eyes drying quickly. A big smile was on his face, and his eyes were sparkling. As she looked at him, she thought how young he acted, even for his age. He seemed to her that he was holding onto childish behavior, for at thirteen, she never would have been this upset. Still, he didn't have parents, neither of them did, and even though she was twenty-four, the thought of leaving the house she had lived in her entire life made her want to cry as well. Still, the prospect of a new, better life helped her through it. Getting to see Vincent all the time wasn't too bad either.