

SPELLCRAFT 1091

SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar

Chapter 1091: Resolve To Grow

The cool damp air of the cave billowed out in a steady rhythm, dancing with the erratic glow of the makeshift machines and computers scattered haphazardly around the interior.

Crystalline stalactites hung from the cave ceiling, reflecting off the luminescence cast from the pulsating screens and blinking lights, casting a vibrant, ethereal glow throughout the enclosure.

The inhabitant of the cave was an eccentric figure.

Clad in a faded lab coat streaked with dirt and a smattering of other stains, the man stood hunched over a console, his eyes aglow with a mad curiosity.

His hair, as wild and untamed as the man himself, stood at odd angles, and his cheeks were adorned with a grizzly beard.

His gaunt features were etched with lines of age and countless hours of study and experimentation.

"It's back... the Kraken... it's back!" He laughed to himself, a sound that echoed eerily off the cave walls, accompanied by a metallic clanging as he banged his fist onto the console in giddy excitement.

His eyes, akin to a wild animal's, darted across the lit screens, soaking in the data and information that flowed through.

Something else made his mind whirr as well.

"Defeated the Enhanced Orcs, did he?" He mumbled, ruffling through various papers strewn about.

His lips curled into a wicked grin, showcasing a few missing teeth.

"Interesting, very interesting..."

This peculiar stranger, this unexpected variable in his experiments, had piqued the interest of this mad scientist.

'Its been decades since I arrived here. To think there's another one who managed to cross the Dark Waters!'

This phenomenon had put a damper on his curiosity, stifling the thrills he had been seeking.

And now, someone had broken that monotony.

"Who are you, stranger? Who are you that dares to defy the Dark Waters and stirs up my Kraken?"

He questioned to himself, a spark of fascination lighting up his manic gaze.

His long, skeletal fingers moved to adjust the thick glasses resting on the bridge of his nose, a wild gleam of anticipation in his eyes.

"I must meet you... I must know you." The words trickled out of his mouth, seeping into the stale cave air, filled with promises of a dangerous curiosity.

The mad scientist let out a final, lingering laugh, his joy echoing throughout the cave, resonating with the rhythmic hum of his machines and the secret whisperings of the Dark Waters.

Staring up at the patchwork canvas of the tent above me, I let out a sigh that seemed to echo through the hushed silence.

The day's events felt like they had been taken out of a dream, the kind that leaves you feeling disoriented and uncertain.

My hand absently fiddled with a worn-out patch on my vest, trying to make sense of the jumbled thoughts.

My satchel... all my necessary tools were with the monster in the Dark Waters.

Even now, the memory of its vast silhouette, its glowing eyes filled me with an unnameable dread.

I could almost still feel the icy chill of the water, the relentless pull of the current, the taste of fear as I'd faced off against the monster.

I was weak, and I knew it.

The stark truth stung, but I had to accept it. The storm, the currents, and the beast had almost cost me my life.

And if I didn't do something about it, next time, it might just succeed.

I shook my head, a weary smile tugging at the corner of my lips. It was a tough spot, for sure.

But despairing over it wouldn't get me anywhere. The question wasn't what had happened, but what I could do about it now.

And the answer was clear as day.

I had to get stronger.

I had to train, learn, and push past my limitations.

I had to be ready to face the Kraken again, to snatch my belongings from its grasp. My journey depended on it.

'Fortunately, it's not impossible to grow. It'll take some time, but...'

A renewed sense of determination stirred within me. My fingers stilled on the vest, clutching the fabric tightly.

This setback, as brutal as it was, was just another challenge to overcome.

I had come to this world, taken on a task that was already impossible by all standards.

I had faced many trials, experienced victories, and losses, but I had always found a way.

This time wouldn't be any different.

I sat up, brushing off the dirt from my vest, my eyes filled with resolution.

"I should start with my Core..."

I still had single Nether Core within me. If I could generate more, that would be good.

'I should also develop a strategy that will allow me to face that monster while also fighting against the storm and devastating current.'

It was pretty clear to me that the beast had the advantage when it came to water territory

I had to even the odds considerably.

'The eyes as well... I'll need to do something about that.'

As I lay back down, ready to seize a few hours of sleep, I was already planning for the day ahead.

It was time to become stronger, to prepare for the battle that awaited me.

And come what may, I would face it, head-on.

[The Next Day]

Morning light crept into the tent, casting a warm, soft glow onto the canvas.

Birds outside were already chattering cheerfully, a vibrant melody that greeted the start of the new day.

I slowly stirred from my slumber, the sounds and the light pulling me from the depths of sleep.

My body felt surprisingly refreshed despite the restless thoughts that had swarmed my mind the previous night.

My muscles were taut with a strange new energy, as though bracing for what was to come.

Sitting up, I smoothed the creases on my pants, and then drew my legs into a cross-legged position.

This was the stance that allowed me to feel most grounded, most connected with myself and my surroundings.

I had used this posture countless times in the past during magic training... or what was supposed to be Magic Training.

'I didn't have Magic back then, so there was no point.'

But today, it felt different, like an old routine transformed into a fresh start.

My eyes fluttered shut as I took in a deep breath, the cool morning air filling my lungs.

I reached within, toward the well of magic residing in my core. I could feel it there, a warm, constant presence, waiting, beckoning.

For a moment, everything outside seemed to fade.

The chattering birds, the rustle of the wind, the noise of the goblin village, all disappeared into a silent murmur.

The only sound was the rhythmic beating of my own heart.

The road to strength... it was not a path of mere physical training. I knew that well. It was a journey of the mind, of the spirit, and of magic.

I had to understand my own strengths and weaknesses, push past my limits, and harness the untapped potential of my magic.

A smile tugged at my lips.

"I can do this," I whispered to myself, the words dissolving into the stillness around me.

A new day had dawned, and with it, a new resolve. A resolve to become stronger, to overcome the hurdles, and reclaim what was mine.

It was a fine day to grow even further. I welcomed the journey with open arms.

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Chapter 1092: Farewell To A Home

[A Week Later]

"Haaa..."

A week of intense training had passed, each day melting into the next in a routine of meditation, physical exercise, magical practice, and the constant absorption of knowledge about the new world I was now a part of.

My body had been pushed to its limits, yet I felt invigorated rather than exhausted. My magic felt stronger, more attuned, and my mind clearer than ever before.

The sun had already dipped below the horizon, surrendering the world to the stars, when I finally opened my eyes and stepped out of my tent.

The chill of the night air was a welcome change from the warmth of the day.

A gentle breeze rustled the leaves and played with my hair, carrying the faint scent of roasting meat and the mellow undertones of a bonfire.

I turned my gaze to see Gobtia approaching me, her small goblin face lit by the flickering fire behind her.

She smiled at me, her eyes shining in the firelight, and motioned for me to follow her.

"Food's ready, Lewis," she said, her voice echoing slightly in the quiet night.

My stomach growled in response, reminding me of the long hours I had spent training without a bite to eat.

I thanked Gobtia and followed her to the communal bonfire, my feet sinking slightly into the soft earth beneath me.

The goblin village was bathed in an ethereal glow, the firelight dancing on the faces of its inhabitants.

The air was filled with the sound of laughter and cheerful chatter as the goblins gathered around the fire for their communal meal.

A sense of camaraderie filled the air, warm and inviting, just like the food that was spread out before us.

Over the past week, I had become a part of their daily routine. The goblins had not only accepted me into their community but had also shared their lives and lore with me.

I had learned about their culture, their traditions, their hopes, and their fears.

In return, I had offered my knowledge and my strength to them, a symbiotic exchange that had fostered mutual respect and understanding.

As I sat down with them around the fire, tasting the simple yet hearty meal, I couldn't help but feel a sense of peace. The faces around me were no longer alien but familiar, their smiles sincere, their laughter contagious.

I looked around at the faces illuminated by the firelight, the faces of my newfound companions. Each one of them had their own story, their own dreams, their own battles.

And yet, in that moment, we were one - one village, one community, one family.

A smile spread across my face, a genuine expression of my contentment.

Even if it had only been for a week... I felt a strong bond with these people.

Yes, I thought to myself as I clinked my cup with Gobtia's, savoring the moment.

'I am finally ready.'

Ready to face the challenges that lay ahead, ready to retrieve what was mine, ready to venture into the unknown once again.

'After everything that has happened, its finally time...'

I looked at the laughing faces around me, and the gentle gazes that surrounded me, feeling warmth permeate through me.

'It was short, but I really was happy here.'

And that made all the difference.

A warm, hearty laughter echoed through the goblin village as we sat around the roaring bonfire. As the laughter died down and the goblins returned to their discussions, I took a deep breath, preparing myself for what I was about to say.

"Gobtia, Chief," I began, my voice steady despite the knot in my stomach. Both turned to look at me, their expressions curious.

"I have something I need to tell you."

The Chief tilted his head, his eyes peering at me intently. "What is it, Lewis?"

"I...I will be leaving tomorrow," I confessed, holding their gazes. "I plan to face the creature in the Dark Waters."

A ripple of shock passed over their faces.

Gobtia's eyes widened and her father's bushy eyebrows knitted together in concern. The rest of the goblins, who had overheard our conversation, fell into a hushed silence.

"Why?" Gobtia asked, her voice barely above a whisper. "Why would you go there? It's too dangerous."

"I know," I nodded. "But I have to do it. I need to retrieve something that I lost there."

The Chief sighed heavily, his shoulders drooping. "Lewis, you've become like a son to me in this short time. You've become a part of our village, a part of our family. I...I would have been proud to have you as a son-in-law."

Gobtia blushed at her father's words, lowering her gaze to her lap. "I...I feel the same way, Lewis," she confessed, her voice quivering slightly. "I've...I've loved you since I first saw you. But I know that you have someone else in your heart."

I looked at her, surprised by her words, but also touched by her understanding.

"Yes," I admitted, my voice barely a whisper. "There is someone I love. Someone I need to save."

"We understand, Lewis," the Chief said, his voice full of warmth. "You've got a mission to complete. And we respect that."

"And we won't forget your kindness either," Gobtia added, looking up at me with a smile. "You saved our village, Lewis. You gave us hope."

I nodded, moved by their words. "I owe you a lot too," I confessed. "Your kindness, your hospitality...I won't forget any of it. And I hope that our paths cross again once my mission is over."

I looked over at the rest of the Goblins too. I could see the warmth in their eyes... and while it was a bizarre experience, being so friendly with monsters, it was an amazing one at that.

'I thought the Nether Realm would be crawling with dangers and horrors, but...'

I had been treated with so much warmth in my time here.

It made me so happy.

'I wish you could see all this with me, Karlia...'

And that was what strengthened my resolve further.

'I have to show you everything. I will. I promise.'

As I said my farewells to the Goblins, and they did the same, I couldn't help but feel a pang of sadness at leaving the village, my temporary home.

But I also felt a sense of resolution.

I had a mission to complete, a love to save.

And with the strength I had gained and the memories of the goblin village in my heart, I was ready to face whatever lay ahead.

"It's finally time to end this."

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Chapter 1093: Monster From The Depths [Pt 1]

The morning sun cast a soft golden glow over the Goblin Village as I said my final goodbyes, Gobtia's and the Chief's sincere wishes ringing in my ears.

I stepped out of the village boundary and turned to look back one last time, carrying with me their hopes and the warmth of their home.

With a deep breath, I began my journey, trekking through the thick forest, across the gleaming white sands of the beach, and finally onto the brilliant blue sea.

As I distanced myself from the shore, the vibrancy of the world gradually waned.

The once radiant azure sky was now a murkier grey, its vast expanse punctuated by ominous clouds.

The winds grew colder, and the sea began to swell and heave. Slowly but surely, I was approaching the Dark Waters.

The transformation was gradual but relentless. The further I traveled, the more the atmosphere grew oppressive, heavy with a sense of foreboding. T

he once benign, playful sea was now a tempestuous beast, its waves frothing and crashing against me. The sky was shrouded in dark clouds, their underbellies roiling ominously as they churned in the restless sky.

Reaching the edge of the Dark Waters, I could feel the raw, primal power of the sea.

It was here that I had lost my satchel, here where I had met the monster that lurked beneath these waters.

And it was here, once again, where I felt the threatening pull of the undercurrent, a menacing force that seemed eager to drag me into the abyss.

I paused, taking in the sights and sounds around me. The storm brewing overhead, the lashing waves, the chill in the air.

It was terrifying, yet I felt a strange sense of calm.

I knew what I was up against, and I was prepared.

Summoning my magic, I erected a protective barrier around myself. I could feel the pressure of the sea against it, a constant, crushing force.

But I held firm, focusing on maintaining the shield.

With a deep breath, I flew above the tumultuous waves, the chilling wind whipping against my barrier. The darkness around me seemed to thicken, yet, within me, a fire was burning.

I was not the same man who had first encountered these treacherous waters. I was stronger, more determined, and I was not going to back down.

As the storm raged around me, I plunged forward, defying the gusting winds and the lashing rain.

The monstrous silhouette seemed to stir beneath the water, the luminescent eyes flickering to life.

A surge of adrenaline coursed through my veins as I charged forth, ready to face the monster once again.

Despite the fear, despite the uncertainty, I felt a glimmer of hope. Hope that I would succeed, hope that I would retrieve my satchel, and hope that I would save Karlia, I was determined to overcome the Dark Waters, to confront the monster beneath, and to emerge victorious.

No matter what lay ahead, I was ready to face it.

"Let's begin. Spellcraft..."

~WHUUUUMMMM!~

The creature emerged from the abyss, a monstrous silhouette against the roiling Dark Waters.

Its eerie luminescent eyes glowed with an intense, hypnotic light.

But I was prepared. I focused on the constant flow of energy circulating around me, a protective veil that warded off its influence.

'Things won't go your way this time!'

"[Nether Infusion]!" I intoned, as the air around me began to shimmer, three Nether Cores orbiting around me.

My casting speed skyrocketed, faster than I had ever been able to manage before.

The creature lunged towards me, its gargantuan form cutting through the stormy waves like a dark blade.

I darted out of the way, the wind whistling past me as I narrowly avoided the behemoth's strike.

"[Nova Strike]!" I called out, drawing upon my Nether energy, condensing it into a brilliant beam of light.

The spell shot out, cutting across the darkness and crashing into the beast's tough hide.

But it wasn't enough.

The creature howled, and I could see its wounds already beginning to close.

Its regenerative ability was astonishing.

"[Corona Burst]!" I yelled, using Spellcraft to manipulate my Nether energy, forcing it to explode outward in a dazzling corona of destructive power.

"RUAAAAAARRRRGHHHHH!!!" The creature roared in pain as the burst hit, but it was far from defeated.

Suddenly, the beast's eyes flared, and a massive burst of energy shot towards me.

I could read the flow of energy, feeling it ripple through the air around me, and I pushed off, just in time to avoid the lethal beam.

"Radiant Chains!" I countered, conjuring glowing links of Nether energy that shot forth, wrapping themselves around the creature's body.

I tugged, pulling it off balance and buying me some time to regroup.

My heart pounded in my chest as I faced the creature, its monstrous form dwarfing mine.

But I was not defeated. I was stronger, faster, and smarter than before.

And I was not going to give up.

I could feel the power of my Nether Cores, pulsating with untamed energy. I could feel my heightened casting speed, my improved Spellcraft, all my hard work culminating in this one fight.

We were in a stalemate, but that was about to change.

"Starfall!" I shouted, pouring every ounce of my energy into this one spell.

It was my trump card, a spell of such destructive power that it would obliterate anything in its path.

There was a moment of silence, and then a brilliant, blinding light descended from the sky. The beast roared as the spell hit, its body being consumed by the light.

My heart pounded as I watched, waiting for the light to fade. I was exhausted, my body aching and my energy nearly depleted.

But I held on, hope flaring in my chest. I was determined to win this fight.

'No matter what it takes...'

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Chapter 1094: Monster From The Depths [Pt 2]

As the light from Starfall faded, my heart sank.

The light faded, and the creature remained. It was battered and bruised, its hide marred by countless burns and scars.

But it was still alive, still regenerating, still standing.

"What? How?"

I felt a flicker of doubt. Could I even kill this monster?

It seemed to be immortal, its vitality unstoppable.

But I couldn't give up. Not now. Not when I was so close.

I had to keep trying.

"Just die!"

With a roar of determination, I launched myself back into the fray. My orbs of condensed Nether danced around me, enhancing my spells, strengthening my defenses.

I was in control now, the tide of the battle shifting in my favor.

Yet, the creature was relentless, its will to survive equalling mine.

It lashed out, its attacks wild and ferocious.

But I was faster, smarter. I dodged, I countered, and I attacked.

Still... still I couldn't kill it!

The battle raged on, a dance of light and darkness in the heart of the Dark Waters.

"Haa... haa..."

Exhaustion gnawed at my bones.

"Why... why won't you just die?"

The creature seemed to mirror my fatigue, its movements sluggish, its attacks less frenzied.

Its monstrous eyes glowed less brightly, a sign of its waning strength. But it still lived. Its life force remained undiminished despite our prolonged battle.

"What can I do next?" I pondered, heaving heavily. The monster was seemingly unkillable, its regenerative abilities surpassing anything I had ever encountered.

'Well... almost anything.'

Its regenerative speed was slower than the memories of Jared that I had relating to Karlia. It seemed she had the superior regeneration, but this creature was just as annoying.

Even a large-scale attack that should have killed it down to its very atoms didn't do the trick.

I was stuck at this point.

In my frustration, my mind drifted to the Goblin Village. The Goblins... the Chief... and then Gobtia, to her kind smile, her wise words.

And then it hit me.

The [Connection]!

I recalled the feeling of unity, the sensation of being part of a shared consciousness.

It bypassed all resistance, all barriers.

Could it work here?

'I must be getting crazy and desperate here, but I'm out of options.'

I allowed Gobtia's voice to guide me, her words echoing in my mind.

"The [Connection] bypasses all barriers. It binds everything it touches without exception."

Closing my eyes, I focused on the flow of Nether, allowing it to guide me towards the monster.

'The intensity it has is simply outstanding. It's like a living lump of pure energy...' I heaved slowly.

"It draws me in."

I descended steadily, my heart pounding in my chest.

'This... better work.'

I reached out to the creature, its tentacles flying towards me in a wild fury.

Just before they hit, I deactivated my barrier, reaching out to touch the tentacle.

As our beings connected, a strange sensation washed over me, the world shifting in an indescribable way.

'This... this is...!'

Suddenly, I felt a deep connection with the creature. Its thoughts, its fears, its desires... they all flowed into me.

I was one with the monster.

Our beings intertwined in the most profound way possible.

'Unbelievable! Its thoughts are actually flowing in.'

This creature wasn't just a random monster. It was sentient. I could sense actual traces of emotions and memories from it.

It drew closer and closer to me.

And then, everything began to turn blank.

A stark white nothingness consumed my senses, the world around me ceasing to exist.

I floated in this void, my mind connected to the creature, the rest of the world fading away into insignificance.

I didn't know what would come next, didn't know if I had made the right choice. But in that moment, it felt right.

It felt like the only option I had left.

'I have to delve deeper...'

And I was ready to face whatever would come.

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Chapter 1095: The Truce

As the connection solidified, I felt my consciousness cascading down an unknown path, like a river being swept away by a sudden, overpowering current.

Suddenly, memories that weren't mine flooded my mind, vivid, wild, and tumultuous, painting a story of a life far removed from anything I had ever experienced.

I was no longer Lewis, the mage, but a Kraken, the last of its kind.

I felt an immense loneliness, an ever-present melancholy that wrapped itself around me like a cold shroud.

I saw the Kraken's kin, beautiful beings with powers beyond comprehension, once rulers of the vast oceans.

And then came the pain, the bloodshed.

I saw the madman, his twisted face etched with a lust for knowledge and power.

He hunted the Krakens, capturing them one by one. They were subjected to terrible experiments, their magical essence harnessed for the madman's nefarious purposes.

I felt the Kraken's desperation, its terror, as it watched its kin slaughtered mercilessly. The ocean waters, once a safe haven, were now soaked in the blood of its family.

And in its final, desperate bid for survival, it had fled to the Dark Waters, a place feared by all.

Here, amidst the turbulent currents and perpetual darkness, the Kraken found a refuge, a sanctuary from the relentless pursuit. Yet its sanctuary was also its prison, a lonely fortress far removed from the vibrant ocean it once called home.

The Kraken, I learned, was not a mindless monster, but a tragic figure, its existence marred by sorrow and loss.

It defended the Dark Waters, not out of malice, but to protect itself from the horrors of its past.

As the memories faded, I was left with a sense of profound sadness and a newfound understanding of the creature before me. It wasn't the enemy; it was just another survivor, much like myself. Bound by the shared experience, I felt a strange kinship with the Kraken.

Our destinies, it seemed, were intertwined in ways we could have never imagined.

The connection faded, and I was once again Lewis Griffith, alone in the stormy waters, face to face with the misunderstood leviathan.

"Haa... I understand now."

As my mind snapped back to reality, I was still reeling from the flood of memories that now dwelled within me.

It took me a moment to process it all, the sorrow, the suffering... and the truth about the monster I had spent so much time preparing to fight.

'This Kraken isn't my enemy; it's a fellow victim, a creature like me, pitted against the true villain...'

And the true villain was still out there, past the Dark Waters, plotting, scheming, relentless in his pursuit.

A madman, a mage like me, but far removed from anything I understood magic to be.

'And he's dangerous too...'

He wielded not one, but two Arcanas. From what I deciphered, he had [The Popess] and the [The Emperor].

'Now that I think about it more, it makes a lot of sense...'

It was the [Popess] that gave the Kraken its incredible regenerative abilities.

In a twist of fate, the Kraken had stolen it during their last clash, a desperate bid for survival that had likely saved its life.

But the madman still had the [Emperor] at his disposal.

'That's a tricky one. Could it be...?!' Things began to fall into place in my mind.

The Enhanced Orcs that attacked the Goblin Village were probably not the random monsters I had thought them to be.

The madman must have been behind them somehow.

"It doesn't seem like I'll be able to come to a consensus with such a person..."

A strange sense of unity filled me as I stared into the eyes of the creature.

I knew then that I couldn't kill it. Not after what I had seen, what I had felt.

The Kraken didn't deserve my wrath, but my compassion.

Here we were, both victims of the same villain, both bound by a common goal: to stop this madman.

Our fight was pointless, a diversion from our true enemy. We had to stop fighting each other and start fighting him.

"We don't have to fight each other," I said, more to myself than the Kraken, words carried away by the roiling waters around us.

"We have a common enemy."

My gaze turned towards the direction of the madman, my resolve solidifying with each passing moment.

The Dark Waters seemed less daunting now. The storm around me was no longer a barrier, but a challenge, a stepping stone to what was truly important. I turned back to the Kraken, my heart pounding in my chest.

"I can stop that man for you."

My hand trembled as I extended it towards the Kraken, resonating my words using [Connection], so it could understand.

As my palm met its tentacle, a soft surge of energy passed between us, solidifying our truce.

The Kraken then extended one of its long tentacles towards me, a small satchel attached to the end.

It was my satchel, the one I had lost during our first encounter, now returned to me.

"Thank you," I said, my voice barely audible amidst the churning waters. The Kraken only stared, its eyes deep and understanding. "I promise to leave you in peace, to protect this place, and to eliminate the madman on your behalf."

At my words, the Kraken's eyes shimmered with what I could only describe as gratitude. It then revealed a pulsating orb nestled amongst its tentacles.

The source of its regenerative capabilities, the Arcana of the [Popess].

It gently nudged the orb towards me, an unspoken agreement passing between us.

I could sense its thoughts.

It didn't want the Arcana, regarding its restorative powers more like a curse.

'Thanks so much...' I reached out to accept it, feeling a surge of energy coursing through my body, my magic power increasing at an unprecedented rate.

"I understand your feelings," I said, cradling the [Popess] in my hand. "And I'll make good use of this power, not just for myself but for our shared goal. To defeat the madman."

With that, I pulled away from the Kraken, my heart pounding in my chest. We were allies now, bound by a shared promise.

The [Popess] nestled safely in my possession, its powerful energy pulsing in sync with my heartbeat.

'I've gotten another Arcana. That's a relief...'

As I turned to leave, I cast a final glance at the Kraken. Its tentacles waved gently in the current, a silent farewell. It had given me a part of itself, trusted me with its power.

And now, it was up to me to honour that trust.

My gaze hardened, my mind focused on my next goal. The madman and his remaining Arcana, [The Emperor], were my next targets.

The Dark Waters roared around me, a challenge I was ready to meet head-on.

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Chapter 1096: Madman

"Alright, then..."

Now that I had my satchel, I could use my tools to search for the Arcana I was looking for.

Since I knew it was with the madman that tortured the Kraken and its people, I could be sure that finding one would mean locating the other.

'I'll be killing two birds with one stone. Let's end this swiftly, then.'

However, there was one thing I could not foresee. It was a surprise that shook me down to every bone in my body.

'N-no way...'

The moment I put on my goggles and utilized the map to locate the Arcana and cluster of Nether, I found it in the location I never expected.

"No!"

~WHOOOOOOOSSSSSHHHH!~

My heart pounded in my chest as I navigated through the swirling currents, my sense of urgency spurring me forward.

'It's the Goblin village!'

I had only been away for a short while, but now it was the epicenter of a significant Nether concentration.

That was impossible. Unless...

'The madman is there!'

Fear for Gobtia and her father gnawed at my stomach, turning it into a hollow pit. The open water seemed to stretch on for miles, mocking my desperate need for speed.

But as a Mage, I had resources.

"[Nether Warp]!" I chanted, the ambient Nether snapping to my command, wrapping around me.

In an instant, I was propelled forward, the scenery blurring past me as I moved at a speed that would have been impossible before.

The moment I emerged from the sea and closed in on my target location, the ominous atmosphere of the village hit me.

The once cheerful place was now eerily silent. Goblins who were usually laughing and chatting were now standing lifelessly, their eyes vacant.

They seemed to be under some kind of control.

"Damn it..." My heart sank.

And there he was. In the center of the village square, a man stood clad in a white lab coat, his hair a disheveled mess.

His eyes glowed with an unnatural light, an unhinged grin etched across his face.

The madman.

"I see the Kraken has found a new pet," he sneered, his gaze finding mine. He held up his hand, an orb pulsating with Nether energy.

The Orb seemed to contain the Arcana I was searching for. [The Emperor].

"It's quite pitiful, really, how it sent you here thinking you could defeat me."

My blood boiled, my hands curling into fists at my sides. "You've done enough harm. It ends here."

"Is that so?" he laughed, an eerie, cold sound that echoed off the silent village houses. His gaze swept across the entranced villagers.

"Well then, I do hope you're prepared for a fight. But that would be unwise... for your sake."

"You're crazy." I sharply retorted, watching him shake his head vehemently.

Clearly he didn't agree with my perception of him. The madman just stood there, a twisted smirk playing on his lips.

"You see, I'm a man of science, a seeker of truth."

His eyes, a chilling mirror reflecting my horrified gaze, held a flicker of madness. "And truth is only found through experimentation."

His grip tightened on the orb of Nether energy, and I watched in silence as he gestured to the entranced Goblins around us.

"Either you do as I ask, or their lives are forfeit. It's quite simple, really."

My heart pounded in my chest, my fists clenching at my sides.

'His goal is ultimately to capture the Kraken. He'll most likely utilize me to get to it. Even then, I can't be sure of the safety of the villagers.'

I stared at him, defiance burning bright in my gaze. I would not let this man control me.

"You must think me naive," I began, my voice steady despite the whirlwind of fear and anger swirling within me. "You stand here, threatening innocent lives, and you expect me to just comply? To just bow down and obey?"

His laughter echoed off the silent village houses, a cold, chilling sound. "Well, you could try and fight me, but I assure you, the outcome will be the same."

I took a deep breath, my gaze hardening.

'He's probably right. The problem right now is that I'm exhausted. After fighting the Kraken, I've used up most of my energy and stamina. Plus, the Dark Waters had denser Nether energy, compared to this place.'

Still, I knew accepting his proposal would lead me nowhere too.

In the end, I was walking on thin ice. Depending on the cards I played, and how I went about this, everything could come crumbling down.

'I'll have to be very smart about this...'

Narrowing my gaze on the madman, and also spreading my senses to all the Goblins he had under his control, I prepared myself for my big move.

"So what will it be, young man?" I heard the madman ask.

However, deciding not to waste any time with a proper response, I initiated my move.

~WHOOSH!~

Determination thrummed in my veins as I sprang into action, calculating my every move with strategic precision.

The madman was strong, I could sense it in the overwhelming aura of Nether energy around him.

I had to prioritize the safety of the Goblins, and fast.

"[Grand Dome]," I called, focusing the energy within my core and radiating it outwards.

The spell was like a ripple in a pond, expanding out to form a barrier around the village, my attempt to ensure the madman did not call for reinforcements, or control the Goblins to leave my area of influence.

I didn't stop there. As the madman snarled, his frustration palpable, I turned my attention to the villagers themselves.

"[Restful Slumber]," I chanted, casting the next spell.

I felt the flow of my Nether connect with the villagers. One by one, they slumped, their bodies relaxed as a deep, dreamless sleep took hold.

Finally, I turned my attention back to the madman, a protective aura enveloping the unconscious Goblins. The last step of my strategy was to keep them safe from any stray energy bursts during the upcoming fight.

"Fortress Shield!" I invoked the third spell, the words ringing out in the silent night.

A dome of shimmering Nether energy sprung up around the villagers, encasing them in a protective bubble.

'With this, I should be able to fight freely.'

As for the reason why my opponent couldn't make as much as a single move during my preparation was due to me using Spellcraft to affect his position, allowing the earth he stood on to glue him in place, while also causing the air around him to press heavily on him.

Adding to the fact that my combination of Spells was almost instant, it was an inevitable victory on my end.

Then, turning to the madman, I let the determination blazing in my eyes speak for me.

"Your hostages are off the table," I declared, squeezing the little Nether left from my cores.

"Now, it's just you and me."

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

Chapter 1097: Help Resurfaces

My body felt heavy and strained, my Nether energy still recovering from my battle with the Kraken.

Despite this, I was in a deadlock with the madman. Our powers clashed, his chilling control of his Spells surprised me.

It matched even my quick-thinking and nimble use of spells.

I had to be very conservative with the amount of energy I utilized now.

"[Nether Barrage]!" I yelled, directing a flurry of concentrated Nether bolts towards him.

He merely smirked, replying with a resounding "[Void Deflect]!"

His protective spell bounced my bolts back at me.

"Tch..." I barely managed to side-step them, the impact causing a nearby rock to shatter.

I retaliated with a Spell of my own.

Concentrated tendrils of Nether snaked out from my hand, aiming to ensnare him. The madman, however, had already predicted my move.

"[Shift]!" he chanted, his form blurring momentarily before appearing several feet away from his previous position.

The tendrils hit nothing but thin air, disappearing back into the Nether.

He then countered with another barrage of Spells.

His relentless attack was wearing me down, but I had to keep going.

'Haa... damnit...' My mind was straining from the constant need to sustain the protective shield around the Goblin village and the protective bubbles I encased them all in, while simultaneously matching the madman spell for spell.

'How long can I keep this up for?' My control was waning... and I could tell it was due to external interference.

"It seems you're reaching your limit," I heard the madman's voice echo, wincing as I felt the sound of his voice reverberate in my head.

"[The Emperor]"

'Shit! So that's what it was!'

The worst-case scenario was currently at play. My opponent... knew how to properly use his Arcana!

Suddenly, I found myself under an overwhelming compulsion to kneel. My legs buckled under the force, my entire body fighting against the madman's control.

The strain on my Nether energy was intense, and I wondered how much longer I could resist.

The protective shield around the village flickered momentarily, but I redoubled my efforts, unwilling to let it drop.

My vision blurred as I struggled to maintain control. I had to turn the tide of this battle, and fast.

'What should I do?'

It felt like my body was shutting down under the command of the madman's Arcana. I gritted my teeth, forcing my gaze up to meet his triumphant grin.

"You know," he said with an almost jovial chuckle, "You're the strongest mage I've ever seen. I think I'll enjoy experimenting on you."

"Is that why you started this? Hunting the Krakens? Experimenting on innocent creatures?" I managed to croak out, ignoring the shooting pain coursing through my limbs.

He paused for a moment, his brow furrowing in thought.

"It's been so long... I've almost forgotten why I began," he said, almost nostalgically.

'W-what?!'

"I've forgotten who I am. What was I called? What did I do before now? I can't remember... it's been so long, you know?"

Just how old was this man? Was he so immersed in his obsession that he lost track of everyone and everything?

"It's been so long since I've spoken to a fellow human too. After all those decades of being stranded in this place... I haven't seen any other person cross those waters. Yet you did it. That's what makes you so interesting."

It was just as I saw in the Kraken's memories.

This man was insane!

"But after losing everything, everyone, my research is all that's left. This... this is natural to me now."

His laughter rang through the air, maniacal and disturbing. I watched as his eyes danced with madness and triumph, searching for a way to turn the tide.

"WUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!!!"

Suddenly, a powerful howl pierced the night, resounding across the landscape.

Both the madman and I jerked our heads towards the source of the sound. It was a familiar resonance, one I'd only recently come to know.

'N-no way! Why are you coming here?!' My thoughts echoed.

Out from the crashing waves of the sea, the mighty Kraken rose.

"WUUUOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

It towered over us, its eyes blazing with a righteous fury that seemed to mirror my own.

'Does it want to fight? No... its more like... it wants to help me?'

As much as relief spread through me, worry also appeared. After all, this was exactly what the madman wanted.

~BOOOOOOMMMM!!!~

The battlefield shifted dramatically as the Kraken joined the fray. A dense surge of energy filled the air, nearly palpable.

'Based on raw power alone, it should be far superior to that man!' I thought to myself.

Unfortunately, what I saw was in sharp contrast to that.

The Kraken was far from its native domain, so most of the experience I had with it couldn't be replicated here.

Its movements, though powerful, lacked the fluid grace it held in the water.

On land, it was out of its element, slower, and with less of a barrier defending it from harm.

Worse still, I could see the signs of fatigue it had.

'It used up a lot of energy in our fight too, didn't it? And currently, without an Arcana, it was far weaker than when I fought it.'

"Hahahahahaha! You're mine beast!"

Across the battlefield, the madman was relentless.

He threw spells after spells, cackling in manic delight.

Each spell, a different shade of destructive power, flew towards the Kraken. Fiery explosions danced across the Kraken's hide, met with icy frosts and bolts of lightning.

The madman was a storm of magic, a typhoon lashing out in all directions.

"WUUUOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

Yet, the Kraken stood its ground, howling as it resisted the strikes with its tough hide.

Fortunately, that resilience it had was still present.

With each hit, it roared, defiance resonating through its every pore. It swung its tentacles, battering away at the madman's spells, even as it bore the brunt of his relentless assault.

The scene was terrifying and awe-inspiring at the same time.

And amidst this chaos, I watched with powerlessness.

'Damnit...'

The madman didn't seem like he was tiring, and in contrast, the Kraken looked weakened already.

I couldn't let this continue, or the damage on the Kraken would be fatal at some point.

'I have to do something. I have to help!'

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

Chapter 1098: Sage's Resurgence

A monstrous explosion erupted as the two titans clashed, their struggle echoing throughout the Goblin Village.

The madman's laughter, rife with twisted satisfaction, clashed against the Kraken's defiant roars, creating an eerie harmony of chaos.

"Hahahahahaha! How long can you withstand it? Tell me! Tell meeeee!!!"

The Kraken's colossal form lurched, recoiling under the assault of an unending barrage of spells.

Fire and ice, lightning and earth, all forms of destruction descended upon it.

Each impact left marks, scorched skin or frostbitten limbs, evidence of the madman's relentless onslaught.

Yet, the Kraken fought on, its cries of pain transformed into resonating roars, echoing the defiance of a creature pushed to its limits.

"Enough!" the madman roared, a manic grin stretched across his features.

"You will obey me..." His eyes burned with a maddening light, his voice trembled with a feverish excitement.

Raising his hand, he cried out the name of his Arcana, "[The Emperor]!"

An imposing wave of energy exploded from the madman, rushing towards the Kraken like a tsunami.

The raw power of [The Emperor] washed over the Kraken, its compelling force irresistible.

"I've chipped down all your vitality, and I've confirmed [The Popess] is no longer active in you. You can't resist me any longer."

Just as the madman prophesied, the once defiant roars of the Kraken died down to pitiful whimpers. Its eyes, glowing with a primal fury, dimmed and dulled, the spark of defiance extinguished.

Under the influence of [The Emperor], the Kraken was no longer a beast of the Dark Waters, but a puppet under the madman's command.

"Hahahahaha! You're mine! You're finally mine!"

The madman's laughter echoed throughout the battlefield, a chilling melody of victory.

His laughter carried the chilling satisfaction of a man who had just gained control over a beast of unimaginable power.

A cruel smile played on his lips as he regarded the now subdued Kraken, an ominous gleam in his eyes as he reveled in his triumph.

"Haa... I can't wait. I can't wait to—"

~VWUUUUUUSSSSHHHHHH!!!~

An intense flare of light suddenly broke through the scene's grim aura, instantly drawing the attention of both the madman and the subdued Kraken.

"E-eh? That is...!"

The source was Lewis, cloaked in a dense layer of scintillating energy, his visage barely discernible through the blinding radiance.

"How did you—?" The madman gasped, his eyes widening in sheer horror.

Baring his teeth in a snarl, Lewis wasted no time. As if he'd been shot from a cannon, he hurtled himself towards the still-reeling madman.

~WHOOOOO MMM!~

His right fist, encased in swirling energy, was pulled back, braced for a devastating blow.

"W-wai—!" The madman barely had time to register the incoming attack.

Caught off guard, his eyes widened in shock as he saw Lewis rocketing towards him. It was too late to evade.

The madman could only brace himself for impact.

"Haaaaaaa!!!"

With a thunderous roar, Lewis unleashed his pent-up energy. His fist connected with the madman, an eruption of power following the impact.

~BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMM!!!~

The sheer force of the blow sent the madman hurtling backwards, a human comet streaking through the air before he crashed into the ground, sending up a cloud of debris.

The entire battlefield seemed to tremble as the madman's form skidded across the earth, his laughter abruptly cut short by the unexpected assault.

A trail of destruction marked his course, a testament to the raw strength Lewis had just displayed.

Lewis stood in the air, panting heavily, his fist still extended.

The aura of energy around him pulsed, shimmering under the dim light. His eyes, however, were solely fixated on the fallen madman.

A silent promise echoed in his gaze, a vow of defiance and determination.

"You... you went too far this time." He whispered, the energy around him climbing rapidly.

"I'm going to make sure you never make your sickening laughter again."

"Haa... haa..."

As I stood there, panting heavily, the glow of my energy shrouding me, a realization swept over me like a tidal wave.

The hold of the madman's [The Emperor] on me had weakened substantially when he turned his control onto the Kraken.

It wasn't a coincidence. It was because the madman had split his attention, split his power between controlling both of us.

With this realization, I knew I had to make a choice.

A hard one.

I couldn't protect the villagers and fight him simultaneously. Every ounce of energy and concentration I had was necessary to defeat him.

Reluctantly, with a heavy heart, I undid the barriers around the village and also the shields that had kept the Goblins safe.

A shudder ran down my spine as I considered the implications. The madman might decide to employ the villagers to do his bidding with [The Emperor].

I couldn't afford to let that happen. I had to act fast. I had to end this.

'But... something is off...' I scrutinized the madman.

Despite wielding a powerful Arcana, he hadn't taken complete control of the Kraken from the start.

Even when he did control the Kraken, his hold on me had weakened.

'I also noticed the same for me. If he had the power from the start, he should have controlled me from the beginning to.'

That had led me to the unfortunate assumption that he couldn't use it. But now, I realized that my position wasn't completely wrong, albeit not completely accurate.

'It's somewhere in the middle.'

This signified that he hadn't completely mastered the Arcana.

It seemed to take considerable time and energy to use [The Emperor], and he couldn't maintain his control over multiple beings simultaneously... especially taking account of their strength.

With these deductions, a glimmer of hope sparked within me.

If I could break the madman's concentration, disrupt his control over [The Emperor], then I could take advantage of the lapse.

'Using Spellcraft, I can use the remnant energy from my undone barriers and the leftover energy from his battle with the Kraken...'

With those, I could turn the tide of this battle.

Gathering my resolve, I took a deep breath.

'I don't plan on holding back this time...'

Victory was within reach. I just had to seize it.

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

Chapter 1099: The Monster You Become

My heart pounded in my chest, adrenaline coursing through my veins.

With a deep breath, I gathered my energy, focusing it onto my body. I needed to be faster, stronger.

I needed to take the fight to him.

'Martial Arts is my best choice in the current situation. It's direct, precise, and less complicated.'

In a fight that hinged on my raw power and close distance combat, I could always count on it.

'I have to get this right. Let's go...'

~WHOOOOOSSSHHHH!~

As I dashed towards the madman, the world around me seemed to slow.

I watched as his lips moved, heard the crackle of magic building in the air.

Spells.

He was bombarding me with them, trying to keep me at a distance, trying to escape.

But I was too fast.

~VWOOOOOMMMMM!~

The ground blurred beneath me, the wind whistling in my ears.

An incandescent bolt of energy sped towards me, a wave of heat rolling off it.

A direct hit would be devastating, but I wouldn't let that happen.

With a mental command, my energy responded.

An orb of protective energy enveloped me, my Nether acting as my shield.

~BOOOMMM!~

As I continued to close the distance, his spells exploded against my shield, the impact jolting my body but leaving me unscathed.

The madman's eyes widened, and I felt a jolt of satisfaction.

I was within reach now, close enough to see the sweat beading on his forehead, to hear his ragged breaths.

Fear flickered in his eyes.

Good.

"H-hold on a momen—!"

With a swift movement, I struck, my fist smashing into his ribs with a crack that echoed in the silence.

"Guarrkkk!" The madman cried out, the sound abruptly cut off as my other fist connected with his jaw.

"Blech!"

I didn't give him time to recover.

I unleashed a series of fast, precise strikes, targeting the joints in his arms and legs, aiming to completely immobilize him.

"G-Gaaahhhhh!"

Each hit was calculated, precise.

Each bone I shattered, every scream he uttered, was a testament to my silent rage.

'You deserve it... you monster!'

I wouldn't let him win. I couldn't. The lives of the Goblins and the Kraken were in my hands.

And I wouldn't let them down.

"[Imperial Martial Arts: The Last Straw]"

~BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMM!!!~

One strike of my palm on his chest sent my energy coursing through his body, destroying everything within him; from sinews and muscles to the internal organs within.

I watched his pained face, seeing that he couldn't even properly let out a shout of pain.

His bulging eyes were bleeding, and the same red liquid oozed from his nostrils and ears... and finally his mouth.

"I've destroyed your body. You'll be dead in no time." I told him.

Good riddance.

The wounded lay in a crumpled heap on the ground, his breath ragged and painful.

Each inhalation felt like shards of glass scraping against his lungs, each exhalation a ragged gasp of pain.

The world around him seemed to blur and distort, his vision narrowing to a tunnel.

He was dying. He knew that.

He could feel his life slipping away, each heartbeat growing weaker, slower.

In his haze of pain, his mind began to wander, traveling back to a time before he had become this... this monster.

He had been a man once, a scientist.

He had been fascinated by the Krakens, those massive, mysterious creatures with an energy reserve so vast and unused throughout their lifetime.

His obsession had begun innocently enough.

A need to understand, to learn. He had marveled at their potential, wondered why they didn't utilize it.

And then, he had started to imagine how he could.

As his research deepened, his fascination turned into an obsession. The Krakens became not magnificent creatures but sources of potentially limitless energy, a means to an end.

If he calculated it right, it could benefit everyone.

From that point on, his actions grew increasingly extreme. He had lost himself in his research, his pursuit of knowledge morphing into a quest for power.

No longer did he see these beings as fascinating creatures, but as batteries... all for his utilization.

His deeds were heinous. He saw that now. The Krakens he had hunted, the lives he had destroyed.

His hands, once used to heal and help, had become tools of destruction.

He was a monster, a shell of the man he once was.

It was now, on the verge of death, that he remembered his name.

Jonas.

He had forgotten it for so long, lost in his obsession.

Now, as death approached, it echoed in his mind, a stark reminder of the man he had once been and the monster he had become.

Regret filled him. He had pushed everyone away, isolated himself in his pursuit of power. And for what?

For this?

To die alone and despised?

A tear trickled down his face, the salty taste bitter in his mouth.

He was sorry. Sorry for what he had done, for the lives he had ruined.

The Kraken. He had hunted it, tormented it.

Now, he saw the truth. It was not a monster. He was.

The man who had defeated him, who had brought him to this end, he was grateful to him. He had freed him, not just from his life but from his obsession.

He could finally rest.

"Jonas... you're the kindest man I know. Keep being that way, okay?" He remembered the voice of his lover.

But... that was so long ago. And now, it was too late.

With a final shuddering breath, Jonas closed his eyes.

He was sorry. Sorry for everything. His body went limp, his heart giving one last feeble throb before it stilled.

His journey was over. His regrets and his crimes died with him.

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

Chapter 1100: Having A Bond Companion

My heart pounded in my chest as I looked down at the fallen figure of the madman.

His lifeless eyes stared back, filled with the same madness that had tormented the village.

The smell of burnt ash filled the air, a testament to the fierce struggle that had just ended. Crumpled in his stiff hand was the object that allowed him to wreak so much havoc—[The Emperor] Arcana.

Bending down, I carefully pried the Arcana from his lifeless grip.

The orb that surrounded it had long vanished, leaving the card bare and empty.

It glowed with a soft golden light, pulsating to a rhythm that matched my own heartbeat. It was beautiful, intricate patterns of gold and azure adorned its exterior, almost too divine to be part of such malevolence.

The power that had been used to corrupt and control the innocent goblins was now in my possession. I could feel it, a throbbing energy, waiting to be directed, used.

"I see... so this is what caused it."

Looking back at the madman's corpse, I felt an unexpected twinge of pity.

He had been driven to insanity by power, consumed by his desire to control and dominate. His life, once filled with promise, had been reduced to this sad, pitiful end.

'I guess power corrupts a person... especially if they do not have the will to control it.'

But I quickly shrugged off that feeling.

No amount of pity would bring back the lives he had destroyed. The balance he had disrupted. His intentions, mad or not, had caused chaos, and for that, he deserved no sympathy.

With the Arcana now in my hands, I turned towards the village. My gaze fell on the horde of goblins that had been under the madman's influence, their green eyes no longer glowing with malice, but with confusion.

'Looks like they're awake now.' I smiled to myself.

As the last echoes of victory died down, a weak roar pierced the stillness.

"UUUUURRRRRR..."

It was a sound I knew all too well - the cry of the Kraken.

The giant beast lay by the shoreline, its massive body marred by the battle. Its eyes, usually burning with fierce intensity, was dim and full of pain.

I rushed to its side, skidding to a halt beside its giant, scarred head.

"Hold on, big guy," I whispered, reaching out to touch its cold, damp skin. It was far colder than it should have been.

I closed my eyes, channeling the power of [Connection]. My mind extended outward, touching the thoughts of the Kraken.

The contact was immediate, a torrent of raw pain and fading life force.

Its thoughts were disjointed, slipping away like sand through my fingers. I could feel its strength waning, the life force within it slowly extinguishing. My heart ached as I realized the bitter truth - the Kraken was dying.

A bitter taste filled my mouth.

'It's my fault...'

This magnificent creature was on the brink of death, all because it had saved me. If it hadn't intercepted the madman when it did, then...

'Even though you spent your life on the run... to think you'd just go like this. I'm so sorry.'

I currently lacked the energy to heal a creature of this size. All the energy around had been sucked dry, and even the immense Nether that the Kraken were now mere vestiges.

The situation made it impossible for me to save it.

Tears pricked my eyes.

No, I had to stay strong.

For the Kraken. I pushed deeper into its thoughts, letting it feel my presence, my gratitude.

"Thank you," I projected to it, my thoughts full of sorrow. "I'm so sorry."

A flicker of understanding passed between us.

It wasn't angry. But there was something else... something deeper.

As I reached out to the dying Kraken, I was enveloped by its mind once again. But this time, it wasn't the fading life force or disjointed thoughts that startled me. It was an undercurrent of emotion, something that had been hidden deep within the creature, now laid bare in its final moments.

Through the [Connection], I could feel the Kraken's deep-seated resentment towards its own existence, its constant yearning for death.

It had felt trapped, isolated in its vastness. The loneliness that its kind naturally carried was heightened to an unbearable degree.

It had lived a life of despair, hoping for an end.

But now, facing the finality of its existence, a strange feeling had surged forth.

The Kraken, which had for so long yearned for death, now clung desperately to life. It wanted to live.

'A-ahh...'

The revelation shook me. I could feel the Kraken's desire, its newfound will to survive, the sudden dread at the impending darkness.

But there was nothing I could do.

Its injuries were too severe, far beyond my ability to heal.

Tears welled in my eyes as the Kraken's emotions washed over me. Its desperation, its fear. I gripped its cold skin tighter, offering the only comfort I could - presence.

"I'm sorry," I found myself whispering. "I wish I could do more."

In its final moments, I didn't break the [Connection]. I stayed with it, letting it know it wasn't alone, feeling its desperation fade to acceptance, its fear into tranquility.

As its life force dwindled, I shared with it a single promise. Its sacrifice wouldn't be in vain. That its desire to live, its wish for more, would inspire me, drive me.

And when the final flicker of life left the Kraken, when the [Connection] between us was severed, I rose, a new determination set within me.

The Kraken might not have been able to cling onto life, but I could. I could live, for both of us.

'Thank you... truly.'

~FSHUUUUUUUUUUU!!!~

Suddenly, an unexpected radiance exploded from its body.

The once-dim eyes were now the epicenter of a pulsating, ethereal light that painted the world in a celestial glow.

I shielded my eyes, taken aback by the sudden brilliance.

As my eyes adjusted, I saw it.

"A-ah... no way!"

Floating above the now lifeless body of the Kraken was a spectral form. It was smaller, a shadow of its original massive form, yet it retained the same distinct features.

The ethereal Kraken pulsed with a gentle, inviting light. Its eyes, now an iridescent glow, looked at me knowingly.

'It became a Familiar!'

I was awestruck. It seemed I had underestimated the will of the Kraken to live. I never even considered this possibility.

But here it was, the Bond Soul of the Kraken.

'If that's the case, then... maybe...'

With a sense of reverence, I slowly reached out toward the spectral Kraken.

Its light intensified as my hand drew closer, casting brilliant patterns of colors onto my skin.

As my fingertips met its ethereal form, a surge of energy raced up my arm, enveloping me entirely.

The world fell away as a torrent of images and emotions rushed through me. It was the Kraken's memories, its feelings, its entire being, intertwining with mine.

Our consciousness merged, two becoming one.

'... It is done.'

The intensity of the connection subsided, leaving a warm, comforting sensation in its place. I looked into the eyes of the spectral Kraken, now my Familiar, and I could feel a sense of peace emanating from it.

Its despair was gone, replaced with a feeling of contentment. It had found a new existence, one that it chose, one that it desired.

And it was not alone anymore.

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