

SPELLCRAFT 181

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Chapter 181: Junior Vs Senior

The Hall was filled with surprise.

Put Moderator had just said the unbelievable and everyone was recoiling from his words. According to Klaus Tallman, a lecturer in his own right, Edward could pick his contestants.

"So, I can choose you?" Edward broke the silence by asking the most unexpected question.

For a moment, it seemed Klaus didn't understand his question. When it finally dawned on him, the man gasped and took a step backward before bursting into laughter.

"No, no. Not Lecturers. Forgive me for not making things clearer." I still sensed vestiges of amusement from the man's voice.

"What I mean is... you, Edward, can pick a contestant from any of the students in this Hall!"

My chest tightened the moment I heard that announcement, and that was because Edward's gaze instantly shifted to me.

The way his widened eyes stared in my direction caused me to be nervous. What was on this dense boy's mind? Could he really...

"Oh, yeah, and that student must have registered as a participant of the Martial Arts Division, obviously," Klaus added.

Those words saved me as I gave a sigh of relief while noticing a teary look from my pupil and companion.

'Pfft. Did he really think of picking me?' I mused.

Obviously, the contest wasn't going to allow Magic Users to fight Martial Artists. That was completely imbalanced.

Still, the fact that Klaus failed to mention a restriction in Classes meant that Klaus could indeed pick a competitor from his Lower Class... maybe even challenge seniors!

'I wonder what the tournament executives are thinking by doing this...'

If Edward wanted to, he could simply choose an opponent that guaranteed his victory. That was the obvious choice, no?

Giving him a blank check was tantamount to saying he could get away with an easy win if he so desired.

But...

'Is winning the goal of the Martial Arts Finals, or is there something more?'

... I was curious about the outcome. One thing for sure was that Edward would never even dream of challenging a weakling.

Since I knew the boy so well, it was easier to determine who he would go for.

The boy's eyes darted across the stage as he met with the gaze of many—some of which gave uneasy expressions as their eyes met. I followed Edward's focus, noticing as it trailed to the person I already suspected would be the obvious choice.

"You... I choose you!" Edward pointed in the direction of someone who sat in the Lower Class area... but in the Third Year angle!

Everyone gasped, and those who couldn't really see the one Edward referred to seemed to struggle to take a better look. I, of course, already knew him well.

The boy in question was dazed, completely knocked out of the realm of expectations.

"W-wha—?!" I watched his lips form.

The boy comically looked around him, most likely expecting to see Edward's finger pointing somewhere else, but from what he must have seen... no one else could have been 'it'.

"I'm talking about you, spearman!" Edward yelled, finally hammering his point.

A smile played across my face as the senior was forced to rise and descend from his seat.

Most people would not have expected this choice, no, it was certain none did. A majority of the audience was most likely unable to recognize the one who slowly approached the stage.

But, Edward and I knew perfectly well!

It was the senior who lost at the hands of nine other contestants during the preliminary elimination round—The Battle Royale!

Edward and I had both passionately watched as this boy in question stood his ground and single-handedly fought back his aggressors. He didn't give in despite the overwhelming disadvantage, and kept swinging his far-reaching weapon till he lost.

Many had forgotten already, but Edward clearly had that memory ingrained in his head. Judging the determined and respectful expression on his face, it was obvious that the boy thought very highly of the senior that didn't even make it to the Quarter-Finals.

As soon as he got close enough to the stage, I watched Edward's contestant pick his weapon—the Spear—and climb the platform where he would fight my pupil.

The crowd was still confused, but it seemed they had grown to accept the current matchup and went with the flow. Only true Martial Artists would actually understand what was going on!

"So, this is your choice? Alright, then!" Klaus spoke with finality and made his way to the end of the stage.

"Let the Finals of the Martial Arts Combat for the First Years... begin!"

One would expect this to be followed up by the clash of blades, but a lull took over the stage once the battle had been declared to commence.

Both boys stared passionately at each other, clearly having words they would like to render.

"Why... why did you choose me?"

Of course, that would be the first thing the senior would ask.

Edward gave a proper smile and bowed slightly.

"It's because I watched your fight with those other seniors and respected your stance. You were more honorable and skilled than the others, yet you never got that chance to display your skills..."

The senior bit his lip slightly, most likely remembering the humiliating moment where he was cornered.

"That's why I want us to both give it our all! Let's fight—us Lower-Class Martial Artists... and show everyone what we can do!"

Edward's voice screamed of juvenile enthusiasm, but that seemed to do the trick for the spearman senior.

He gave a soft smile, and what happened to be sparkles of tears formed in his eyes.

"Thank you... truly."

Edward nodded and bowed once again in respect.

"May I ask for your name?"

Since he never made it past the Battle Royale, the senior's name was never announced.

"I'm Jeffery Keener. You can call me Jeff, though."

Edward sharply nodded.

"I am Edward Karl Leon! You can call me Ed!"

Both Martial Artists, as though long friends, gave each other mutual smiles and nodded. It felt like I was watching the reunion of an older and younger brother.

"Now, then, Jeff..."

"Very well, Ed..."

The voices of both boys simultaneously sounded.

Both gripping their weapons tightly and staring passionately at the other, they took their respective stances.

"... Let us begin!"

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Chapter 182: The Lower Class Champion

>WHOOOOSHH<

Both boys charged at each other at great speeds, drawing their weapons with precision and firing it toward the opponent at the same time.

>CLANG<

As the spear met the sword, both Martial Artists stood a couple of meters from each other, smiling ecstatically. They seemed thrilled by the fight that had only begun.

>FWOOOOSH HH<

Twisting his hold on the spear, the Senior—Jeffery Keener—removed his weapon from its position and struck forward in an attempt to steal a jab on Edward.

Fortunately, the junior was just as fast as he quickly picked up his senior's intentions and dodged at the right moment, taking a few leaps backward to prevent further assaults.

I smiled as I watched the whole exchange.

'The spear is a tricky weapon, especially at the hands of an experienced user...'

Even though Edward had superior Techniques, in the end, he lacked experience. His way with the blade had not become second nature to him as it was for the senior.

Plus, Edward had yet to fight a spear-wielder with such skill, so it would prove a bit challenging.

In any case, this was quite an interesting match to watch so I sat back and relaxed. It would be presumptuous of me to dictate my knowledge of the outcome, so I left it all to chance.

"Hyaaa!!!" Jeff made multiple jabs as Edward tried getting close, creating several afterimages of the spear.

'A Spear Art, eh?'

Infusing Mana to his strikes, these afterimages could have as well been real, as my student was assailed by a barrage of strengthened spears.

>SWOOOOSH HH!!!<

This time, Edward refused to run, instead channeling his Mana to cover his blade and counter.

>CLANG<

The strikes ended with both weapons and masters moving back in recoil.

From their exchange just now, it was certain they were both evenly matched in Skill—though at the base level.

Jeff had more experience, so it seemed like Edward was at a slight disadvantage. But, Ed also had more tricks up his sleeve and a considerably higher Mana Pool than his opponent. So, there had to be a reason he was holding back.

'Accumulating experience through sparring, eh? Good job.' I smiled.

"I didn't take you for the kind to hold back in these kinds of fights. Why aren't you using your full powers?" Jeffrey finally asked, sounding a bit offended.

So, the senior too had found out!

"I want to learn as I spar! There's no guarantee I will get this opportunity again. That's why I want to enjoy this round as much as I can!"

Jeff seemed a bit dazed by Edward's reply, but his expression only lasted for a moment before switching to a more understanding one.

"I see... very well!" He straightened his spear once again and pointed it toward his opponent with determination.

"I will entertain you with all I have!"

Beads of sweat appeared on Edward's face as he also took his stance once again and braced himself for what was to come.

"Winner, Edward Karl Leon!" Klaus declared, returning to the stage.

I was still shivering with excitement in my seat when he spoke, causing my already stretched-out smile to widen even more.

Edward nearly collapsed on the stage, but supported himself with his blade. I saw sweat dripping from his body and the tattered, ripped clothing that clung tightly to his skin.

His opponent was flat on the ground, knocked unconscious by Edward's last move that shattered the stage to a terrifying degree. The destruction was not as high as mine, but it was obvious that it needed to be repaired and most likely reinforced for the next match.

"Haa... Haaa..." The young Martial Artist gave gasps for breath as he maintained his solitary stance.

The audience was in a frenzy, completely dazed by the young boy's victory.

I was certain that no Lower Class student had ever gotten this level of acknowledgment before. Even the seniors and those in higher classes had to applaud and acknowledge the prowess he showed.

"I now declare that the one who has officially scored first place in the Martial Arts Division for the First years is... Edward Karl Leon!"

More deafening cheers echoed from the crowd. I was certain the Martial Arts department students were very pumped after viewing the match.

Edward had indeed brought about a revolution.

"Congratulations, Ed. You really did it!" I smiled in genuine pride and joy.

Perhaps things would have been different a while back—I would most likely be a little jealous of his achievement. However, I was now seeing the bigger picture.

Edward's efforts had paid off, and he fought to the fullest. If I wasn't happy about that, then what kind of comrade would I be?

The silly boy considered me a friend as well as a mentor, after all. I had to show the support attributed to my role.

"WOHOOOOOO!!!" We cheered on for him.

I, Ana... and the congregation that gathered! We all voiced our heartfelt congratulations to the star of the Lower Class, Edward Karl Leon!

Shortly after Edward got off the stage, the Earth Mage from earlier arrived at the scene and began repairing it once more.

He seemed a bit disgruntled about the level of damage occurring in the Finals and began adding enhancements to the stage.

I watched as layers of strengthening Magic flowed through the blocks and tiles until they completely merged.

'You should have done that earlier.' I smiled in a little tease.

Edward, of course, returned to the place where the competitors sat, so Ana and I couldn't see him—at least, not while the Exchange was still going on.

"For the next round, we have the Finals of the Scholar Division of the First Years!"

The sole winner who had qualified for the finals stepped on the new and improved stage. Her situation was the same as Edward's—they were the only ones left for the final round.

'Will she be picking one opponent as they did for the Martial Arts Division?' I pondered

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Chapter 183: Bias

"For the Finals, you will be challenged by the greatest Scholar in the history of the Eastern Empire—Lewis Griffith!" Klaus announced, much to the surprise of everyone who watched... including me.

'E-eh?!'

The lone Scholar on stage, Reinhardt Ciera, gasped at the difficulty of the Finals. How could she, a mere student, compete with the Great Sage?

Her eyes frolicked uncomfortably across the stage, but it seemed like she did her best to control her expression from leaking out the sense of nervousness she felt.

"Do not worry. Considering your level, we have not compiled the more difficult ones for you. Rather, your challenge will be to argue against one of Lewis Griffith's earlier treatises concerning the Mana Core Grade revolution and relevance, as well as the Concept of Inepts."

I sighed as soon as I heard the question.

It was indeed one of my earlier works and, being honest, I still considered it to be childish and juvenile compared to my other advanced works.

Admittedly, my motivation for creating that piece was due to the lingering frustration I had concerning my Inept Status.

Since this was an outdated philosophy, and a very flawed one at that, it was probably going to be a very simple matter to argue against it.

"You have thirty minutes to complete your argument. You may begin!" Klaus declared, setting a timer above us to observe the events of the contest.

The flustered girl began making her case, beginning from the introduction of my treatise and the relevance it had in the past. Afterward, she began addressing the essential components it contained.

As the girl went further on in her argument, I grew more and more disappointed. Her start was excellent, but she had yet to mention one of the flaws my concept had.

The question had been to argue against my philosophy, not explain it!

The problem wasn't the nature of the question posed, which I considered to be quite simple, but the stage it was set in! It was no wonder the girl was finding it hard to properly perform what was expected of her.

Firstly, it was an impromptu presentation, making Reinhardt Ciera flustered in her thoughts.

Secondly, the timer. A Scholar had to make proper use of time and ensure that every moment was not wasted. As a result, she was rushing to deliver her speech while trying to collect the jumbled thoughts in her head... all at the same time.

The third challenge was her opponent—me! Many would feel reluctant to challenge more powerful and respected figures in society, especially young students who looked up to them.

This Ciera girl must have been so conflicted when it was announced who she would be arguing against. That insurmountable wall that existed in her mind must have put a mental strain on the young lady.

Finally, the pressure! Usually, it would be inconsequential whether or not there was a crowd watching you—especially if it was a competition.

However, thanks to the first three factors, our beloved competitor must have already been worn out. Adding the expectations and critical gazes of the crowd to the mix was just too much.

As a result, even though her start was impressive, the girl flopped midway through and spoke in gibberish.

"Time up!" Klaus announced, preventing her from going any further in her pointless presentation.

It had to be painfully obvious to the experts, at this point, that the girl performed woefully.

Klaus looked above him, to the area where the Judges sat, most likely awaiting their decision. I watched the brief exchange between them and saw the moderator nodding in agreement.

"The winner of this round is..."

A moment of silence filled the room and it seemed like everyone was curious about the verdict. Of course, I already knew it would be—

"Reinhardt Ciera!!!" Klaus' voice boomed.

"What?!" I blurted out in shock as soon as I heard the verdict.

It was completely different from what I expected.

"E-eh...?" The Reinhardt girl even gave a gasp of surprise.

She must have been certain that it was her loss, same as my conclusion. Why was she awarded the victory, then?

"The goal of the match was not just focused on giving the right answers, but it measured the contestant's mental prowess, the eloquence of words, and the ability to remain composed in unfavorable conditions."

'What the heck is this guy talking about?' I glared angrily at Klaus.

The man went on about how Ciera knew the historical value of Lewis Griffith's treatise, showing her wealth of knowledge. She was also able to completely use her time without breaking down, blah blah blah!

I got so pissed off listening to his drivel that it took a great deal of my self-control to remain silent.

'This... this is bias!'

"What's going on here? J-Jared, is this true? I actually thought she would lose." Anabelle suddenly spoke, looking at me innocently.

Even an airhead like Ana knew something wasn't right here, yet the judges and moderator had decided the girl was the winner.

"You were right to think she would lose," I muttered in a low and grim tone.

Ana didn't seem to get my message as she furthered her inquiry.

"Then why did she... win?"

I sighed and shrugged. At this point, there was no use getting angry because of these things. Obviously, they figured out a loophole to ensure that the Upper-Class student went home with the medal.

It was only for a moment, but I somehow wished Ana had participated in the Scholar Division. If she had, we would have been able to show what an actual Scholar was capable of.

'Urgh! There's no use in thinking about that now...' I quickly chastised myself.

Anabelle's participation in the Magic Division was something I didn't regret. We had both lost, but... clearly, the Exchange was epic thanks to our matches.

As a result of our powerlessness as students, Ana and I—no, everyone who watched—merely had no other choice than to tolerate the gross bias displayed in favor of the Upper Class.

"I now declare that the one who has officially scored first place in the Scholar Division for the First years is... Reinhardt Ciera!"

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Chapter 184: Decision

We watched in silence as the victor was declared for the First Years Scholar Division.

The girl walked to her seat, still looking confused about the whole thing, though I saw a smile play on her face. Who wouldn't be happy about winning, even if they didn't understand how?

I shrugged off my annoyance and simply waited for the next round.

"Next, we have the Finals of the Second Years!" Klaus announced with his usual cheery tone.

I carefully stared at him, wondering how he could maintain such a straight and positive face after wrongly declaring someone the winner.

'He must be used to it...' My thoughts trailed.

A part of me wanted to fault him, but I couldn't do that in good conscience. He was simply following the orders of the higher-ups who, for some reason, wanted the undisputed winning streak of the Upper Class to resume.

"Haa... how troublesome..." I unconsciously whispered, looking at the big ones towering above with their floating platform and elevated seats.

Even if Damien Lawcroft resorted to this form of pettiness, and the other Senior Lecturer I didn't really know was willing to sink so low, I truly wasn't expecting the last judge to follow their decision.

'Legris Damien... is this what you really want? I didn't think you were that kind of guy.'

My eyes fell back to the stage as the contestants for the Second Year Magic Division had begun climbing the stage.

'An Upper Class against a Middle Class, eh?'

Based on what I had seen so far, was there even a reason to continue watching?

I could better spend my time practicing magic or even meditating. Plus, there was 'that' project I was working on.

It would still take a little over a week to perfect, but spending some time on it now would be very helpful.

"Hoo... na, let's just get this over with."

It wasn't compulsory to attend the Exchange—some students didn't show up, like all the members of the Elite Ten who were most likely preparing for their round on the final day.

Other than them, though, virtually everyone was present. Why?

Even though it wasn't a compulsory exercise, it would be foolish of a student to miss such a spectacular event where skills were exhibited and knowledge could be received.

And so, even if it was easy to determine the victor, the only reason I remained on my seat was to observe the matches and learn from them.

"Winner, Jesire Gulberto!"

"Winner, Alekzi Zachiel!"

"Winner, Avans Xeilong!"

The match went on and on, with victories going to none other than the Upper Class.

"That is all for today! Tomorrow—Saturday—will be the conclusion of the Finals Event, featuring the third year! Afterward, we will close early and anticipate the spectacular event on Sunday!" Klaus remarked, causing a roar of cheers and applause from the audience.

'I suppose tomorrow will be the same. I'm just going to skip it.'

Once the event was over, we met up with Edward and proceeded to exit the Hall.

"Congratulations on your victory!" Ana and I both told the big guy who seemed to nearly burst into tears thanks to the overwhelming emotion that appeared to course through him.

He thanked me a billion times, of which I told him not to bother with.

"To be fair... I truly wanted to fight you! But, considering how you lost against Kuzon, I figured that would be a bit unfair on you..." Edward suddenly spoke.

Our group had already walked some distance from the auditorium and now made out way toward the Dorms. Of course, that meant Ana would soon be parting with us since her living quarters was different from ours.

However, in the meantime, we walked together.

"I see. Well, you should be glad you didn't choose me. I would have transferred my frustration and given you a beatdown!" I declared with a chuckle.

We all laughed at my joke—well, to them that was all it amounted to. But, I knew within myself what the truth actually was.

"Tomorrow is the final day of the Finals. Do you guys have any intention of going?" Ana asked.

I shrugged, and from my reaction, it was obvious what my answer was.

"Well, I think I'll go! I want to see how the Upper-Class students will fight in the Finals. Plus, it's compulsory for all winners to be present for the Finals tomorrow. There'll most likely be an award given to us." Edward gave a firm response, just as I expected.

"Oh, that makes sense!" Ana beamed.

"What about you?" I found myself asking the girl.

"Hmnn, I think I'll go. I feel something big might happen. Besides, someone has to cheer for Edward as he receives his prize, don't you think?"

I rubbed my chin and nodded slightly. What Ana said made sense. Besides, if it was to support Edward, then...

"Oh, you don't need to concern yourself about me, Jared. I know you have a lot on your plate." The boy quickly added, causing me to heave a sigh of relief.

I was happy that he didn't impose on my presence tomorrow. I had such understanding companions, did I not?

"Well, you guys had better watch everything carefully tomorrow! I'll be expecting your report on any important scenes!"

Ana and Edward laughed in response to my words. Even if I would be absent, there was no way I wanted to miss out on any of the fun.

"Sure!" They beamed.

Once we had an understanding, our group continued down the path as we made our way to the dorm.

"Oh? So that's the group, uh?" A feminine voice sounded from a distance, watching a bunch of Lower Class students chatter excitedly as they made their way to the Dorms.

The girl who spoke gave a small smile and sighed. She was atop a building, able to see a great distance from her height, but her focus was on that particular group of First Years.

"This will put some ideas in 'his' head the moment he catches wind of what happened... arh, how bothersome..."

The wind howled and caused her dark brown hair to fly, slightly covering her blue eyes as she kept them wide open and kept staring at the group—especially the one in the center.

"Jared Leonard, uh? I wonder what's so special about him..."

A slight smile appeared on her face the moment the image of someone else flashed on her mind. 'That' person and the blond-haired boy who walked with his companions had so much in common.

'I suppose I'll see you soon... during 'our' round.'

With that, the girl fell in silence and completely drifted with the wind, vanishing as though she had never been there before.

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Chapter 185: A Strange Encounter

The next day greeted me with an unusual feeling of exhaustion.

Unlike the previous days where I had woken up excitedly for the Exchange, this one, in particular, made me feel like staying in bed.

I had tried hard enough the previous night, mixing lots of chemicals and trying out various effects. Wasn't I allowed one day off, just to rest and collect my thoughts?

'I think... I do...'

Suddenly, an image flashed in my head!

The picture of a particular golden-haired boy who wore a casual smile and had an air of ease around him. Once I had this image appear in my head, I sprang out of bed!

"What do you think you're doing, Jared! Time to hustle!"

In a flash, I made my way across the room and did all I had to do. Brushing, bathing, getting dressed!

I was done in a jiffy, and the moment I was properly clothed, my legs carried me beyond my room as I raced away from the Dorm.

Fortunately, the hallway was abandoned and I met no one currently on the premises.

They had all most likely gone to spectate the Inter-Class Exchange! In a way, it made the usually lively area dull and completely empty. That wasn't my concern, though.

'Well, it's not like I planned on spending time in the Dorm anyway!'

Racing beyond my Classroom, which was also abandoned, I made my way to the place where I usually conducted a private training session—the Oasis!

I still had no idea why the area was made available to everyone, but it was not a matter of concern to me. The important factor was that I had access to a place overflowing with Mana—perfect for my exercise!

>WHOOOSH<

Racing across the cluster of trees, I finally got to the center and set my eyes on the clear pool of water!

"Finally, I'm here!" I declared loudly, jumping to the clearing, just a few meters from the lake.

I finally had this place all to myse—

My entire notion was set ablaze the moment I noticed the presence of another in the Sacred area dedicated to my training.

No, it wasn't my senses, my eyes caught the one who had been in the Oasis before I arrived.

"W-wha—?!" I found myself short of words, staring straight at the far end of the pool.

A naked figure was immersed in the water, completely soaked and covered from the chest below.

Her entire body was wet, telling me she had been enjoying a bath in the water deemed to be sacred. My brain tried seeking the proper response or reaction, but I came up short.

My widened eyes couldn't close as they kept looking at the girl who was now opening hers to look in my direction.

"Uh? Someone is here too?" Her voice, lustrous and sonorous, filled my ears.

"U-Uh... Um..." I still couldn't speak properly.

The girl's clear blue eyes seemed unbothered by my presence as they examined me for a moment.

"So? Are you going to keep staring?"

The moment her second statement registered in my head, I came to my senses and realized that I had been staring at a naked girl all this while.

"Arh! I'm so sorry about that!" I shrieked, instantly turning away.

I could feel a form of embarrassment flowing through my body as my cheeks were beet red. Whoever the girl was, I certainly prayed she didn't get the wrong idea about me.

I was simply surprised—too stunned to move—yeah! It wasn't like I was a pervert who got off staring at women.

"Sigh, you can be at ease now." The girl's voice sounded, causing me to jump slightly.

Her tone didn't show any form of annoyance, fortunately.

'She must be fully dressed now.' My thoughts trailed, though a lingering emotion told me the opposite could also be true.

I gulped, slowly turning back to the pool. It would be completely weird if I once again saw something I didn't want to.

Once I finally completed my twist, I saw that the girl was indeed already completely clothed.

'Oh? She's dressed already...'

I wondered about my flat thought, noting a sense of disappointment in my mind. Was I really looking forward to another sight?

'Jared, what are you becoming?'

"You... you're Jared Leonard, right?" The girl's voice brought me back to the realm of reality.

"Y-yeah!" I sharply looked at her, properly examining the girl in front of me for the first time.

It was surprising how she dried off so quickly, but I found no trace of water on her body as I observed her.

Now covered completely in clothes, the girl's beauty had not diminished in the slightest. Her dark brown hair flowed behind her, slapping her back as the wind motioned.

She had a mature look, clearly older than I was by a year or so. Maybe it was just my imagination.

Her blue eyes were deep, unlike the clear ones I saw in Ana's eyes. They seemed to contain amusement as well as a further depth I couldn't possibly decipher.

Her apparel was fancy, yet causal. Donning a blue and white attire, with ribbons on her hair, the girl placed a hand on her hip and stared curiously at me.

"... H-how do you know my name?" I managed to break the uneasy silence that had completely shrouded the area.

"Meh, that's not important. By the way, shouldn't you be watching the Inter-Class Exchange? It's currently going on, isn't it?" The girl asked after nonchalantly dismissing my question.

Judging by her demeanor and question, there was no doubt that she was a student. But...

"I decided to skip it since there's nothing I can gain from it. It's better to spend my time practicing or something. What about you?"

I narrowed my eyes at the older girl suspiciously.

"Oh? Me? Well, I think it's the same as you." She smiled a little, still treating my questions as though they were nothing.

How could she say she was skipping the Inter-Class Exchange because of the reason I gave, yet I caught her cooling off in the lake—something even I had never tried doing!

Who the heck was this girl?!

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Chapter 186: Prospects

"Well, since you disturbed my light nap, I think it's time I get going. I'm done with the pool, so it's all yours."

The strange girl began moving in my direction, causing me to feel uneasy. My heart beat fast as I gulped in nervousness, or was it fear?

"I certainly hope you won't miss the Final event because of your 'training' as well." She spoke in an amused fashion.

"Will you be there?" I didn't know why I asked that, but it just slipped out.

"Hmm, I wonder... oh well..."

As I stood, petrified, the girl walked past me. Shortly after, I heard the sounds of leaves moving, and thistles snapping.

Not long after, the sound stopped. She had already left the area!

"Hoo... whew!" I was finally able to breathe freely

'What the hell?'

Now all alone in my sanctuary, I still didn't feel completely comfortable. As my eyes frolicked around the pool, I remembered the embarrassing scene with the girl.

"Urgh!" My hands subconsciously rubbed my face as I groaned in embarrassment.

I was curious about a lot of things. The identity of the girl, for one.

I had been coming to the Oasis for so long, and I had never seen her. Yet, from her tone and level of comfort, it seemed like she frequented this place as well.

Enough so that she was actually immersed in the lake at the center!

I moved closer to the pool and hesitantly dipped a finger within it.

'Arh!'

As expected, a jolt of energy coursed through me, causing me to sharply remove my hand from the cluster of water.

"Yep! It still stings..."

This pool had a very thick concentration of Mana, enough so that it would sting to just touch it.

I had tried so many experiments since I began coming here and achieved various results, but even I would not dare to dip myself in the waters.

"How was she able to dip her body in it and look so comfortable? I don't understand..." My lips moved in a murmur.

Was she even human?

The saturation of Mana within the lake would be enough to send someone into Mana Shock if they couldn't possibly absorb it, or even got too exposed. How was she so fine?

'Does she have an absorption technique that makes her capable of taking in so much Mana at once? Did she reinforce her body?'

But, the girl didn't even seem to be practicing or anything. She just appeared to be enjoying a cool bath in the water. The more I thought of it, the less I understood.

'Alright! That's enough of that!'

There was no way to get to the root of the matter, so I wasn't going to bother trying. Plus, there were more important things on my mind—more pertinent issues that demanded my attention.

"It's time I began my... activities..." I smiled to myself.

The bag I brought along with me fell to the ground as I squatted to bring out its contents.

Crushing a few juicy blades of grass underneath me, I smelled the fresh scent of greens while offloading the items within the baggage lying flat on the floor—

Five boxes containing a total of ten vials each.

A pouch containing exactly twelve stones.

A piece of parchment, similar to a card—but having several engravings on it.

A short stick that also had inscriptions and glowed slightly.

—These were the tools I brought along with me.

The vials contained the potions I was working on; the stones within the pouch were made of condensed Mana.

After realizing the nature of the Oasis, I figured that I could simply harness the Mana saturation by storing it within objects. Unfortunately, this was no simple task.

If an item had too much Mana—more than it could handle, it broke apart. As a First-Year Lower Class student, I had no access to any special items, so improvisation was inevitable.

Fortunately, my brilliant mind figured out an alternative!

Since the entire Oasis area had been exposed to the excess Mana, that meant I could simply harness its resources to create vessels for storing Mana. It was quite an intricate task, but I succeeded.

Using Earth Magic, I compressed the soil around the lake and formed several stones with them. Each stone had the concentration of about a ton of the soil—that was how much I refined them.

Still, due to how time-consuming the process was, I only had time to forge twelve. Thanks to how much they had been absorbing, these stones each had more than my total capacity.

The potions I brought along were also near perfection, all thanks to the Oasis' resources. Not only did they pass as concoctions, but their effects also graduated to form Magic Potions!

Thanks to harvesting the ingredients surrounding the lake—even the Lake water itself—I was able to add Mana properties to the potions and made them much more effective.

So far, I was able to further enhance my Mana Shock Potion, as well as a Mana Restorative Potion, Health, and Stamina Restorative Potions, as well as other kinds.

It was amazing how fast my research was going, but it didn't end at that!

The other two items I brought out of my bag were the major things I needed to work on today.

One was a card, and the other took the appearance of a short stick. They both had one thing in common...

... Magic Items!

"Hoo, shall we begin?" I cracked my fingers as I excitedly stared at all the tools set out in front of me.

The stick was a prototype for a Magic Wand—something that vastly increased the effectiveness of a Mage's Magic and also reduced Cast-time. I had a bit of help from Ana in sorting out the details, but thanks to the time I had... it would be completed today.

The major challenge was the second one—the Magic Card!

I built it with the idea of an ancient concept in mind. In simple terms, this object had the capacity to store any kind of Magic within it so I could use the Spell at any time.

So far, it could only store up to Intermediate Level, but... my goal was beyond that! As a result, it would take even more time to perfect. Fortunately, time was what I had.

Even though my body had almost reached the limit of its growth currently, there were many other ways I could grow stronger. I simply needed to focus on those factors as my tiny body increased in capacity.

Eventually, getting stronger enough to surpass a monster like Kuzon... would become a reality!

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

Chapter 187: The One Who Aims High (Pt 1)

Jerry Keller woke up feeling refreshed.

Even though he had had a very eventful night, he made sure to get plenty of rest for the next day. He slept for four hours and managed to wake up right on schedule—this was way more time than what he usually spent in bed.

'Hoo, I should get up now!'

Jumping out of his firmly-built bed, he stepped on both feet and made his way to the bathroom.

Ainzlark Academy ensured each room had its bathroom, lavatory, and basically all essentials. That made it easier for Jerry to commute from his bedroom to the place where he would have his bath.

His room was fairly large for his Class Placement, but given his rank, this was normal.

Upon reaching the bathroom, he took his toothbrush and began freshening up.

It was only five in the morning, but Jerry felt uneasy for a moment. Not only had he woken up later than usual, but this wasn't his usual schedule.

Normally, before anything, Jerry would spend at least three hours working on practicing and improving himself as a Magic-User. That meant he needed to wake up much earlier so he would have time to freshen up and attend class afterward.

However, today was different!

Unlike all other days, it was a special occasion that required him to be at full strength and peak condition. He couldn't risk stressing his body too much, so Jerry decided to take a break from his usual routine.

It was easier said than done, though, as muscle memory didn't make him feel completely at ease with his current activity.

After brushing, bathing, and essentially getting set for the day, Jerry Keller walked in front of the mirror and observed himself closely.

Having auburn hair—something he was born with—that seemed to stretch to the back of his head, it was tied behind to form something similar to a short ponytail. The boy's brown eyes showed great determination and brightness and his thinly lined lips parted to form a confident smile.

"Alright, Jerry! It's finally today!" He spoke to none other than his reflection in the mirror—in essence, himself.

His simple attire was a dark blue jacket and a white top underneath. His black pants were also very lackluster in design, and his sneakers had no form of elegance.

Compared to his status in the Academy, his sense of clothing left much to be desired. It wasn't like the boy was rough or had no fashion sense, rather he wasn't particularly interested in those things.

Only one thing interested Jerry Keller—Magic!

Once he was done observing himself, he left the mirror and made his way to the door.

Before he opened it, he felt a cluster of people standing at the other end, causing him to pause.

Before he could resume his motion, a knock sounded.

Jerry smiled and opened the door, hearing the slight creak of the luxurious wood that made up the structure.

"Oi, Jerry! You're up early—as usual!" A thick and more mature voice than the owner of the room could ever dream of achieving burst forth.

Standing in front of his door front were ten taller and more physically built individuals. A normal person would have been intimidated by their build, but not Jerry. After all...

"I could say the same for you guys." The boy responded with an excited smile.

... They were his friends!

"Hehe! What can we say!"

The boys chuckled and laughed as Jerry proceeded out of his room and closed the door behind him.

The ten that now surrounded him were seniors, and he was only a Second Year. Usually, the gap in their ranks would make anyone feel a bit pressured and out of place. But, the entire life of Jerry was weird.

These seniors were his inner circle, comrades he usually hung around with every time. They were strong enough to almost reach the ranks of the Elite Ten, but were not quite there yet.

It was partially thanks to Jerry's influence on them that they had gotten so strong, but the boy told himself that their pure determination was what yielded the results.

"The Exchange won't be held for another three hours or so, where do you plan on going?" One of the ten boys asked with a knowing grin.

Of course, his question was unnecessary.

There was a reason why all of them had gathered in front of Jerry's room. There was a reason why Jerry himself had woken up so early and expected his friends to be waiting for him.

"Where else?" A smile formed on Jerry's thinly lined lips.

The boy's around all leaked out smiles as they began moving down the stairs from the top of the Lower Class Dorm.

There was only one thing on Jerry's mind—the single thing activity could occupy him before participating in the contest that would be taking place on the final day of the Exchange.

It was Sunday, and most wouldn't even have been up at this time, but Jerry and his friends were.

Why?

"... We're off to the Training Area!"

"Huff.... huffff..."

Heavy breaths filled the hall and the stench of sweat permeated the area.

The ten boys were the ones responsible for the strained breathing. Some had already collapsed to the ground while others squatted a bit to catch their breath.

No matter what kind of posture they had, one thing was certain—they were exhausted!

"Wow! That was a rush!" Jerry exclaimed happily.

His voice was full of life and enthusiasm, a sharp contrast to the exhausted ones who gave him tired smiles.

"As always... you're a monster, Jerry!"

His bright brown eyes tuned to the boys he had been sparring with—all ten of them—and shook his head while maintaining his innocent smile.

"No... I'm not quite there yet."

As always, he donned his humble persona. Even though he had single-handedly handled the ten students who were strong in their own right, he didn't even show the slightest bit of pride.

The boy's eyes showed an interest in even more strength!

To achieve his goal, becoming one of the Nine Rankers, Jerry knew has to keep evolving.

"I can still... get stronger!"

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

Chapter 188: The One Who Aims High (Pt 2)

A few hours passed since they began their training session—well, only a bit over two to be exact—and the boys were already plenty tired.

Everyone, except for one in particular, was on the ground, lying flat and heaving heavily. Sweat popped on their skin as they struggled to keep a normal composure amid the gasps that sounded.

"Haa... that was... intense..." One of the boys who still had enough strength to form words let out.

Unlike the rest, he didn't seem as best up. It could be that their opponent had gone easier on him, or... he was simply better than the rest.

The boy's eyes darted to the one who had dealt all of them such serious attacks that they were now on the ground.

He was seated on one of the chairs at the edge of the hall, having beads of sweat on his face as he wiped it with a towel.

"Are you sure this won't affect your performance at the event?"

The boy who sat—Jerry—gave a small smile as he glanced at his worried friend.

"Na. I don't think so. Besides, I don't think I would be in top form if I didn't let out some tension before the main matches."

What Jerry was trying to say in his kind and considerate tone was that the boys he fought were not challenging enough to make him go all-out and exhaust himself.

Simply put, he needed the warm-up to be in good shape for the main fight. As insulting as that notion was, it was the truth. That was probably why Jerry resorted to a milder manner of approach to ease the fears of his friend.

"I... see..."

Of course, everyone in the room already knew what he meant by those words.

"So, should we start getting a move on?"

His question demanded a response, but Jerry fell silent for a short while to contemplate the implications of what answer he wanted to give.

In all honesty, he still wasn't satisfied with the matches he had with them, and felt like he could go more. Unfortunately, his comrades were already at their limits.

Besides, if Jerry pushed himself too much, then maybe it would indeed cause him to lack enough energy during his actual round in the tournament.

Caught between the conflicting interests that warred in his mind, the boy decided to go with the more obvious response.

"Alright. Let's head back."

The boys gave a relieved expression, happy they were done with the hellish exercise, though the one who seemed more considerate of Jerry's feelings understood the difficult choice his friend made.

'If only we were stronger... we could give him more of a challenge...' Those thoughts often trailed within him, etched in his mind like second nature.

Perhaps that was why he strived the hardest out of everyone else to catch up—even if it was only by a single inch— with their leader.

The boys stood atop their exhausted legs and made their way toward the exit of the room. Jerry was at the forefront, while the rest trailed after him This wasn't done intentionally. Perhaps it was just instinct—the strong leading the weak.

After leaving the room where there had spent about two hours training vigorously, the boys hot the showers—yes, literally!

The facilities in Ainzlark Academy were made to be top-notch, and the Training Area was no exception. As a matter of course, shower rooms were provided for, and the boys used them to fulfill the purpose of washing off their sweat and exhaustion.

With the temperature set to cool off the tension that pulsed their bodies, the cool liquid dripped down their bodies and gave them a soothing feel.

After temporarily experiencing hell, being greeted by the cooling splatters of water wasn't so bad.

The shower session didn't last very long, but it could have as well been an eternity for the boys. After they were done freshening up, they wore the initial clothing brought from their Dorms.

Since the Training Area would inevitably cause stress among those who used it, spiking whatever outfit they had on at the time, the Academy once again intervened expertly.

By providing good training uniforms to be used by students, it allowed them to freely use the facilities without holding back. Even if the clothes were stained, burned, soaked... it didn't matter!

Thanks to this measure, the Training Hall achieved its purpose perfectly.

"Hoo... I feel much better now!" Jerry remarked, stepping out of the large structure—his friends trailing directly behind.

"You got that right."

"Yeah. I wish it lasted longer, though."

"You can't be serious. If we take too long, we'll be late for the matches."

Jerry smiled as he heard his friends exchange words.

Considering the time they had spent, he estimated about thirty minutes were left before the Exchange really began. Still, it wasn't his style to be late for anything—a habit he passed among his allies.

"We should start heading there now..." The boy softly muttered.

"Oh? Okay, then..." They answered with nods and moved quickly.

Even though the match left a brief feeling of dissatisfaction within Jerry, he had quickly brushed those lingering sentiments aside. After all, once the main events started, he wouldn't have the luxury of 'going easy' on anyone.

It was the real deal!

'All members of the Elite Ten in each Class, uh...?' Images of his colleagues flashed across his mind.

He was only one out of nine others, so he knew he wouldn't be facing the enemies alone. Still, Jerry Keller had never felt so alone.

The nine people besides him... how could he describe them?

'Those cowards...' The boy gritted his teeth as the images of the ones professed to be the greatest among the Lower Class members flashed in his mind.

Could there be any other synonym that best encapsulated how he viewed them?

These so-called champions were nothing more than individuals who were satisfied with their positions of power and didn't dare defy those of the other Class.

They didn't bother practicing for the Exchange or even try to win. As they had already told him, and most assuredly themselves as well...

"There's no point!"

Within him, Jerry seethed with a rage that he couldn't fathom. He was disgusted by those who were meant to be the champions of the Lower Class.

'If... if the ones professed to be the leaders don't have the will to march on...'

Jerry's head unconsciously turned behind him and saw the friends that trailed behind him. He didn't know why he thought of them now, but memories invaded his head the moment his eyes captured their current builds and compared them to the past.

They had certainly grown stronger—and more importantly, more purposeful.

Jerry recoiled his head and faced his front, staring at the massive auditorium from a distance while completing his earlier lone of thought.

'... How will those behind them follow?'

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

Chapter 189: The Elite Ten

The Hall greeted them with silence.

Eyes darted in the direction of the ones who entered the large expanse. The decorum was deafening—uncomfortable, even.

Jerry watched as the people who had already gathered stared. Of course, he knew the looks weren't for him or even in his direction. The eyes of everyone lunged at the same location!

The seat of the Elites!

Yes, even though the Hall was segmented, two additional areas completed the circle around the colosseum. One belonged to the regular participants who had been competing in the Exchange for so long.

However, the other cluster of seats were reserved for the ones known to be the highest in Status—no, not the Rankers—the Elite Ten!

Unlike the other seats which were designed to accommodate more students than were actually present, the chairs arranged in rows and columns in the special area were exactly thirty!

Thirty seats, all belonging to specific people; from the Elite 10 of the Upper Class, to the Middle, and finally the Lower Class.

These seats had already been occupied by a couple of individuals, nineteen to be exact.

The Middle row was filled with the Top Ten of the Middle Class, and the rows in the ground area belonged to the Lower Class. All the members of both were present, except one—Jerry himself.

As he entered the Hall from the entrance, no one paid him any heed. They didn't mean this as an act of disrespect, no, they were just too engrossed with the sight of the most exceptional students in Ainzark.

Well, not completely, but... at least in the room, no one could rival any of the ones seated in that special area. That was the opinion of the public, but a few in the room would find that very debatable.

Jerry, along with his companions, silently walked across the vast space, drawing close to zero attention. If he wanted to make an entrance, he could have attempted it—but Jerry wasn't that kind of person.

"I suppose I'll see you guys around." He smiled at his friends who were already breaking away from him in order to get to their respective seats.

They knew their place, and it was no longer to be beside their leader. Even if they were strong seniors, they could only seat among the Third Years of the Lower Class.

For Jerry, someone who belonged among the ranks of the Elite Ten, this was the farthest anyone could escort him.

The boys nodded at their buddy and hurriedly ascended the stairs to get to their preferred positions, leaving the auburn-haired boy by his lonesome.

He did feel a bit melancholic, remembering the last time he was in this place. It was during his first year, and so many memories washed through his mind—some of which the boy considered to be distractions at this point.

"Hoo, let's get this over with..." With this whisper, Jerry walked to the special area, taking an observational stare at those who had taken their seats already.

As expected, the Middle-Class members would have been the first to get there, followed by the Lower Class.

The nineteen of them seemed to bathe in the attention showered on them by the masses. That disgusted Jerry—so much so that he averted his gaze and stared at the audience.

Noticing that a few of them were not actually looking at those who could be synonymous with celebrities, Jerry took a closer look and saw someone very familiar.

'Jared Leonard, eh?' A smile played on his face.

The boy who made quite the impression on nearly everyone was seated amid a boy and girl, engaging in conversation with them. Well, not only the boy and girl, but also a golden-haired boy and a dark-haired one as well. Another girl with frosty silver hair seemed to chime into the conversation every now and then, but she remained silent—mostly.

Seeing his juniors rather converse very spiritedly rather than gawk at the school's heroes made Jerry give an empathic nod as he moved to his seat.

Upon getting closer, the eyes of the audience shifted to him, and whispers began flying.

"That's him, right? The one who became an Elite Ten while only in his Second Year!"

"That's amazing, right? I heard only two Second Years are currently members of the Elite Ten!"

"Wow! That must mean he's so strong... even if he dresses so ordinarily."

Jerry cringed a bit at the last comment, but kept moving.

"Is he really that special, though? I mean... it could just mean that the Elites of the Lower Class are just weak."

Jerry bit his lip and kept up his pace. He couldn't even mentally argue with their words.

"Yeah. I mean, the only other Second Year who got the rank of Elite Ten is in the Upper Class, right? I heard she's also the second seat of the Rankers. That's pretty impressive!"

The boy clenched his teeth and felt a churn in his heart. He knew full well who they referred to, and what kind of relationship he had with the girl.

She was...

Banishing the thought before it fully manifested in his head, Jerry took a few more hasty steps and reached the empty space left in the lowest row, seating in a hurry.

'Huu...!' A bead of sweat fell from his brow and he gave a tensed sigh.

"Oh? It's Jerry.!"

"I knew you'd be late."

"Off training again?"

"Even today? Dude, don't you ever take a break?"

"It's not like that'll be of any use, though..."

Jerry clicked his tongue as he was assailed by the joint clamor of his fellow Lower Class Elite Ten.

Made up of seven boys and three girls, the Lower Class Elite Ten was considered the weakest—this was a matter of course.

Still, the way the members shamelessly accepted this fact and nonchalantly regarded their relevance sickened the boy who aimed higher.

"It's not like any extra training will do you any good, though. I mean..."

Upon hearing one of his colleagues say that—Top one of the Elite Ten for that matter—Jerry was about to sharply respond when gasps suddenly echoed across the hall.

He could feel the attention of everyone instantly shift to the entrance. Instantly, Jerry knew what that meant!

There was only one reason why common folks would stop paying attention to celebrities. That would be in the event that... a bigger celebrity showed up!

In this case, they were the biggest celebrities in the Academy!

"WOHOOOOO!!!!!" The deafening cry of the audience rang in Jerry's ears, causing him to sharply look toward the entrance himself.

"... See what I mean?" A soft and powerless comment came from the highest-ranked of the Lower Class Top Ten, but, at this point, Jerry had lost any interest in giving any word of reply.

He, as well as every other member of the crowd, now looked in the direction of the emerging ten figures. They were the strongest of the students in Ainzlark Academy—nine of which were labeled as Rankers...

... The Upper-Class Elite Ten!

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

Chapter 190: Rankers

They were known as the pillars of Ainzlark Academy—the untouchable among the ranks of students.

Due to their immense potential and prospects, the words of these people carried weight—enough to reshape the school! These extremely influential students were known as none other than...

... Rankers!

There were nine of them in total, all said to be capable of performing feats akin to fully-fledged Mages. These nine students were the cream of the crop in Ainzlark Academy, so it was only expected that they would belong to the epitome of Ainzlark's Class System.

Yes, they were all Upper-Class students!

Jerry scowled a little as he watched them enter the Hall and walk toward their highly esteemed seats.

The audience was in a frenzy as the greatest public figures made their appearance. Some shrieked in delight while others merely cried and gasped. Murmurs spread across the large expanse—naturally—and words of excitement leaked into the seated boy's ears.

"John Spencer looks elegant as always!"

"Devan Keith is so dark! So this is how he looks like... I've only heard the rumors!"

"I-isn't that...?!!"

Jerry wished he could block off all the sounds that assailed his head, but he simply endured it. There was certainly a spell for that, but it was only a wonder why he didn't think of using it.

As gasps and shrieks went forth, attention began converging on a particular someone.

"Wow! Look at Fabian Lestrome Indiavel! He's so charming!"

"Yeah! As expected of the one who leads the Rankers!"

When one looked at the Elite Ten of the Upper Class, the term 'Rankers' came into mind. Out of all of them, only one was not a Ranker, and that was simply because he was the weakest of the bunch.

The one who led both the Elite Ten and the Rankers, the strongest student in the Academy—Fabian Lestrome Indiavel—also known as the Second Prince of the Eastern Empire and the 'Gifted One Of Magic', was certainly at the center of attention.

His cool smile radiated the elegance he carried.

The boy's blond hair was cleanly cut, but was still long enough to slightly touch the tip of his shoulders. A strand, like a sharp elegant line, covered a bit of his forehead in a breathtaking style.

Fabian had a big build, most likely due to a well-tempered body, making any who stood before him feel like they were in front of a mountain. His outfit was pure white, having gold designs to accentuate the splendor.

As a matter of course, he walked in front of everyone else that belonged to the same 'Elite' rank as him.

As the prince of the Kingdom and the strongest of the students, this was only natural.

Walking behind him, however, was someone who was not lost in his shadow. Even though he was in front of everyone, this particular figure was just a hair's breadth from his side.

It took a second for the people to recognize her, but once they did, their eyes popped beyond what would be considered normal and their gazes shifted to a celebrity that was on par with the prince.

"I-isn't that...?!!"

Gasps and shrieks filled the mouths of students as they let out the girl's name.

"Ciara Epilson!!!"

Yes, that was the name of the most famous Ranker, well, the second most famous Ranker in all of Ainzlark Academy.

She would have easily won first place based on her merits alone, but it was only due to the royal heritage of the Prince that granted him an edge over her.

This girl was said to be a phenomenal genius, a wonder in the realm of Magic... the second Year who made it to the realm of Rankers, one who had never lost in a match... and the current occupant of the Second Seat of the Elite Ten and Rankers!

Ciara Epilson was the epitome of a genius—plus, she was a girl!

"Kyaaaaaaaa!!!"

"She's so amazing!!!"

"And she's pretty too!!!"

"I want to be like her!"

"To think a Second Year could... how amazing!"

More and more cries rang out, and before long, only the prince and Ciara got all the attention.

The other Elite Ten members acted indifferent about the lack of attention on them and simply kept moving, but if one took a closer glance at them, the jealousy in their eyes was clear as day.

Gritting their teeth and clenching their fists powerlessly, they endured the humiliation of being behind their junior.

Being overshadowed by the prince was understandable, no one would argue. However, for a junior—one whose background was of a commoner—to completely steal all their glory... that was unforgivable.

Still, there was nothing they could do about Ciara Epilson. Not only has she bested each and every one of the other members of the Elite Ten, except number one, but she was also undoubtedly beyond their reach.

The only thing those of the lower ranks could do was watch powerlessly as the grill gracefully trailed behind the prince—nearly by his side.

Other than the other Elites who trailed behind Ciara, one other person was staring intensely at her. His look wasn't exactly a glare, but it wasn't one of pleasantries either.

The look came from Jerry.

Ciara Epilson, who had apparently ignored all the other stares, looked in the direction of the seated Lower Class Elite and gave a naughty smile—no, more like a mocking expression.

Jerry gritted his teeth as their eyes met. He wanted to yell at her the way he used to, but that would be suicide now.

Things were more complicated now, and Ciara seemed to be enjoying herself as she looked at his powerlessness.

Who would have thought that these two were once... friends.

The Elite Ten of the Upper Class reached their seats and began climbing their stairs to get to the zenith where they would be staying. As they all trailed upward, Jerry decided to take his eyes off the girl before his neck turned to the side.

He had to let go of these feelings one day...

"Oh? So you're still here... and with that intense gaze in your eyes..." Ciara whispered as she walked past him.