

SPELLCRAFT 171

SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar

Chapter 171: Rematch (Pt 1)

"We will now begin the next round. The Martial Artists who qualified, please step to the stage." Klaus declared.

Of course, everyone knew who the moderator referred to.

The two Martial Artists who followed the way of the blade and had clashed earlier in the Quarter-Finals would once again meet on the same stage.

I watched Edward rise from his seat, donning an irremovable smile on his face.

I nodded at him and saw him descend the stairs.

Eben Lustriel, his opponent, had been on a seat based at a lower platform, and as such, had already arrived at the stage before Edward.

I saw the hateful glare in his eyes as he watched my comrade approach steadily. It appeared Klaus, the moderator noticed the enmity, judging his facial reactions alone—the adult man felt uncomfortable.

Still, it wasn't in his place to say anything.

'If Eben goes overboard in this match, and aims for Edward's life directly, he'll just be stopped before he can achieve that... and it'll be Edward's victory!'

Still, I hoped he didn't do anything careless. As much as I wished my pupil complete victory, I wanted him to achieve it by besting his opponent, not just by default.

"Okay, then... since both participants are on stage... we will be beginning!" Klaus stated, watching as both boys took their positions on the battleground—each wielding their respective weapons.

As usual, he moved out of the way and got to the edge of the stag before he announced anything.

"Begin!"

The moment his words registered, both boys released their mana, causing what seemed to be a maelstrom to envelop the stage.

Mana came in different shapes, size, and colors—but, it was a general rule that one's mana reflected the kind of core they had. Unless the color was affected by a particular Spell being used, the color would be the same as their core.

Both Boyd unleashed yellow sparks of mana, clashing their energies with each other, even before the clash of their weapons started.

"This won't end like last time." I heard Eben speak the first word.

There was a pause, as Edward only gazed at his opponent.

"This time... I won't underestimate you, and I'll win!"

"So, you now admit that last time was your loss, uh?" The confident boy defiantly spoke, giving an amused smirk.

This only served as fuel to Eben's deep-seated fury, but Edward didn't seem to care.

"I'll be sure to silence that mouth of yours! Prepare yourself!"

Those words were unnecessary to someone like Edward. Even before the match started he had already been utterly prepared.

There was nothing in his mind that would stand in the way of his victory. Just as I taught him, during battle he achieved a state of absolute focus—Total Concentration!

>WHOOOOOSHHH<

Both Martial Artists, gripping their blades, dashed at each other with full force.

The wind resulting in their fast-paced movement swept through the audience, and I felt a chill brush through my body.

>CLANG!<

The lashes of their Mana clashed even more, same as their blades. Sparks flew, giving off metallic sounds and reverb that caused some to wince.

I gave my all in observing the match—partially to see the growth of my student when battling another, but also to ensure that Eben Lustriel didn't try any funny tricks with Edward.

His annoyance and hurt ego made my suspicions valid. Plus, after what happened with Anabelle, I had somehow grown more cautious concerning my comrades.

>FWOOOOOSHHH<

With their blades at a stalemate, both warriors took steps back and then lunged once again at each other.

Their speed was evenly matched, almost as though they were moving in choreographed patterns. Silence enveloped the hall as everyone seemed to watch the two swordsmen in awe.

>CLANG<

>SWOOOOOSHHH<

>SKRIIIIII<

The blades clashed even more, swinging and moving like the wind. They rubbed each other and whirred in the most peculiar way.

More wind blew across the stage, and it seemed like the match would go on forever.

But, I wasn't worried at all.

While I wasn't entirely certain about Eben Lustriel, I knew his opponent more than most. After observing the stroke of his blade, his footwork, and every single motion he had made ever since the match began, it was clear to me.

'Edward... isn't giving it his all yet!'

Both swordsmen took steps back and began taking deep, slow breaths.

"Huuff... huff..."

Eben appeared to be the more exhausted one of the two of them. His shoulders slightly dropped even as he tightly clung to his thin blade. I could see his gait faltering a bit, and his arms already trembling.

'I see... his swordsmanship isn't built for prolonged matches.'

Even if they kept up this pace, it was clear Edward had the upper hand in stamina.

In the first place, such high movements and powerful strikes that the Lustriel School was known for put a heavy strain on a person's muscles. Judging the method of execution, it was also fairly obvious that it was meant to defeat enemies in one strike—or close.

Using those moves consecutively, especially when one didn't have a body structure suited for the heavy repercussions, would only lead to premature fatigue.

"Think you can still go on?" Edward finally spoke, interrupting the moment of silence that ensued between the two Martials.

"Tch. Don't you... underestimate me..." Eben struggled to speak.

From his strained tone, it was clear he was close to the end of his strength.

Even though Edward was also spent, he was far from his limits.

Besides, I knew the boy could end things quicker if he wanted to. It was still a mystery why he chose to engage in such a drawn-out fight.

'Hmm, maybe he wants to gain as much combat experience from his fight with Eben.'

It wasn't every day one got to fight someone from a highly esteemed Martial Arts Discipline, after all—especially one that specialized in Sword Arts.

"I see..." My lips curled in an amused smile.

'Well, then... since that's how it is, let's see how it'll end up.'

Looking back to Edward and his opponents, they seemed to be getting ready to resume their fight.

"You say I shouldn't underestimate you, but it seems you can't fight for much longer." Edward taunted slightly.

"Shut up..." Eben gave a murderous glare.

The more energetic Martial Artist wasn't fazed by his opponent's slight bloodlust. Rather, he cracked his stiff bones and made preparations to launch another attack.

"Don't worry... I'll be ending it with this next move. This time, I'll tell you... Prepare Yourself!"

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Chapter 172: Rematch (Pt 2)

"Now, then... enough talk. Let's fight!"

With Edward's resolute words and determined eyes, he prepared his legs to move while keeping his sights on the target.

Eben Lustriel sighed, taking deep breaths to restore his energy—the tiny vestiges that remained—while strengthening himself with Mana.

Had it been an ordinary swordsman who used the Swallow God Sword Techniques, he would have collapsed in exhaustion by now. However, thanks to the miraculous effects of Mana and strengthening Magic, Eben could keep fighting.

I predicted that the adversary of my pupil had more Mana reserves compared to Edward, and could most likely control his Mana better. In a battle solely based on those factors, it was certain who the victor would be.

If they kept exchanging blows at this rate, their power would be on par, and it was going to end up a battle of attrition.

'If you want to turn this around, Edward... you had better get serious!'

After all, I knew more than anyone, what Edward desired the most—an overwhelming, crushing victory!

"Huuuu..." I watched as Edward gave a heavy breath, closing his eyes for a moment before flashing them wide open again.

A tinge of excitement swept through my body upon realizing what he was about to do.

"The 9 Fundamental Precepts: Form 6..."

Immediately I saw his lips moving to form those words, a brief feeling of hesitation welled up within me.

'Form 6? You haven't completely mastered it, Edward!'

He had gotten a good grasp on the first five, but the sixth was one that required even greater focus and concentration. Since the difficulty rose drastically after the fifth, I made sure to halt his progress any further.

To think he would resort to such a move now... what was Edward thinking?

He took his stance, gripping his blade with one hand and stretching it out to the air while using the tip of his finger on the second hand to touch the ground.

The pose seemed bizarre, as he couched a knee slightly to ensure one hand grazed the floor while the other—gripping the blade—was ascended above.

His face was on the target, and he seemed like he was ready to move at any time. The opponent, on the other hand, remained in his position.

Judging from his current status, I surmised that Eben Lustriel was most likely trying to conserve his energy by limiting his movements. He would wait for Edward to make his move while parrying his attack and dealing his blow at the same time.

It was an excellent strategy.

Unfortunately, something of the sort wouldn't be effective when faced with the move Edward was about to make.

'If he has learned it well and perfected it to 30 percent, no, even 20, then... such defenses won't be enough!' I grinned.

The 9 Fundamental Precepts' Sixth Form, also known as...

Edward gripped his blade tighter and loosened his muscles, getting ready to march. The ground beneath him cracked as the accumulation of mana on his body had reached boiling point. He finally opened his mouth and steam proceeded from it.

"... FLOW!"

>BOOOOMMMMMM<

The area where Edward stood erupted as chunks of tiles burst apart. Smoke and dust ascended, rising as a result of the destruction the boy left in his wake.

As for his body, it had long left his previous location and was now charging at the target.

>WHOOOOSH!!!<

Such speed as was never seen throughout the contest between the two now manifested.

In a flash, the distance between both opponents was closed and Edward was basically within range.

I noticed Eben's flustered face as he struggled to make a reaction.

"W-wha—?!"

Making a whirl, Edward's spinning form created a whirl that surpassed anything possible by normal human standards. It was almost as though someone cast a wind tornado Spell on the battlefield.

"WHOOOSSSHHH!!!<

Eben struggled with the pressure and barely had enough time to raise his katana.

It was too late, though, as the boy's spinning body completely overwhelmed him.

The Swallow God disciple had his blade flying away thanks to the sheer pressure of Edward's swing.

The dark-metal weapon cracked and shattered apart in mid-air, leaving Eben unarmed.

Edward was still not done, though.

In his cyclone, he encircled Eben, swirling around him on all sides to trap the so-called prodigy of the blade in a tight circle.

>SWISH<

>SLASH<

>SWOOSH<

From all areas, Edward's blade tore through Eben's clothes—even reaching his skin until blood gushed out on so many areas in an instant.

None of the wounds were fatal, but they seemed painful regardless. Evident to this fact was Eben's scream.

"Guarghhhhhh!!!" The helpless boy's agony rang true.

I sensed not only pain in his voice, but frustration and shattered pride. After his loss against Edward, I was certain the boy had trained harder and worked on himself and his blade.

He did all that, only to be so one-sidedly defeated again! As an elite from a great family, this had to be the first time he would be experiencing shame to this degree.

"Sorry, bud... this is the end!" I smiled.

There was no need to feel sentiment for someone that didn't concern me.

>SWOOSHHH!!!<

After dealing multiple damages to the enemy, Edward finished it with a decisive blow to Eben's back.

"Guarkkk!!!"

Silence radiated the hall at that moment. Edward's blade was outstretched, and his calm face could be seen in absolute focus that it almost appeared to be melancholic. Eben's bloodied and roughened face was the opposite of Edward's clear one.

His mouth was opened as he made a tired screech before losing all strength and giving in to the call of unconsciousness.

>THUD!<

Eben Lustriel fell, losing the match that very moment.

More silence filled the hall as Edward huffed, moving away from his opponent while dragging his feet on the ground. It seemed he was plenty tired too.

"Huff... huff..." He breathed heavily.

>CLANG<

His sword fell to the ground and I saw his arms spasm a few times.

'He has reached his limits, uh?' I smiled in understanding.

That's what he got for pushing himself too hard.

"W-winner... Edward Karl Leon!!!" Klaus declared in a flustered tone.

I could tell that he was secretly happy that no major incident had occurred.

"WOHOOOOOO!!!!" A deafening myriad of cheers came from the audience

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Chapter 173: Match Of Seniors (Pt 1)

With Edward's victory, the winds of reaction were swept to the side of the Lower Class once again.

Now lit with hope once more, the people cheered for the victory of one deemed worthless, and the loss of an elite.

I watched Edward leave the stage, showing exhaustion. He panted as he dragged his feet on the ground.

Some medical experts rushed to the stage to carry Eben and treat his injuries, while others noticed Edward's awful shape and also approached him. The boy seemed reluctant to accept their help, even looking at where I sat for what my take on the matter was.

I sighed in near annoyance and gave him a slight nod with a knowing look.

'You should take care of your body! Go with them!'

With that, Edward raised his hands slightly in surrender and followed the medical unit to a specialized exit in the Hall.

It wasn't possible for any student who wasn't injured to gain access to the place—and even if they were, medical experts had to escort them. If that hadn't been the case, I would probably have gone to see Ana and Edward in their sorry state.

"Hoo, I hope those two are fine..." A whisper unconsciously leaked out of my mouth.

My eyes trailed to the stage and Klaus was already beginning to make announcements for the Scholars to appear on stage. A slight thought wandered in my head as the two qualifiers climbed the platform to commence their contest.

'Edward defeated Eben in the Semi-Finals, leaving him as the only one left in the competition...'

Even the Scholars who were about to compete had the same fate. The one who won would be the last one standing. It begged the question as to what exactly their Finals would be like.

If they had advanced so far, did that mean they didn't have any Final Matches? No, I doubted it. But, even if they had one... who would their opponents be?

My concerned eyes met the Upper-Class elite and the Middle-Class student who were about to face off. It was clear the Upper-Class one would end up victorious.

'After that, then what?'

"Begin!"

The round was soon over and, as I had predetermined, the Upper-Class Student—Reinhardt Ciera— won flawlessly.

When it came to knowledge and skills, no one could best the Upper Class who had been given more than enough to enable their quick growth—in addition to their already extreme talents.

"We will now begin the round of the Second Years!" Klaus declared, bringing me out of my thoughts.

I raised my head to watch the Magic Users gather—eight in number—as they would begin their preliminary matches.

'Just like ours, their goal will be to defeat Automatons within the allotted time frame...'

I was curious to see how well they would perform, and how superior the quality of their numbers would be in comparison to us First Years.

Since only the Upper and Middle Class passed, it would be quite the fun match, wouldn't it?

The stage shook slightly, and just as earlier, Automatons appeared from the holes that scattered across the tiled ground.

My eyes bulged slightly upon realizing the mechanisms that appeared differed from the ones we encountered.

They had four arms, and their shapes were thinner. A tail also stretched behind them, forming what seemed like a razor edge.

'Ah, I see... so the difficulty of theirs is even higher—as it should be.'

If they were to use fodder Automatons for our seniors, it would be too easy, and they would only waste resources in the venture. The best course of action was to generate constructs of superior quality to even things out.

Judging by the shapes and sizes of these new models, I guessed they focused more on speed and reach.

Considering they had four arms and nimbler bodies, they would be more difficult to hit. Not only that, but they even had more variations in combat so their patterns would be more difficult to determine.

Four arms meant more damage, but that wasn't the main focus of the preliminary round—at least, from what I surmised.

'A Magic-User had to be able to conjure Spells quickly and adapt to all situations properly!'

For our seniors, this would be the ultimate test to prove that.

The Automatons began gathering, whirring to life as the Klaus prepared to announce the start of the round.

"Begin!" His voice matched the sound generated by the timer that began counting.

>WHOOOOSH!!!<

As expected, the Automatons rushed at the Magic Users on stage.

However, considering the skill they had in the proper use of their Mana, the seniors had no problem dodging the assaults of the Automatons.

The problem was how to deal attacks on them—which was the main essence of the round. If one spent too much time on defense, such an individual wouldn't get enough strikes to count as kills.

I guessed the structure of these Automatons wasn't very tough, so they could be easily dealt with if they were caught. That was a good handicap, considering their immense speed.

A wide grin formed on my face as I forgot about the worry I had for Edward and Anabelle. My eyes were fixated on the march and I watched with great interest, somehow wishing I could be allowed into the ring.

"Let's see how you guys fare!"

One minute elapsed too quickly, much to my disappointment, and the contestants were told to stop.

Klaus took his time to explain the grading system—just as he did with us. After our considerate moderator was done, he revealed the results on the broad screen that covered the air.

All of us looked up and observed the rankings. Of course, I wasn't surprised by the list and even the number of kills since I had been keenly watching since the match started.

Unlike our round, the numbers of Automatons defeated weren't as high, but that was understandable.

Also, the ones who took top spots were all the Upper-Class elite, leaving the last three positions for the Middle-Class members.

It was disheartening to see, but that was the reality of the Exchange.

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Chapter 174: Match Of Seniors (Pt 2)

The highest score belonged to a senior called David Springer. He defeated a total of 89 Automatons—an impressive feat, all things considered.

As for the Middle-Class ones, the highest among them could only manage nineteen.

That was how pathetic the whole thing was!

Compared to the number I estimated would be possible for me with my current capabilities, all of them were subpar—both the Upper-Class and Middle-Class students.

By thoroughly calculating everything without bias, the results I arrived at were simple.

'I would have scored at least one hundred and fifty... these seniors are not as impressive as I thought.'

Of course, it could be that the Upper-Class members were holding back and not taking things seriously, but it remained a fact that they could have achieved better.

In any case, there was no use ruminating on the thought. Their Semi-Finals were about to commence.

As per the rules, the two highest of the Upper Class were chosen and the same applied to the Middle Class.

After splitting them into groups, those who had their matches in the second round left the stage and watched from the sidelines as the round began between an elite and an average.

"Begin!"

The results were to be expected, but they still shook me every time I saw them.

Even though the Upper-Class Second Year was obviously superior to his opponent, he didn't bother ending things simply with a stronger spell. No, he dragged things out and completely made a mess of the opponent.

Enjoyment seemed to play on his face as he toyed with the determination of the Middle-Class Student who kept trying, even though victory was not in sight.

Of course, I felt no pity for the one being pummeled. If he couldn't win, the best thing he could do was learn from the gap that existed between him and his opponent and surrender. There was no shame in that!

But, for stubborn people with something to prove, they ended up wasting their time and only causing more injuries for themselves.

'Maybe he thinks he'll get the attention of a Lecturer and become an Apprentice...'

Unfortunately, life wasn't that simple.

Lecturers always aimed high, looking for talented students to accept. Those who had no prospects, or were not talented—no matter how much they struggled—would never gain the attention of any Lecturer.

Besides, it wasn't as if our Lecturers had to pick Apprentices. Some would rather choose no one if they didn't excite them enough. An example of that would be Neron Kaelid.

In any case, my dear senior was struggling for nothing. Ultimately... loss was inevitable.

Both matches were won by the Upper-Class seniors, but as per the rules, only one would make it to the Finals.

Since the first match wasn't as hardcore as the first, and the Middle-Class senior who fought in the first round struggled as hard as possible, he was allowed to fight in the Finals.

As for the Upper-Class member who passed, it was the one who fought a more brutal match in the second round.

With that, the results were clear.

'Sigh... this is pathetic!'

I was certain the Middle-Class student who passed would be overjoyed with the fact that he was given another chance. But what of it? Only more suffering and pain awaited him.

That was most certainly not something to look forward to.

As soon as the Magic Division was done with their Exchange, it became time for the Martial Artists to clash.

Though none of their Martial techniques were as good as the Martial Blade God, I still wanted to feast my eyes on the fights of more experienced fighters. The more fights a Martial Artist witnessed, the more powerful they became.

I was not strictly a Magic-User. Using my standard of measurement, I was at the Intermediate Level of Martial Arts, and was a Sage as a Scholar as well.

In essence, I was eligible for all three Divisions of Ainzlark Academy!

"Begin!"

The match started, and their weapons clashed.

One of the seniors used a blade, while the other was donning two daggers at top speed.

They fought and exchanged hits, unrelenting in their endeavors.

Of course, the one with the upper hand was the Upper-Class senior. The way he commanded the battle was as if he was merely toying with the Middle Class one.

Even though he wielded a dagger, he was easily able to bypass the reach of the blade, dealing little hits on the desperate swordsman as he whittled down the poor guy's health.

"Gahh!"

"Arghh!!!"

"Uarghhh!!!"

Screams filled the air as each exchange of their weapons led to more strikes that proved detrimental to the Middle-Class senior.

"I'll finish this now..." The elite announced, not even a scratch evident on his body.

And so, he did!

>SWISH<

>SLASH<

The twin daggers crisscrossed and completely tore through the attire of the opponent, causing blood to spurt out.

The Middle-Class swordsman, having no energy left to continue, fell flat on his face.

The winner was clear to everyone.

"Tch..."

Once again, the Upper Class secured victory!

The same applied to the Scholars' round, and even the Third Years.

The Upper Class won every single match!

The only blot to the supremacy of the Upper Class' undeniable victories was the fact that we First Years had a couple of Lower Class members who made it to the Finals.

Just Edward and I... we were the only ones left who had yet to taste defeat!

'Hoo... if this is how the Semi-Finals are, then...'

"That concludes the Semi-Finals, and the Inter-Class Exchange for today!" Klaus announced.

I looked at the stage with weary eyes, wondering how Klaus was always able to maintain his bright attitude.

"There will be a break tomorrow! You should all rest and try to recover your strength for the day after!"

That made sense.

Many people were exhausted, whether physically or mentally. Having a day off to revitalize the competitors and even the audience was a good call.

I had so many things to do and consider, and I needed that time badly.

"We will resume the Inter-Class Exchange on Thursday! Till then... rest up, and prepare yourselves!"

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Chapter 175: The Finals

The break was much needed.

Thanks to the day we all had off, I was finally able to get my thoughts in order. My companions, Edward and Anabelle were released shortly after the Exchange ended for the day, allowing us to walk to our dorms together.

The healing Magic available to Ainzlark Academy had to be impressive to pull off such speedy recovery, especially for Anabelle.

Looking at the girl, it didn't appear as though she had been injured during her match. In any case, after the Exchange for the day, I decided it was best we all occupied ourselves with personal affairs.

I left Anabelle and Edward to themselves since I couldn't afford to be distracted by anything. The match before me was that serious.

I felt like if I didn't give my all... the one who was going to lose would be me!

And so, during the break, I tempered my resolve and harnessed my skills. Going over all I had learned in the previous matches, I prepared myself for the worst.

I couldn't use my Familiar or any external help. That meant all the potions and magic items I had been developing were rendered obsolete. My use of SPELLCRAFT was also limited since I had three different extremely skilled judges keeping a keen eye on my every action. As much as I wanted to win, I had to keep my focus on the big picture.

It wasn't time to show what I was fully capable of!

"I'm severely handicapped right now. Still... I will win!" With these words of determination proceeding from my mouth, I anticipated the main rounds of the Finals.

I was going to go first, so I needed to set a good example for everyone. I needed to show both the students and staff that even though someone was deemed to be talentless, with enough study and practice... it was possible to rise to the top!

"Welcome, everyone!"

I sat on the seat of the final contestants. We were so few who sat there, making it seem like the seats could be more than they actually were.

'It feels weird without Ana here...' I tilted my head and found her seated among the Lower-Class audience.

A smile formed on my face as I resolved to win against the one who defeated her.

"The Finals will last for two days! Friday and Saturday!" Klaus announced.

The Hall became quiet in order to listen to our moderator's words.

"Each match will last as long as the competitors are still willing to fight, and none have gone unconscious. Once it has been determined that a contestant is unable to fight anymore, even if they don't explicitly quit, then the match should be deemed to be over."

I felt like Klaus said those words intentionally to prevent any excessive display of pointless violence.

Ultimately, this was an exchange between students. There was no need to turn it into something more gruesome.

"And now, still obeying the rules stated above, we will begin the Finals with our very first match!"

I gulped slowly and prepared myself. Tension filled my heart, and despite my preparations, I still felt uneasy.

"The Magic Division of the First Years will go first... let the two Final contestants step forward."

I rose from my seat and began moving to the stage.

"Kuzon Midas and Jared Leonard, please climb the stage!"

From the corner of my vision, I spotted Kuzon in his usual casual outfit. His black jacket and trousers contrasted the white outfit he wore underneath.

He had a gold necklace around his neck, mostly covered by the white top he had on and on his hand, I noticed a golden ring. No, not just a ring... but also a watch.

I felt Mana from them, causing me to furrow my brows slightly.

'Those are... Magic tools!'

Using them was against the rules. Though I had never sensed him using them, it was still against the regulations of the tournament.

I climbed the platform still eyeing the devices he had on and, out of the blue, Kuzon turned his head in my direction.

'Did he notice I was staring at him?!'

A smile played on his face and he shrugged.

"Don't worry. I've never used them once. I don't intend on using them either... so it's fine."

I masked my unease with a smile of mine.

"Oh? And I'm just supposed to rely on your words?"

We both climbed the stage and took our positions opposite each other.

Klaus was standing between the both of us, keenly observing our actions for some reason.

"Alright. You're all good!" He commented.

Was he trying to see if we brought any external aid with us?

It wasn't beyond the realm of reason that some people would resort to using all they had in the finals, especially since they would think the wariness of the judges would be thinnest considering no one had violated the rules thus far.

While it was good to use everything in one's arsenal to win a battle, this was merely an exchange. It was downright foolish to be caught cheating while still in the Academy. Even I, who wanted to win badly, could probably resort to some underhanded means and get away with it, but... for this Exchange, I wanted to see just how far I could go with my base abilities.

I currently possessed five Mana Cores. How much could I achieve with them?

"Excuse me, sir, but isn't the equipping of Magic items against the rules? Why is he allowed to wear them?" I asked Klaus, pointing at Kuzon.

The moderator sighed almost as soon as the issue was addressed. It seemed he had been expecting me to raise the question.

"We know all about the items, so don't worry. If we detect that he's using them, the match will end immediately. Your opponent, Kuzon Midas, has given us clear reasons why he can't unequip them. I hope you understand."

I clicked my tongue and nodded.

Kuzon seemed to smile even more in amusement after my inquisition was shot down by the moderator.

In essence, he was being given special treatment.

'Well, it doesn't really matter at this point. What I need to do hadn't changed! I'll win... no matter what!'

Klaus moved to the edge of the stage and prepared his signal, causing my opponent and me to lock eyes.

"Begin!"

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Chapter 176: Jared Vs Kuzon (Pt 1)

The moment the signal was given, I armed myself with all forms of enhancements.

In a battle against a superior opponent, it was best to be at one's peak—physically.

Using all five of my Cores to multi-cast, I was able to arm myself with several spells within the time frame of seconds.

"Are you done with your preparations?" Kuzon smiled as he spoke.

"Who knows? Am I?" I retorted.

"I see you're taking this match seriously... why? It's really no big deal who wins or loses. This is just a ceremonial activity that this Academy uses to flaunt the superiority of the Upper-Class students." Kuzon shrugged.

Well, he wasn't wrong.

"Or, don't tell me... you aim to rebel against that notion by achieving victory here. Is that it?"

"No!" I sharply responded to his insinuations.

"My goals are not as grand as that. This is just something I want to do. It's nothing personal, well, it wasn't... but now..."

"Is it because I won against the female friend who always hangs around you?"

I furrowed my brow slightly at his jestful remark.

"Not really. But... I consider you a challenge to surpass. That's all there is to it."

The moment I said this, Kuzon paused for a moment—looking dazed.

His silence didn't last for long, though, as he soon burst into laughter.

"Hahahahaha! Oh my, to think you'd say it like that."

His golden hair swayed as he cocked his hair to the side and supported it with his hand. With his fingers frolicking his hair and putting it into place, he gave a wide smile.

"Well, I don't consider you a challenge at all. Your skills are great, but... you can't beat me."

I stared straight into the boy's eyes. It didn't seem like he was lying or even overconfident in his strength.

What he spoke was most likely the truth!

... But...

"We'll see about that!" I grinned excitedly.

... Why was my heart beating so fast in anticipation the more I thought of how right the boy was? My obsessive nature was surfacing, and the desire to win rang truer than ever.

"Let's do this!"

>BOOOOMMMMM!!!<

In a flash, I shattered the ground I stood on, truly breaking it into pieces as I zoomed at Kuzon.

>WHOOOOSHHH!!!<

My speed had long transcended human limits and the only reason I hadn't been torn apart by the pressure was thanks to my enhancement.

"Hahaha! Interesting!" Kuzon laughed, doing the same.

He lunged at me with equal speed, causing my eyes to bulge in both shock and excitement.

I heard the loud cracking noise behind him as the platform he stood on had most likely shattered apart as well.

There was no chance to confirm my suspicions, though, as the boy was already right in front of me.

>BOOOOOMMMMMMM!!!<

Both our arms clashed in direct combat, hitting each other at similar wavelengths.

The air around seemed to part for us, as everywhere became clearer than ever. I heard the gasps of the audience—most likely due to the bizarre sight of the ground breaking, or maybe the wind that blew all over them.

My plan was simple!

'He's very adept at using Spells so, why don't we try a little enhanced Magic combat?'

I had to size him up a bit.

>WHOOOMMM!!!<

Raising my fist with quick precision, I aimed for his defenseless head, putting all my strength into the hit.

>BAM!<

To my surprise, he matched my speed and raised his unoccupied hand to block.

"Tch!"

Twisting my body in the air, I detached both limbs from the opponent and sent two kicks flying in succession.

Both moved at frightening degrees and packed the brunt of my enhancements. Still, to my surprise, Kuzon tanked them both.

'Hmm? Let's get a bit more serious then!'

>WHOOOOSH!!!<

Increasing my flow, I rushed past Kuzon breaking the ground with every step I took as I circled around him.

Trying many different attempts and failing, I sent my fists flying, or kicked violently, yet the boy caught every single one!

"Shit!" I unconsciously let out, realizing none of my blows had any effect.

I couldn't properly use Martial Arts since that would be against the rules, but I at least thought I had the upper hand in combat.

Realizing I was wrong, I dashed back to gather my thoughts.

"Oh, no, you don't!" Kuzon yelled in what I could only call excitement, charging at me as I retreated.

'Damn it!' I gritted my teeth and prepared my defenses.

>WHOOSH<

>BAM<

>WHOOOM<

>SWOOSH<

We exchanged hits, throwing arms and legs as we matched each other's pace and countered our attacks.

It lasted for some time and I was beginning to feel numb in my arms, but I persisted. There had to be a way to get rid of him!

'How ironic!' My mind rang.

I intended to overwhelm the boy in close combat, but it now seemed like he was overwhelming me. No, that wasn't exactly accurate.

Seeing as close combat wasn't the right call, I wanted to use something else, but Kuzon's barrage of attacks was making things difficult.

I had no choice.

Increasing the flow of my Mana, I made use of one of my Cores, while using the other four to sustain my enhancements.

>BRUUUPPPP!!!<

The ground beneath Kuzon suddenly turned liquid, like wet cement, causing the boy's legs to begin to sink.

As expected, he realized this on time and jumped away, detaching himself from the earth trap before it was too late.

"Not bad!" He grinned in slight amusement.

Taking it as my chance, I altered the form of the liquid ground, turning it into several muddy arms that stretched for my target.

>BOOOOMMMM!!!<

In an instant, they erupted in flames.

'His magic is still quite impressive!'

He didn't even appear to be casting, yet the combustion effect was instantaneous. To catch up with his speed and power, I would have to constantly use all five of my Cores.

"I remember making a deal with you... that if you could understand what happened with your friend back there in her match against me... I would take my time with you and properly enjoy this match." Kuzon said, now a distance from me.

Of course, I remembered those words perfectly.

"Well, I'm about to test you now... let's see if you truly learned something."

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Chapter 177: Jared Vs Kuzon (Pt 2)

>BBBRZZTZZZZZ<

Suddenly, sparks of purple electricity appeared on my opponent's fingertips, bringing back memories.

"Those again, eh?" I smiled nervously.

"Well, yeah... I wonder how you'll avoid it."

Before I could say anymore, Kuzon snapped his fingers and the purple electricity zoomed in my direction at a frightening pace.

Even with my current enhancements, it was barely possible for my eyes to keep up with the speed.

In a flash, before I could dodge, the lightning caught up with me and encircled my body.

"GUARGHHHHH!!!" The deathly scream of Jared Leonard filled the air.

To those who watched, I wondered about the horror they must have experienced—seeing as a student was being fried with so many jolts of electricity.

"Arghhhh!!!" More cries of pain echoed before they began to subside.

Sparks ignited, appearing around the smoking body of a previously confident boy. Smoke rose and in a heavy thud, the Lower-Class champion who had made it this far—Jared Leonard—collapsed.

"Hmm? This is disappointing..." Kuzon murmured, frowning a little.

He made slow steps and began moving closer to the fallen figure.

"... I was actually hoping you'd have figured out the trick. Did I expect too much from you?"

He finally paused, directly in front of my smoldering and utterly defeated body.

"Moderator, I guess this counts as—"

>BZZZTTTZZZZ<

Instantly, a flash of purple electricity buzzed from beneath Kuzon, covering a large area.

"Wha—?!"

Before the flustered boy could say any more, a brilliant detonation of pure electricity charged from underneath him, enveloping his body in pure energy.

>BOOOOMMMMM!!!<

The surrounding area shattered apart and the crowd burst forth in excitement and amazement—even fright.

The effects of the spell ascended to as high as thirty meters high, sending vibrations across the room. The deafening roar of the shattering ground and the crackling lightning sent all into awe.

This was a High-Tier Intermediate Level Spell pushed to its limits.

How did it happen? When? The question must have surfaced in the minds of everyone who watched the surprising event.

I was certain that the one who was hit by the Spell felt the same.

"H-how...??!" Kuzon let out.

The lightning Spell lasted for a few moments before being forcefully canceled—dispersed by a Wind Spell activated at the center of the blast.

>BOOOOMMMMM!!!<

Remnant cackles of electricity buzzed before completely disappearing.

"Hoo, not bad. You fooled me... that's quite impressive..." Kuzon smiled, completely unscathed by the Spell.

His eyes completely ignored the figure that was at his feet—a copy of myself. Instead, he looked straight ahead, as though seeing through my currently invisible self.

"What did you do?"

I smiled at his question and decided that the jig was up. With a sigh, I undid my Invisibility Spell, revealing an unscathed version of myself to Kuzon as well as the rest of the crowd.

"Guess even that didn't work, eh?"

Gasps radiated the hall as the audience was in awe and shock at my sudden appearance. In the very same instance, the lightning-struck body on the floor—my duplicate—turned into Mana particles and vanished.

Kuzon and I both smiled at each other, both most likely wondering about the same thing.

"How did he escape my spell?!"

As for how I was able to avoid Kuzon's earlier attack, it was thanks to my multiple Mana Cores. I cast a Magic Clone and Invisibility Spell at the same time.

'Both are High-end Intermediate Spells at least. They also take a deal of time and Mana to activate.'

Taking these factors into consideration, no one in the match bothered using them.

My prowess in Magic was incomparable to that of others, making it possible for me. Before Kuzon activated his lightning Spell to fry me, I multi-cast both Spells, turning invisible and creating a clone at the same time to act in my stead.

Fortunately, Kuzon was distracted by his spell that he failed to notice my actions. From the audience's reaction, they had also not seen it coming.

Usually, it would be impossible to cast both Spells simultaneously—however, thanks to having five Cores, I was able to achieve it!

"I'm more curious as to how you're unscathed after being hit by my Lightning Spell," I spoke first, smiling at the boy who seemed a bit more on guard.

"That's a trade secret." He chuckled.

'So that's how he's going to be, uh?' I reasoned, eyeing my opponent closely.

I didn't expect Kuzon to be so difficult an opponent. He was quite a guy!

Not only was he exceptional at close combat, but he was extremely adept at Spells too. The boy also remains unscathed after a surprise attack, a testament to his defensive measures.

How was one supposed to beat such a guy?

"So, did you figure out my trick? The one I used against your female friend at the time?" Kuzon suddenly spoke.

To be honest, I tried as much as I could to map out different theories and possibilities during the one-day break. Unfortunately, with only limited knowledge—and having only seen him use that move once—there was very little information to work on.

"Not really. I figured it would be best to see for myself and arrive at conclusion." I responded.

I had a few ideas in mind before our match began, some of which were disadvantageous for me. However....

"And? Have you realized it now?" Kuzon's smile deepened.

"Yes."

My response was flat, but my expression told a different story.

"Then you must have realized it by now... how impossible this match is." My opponent spoke with a grave tone.

I understood perfectly. For the first time since I met Kuzon, the truth had finally become clear. I couldn't win against him, at least not with the kind of handicap shackling me.

'If he wanted to, this guy could most likely end things now. I didn't notice them earlier, but now...' My senses trailed across the arena. I could practically see what surrounded me—the very same constructs that floated around the stage.

They were invisible to the normal eye, and even with enhanced vision, it was still impossible to pick up their traces. The only reason I noticed them now was because I had realized the 'truth' about Kuzon.

The thin layers that enveloped the platform on all ends that were completely under my opponent's controls... were none other than threads!

Looking at Kuzon, who was surrounded by a barrier of these threads, a bead of sweat fell from my face and I made an inquisition.

"You... can use Original Magic, can't you?!"

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Chapter 178: Impossible Challenge

Original Magic, the epitome of Magic for the practitioners of the craft.

Usually, only those who have attained a high level in both experience and Core formation would even dream of commencing the establishment of their own unique Magic.

Not only did it take a lot of time to develop, but it is said that perfecting one's Original Magic took a lifetime.

Yet... what was this impossibility that unfolded before me?

All around the stage were thin layers of threads that were nearly beyond detection. This was Kyron's secret—the reason he had yet to be touched throughout the contest. And, the mere fact that he had

already developed Original Magic was enough testament to the fact that I was absolutely no match for him!

"You're right. So, you did figure it out." Kuzon remarked with a grin.

He didn't even try to hide it, and his eyes showed utmost sincerity. This was a reaction only permissible to the strong.

If I was right... then this boy, Kuzon, was already beyond the level of the Third Years in this Academy. If so, what the heck was he doing here?!

Who was he? What was his true identity?!

"Now, then... as promised, I'll be taking my time with you." Kuzon made a gesture that indicated he was about to resume our fight.

I felt a sting in my heart.

It was clear to the both of us that I stood no chance. Further engaging in this fight was meaningless. If I chose to blindly keep going, what made me different from the seniors I called idiots.

The ones who were clearly inferior, but kept fighting despite that, I insulted them within myself. Yet, now that it was my turn... I found myself making the same mistakes!

Why?

'Even though... this is... a fight I'll lose...'

I gritted my teeth in frustration, feeling annoyed that I had to hold so much back when my entire being screamed at me to go all-out.

If I did, I could probably come out victorious, but it was clear that Kuzon was not serious as well. Could I seriously beat him if he went all-out?

For the first time since I entered the Academy, I was facing a student who was more superior to me in seemingly every way.

For him to have developed his Original Magic to this degree, his talent and expert use of Mana had clearly surpassed mine.

His combat Skills were top-tier, and it didn't even seem like he was going all-out yet.

Kuzon Midas... he seemed like the perfect human, so much so that it scared me!

"No, then... let us—"

"No!" I interrupted the boy's words, making him halt in his preparation to advance.

Our eyes connected, and his curious gaze showed that he was questioning my words.

"Don't tell me you've lost your nerve already." He smirked, seeming to taunt me.

I brought my emotions under control, clenching my fist as I saw the thread swirling around me in every direction.

"One move. Let's end this with one move!" A resolute voice proceeded from my lips.

Kuzon's eyes bulged slightly, and his condescending smile seemed to fade away.

"You serious?"

I nodded at his question.

There was no point in meaninglessly dragging things on. The wisest choice would be to give up and admit it was my loss, but... since I had become an idiot, I could no longer back down now!

"Yeah! Let's settle this once and for all!"

With both of us seeming to be in agreement, I bent slightly and relaxed my tensed muscles.

This would be my last shot at Kuzon, most likely a futile attempt, but... I was a sore loser!

'Huu... I should put on a good show at least!'

Rapidly activating all five of my Mana Cores, I caused a phenomenal amount of mana to burst forth from my body.

>BOOOOOMMMM!!!!<

The auditorium echoed as a result of the pressure I generated, and the crowd let out gasps.

I felt the ground beneath me vibrate as the floor shattered apart.

However, in my current state, I did not need any platform to stand on. The wind hovering around me lifted my body as I floated in mid-air.

Other than the encircling wind, flashes of lightning crackled, the shattered earth surrounding me began rising, combining with a giant bubble of water that was being generated in my front.

Blazing Purple Flames ignited, also magnetizing in the direction of the cluster of elements being formed in my front.

Water. Earth. Fire. Air... and Lightening!

Before everyone, I multi-casted five elements at the same time.

Usually, the combination of these opposing attributes would end in a useless blob, but, thanks to my expert control over Mana, I formed a perfect core at the center which acted as a stabilizer. The elements revolved around it—forming a powerful sphere that caused everything around it to blow away.

>BZZTTTZZZZ<

>WHOOOSSSHHH<

>VWUUUUUMMMM<

>KRKTTTRKKTTR<

Multiple sounds emanated from the powerful cluster of Spells in an instant.

Each of these Spells was of the High-Tier Intermediate Level. Combining all five of them caused my offensive capabilities to skip the Highest Rank of Intermediate Level and further into the territory of masters... the Advanced Level!

"Take this!" I grinned in excitement.

My widened eyes watched as Kuzon gave a maniacal expression of shock and anticipation. His large smile told me he was impressed by the product of only a few seconds' efforts.

That was enough for me!

"Flow!"

I sent the phenomenal cluster of indescribable energy in Kuzon's direction, watching as it tore apart the whole stage.

>WHOOOOOSHHH!!!<

Everything in the orb's path was obliterated as it violently lunged at its target.

'What will you do, Kuzon!' My thoughts rang in impatience.

The golden-haired boy stretched out both hands and seemed to call upon the threads that surrounded the arena.

The nearly undetectable threads gathered in a flash, all forming a barrier a short distance from him while receiving my attack.

>BOOOOMMMMMMMMM!!!!!!<

The earth around us shattered, and if not for my triple-layered barrier which I made right on time, the explosion would have affected me too.

Of all the Spells I had ever executed... this was by far the most destructive!

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Chapter 179: Winner

>BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMM!!!<

A massive explosion erupted, shattering the entire stage.

The shockwave of said blast was so great that even from my distance—with my magic barriers protecting me, I still felt the pressure.

Of my barriers, one completely shattered, and the second was on the verge of breaking apart.

Considering I made them in a hurry, it was understandable, but still... my distance from the core of the explosion was great. For my defenses to have suffered such damage, how devastating would it be for a person to be at the center?

No, those were useless thoughts!

I was certain that someone of Kuzon's quality would be able to take such a devastating strike. Even if he secured injuries, there was no way he would die!

Finally, the storm of multiple elements colliding ceased, and the debris of what was previously known to be our battleground remained, as well as the rising smoke that nearly blinded one's vision.

>WHOOOOSHH<

A sudden gust of wind got rid of the ascending dust, most likely caused by our Moderator who wanted everyone in the Hall to witness the result of my Spell.

'So? What happened...?' I raised my hesitant head and glanced in the direction of where Kuzon had been... the center of the blast.

"Nice one..." The boy's voice sounded as his body became visible.

My heart fell as I watched him emerge from a cocoon made of threads, completely unscathed.

"The ones I made earlier were no match for that Spell. You made me use more Threads to defend myself. That's very impressive." He remarked.

The color of the threads that made up the Cocoon was different from the usual transparent ones.

"Blue, eh?" I whispered.

Thanks to their clear color, everyone in the Hall could see it now as the thin wires had lost their invisible properties.

"That still wasn't enough, uh?" I gave a weak chuckle as I watched him walk closer to me.

"You don't seem tired-out. That Spell didn't take everything out of you, uh? You amaze me every second."

I watched in silence as Kuzon patronized me. Somehow that made me sick to my stomach. No matter his compliments, the fact remained that I couldn't do anything to even penetrate his defenses.

"Since you still have Mana left... do you want to continue?" He asked.

I clenched my teeth.

He was right.

My stockpile of Mana was just about halfway gone. Thanks to the automatic recovery of Spellcraft, Mana wasn't really a problem. The issue was my Capacity! At my current level, that was the highest firepower I could generate by myself.

'If he's able to tank that, then...'

No matter how hard I tried, I would never be able to win.

"No, this is the end. Like I said... we'll decide this with one move." I shrugged, ready to surrender.

There was no point in going any further. Doing so would only make me a bigger fool!

"Hey, don't be too hard on yourself." Kuzon sharply spoke, causing me to stare at his eyes.

Something about them changed.

Usually, they were casual and unserious. However, now that I stared deeper into them, there was something else the boy's vision displayed.

"You're strong. Trust me!"

Somehow it felt like I was a kid being encouraged by an adult.

'I'm the one who's supposed to be the adult here...'

Suddenly, a realization dawned on me. I had been acting like a child all along. Being obsessed with winning and losing, and not actually taking careful facts into consideration.

Once I realized the errors of my bratty ways, a sense of gratitude flowed within me as my eyes looked at Kuzon more clearly.

"Thanks. You're strong too." I remarked.

A moment of silence pervaded our immediate vicinity and time seemed to stop. Throughout my second life, I had never met anyone with more of an impression than this young boy. Whoever he was... he made me want to be better.

'So, this is what rivalry is all about, eh?'

Of course, I knew I wasn't good enough to officially declare myself his rival. Was this how Stefan felt about me? Even if the one I wanted to challenge dwelled on a higher plane than me, I still wanted to catch up so desperately.

'Kuzon Midas... I suppose I'll consider you my rival, after all...'

"Pfft!" Suddenly, the boy burst out in laughter, surprising me.

The timing felt like he had just heard my thoughts, making me feel a bit embarrassed.

"Of course I'm strong. I'm the strongest student here!" He laughed even more.

His sassy attitude made me feel like retracting my rivalry, but it also made me break into a smile. He had only stated the obvious.

"Well, for now, you are. Just hold on to that title, for now, Kuzon... I'll be taking it from you." I found the courage to speak out my intentions.

Once my words landed, the seemingly invincible boy gave a dazed look for a moment before smiling sincerely.

"Well, then, I better not lose to you. This sort of makes us rivals, don't you think. Hahaha!" Kuzon laughed even more.

He certainly seemed to be enjoying himself.

And, the boy had said something I didn't have the guts to utter yet.

'Rivals, uh? I guess we are...'

"I surrender!" My voice echoed through the vast Hall that was already filled with tension and unrest.

Sudden gasps and murmurs filled the room, but they had no choice but to accept it. My eyes trailed to Edward and Ana, who watched and nodded with teary eyes.

They must have known how badly I wanted to win, and the pain it took me to intentionally stop fighting altogether.

Thankfully, their eyes didn't show disappointment. Still, I felt bad.

'Forgive your tutor... I wasn't able to win!' A sad smile played across my face.

Even though I had forfeited the match, I had gained much more and even lost something that would serve as dead weight for me.

In a way, I suppose this loss was very much worth it.

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Chapter 180: Broken Pride

My ego had been shattered—my pride at being a step ahead of everyone else was completely ruined.

All I had gotten from this Exchange was the desire to grow even better... as well as a Rival who would spur me on to achieve that.

"Winner, Kuzon Midas." Klaus' voice echoed across the hall as I descended the broken-down stage.

A sting crept upon my heart but I shook it off. For now, I would have to live with this loss... and it would only make me grow stronger eventually!

"I now declare that the one who has officially scored first place in the Magic Division for the First years is... Kuzon Midas!"

The crowd seemed to be a bit conflicted by the results as it took a few moments of pause before a wave of cheer burst from them. Since I had lost, there was no longer any place for me among the competitors. My eyes frolicked about and I saw Ana seared among the other First Year Lower Class students.

Of course, she sat alone—most likely due to the special treatment given to the strong by those who knew they were inferior.

Her sparkling eyes invited me in her direction as she lightly tapped a seat beside her. Nodding slightly, I smiled and proceeded to join her.

As I took my steps, it was impossible to ignore the multitude of eyes on me. Some displayed bewilderment, some fear, some suspicion, some reverence... some animosity!

I felt a cold stare from behind me, the direction was the Judges' stand. I realized that it had to belong to none other than Damien Lawcroft, so I ignored whatever annoyed expression he had to be making.

Even after seeing the sight I displayed, was his stubbornness too much that it blinded him from admitting to the potential a Lower Class trash had?

I shrugged off the negative vibes he emitted and completely ignored the positive looks from everyone around.

If I had won the match, perhaps my reaction would be different. But, now? All I felt was a burning need to get better!

Even as people stared, I climbed the stairs and reached for the elevated spot where Ana was waiting for me with empty seats.

I helped myself to the seat on her left, rendering a word of thanks.

"You did good out there! It was an amazing match!" She spoke even before I completely settled in.

Was she reading my mind? Could Ana see the guilt that was still clinging to me?

After promising to win, I couldn't even make good on it. Instead, I even surrendered without fighting to the bitter end as others would prefer.

"That last spell of yours... it was amazing! You have to teach me!" She beamed even more, not minding the fact that I didn't respond to her earlier statement.

'I see... so she's trying to cheer me up, uh? How cute.'

First, it was Kuzon, now Ana. I was certain Edward would also try to make me feel better once we met again. How hilarious was that?

Still... the sentiment didn't feel terrible.

"Yeah... sure..." I replied, turning and looking wholeheartedly in Ana's direction for the first time.

Once I captured the innocent and optimistic glow of the girl, the guilt within me vanished. I really didn't owe it to anyone to win. It was just something I needlessly burdened myself with.

In the end, those superficial concepts didn't matter one bit.

Ana never asked for me to avenge her. What she was asking now... was the same as what I desired.

We both wanted to become better!

"... I'll teach you."

With the deal sealed, there was no need for further words between us. Our heads simultaneously turned back to the ruined stage, and for the first time, I was able to see what devastation my Spell had actually wrought.

'There's no way they can use that for the next match!' My thoughts rang.

Did I really take things too far?

Fortunately, Ainzlark was the top Academy in the Eastern Kingdom for a reason.

In moments, the destroyed stage was repaired by an earth mage who also served as the Lecturer of the Upper-Class First Years.

Particles that had been fragmented beyond repair seemed to be replaced thanks to the superior use of Mana, and in seconds, the platform was as good as new.

'That's some expert use of Magic right there!' I beamed in observation, already out of the slump my loss had brought me into.

Not all Advanced Spells had to be destructive like mine. The one the Earth Mage Lecturer used was most definitely of the Advanced Level, but it simply meant a more intricate and efficient repair—if not renovation—of the stage.

Usually, a Mage was expected to be capable of producing at least one Advanced Spell without difficulty. Also, they needed to be well versed in Intermediate Level Spells and Basic Magic to an expert level.

The way the Lecturer used Advanced Magic to simply rectify the damage I had caused told me there was more up his sleeve.

He was certainly no joke. No, Ainzlark as a whole was simply too impressive!

'Well, not everything here is good...'

"We will now resume the match!" Klaus Tallman declared, causing some of the crowd who still stole glances at me to return their focus to the center of attention!

It was finally time for the next round, belonging to none other than the Martial Arts Division! In essence, Edward's time had come!

I noticed beside me that Anabelle's eyes were bursting with so much anticipation, and to be honest, I was too.

Instantly forgetting my match, both eyes now observed as my comrade and dear pupil picked his weapon from the rack of several tools and climbed the stage all alone.

'He already defeated Eben Lustriel in the last match. Who will he be competing against?'

My curiosity was piqued!

"For the Martial Arts Finals, we will have our contestant—Edward Karl Leon choose his opponent!" Klaus suddenly boomed, causing me—no, all of us who watched—to drop our jaws in shock.

The contestant himself was in a daze.

"Now, then... who will it be?!"