

SPELLCRAFT 1061

[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)

Chapter 1061: Ambush [Pt 1]

'How many markers are these? A dozen? No, they're more than that...'

My goggles were picking a lot of signals all around our group, making it clear that we were surrounded.

'What should we do? Pretend we haven't detected them yet? Should we see what they'll do?'

There were a few things to take into consideration when taking this sudden event into account, such as—

"We know you are there. Show yourselves!" Aria's voice suddenly interrupted my analytic line of thought, sending everything crashing down.

'Nooo! Why would you do that?' I nearly cried out, but held my thoughts deep inside me.

There was no point dwelling in regret now. I could only consider what to do now that Aria had revealed our knowledge of them.

'I mean... it's more reasonable that we would detect them, considering Aria's strength.'

"Hahahahahahaha... hahahahaha... haaaa..."

Suddenly, echoes of laughter began echoing from all around us.

I could hear cackles of amusement from multiple directions, almost as if the foes that surrounded us were scoffing at our little group.

'What's their deal?' I reached for my satchel, ready to utilize a tool if necessary.

Fortunately, our invisible watchers didn't remain invisible after Aria's declaration.

One by one, they began to materialize. In front of us, behind, to our lefts and to our rights, they were present.

Fortunately, there was some distance between our group and theirs, but it was clear we were outnumbered.

'Fifteen of them. Damn...'

And most unexpectedly of all, our adversaries had two common features that resonated with all of them.

Their silver-like white hair, and their pointy ears.

That's right...

They were all Elves!

'We're in trouble...' My thoughts trailed as I carefully stared at them.

The Elves all had orange markers—almost red. And the one who stood in front of us, donning a broad confident grin, was red!

She seemed like the leader, and her demeanor alone showed how much she trusted in her own strength.

'Looks like she's similar to Aria in strength. That's not good.'

Aria was the strongest among all of us. In power, she was unrivaled—thus making her our trump card.

Having so many enemies who could at least stand some modicum of a chance against her, and an adversary who was practically as strong as she was, made things a bit problematic.

I glanced at Aria and noticed her troubled expression. She was obviously shaken by the appearance of the Elves, most likely aware of their level of threat to her.

'Larry and Drake also appear worried. It seems they understand as well.'

"My name is Perena, daughter of the Elf Queen Kamilia!" The Elf in front of us declared, her grin widening as she stared at us with an obvious gleam of condescension.

"For your crimes against the Eastern Empire, and the threat you pose to the world, all four of you will be eliminated right here and now."

'I see. So that's what this is about.' I clenched my fist and glared at the Elves.

During my travels with Larry, Drake, and Aria, I got to know more about this world.

To be frank, the races were similar to mine. However, if there was something that made mine completely different from theirs... it was the level of corruption in this world.

'The Elves, the Beastfolk, and the Dwarves especially. They seem to be the ones running the world somehow.'

Aria and Drake found this out individually, and Larry had already suspected what was going on, before they eventually formed a team and decided to be outlaws.

'For the sake of the world? They probably just want to silence them so that they can continue running their activities without any disturbance.'

And for that reason, we had to be eliminated.

'Now that I know the truth, I'm part of that equation.'

"Sister, you have to see the truth already. You can't possibly think this is for the greater good—"

"Silence! I no longer consider you any sister of mine. No... I never did!"

'Sister, huh? I'm not entirely surprised.' I calmly thought.

Aria had the hair color that made me already suspect she was at least part royalty. She was an Half Elf, which meant her mother or father was of a different race.

She didn't like talking about her family, so I already had a feeling things were complicated.

The moment Perena and her allies appeared—all donning the same hair color, I already pieced most of it together.

'So she's the daughter of Queen Kamilia, huh?'

Aria had sometimes spoken about the leaders of the group that controlled everything—The Triumvirate—and she often addressed the Elf Queen with a special type of scorn.

I had initially thought it was due to both of them belonging to the same race, but after considering the other elements, and now that the truth was right in front of me, it made more sense that her mother was the Queen she hated so much.

'We don't have time for this, though...' I thought to myself while narrowing my gaze.

I needed to find a way to handle all fifteen of our adversaries at once.

'And I have to hurry!'

"Sister..." I watched Aria's downcast expression, noticing the hesitation in her eyes.

'She's not in the right headspace. None of the others have much combat expertise as well.'

It seemed like most of the burden of this confrontation would be on me.

"You are a disgrace to our Elfen heritage." I heard one of the fifteen Elves declare.

"Not only are you a Half Elf, but you dare go against our queen?" Another spoke.

"Tainted one!"

"Disgusting hybrid."

Echoes of several derogatory words emerged from the surrounding Elves, and the Aria who was usually so stern and strong-willed suddenly crumbled under their words.

'So she's been living under this prejudice for so long...'

I could only imagine how difficult it would have been for her growing up, rejected by those she would have called family.

How much willpower she would have had to defy her mother's authority and go against the corruption of the Eastern Kingdom.

Aria was stronger than I initially thought.

"You were merely a Half Elf, yet everyone dared to call you the strongest of our Race. I'll prove to you right here and now how foolish that is!" Perena snickered.

"You do not deserve the title of Grand Magic Swordsman! You do not deserve the title of the strongest! I'll show you right here and now... how inferior you are."

Aria's body trembled as she was battered by her sister's words. I could only see pain on her face.

"And when you're dead, I'll finally be able to claim my rightful place as the strongest. As the Queen's greatest blade!"

"SHUT UUUUUPPPP!!!" A loud voice echoed from among our group.

It came from none other than the Great Sage... Larry Damien.

"Aria don't listen to any of the words these fools are saying!" His voice roared and his face depicted genuine rage.

'That's a lot of energy...' I mused, smiling at the sight of Larry defending a fellow comrade.

"Aria is the greatest! The Grand Magic Swordsman." He proudly declared, causing smiles to form on my face as well as Drake's.

Aria's face cleared up as she looked at all of us with joyful surprise, her gleaming eyes particularly focused on Larry.

"Never forget that!"

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Chapter 1062: Ambush [Pt 2]

With a newfound determination burning in our eyes, Larry, Drake, and I rose to action.

"That's right, Aria! You're the strongest." Drake grinned widely.

"Perena just wants to kill you so she can be the new strongest." I added with a snicker.

Our voices of encouragement reached Aria, who seemed overcome with emotion as she stared at us.

"Y-you guys..."

"Larry, Drake, let's do this," I commanded, my gaze piercing through the mass of silver-haired Elves surrounding us.

'Why did I just say that? None of them can even fight...' I swiftly thought to myself.

It was one thing to support the actual fighter among us, and it was another to leap into action.

Larry responded with a nod, determination etching his usually jovial features. Drake, however, offered a smug smirk, his knuckles popping ominously as he readied himself for the coming storm.

'Looks like they took my words too seriously.' I forced a grin on my face.

"Your words are wasted, humans. You stand no chance against the might of the Elven folk," Perena taunted, a cruel smile dancing on her lips.

Yet, beneath her bravado, I caught the faint shimmer of uncertainty flickering in her eyes.

'Taunting aside... Aria should be able to handle her sister, right?'

The Elves were probably cautious due to Larry's presence as the Great Sage of this world, which was why they hadn't struck yet.

I couldn't imagine that holding them back for very long, though.

~VWUUUUSSHHHH!~

Without warning, the Elves launched a devastating volley of raw energy our way.

'What? Already?!

The air sizzled, thick with magical discharge and imminent danger.

'Crap!' I attempted to reach my satchel for a defensive tool, but the moment I paid attention to our ace, I realized I didn't need to.

Aria, seemingly rejuvenated by the surge of conflict, summoned a shimmering barrier around us.

~BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMM!!!~

The storm of elven magic crashed against the shield, sending ripples of light dancing across its surface.

She turned to Drake and Larry, their faces pale but resolute.

"Stay within the barrier. We'll handle this," she ordered, her voice hard but laced with concern.

"Yes ma'am." They nodded in understanding, their trust in us unspoken but evident.

"Aria, do you have a plan?" I asked, preparing myself for the onslaught I knew was coming.

She shook her head, a grim frown on her face. I nodded, understanding the gravity of the situation.

"You handle Perena. I'll deal with the rest."

I saw her hesitate, worry clouding her eyes.

"Can you handle them?" she asked.

I shrugged at her question.

Frankly speaking, it wasn't certain.

Still, Perena was the strongest, and I would rather pick my chances dealing with the small fries than actually fight someone with a much larger gap of power than me.

"I'm not sure. But you need to defeat your sister. Hurry, so you can back me up."

Without waiting for a response, I charged towards the Elves, throwing a flare into the sky. The brilliant burst of light drew their attention, and I used the momentary distraction to launch a volley of explosive shards from my satchel.

The Elves scattered, narrowly evading the onslaught, and redirected their attention to me.

'Aria's barrier will serve as a deterrent for the weaker Elves, and since I'm actively attacking them, they'll want to deal with me first.' A smile formed on my face.

~VWUUMMMM!!!~

I was the new target. From every direction, a tempest of spells and attacks barreled towards me.

With every ounce of agility I possessed, I danced through the storm, evading some and using my magical gadgets to deflect others.

It was a barrage of deadly magic and I was at the heart of it.

'Please hurry, Aria!' I screamed internally.

Elsewhere, I could see Aria squaring off with Perena. They were a tempest of clashing energy, the ground around them scorched and charred with their fierce battle. I could only hope Aria would defeat her sister swiftly.

'For our sakes!'

Looking around me now, I could see that I was surrounded by foes, outnumbered and outmatched.

"Hehe..." Regardless, I appeared undeterred.

I had to survive, to win.

We had to win.

I had no other choice but to weather this storm and stand firm. I knew then that it wasn't just a battle of might; it was a battle of resolve.

"Looks like I'll have to get a little serious..."

On the other side of the battlefield, a separate storm was brewing.

Two figures clashed, their magical blades meeting in a cacophony of ear-splitting clashes and ethereal sparks.

Aria, her figure crackling with radiant light and bursts of lightning, locked swords with Perena, who commanded the elements of ice and wind with a chilling finesse.

The battlefield between them transformed into a stage of raw elemental might, the air shimmering with their magic.

Aria, wreathed in luminescent energy, moved like a bolt of lightning, her blade cleaving through the gusts of wind and shards of ice thrown by Perena. Her blade was a beam of light, dancing through the tempest unleashed by her sister.

Contrasting Aria's radiant energy, Perena was a swirling tempest of ice and wind. Her hair danced wildly in the storm of her making, her silver eyes cold as she commanded the elements with a ruthless efficiency.

The blade she wielded was a chilling manifestation of her icy magic, clashing against Aria's lightning-infused sword.

The force of their collision sent shockwaves reverberating through the earth, the surrounding terrain transforming into a field of destruction.

Their energies ripped through the soil, shattered rocks, and splintered trees, each clash between their blades sending a powerful quake throughout the battlefield.

"You're not superior, Aria!" Perena yelled over the howling wind, her voice carrying a bitter chill. "You will fall by my blade!"

Aria, her eyes alight with grim determination, met her half-sister's furious gaze.

She was done being deterred by Perena's words. She now had friends... a real family. None of the words she heard now had any effect on her.

"I won't let your delusions tarnish our fight, Perena. This ends here."

Their fight raged on, neither giving the other an inch.

They matched each other stroke for stroke, their power evenly matched, but Aria's speed was the key difference.

It was the lightning in her veins, the raw speed and power that allowed her to weave through Perena's onslaught of ice and wind.

She struck like a thunderbolt, her blade a flash of light in the storm, finally breaching Perena's defenses.

"HAAAAAAAAA!!!" With a powerful swing of her blade, she sent Perena sprawling onto the ground.

~BOOOOOOOOMMMMMMM!!!~

The storm finally quieted.

Aria, her body humming with spent energy, approached her fallen half-sister, her breaths heavy and ragged.

"Haa... haaa..."

She cast a long shadow over Perena, who now knelt in defeat, her body shaking and her magic fading into wisps of frosty wind.

"It's over, Perena," Aria declared, her voice echoing throughout the scarred battlefield.

The storm was over, but the echoes of the clash between the two magic swordsmen would linger long after their fight ended.

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Chapter 1063: Kill Or Be Killed

Aria stood over her defeated sister, her heart heavy.

"We weren't always like this, Perena," she began, her voice trembling with unsaid words and raw emotions. "We used to laugh, train, play...together."

Perena scoffed, pushing herself up to a kneeling position. Her icy gaze met Aria's.

"That was before I knew the truth. Before I knew you were nothing but a hindrance. A barrier between me and the respect I deserved."

Aria's eyes softened. "Strength isn't just about power, Perena. You were always stronger in so many ways. I looked up to you...I still do."

Perena's laughter echoed hollowly around them, her expression twisted in bitter mockery.

"That's rich coming from you, Aria. You, who always held the advantage. I won't concede to you. I'll never accept you as the stronger one."

In Aria's moment of guilt-ridden hesitation, Perena seized her chance.

With a swift move, she activated a small magical device that suddenly manifested in her hand.

"W-wha-?!" A paralyzing shockwave hit Aria, immobilizing her.

"Haha..." Perena's triumphant grin seemed to illuminate the ruins as she rose, her sword poised for the final blow.

"Die!" With bloodshot eyes and a maniacal grin, Perena brandished her blade to mercilessly end her half-sister's life.

However...

~SQUELCH!~

The shocked gasp never left Aria's lips, as Perena suddenly jerked forward, her wide eyes mirroring Aria's disbelief.

Standing behind Perena was Lewis, his sword impaled through her.

"H-haa...?"

Blood splattered on the ground as all three were locked in the silence of the surprising outcome of the battle.

"I had to do it," Lewis whispered coldly, withdrawing his blade as Perena staggered.

"It was her or us."

Perena's body swayed, her gaze flickering between Lewis and Aria.

"How..." she choked out, blood trickling from her lips. "How did you...?"

How had he managed to escape the detection of both of the strongest Magic Swordsmen in the world? Wasn't he just an ordinary man?

It... it didn't make any sense!

Perena's question hung in the air as she collapsed onto the ground, her life extinguished like a candle in the wind.

"Perena!" Aria's scream tore through the silence, her tears falling onto the ruined earth.

Paralysis wore off, and she crawled towards her sister's still form, her heart shattering with each labored breath she took.

As Aria grieved, her gaze swept across the battlefield.

"W-what? N-no... no way..." Her heart clenched as she recognized the faces of her fallen siblings among the carnage.

Fourteen figures laid lifeless, each a harsh reminder of the battle that had just happened.

"T-they're all..."

All dead. All gone. The silent witnesses to a familial battle that ended in nothing but despair.

The reality of it all threatened to swallow Aria whole, the weight of their loss a crushing burden she witnessed with near disbelief.

"You killed all of them...?"

"Yes." Lewis replied calmly, almost as if he had not done anything worthy of address.

"There wasn't enough time to take care of them without going to the extreme. Trust me, I tried."

"What are you saying? That it was easier for you to kill them than to let them live?"

"Precisely." Lewis' voice echoed within her ears like a hollow tune. "And it's a good thing I ended them quickly. If I didn't..."

Both their gazes fell on the lifeless body of Perena.

"... It would have been your corpse on the ground."

[Moments Earlier]

"Filthy human!"

"Give up now!"

"Die!"

The fourteen Elves encircled me, a relentless wave of power emanating from each one as they launched Spell after Spell toward me.

~BOOOOOOMMMMMM!!!~

My mind raced, piecing together possible strategies. I erected a barrier around me, barely having the time to strengthen it before the volley of spells came crashing down.

My barrier shuddered under the relentless assault, fracturing at the seams. The Elves' power was extraordinary.

'The barrier can't hold forever...'

The realization dawned on me. This wasn't a battle I could win by holding back. It was kill or be killed.

"Time to get serious," I muttered to myself. Reaching into my satchel, I felt the cool touch of the glass vial that held my trump card - Aether Poisoning.

Unleashing the gas version of the lethal substance, the air around us swirled in a haze of dangerous potency.

"W-what is... thissss...?!" The Elves, their eyes widening in alarm, began to falter.

"GUAAAARRCKKK!!!"

They clutched their throats, their bodies convulsing as the Aether invaded their systems.

"In the Nether Realm, Aether is your worst nightmare," I whispered, watching as the Elves fell one by one.

They crumbled to the ground, their eyes filled with fear and confusion. The lethal potency of Aether was merciless.

"You should've considered that before threatening us."

As the last Elf succumbed to the poison, I looked beyond my area of combat.

Aria was caught up in a conversation with Perena. I could feel the tension radiating off of them, an ominous sign. I decided to draw closer.

Pulling a ring off my finger, I activated its enchantment. My form was immediately shrouded in an invisible cloud of Aether energy, masking my presence from the Nether beings.

It was my secret advantage. I crept closer, my movements undetectable.

Perena had Aria paralyzed, and her victorious grin turned my blood cold.

Not wasting any time, I lunged forward, driving my sword through Perena's back and out through her chest.

No remorse filled me as her body slumped to the ground, my only thought being Aria's safety.

As her sister, as Perena breathed her last, I knew then that we had done what we had to, regardless of the cost.

After all, it was them or us.

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Chapter 1064: The Dead End [Pt 1]

Following the demise of the Elves, the area around us was eerily quiet, the once lush meadow now a somber graveyard.

The wind carried a bitter cold, whipping across the barren wasteland left in the wake of our destructive battle. The charred remains of once towering trees stood as stark reminders of the clash that had occurred here.

Aria had painstakingly dug graves for each of her siblings near the entrance to the Despero Labyrinth, mourning them in silence. Larry and Drake offered what comfort they could, but the grief etched on Aria's face told me words were of little solace.

As I observed the scene, a twinge of impatience gnawed at me.

'We need to continue our journey...'

My goal of saving Karlia hanging in the balance. Every second delayed was one I couldn't bear to stand, and I wanted more than anything to express the swirling exasperation within me.

But I swallowed the words. This wasn't the time to press.

"Aria," I said, striding over to where she knelt by the fresh mounds of earth.

"The Arcanas. They possess extraordinary power." I paused, glancing at Larry, whose own hopes rested on the fabled artifacts. "They're said to control even life and death."

Her eyes met mine, and I was taken aback by the depth of despair in them. But as my words registered, a flicker of hope ignited within them.

"Really?" she asked, her voice barely a whisper.

I nodded, hoping my reassurances weren't hollow promises. "With them, Larry hopes to bring back his family. You could...you could do the same for your siblings."

Her gaze remained locked with mine, the despair slowly giving way to a glimmer of something akin to hope.

I felt a pang of guilt, because even if I knew the Arcanas held such power, I wasn't particularly supportive or invested in bringing back her dead ones.

'Considering the fact that I am the one who killed them, it makes me feel more like a hypocrite.'

But I needed Aria focused and moving forward, not trapped in her sorrow.

Larry and Drake thanked me quietly, gratitude shining in their eyes for the ray of hope I'd provided.

However, I didn't feel like a hero.

I'd said what I needed to, to get us moving again. And I was still worried about the journey ahead.

We'd made powerful enemies, and the path we'd chosen was fraught with peril.

'If not for the fact that these three are useful, I might have already abandoned them... perhaps...'

I wasn't too sure myself. Perhaps I could never be certain of the choice I would make.

But I simply smiled in response, masking my own concerns.

As I gazed at the mournful scene, I couldn't help but wonder if I deserved any of the praise being offered to me.

Yet, even as doubt gnawed at me, I steeled myself. We had a mission to accomplish, and no matter the cost, we would see it through.

'That's what I should focus on. That's all that should matter.'

[One Month Later]

The weeks that followed the death of Aria's sisters were a blur of desperate escape, shadowed pursuit, and sleepless nights.

We pushed ourselves to the limit, stealth and speed our only allies in avoiding the relentless sentries. The journey seemed to stretch on forever, an endless trek through dense forests and harsh terrains.

The world around us was as gray as the emotions etched on our faces.

We were shadows flitting through the wilderness, hunted, constantly on the move.

A grim silence clung to us, like a shroud wrapping us in its dreary embrace.

A whole month of this ceaseless wandering finally brought us to our destination - the Mors Labyrinth.

A chill of foreboding ran down my spine at the sight.

Situated in the heart of a festering swamp, the labyrinth was a monstrous monument to despair.

Its presence loomed in the air like an unspoken death sentence.

The name 'Dead End' wasn't just a title; it felt like a tangible entity, an unseen specter of death waiting to claim the unwary.

"Mors... a dead end," Larry mumbled, his eyes fixed on the entrance. "The records weren't exaggerating in the slightest."

The entrance to the labyrinth was a gaping maw swallowed in the eerie silence of the surrounding swamp. Thick mist clung to the ground, cloaking the dark path that lay ahead in mystery.

Aria was silent, her face set in a determined scowl.

I could see the subtle twitch of her hand on her blade, an unspoken declaration of her readiness to face whatever lay ahead.

Drake and Larry echoed her grim determination, their eyes reflecting a mixture of apprehension and resolve.

I pulled the collar of my coat closer, the damp chill of the swamp seeping into my bones.

A heavy sigh escaped my lips as I looked at my companions, their faces etched with weary resilience.

"Remember," I began, meeting their eyes. "We've come this far, faced obstacles that would break most. The Mors Labyrinth is no different."

Everyone nodded as I spoke, staring at the overwhelming sight before us.

"We get in, retrieve what we need, and get out. Stick together, watch each other's backs, and never lose sight of our goal."

With those words hanging in the chilling air, we ventured forth into the belly of the beast, the shrouded darkness of the Mors Labyrinth swallowing us whole.

The tension was palpable as we stepped over the threshold, the labyrinth seemingly breathing around us, ready to test our resolve, our unity, and our will to survive.

If only I knew at that moment that venturing inside was a mistake.

... A costly one.

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Chapter 1065: The Dead End [Pt 2]

The moment we crossed the threshold into the labyrinth, it felt like stepping into the maw of a monstrous creature.

A bitter, damp chill hung in the air, wrapping itself around us, permeating our very bones. The walls of the maze were slick, shadowy stone, resonating with a sense of foreboding.

We traveled in silence, the only sound being the echo of our footsteps, creating an eerie rhythm in the oppressive silence. The labyrinth seemed to change and shift with each passing second, its sinister nature concealed in the shadows.

"Feels like we're being watched," Drake whispered, his eyes darting back and forth.

"Just keep moving," I instructed, my hand reaching for the pouch of tools at my belt. This was no place for hesitation.

Suddenly, our path was blocked by a horde of grotesque black creatures. Their forms were inky, shifting masses of shadow, their beady red eyes glaring at us with a malevolent light. There were both towering beasts and small, writhing things, all united in their hostility.

"Get behind us," Aria ordered Drake and Larry. She brandished her sword, ethereal lightning sparking along its edge. I quickly armed myself with a sturdy, enchanted staff from my satchel.

The clash was swift and brutal. Aria's blade was a blur of steel and light, cleaving through the beasts.

Each swing of her sword released a sharp crack of thunder, accompanied by blinding flashes of lightning.

Her attacks were swift and precise, each one imbued with a ferocious energy that kept the creatures at bay.

I fought back with everything I had. Enchanted spheres erupted from my staff, their brilliant light illuminating the grotesque features of our adversaries.

The staff itself became an extension of my arm, a reliable ally as I struck the monstrosities around me.

I was once again grateful for my knowledge of Martial Arts.

Despite our efforts, the swarm of creatures seemed unending. For each one we felled, two more appeared to take its place.

Yet, we persisted, fighting back-to-back, our spirits unyielding.

"You alright?" Aria shouted over the clamor of battle.

"Nothing I can't handle," I replied, gritting my teeth.

The labyrinth felt alive, the walls pulsating as if in response to the ferocious conflict. Aria and I fought like two cornered animals, our survival instincts guiding our every move.

Eventually, our relentless onslaught started to take effect. The swarm dwindled, their numbers lessening with each passing minute.

Finally, only a few of the grotesque creatures remained, their courage wavering.

With a final flourish of Aria's sword and a radiant burst from my staff, the remaining beasts dispersed into shadowy wisps, their forms dissipating in the chilling air.

We stood panting, the aftermath of the battle spread around us. Drake and Larry emerged from their cover, their expressions a mix of awe and relief.

"Is everyone alright?" Aria asked, her eyes scanning over the group.

"We're good, thanks to you two," Larry replied, his voice filled with gratitude.

We continued on, the labyrinth's oppressive silence creeping back in, reminding us of the danger lurking at every corner.

Hours seemed to merge into each other, the sense of time distorted in the shadowy maze.

Eventually, we arrived at a colossal gate, what seemed to be the entrance of a massive space beyond it.

The gate was intimidating, a grand testament to the labyrinth's sinister design. A feeling of dread filled the air, the sense of an impending encounter thick in the chilling air.

"Well, this isn't ominous at all," Larry commented dryly, his gaze taking in the sight.

"We must be prepared," I warned, my hand instinctively reaching for my satchel.

The real challenge of the Mors Labyrinth awaited us, its hidden horrors ready to be unveiled.

'Let's see...'

Looking at the map, there didn't seem to be any adversary beyond the gate. No marker whatsoever.

Yet why couldn't I shake away the awful feeling that gnawed at me?

'No time for hesitation, Lewis. Every second counts.'

With that thought echoing in my head, our group pushed through the gate, advancing to the spacious expanse that greeted us.

~SHUUUUUUUUUU~

... That was our mistake!

~VWUUUUUMMM!~

The heavy door behind us grumbled closed, its stone exterior melting into the seamless wall of the labyrinth.

'What?!' My heart pounded in my chest, echoing the finality of the door's closure.

No turning back. No way out.

From the abyssal darkness of the chamber, grotesque forms began to manifest.

Enormous, nightmarish entities, each one towering above us with an imposing presence.

They were the epitome of the labyrinth's ominous promise – colossal horrors spawned from the darkest depths of despair.

"N-no... no way..."

Each of these creatures bore the dreaded purple marker on my navigation device. A symbol that made my blood run cold, a testament to their terrifying strength.

Fear gnawed at my heart, but I bit back, steeling myself for the encounter.

'What should I do? What can we do?'

Then, as I was still trying to remain composed, another entity emerged from the heart of the chamber.

"HUUUUUUUUU..."

A monstrous form, its size and power dwarfing the others.

Its presence was suffocating, a potent mixture of dread and despair.

My device began to glitch, unable to measure the sheer magnitude of the entity's energy.

"No... this is..." My eyes widened as I realized that this was a black marker. The ultimate sign of a monstrous threat that we had no hope of defeating!

The black-marked entity that stood before us was a monstrous amalgamation of everything nightmarish. Its towering silhouette loomed ominously, casting a ghastly shadow that swallowed the dim light of the chamber.

Its form was too grotesque to describe.

Despair welled up within me, a gaping chasm threatening to consume my sanity. This was an impossible situation, a death trap in every sense.

The labyrinth had played its hand and dealt us an inevitable demise.

I clenched my fists tightly, my knuckles whitening under the strain. I glanced at my companions, their faces pale in the ominous glow of the chamber.

They looked towards me, seeking a plan, a glimmer of hope. But for the first time in our journey, I had nothing.

"Is there even a way to defeat that thing?" Aria's voice wavered, his gaze fixed on the black-marked monstrosity.

I swallowed hard, the bitter taste of fear and despair lingering in my throat. "I... I don't know."

The words felt like a betrayal, an admission of defeat that I never thought I'd utter.

Desperation clawed at my mind, pushing me to think, to strategize, to find an escape from our impending doom. But the labyrinth had us cornered, the eerie silence now a deafening testament to our hopeless predicament.

For the first time ever... I truly felt powerless, incapable of altering the grim outcome.

'Is this the end?'

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[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)

Chapter 1066: Dead End [Pt 3]

My Navigation Device registered the level of threats I faced based on the color of the markers it displayed.

White

Yellow

Blue

Green

Orange

Red

Purple

... And the worst of all...

Black!

I already determined within myself that if I ever saw anything bearing the black marker... I would immediately retreat.

Unfortunately for me and my comrades... that was no longer an option.

"HUUUUUUUUUU..."

The black-marked entity that stood before us was a monstrous amalgamation of everything nightmarish. Its towering silhouette loomed ominously, casting a ghastly shadow that swallowed the dim light of the chamber.

Its form was a grotesque parody of existence.

Veiny, muscular limbs, too many to count, sprawled in chaotic directions, each ending with a set of razor-sharp claws that gleamed wickedly.

Its torso was thick and barrel-shaped, covered in scales that shimmered in an eerie palette of purples and blacks, reflecting a non-existent light.

Its head was a grotesque masterpiece of terror. Multiple eyes, as black as the void, dotted its elongated cranium, gleaming with malevolent intelligence.

Its mouth was a horrifying gash that stretched across its face, filled with countless jagged teeth, each one large enough to impale a man.

From its back sprouted appendages that could have been wings, but they were unlike anything found in the natural world.

They appeared skeletal and leathery, crisscrossed with pulsating veins that gave off an ominous glow, as if brimming with pure, destructive energy.

This creature was an embodiment of despair, a creation born from the darkest recesses of fear.

It exuded an aura of power and malevolence that transcended everything we had ever encountered, etching an image of impending doom into our minds.

It was despondency incarnate.

Yet... YET...!

We had to fight!

~BOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!~

The deafening cacophony of battle reverberated through the massive chamber, swallowed by the suffocating darkness that surrounded us.

Beams of light, summoned by Aria's desperate magic, danced against the titanic monsters towering over us, casting grotesque shadows against the cold stone walls.

"There's too many of them!" Aria yelled, her voice barely audible above the clamor.

But I was already acutely aware of that grim fact.

Throwing my Aether bombs at the creatures, I watched as they detonated, sending waves of destructive energy rippling through their ranks.

~BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMM!!!~

~BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!~

Tears poured from her eyes as her voice pierced the air; sadness and rising rage evident from her face. But her grief was swiftly rewarded with a monstrous claw impaling her, lifting her off the ground.

"Gurk!" Her crimson blood splattered across the ground as she made a weak groan.

I could only watch as the light faded from her eyes, her body falling limply to the ground.

"No... no..."

Despair and rage welled up inside me, as potent as any spell.

"NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!"

With a roar, I activated the magic stored within my nine remaining rings.

"ARRRRGHHHHHHHHH!!!"

Spells of destruction rained down upon the creatures, obliterating several and pushing back the rest. Mists of Aether spread across the room, poisoning and destroying all the enemies around me.

'They're dead...!' My thoughts echoed as I witnessed all of them, seeing their pale bodies having no life within at all.

~BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!~

Multiple high-end Spells burst out, all chipping at the integrity of my barrier, but leaving me unharmed.

But even that wasn't enough.

"Why...?"

More monsters filled the gaps, their hideous forms relentless and undying. My trump cards, my best strategies, they all meant nothing.

"Why won't all of you die...?"

The black-marked creature simply watched, its multiple eyes gleaming in the dark.

The realization was as cold and unforgiving as death itself. It mocked me, almost as if telling me I wasn't going to survive this.

"JUST DIEEEEEEEEEEE!!!"

As the monstrous horde closed in, my heart pounded in my chest, the echo of each beat a countdown to the inevitable end.

I glanced at my fallen friends, their lifeless forms a stark reminder of our futile struggle.

I had failed them.

As the final wave of monsters descended upon me, I braced myself for the end, my breaths ragged, and my body trembling with the force of my impending demise.

I had fought, and I had lost. Now, there was nothing left but to face the end.

"ARRGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

The world around me was blotted out, reduced to a blank canvas of white. I could see the chamber collapsing, chunks of stone and debris disintegrating before they even reached me.

My senses were overloaded, the harsh light searing my retinas, the deafening roar of the explosion drowning out all other sounds.

My last sight was the searing white expanse of destruction I had unleashed.

'Haaa....'

In the end... did I manage to get them? Every last one of them?

Was I able to kill the creature of darkness?

The answer?

"HUUUUU...."

NO!

Reality resurfaced as the blinding light faded, leaving in its wake an eerie silence and the chilling echo of devastation.

I was lying face-down on the cold, unforgiving ground, every inch of my body aflame with agonizing pain. My barriers were obliterated, leaving me unprotected, vulnerable to the treacherous Nether that now started to seep into my system, poisoning me from the inside out.

I knew I only had a few seconds to live.

"HUUUUUUU...."

It was then, through my blurred vision, that I saw it.

The black marker monster.

"HUUUUUUUUUUU..."

Still standing, unfazed by the destruction that had decimated everything else. A hot surge of regret, a bitter taste of failure welled up within me, anger flaring as I gritted my teeth.

It wasn't supposed to be this way.

My breaths were ragged, uneven, each one seeming like my last. My thoughts swirled, dizzied by the overwhelming pain and the creeping darkness at the edges of my consciousness.

I could feel death's cold touch, lurking at the edge of my senses, its icy fingers reaching out for me. I was on the cusp of the abyss, teetering precariously at the precipice of nothingness. I was dying.

But as I lay there, seconds from oblivion, a sudden realization hit me. I didn't want to die.

I wanted to live.

My mind clung desperately to images of Karlia, her smile as bright as the sun, her laughter that echoed like a sweet melody in my ears. My heart ached with longing, with the unfinished promise of a future I wanted to fight for.

I thought of Larry and Drake, of Aria, their voices, their shared laughter, our bonds that were severed so abruptly, so cruelly.

I wanted to bring them back. I needed to bring them back.

The mission... our mission. It wasn't over. It couldn't be over. Not yet.

"No," I gasped, forcing the word out through clenched teeth. The determination to survive, to fight, ignited within me, a spark in the all-consuming darkness.

"I... won't... die."

As if mocking my frail attempt at defiance, the monster moved, a towering shadow that loomed over me. I couldn't move, my body was betraying me, failing me.

The fear was potent, a gut-wrenching terror that seemed to dwarf even my physical pain. But underneath it, a single thought clung stubbornly, refusing to be extinguished.

"I... will... live."

Whether it was a whispered vow to myself or a challenge to the looming specter of death, I didn't know.

All I knew was that I had to fight. For Karlia, for my friends, for the world that still needed saving.

The world blurred once again, my strength waning. The darkness was closing in, but in my heart, the spark of will remained, flickering stubbornly against the suffocating dark.

The world around me began to fade, but my resolve didn't.

I was Lewis. And I was not done yet.

And so... as the blackness threatened to consume me entirely, a strange phenomenon began to occur.

From somewhere deep within me, a brilliant light ignited, dispelling the encroaching shadows.

There was an abrupt surge of energy, an explosion that radiated outwards from my very core, stirring the lifeless particles of Nether around me into a frenzied whirlpool of raw, untamed power.

'Haaa...?'

I felt myself being lifted, like a marionette being yanked upwards by invisible strings, until I was standing, shakily, on my own two feet.

My body was enveloped in a swirling tempest of energy, a corona of seething power that danced and crackled around me.

The pain, the agonizing torment that had been gnawing at my very being, started to recede, replaced with an electrifying sensation that coursed through my veins.

My hand rose before me of its own accord, appearing pale and ghostly amidst the violent undulation of energy.

But rather than decaying under the ravages of the Nether, my flesh began to knit itself back together, healing with an astonishing rapidity that left me reeling.

"Nether..." I breathed, a sense of awe overtaking me.

I was not only withstanding the destructive force of the Nether, I was controlling it.

Manipulating it to my will, bending its chaotic nature into a beacon of restorative light.

In that moment, my mind raced, connecting dots and drawing conclusions faster than ever before.

The energy swirled around me like a tangible force, resonating with my heartbeat, synchronizing with my every thought.

I could feel it, more intimate than my own heartbeat, more intricate than the most complex of spells.

I could now channel this energy, this Nether, into Magic.

The realization struck me like a lightning bolt, sparking an exhilarating rush of anticipation that flooded my senses.

A strange serenity washed over me as the last of my injuries healed.

The corner of my mouth twitched upward, stretching into a wide, feral grin.

For the first time in a long while, amidst the wreckage and ruin, under the watchful gaze of the black marker monster, a spark of hope ignited in my heart.

My voice emerged from my throat as a whisper, yet carried a note of triumph that echoed through the cavernous chamber, reverberating against the walls and ceiling.

"Spellcraft... "

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[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)

Chapter 1068: The Great Sage's Magic

There I stood, amidst the ruins and the fallen, the energy of the Nether pulsing and rippling around me like a living entity.

I lifted my hands, fingers splayed wide, feeling the pure, unbridled power coursing through my veins.

I could feel the surge of ecstasy rippling through me as I realized - I was about to use Magic, for the first time ever.

"HUUUUUUUUUUUUU..." The black marker monster, undeterred by the spectacle, extended a gnarled hand, summoning from the depths a host of vile creatures, each more grotesque than the last.

They lumbered toward me, monstrous forms silhouetted against the foreboding darkness. I should have felt fear or despair.

I should have felt the crushing weight of failure and anxiety.

But I didn't.

No.

Right there and then, only one feeling coursed through me, invading me down to the marrow of my bones, coursing through every vein in my body, and reaching the very recesses of my soul.

I only felt a thrill of anticipation.

"Let's see... Let's see..." I murmured to myself, my gaze falling on the myriad of creatures that the dark entity had summoned from the abyss.

They were grotesque, their bodies twisted and malformed, their eyes glowing with an unholy light.

I focused my energy, feeling the Nether respond, thrumming in time with my heartbeat.

"[Ethereal Cascade]," I whispered, and the energy erupted from me in a wave of shimmering light.

The ground beneath the creatures' feet exploded into a field of luminous spires, impaling them with beams of condensed energy.

Despite the successful attack, I didn't pause.

Time seemed to slow, the world around me existing in a surreal, dreamlike haze. My heart pounded in my chest, each beat echoing with the surge of magic.

"[Dark Vortex]," I called out next, and a swirling whirlpool of energy appeared in the midst of the remaining creatures, tearing them apart with its sheer, unyielding force.

"Whoa..." I found myself muttering, staring in awe at the destruction I had caused.

The euphoria of it all was intoxicating, heady, a rush of adrenaline and power that left me giddy.

But there were more of them, and I wasn't done yet.

"[Gale Barrage]," I shouted, and the air around me solidified into razor-sharp blades of wind, slicing through the enemy ranks like a hot knife through butter.

More creatures spawned from the darkness, attempting to overwhelm me with their sheer numbers. But I was on a roll now, my confidence soaring as I engaged in the thrilling dance of battle.

"[Ethereal Chains]," I bellowed, and the remaining creatures were ensnared in glowing binds of energy, rendering them immobile.

My eyes focused on the dark entity, the black marker monster, now standing alone amidst the destruction.

I was panting, my chest heaving with exertion, but I felt invincible, the taste of power on my lips.

"Now for the big finish," I whispered to myself. "[Black Nova]..."

Dark energy swirled and congealed into enormous claws that slashed through the air, aiming for my heart.

~VWUUUM!~

I moved, a quick-step dance to the side, before launching another attack.

"[Void Torrent]!" I roared, invoking a violent surge of Nether that pummeled the monster.

Yet, it still stood, seemingly unfazed.

Each of my attacks, as devastating as they were, seemed to barely scratch this abominable foe.

I could feel the strain of the ongoing battle, the toll it was taking on my body, on my mind.

But there was no room for surrender.

I gritted my teeth, sweat trickling down my forehead. I could feel the energy within me, the Nether, pulsing like a heartbeat.

Rising to my feet once more, I swayed on the spot, my vision swimming as I stared down at the horrific entity.

"Haa... I'm going to beat you."

"[Mage Mode]," I growled, drawing upon the reserves of my energy.

My body ignited in a blaze of scintillating light, the power threatening to consume me.

The cavernous chamber was bathed in an eerie glow, casting long, monstrous shadows against the walls.

The black marker monster retaliated with a roar that echoed in my skull, its massive form lurching towards me with surprising speed.

Anticipating the attack, I quickly muttered, "[Mirror Echo]."

A shimmering wall of energy materialized before me, deflecting the creature's onslaught back toward it.

As the creature staggered under the force of its own attack, I seized the opportunity.

"[Maelstrom of the Void]!" I bellowed.

~VWUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMM!!!~

The air around me crackled and twisted, energy vortexes spiraling wildly in the midst of the chamber.

An ominous hum filled the air, the prelude to a cataclysmic symphony.

Suddenly, with an explosive force that rocked the chamber, a myriad of energy missiles surged forth from the vortexes, their brilliant trails searing across the darkness, homing towards the monstrous entity.

"RAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!" The creature roared in agony, the missiles piercing its dark form, causing it to convulse violently.

'It's still not dying. Its regeneration is too fast!' My thought echoed as I glared at the already recovering monster.

I had to strike it while I still could. I had just awakened, and while Adrenaline and Magic kept me going past my limits, I was running out of time.

'Need to... end this now!'

There was one more Spell, one that I hadn't used yet.

It was a risk. But I was out of options.

'I'll have to revamp it by meshing various elements to make it work.'

I would have to use Spellcraft to activate it, while using the last remaining strand of my power to gather as much energy as I could.

'Using the memories of the Arcanas I interacted with, I'll generate a spatial collapse that'll render its existence impossible with that mass, while attributing the concept of null by accounting for its seemingly unlimited regeneration...'

Calculating as fast as I could, combining various formulae and effects in my mind, I arrived at the simple answer.

"Let's see if you can handle this..."

This was it. The best Spell I could come up with under such a short amount of time. Something that would even kill this undying being.

"[OBLIVION]!" I shouted, my voice echoing across the chamber.

I felt the energy shift around me, coiling like a serpent preparing to strike. This was not just a Spell; it was the culmination of my will, my desperation, my fear, my hope.

And then I unleashed it.

The air itself seemed to freeze, before the world exploded in a blinding burst of energy.

The force of the explosion was cataclysmic, shaking the very foundation of the Labyrinth.

The chamber was engulfed in light, the destructive force tearing through everything in its path.

The monster let out a final, earth-shaking roar before its form disintegrated into nothingness, consumed by the ocean of energy that killed it over and over again, down to the tiniest fraction of its existence.

And then...

... Silent noise radiated forth.

'It is done...'

When the dust finally settled, the Labyrinth was no more.

All that remained was a barren expanse, a monument to the titanic clash that had occurred. The black marker monster... was gone, reduced to mere ashes by the devastating Spell.

I floated amidst the desolation, panting heavily.

Victory was mine.

But the cost... the cost was immense.

In the end, I was left alone, standing in the ruins of the entire region that I had shattered.

"I... I did it..." I whispered, the words sounding hollow in the aftermath.

I looked down at my hands, the hands that had wielded such terrible power.

And in that moment, I felt an overwhelming sense of exhaustion wash over me.

"You're next, Karlia," I whispered, my voice barely audible over the ringing in my ears.

"I'm coming for you."

Finally, the world faded into blackness as the exhaustion pulled me under.

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[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)

Chapter 1069: The Lucid Dream

In the silent echo of a dream, I watched as the scenes of a life that resembled my own unfolded.

I was a silent observer, a captive audience to a drama of magic and ambition.

The boy in my dream bore a striking resemblance to me in my youth, but the more I watched his life play out, the clearer the truth became.

He had brown hair, and his eyes were deep amber, though filled with the same childlike wonder I had.

His words echoed around me, a mantra I felt in the very marrow of my bones.

"I love Magic!"

His voice was vibrant and brimming with childlike wonder, the kind that only comes with the boundless curiosity of youth.

His words resonated with the parts of me that were still innocent and untouched by the world.

A familiar desire ignited within me, a thirst for knowledge and power, a deep-seated need to grasp the intricacies of magic.

... It reminded my own past.

The boy's passion mirrored mine, his ambition matching my own.

But as I watched, a sense of unease gnawed at me.

His life was not my life.

His experiences were not mine.

His dreams were not mine.

Yet, I could not help but feel an odd kinship with him.

I saw the boy mature, his enthusiasm for magic never waning. I watched him pour over dusty books and theory, devoting himself entirely to his love for Magic.

He isolated himself from his peers, preferring the enchanting allure of Magic to the company of others.

There was a single-mindedness to his ambition, a cold, calculating determination that felt eerily familiar.

I watched him, unable to move, unable to intervene as he set his course and pledged himself to his passion.

But as he aged, so too did his ambitions grow.

They twisted and warped, becoming more than just a dream.

They became an obsession.

I watched as he spoke of grand titles and global recognition, an intense fixation in his eyes that I couldn't help but recognize.

"I... I can do it!" He would always profess. "I am SPECIAL!"

And then came the 'Awakening'.

The boy, now a young teenager, brimming with confidence and arrogance.

The scene was heartbreakingly familiar.

He was rejected, deemed inept.

"No..." The crushing reality of his powerlessness hitting him, a cruel mockery of his dreams. His dreams shattered, his ambitions ridiculed.

His pain was palpable, raw and searing.

It was a pain I knew all too well, a pain that had once been mine.

I felt a wave of empathy wash over me, a deep ache resonating in my chest.

As the dream wound to a close, I was left with a bitter taste in my mouth.

This boy, so similar yet so different, was not me.

I was Lewis Griffith, a Magic Scholar who'd weathered countless trials and tribulations, who'd sacrificed everything for his cause.

I was Lewis Griffith, the survivor, the Great Sage, the protector.

The man who'd braved the abyss and emerged stronger.

The man who'd embraced the darkness and learned to wield it as his own. I was Lewis Griffith... not this boy.

Not...

"Hey, Legris, you're not gonna give up on your dreams, are you?" I watched as the boy was surrounded by the very people he had rejected.

They all rendered him warm smiles and support.

And what did the boy do? What response did he give to their maelstrom of encouragement and smiles of comfort?

"Of course not!" The boy bore a very prideful, bright grin.

"If I can not be a Grand Mage, then I will simply be something else! I won't let all I have learned go to waste!"

Yes... this was how the story went, wasn't it?

"I still love magic, and I will still devote myself to it! More and more knowledge of this art will be engraved within me, and even if I am unable to practice it, I will make sure no one knows Magic more than I do!"

That's right. This was the birth of a new goal for the young boy.

The desire to become...

"Legris Damien will be known throughout the land... as the Great Sage!"

And after that, the entire world went blank.

"Haaa...."

As I awoke from the dream, I couldn't help but carry with me a strange sense of déjà vu, a nagging familiarity that lingered in the corners of my mind.

Th boy was not me, and yet, he could've been.

I could've been him.

But I wasn't.

"What a strange dream. Who was that kid? Why did I have that dream?" I muttered, rising to my feet as I looked around me.

I was currently standing at the center of a massive crater, everything around me completely leveled.

I must have really destroyed everything in my fight with that powerful black marker monster.

And yet, even though I was confronted with the weight of my reality... I found my thoughts returning to the dream I had.

"What was the name of that boy in the dream again?"

I couldn't remember.

I could barely remember what he looked like.

But why? What was this nagging feeling that wasn't leaving my heart? It kept gnawing at my insides for some reason.

"Well... that doesn't matter now." I whispered, my eyes narrowing on an Arcana that was now materializing in front of me.

The Arcana had a jet black color, with a dark aura radiating from it.

"Forget the dream for now. There are more pressing issues to deal with." Stretching my hand forward, I reached out for the prize before me.

The gnawing feeling within me receded, and I slowly forgot about the pangs in my heart, only focusing on the mission before me.

The forgotten dream could wait.

I was Lewis Griffith, and I had my own battles to fight.

*

[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)

Chapter 1070: The Great Sage's Resolve

There I sat, in the stillness of a massive crater, the only testament to the incredible energy that had surged through this place not too long ago.

The earth around me was scorched, its once vibrant hue tainted by the power of the Nether. As I stared into the distance, the silence seemed to echo my own internal turmoil.

I could feel it, the hum of magic coursing through my veins, pulsing with every beat of my heart.

The very energy that had once been my bane was now my salvation.

With each breath, I could sense the life around me, or rather, the crater, every blade of grass, every grain of sand.

It was a power I'd long coveted, yet its acquisition bore a heavy cost.

My fingers clenched, the cold touch of the Soul Fragments of my friends serving as a harsh reminder of the price I'd paid.

They had been with me, fought beside me, and now...now they were gone. Their vibrant spirits were reduced to nothing but glowing fragments in my hands.

It was my fault. I was the one who couldn't protect them.

'No... I suppose I did the best I could do.'

Back when I was still fighting the black marker monster and its purple marker underlings, I had used Spellcraft to save some of their Soul Fragments.

That meant one thing.

"I can bring them back," I muttered, my voice a mere whisper in the wind.

A spark of hope ignited within me.

[The Hanged Man] was an Arcana that held the power of resurrection. If I had that, I could resurrect all three of them.

But for that, I needed to find it first.

My gaze fell upon the card that lay before me.

Its ornate design seemed to mock me, an ill-omened harbinger of my trials.

"The [Death] Arcana, huh?"

Fitting, I thought, a bitter smile tugging at the corner of my lips.

The very embodiment of the Labyrinth I just experienced.

"But you're also a new beginning," I found myself saying, my fingers tracing the intricate design on the card.

The cycle of life and death, an eternal dance of creation and destruction. It was, after all, through the face of death that I'd found a new life, a life filled with magic.

Besides, it was a useful piece for [The World], my current goal.

My collection of Arcanas was slowly growing, three already in my grasp.

But eighteen more still lay scattered across this world, waiting to be found.

The path ahead was daunting, each Arcana a labyrinth of trials and tribulations.

But I was no longer the same.

"I can do this," I reassured myself, my determination unwavering. "I will find them all."

There was a strange solace in my newfound solitude. Without my friends, there were no distractions, no concerns.

It was just me against the world.

As I stood up from the scorched earth of the crater, I felt an odd mix of emotions swirling within me.

I looked around at the vast expanse of emptiness. Once a labyrinth filled with life, now a barren, desolate land.

This was my doing, my victory. Yet it felt incomplete, hollow.

"There's no need to feel this way, Lewis," I muttered to myself. The truth was bitter, but undeniable.

With the power coursing through me, I didn't require assistance anymore.

I didn't need a team to face my battles. I was capable of detecting Nether, of wielding it as my weapon.

That power alone was a formidable force. Even the monstrous black marker creature could not withstand it.

'If I capitalize on that, it should make the search faster. I have the map, so it shouldn't be too difficult...'

But my thoughts couldn't escape the companions I had lost along the way.

I missed their chatter, their camaraderie, their unwavering trust in me. A part of me still yearned for their presence.

Yet, another part, the logical, strategic part, knew I could make quicker progress alone.

'And then there's the other thing... Arcanas.'

The possibility of learning to use the Arcanas of this world intrigued me.

The knowledge felt within reach, a tantalizing prospect that set my heart racing. Just imagining the different spells, the variety of effects, the sheer power they held, it was intoxicating. T

he thrill of the unknown, the delight of discovery, it was exhilarating. The thought brought an ecstatic smile on my face, a spark in my eyes.

"Yes, this is a good thing," I said aloud, my voice echoing through the stillness.

The sound of my own voice reassured me, validated my optimism. I was not alone. I had the Nether, the Arcanas, the Soul Fragments of my allies.

'I should be much faster now. Karlia won't have to suffer for too long either.'

But amidst the euphoria and anticipation, there was a nagging question at the back of my mind. One that refused to be quelled.

'How was I able to use the Nether?'

It was a mystery that bewildered me, a puzzle that demanded to be solved.

The power had come to me when I needed it the most, almost as if...as if it was waiting for the right moment.

Was it destiny? Was it some unknown entity guiding me? Or was it just the desperate plea of a dying man summoning unknown reserves of strength?

The theories whirled around in my head, each as plausible as the next.

As I stood there in the heart of the crater, I knew that this mystery, like so many others, was part of my journey.

It was a challenge. And I, Lewis Griffith, was never one to back down from a challenge.

'But there's no time to think about that now. Not yet.'