

SPELLCRAFT 231

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Chapter 231: The Girls' Dorm

Renner Lebrious heard the tremors surging from beneath the room where she slept.

As a member of the Middle Class' Elite Ten, she was privileged to have her room on the topmost floor of the female dorm. Since there were only two girls among their ranks, they had the entire area to themselves, even though eight rooms remained untouched.

She wasn't on good terms with her colleague, though, so they stayed at opposite sides—divided by the hallway that existed between them.

Usually, the night would be silent. Renner loved these moments when she got her beauty sleep. That was why she was so shaken by the commotion that abruptly knocked her awake.

'What could that be...?' Her mind trailed, and she grumbled internally.

The girl plopped herself out of bed and sluggishly moved to the door, smacking her lips. Since she was used to enjoying her sleep every night, Renner wasn't completely awake.

Until—

>BOOOOOOMMMM<

—The grounds rumbled once more! The entire building trembled, and she was knocked off balance, falling on her butt.

"O-owww..." She groaned in a cute manner as she rubbed her behind.

Tiny sobs came out as she stood, wondering who could be so cruel as to cause her to suffer such shock in the middle of the night.

The rumble was enough to drive her completely awake though. Now, she simply wanted to figure out what was going on.

Renner was in her pajamas, so she had no qualms marching downstairs to reprimand whoever was responsible for her discomfort. Moving according to her instincts, she put on her flip-flops and swung her door open.

In front of her—yes, directly opposite her door—another door was open. It was that of another girl, one who shared a form of rivalry with her.

"Sia...?" Renner managed to mutter, seeing the more mature-looking lady in a negligee.

The soft wooly fabric was lined in thin lace that subtly showed her body—her finely accentuated body—the opposite of Renner.

Sia gave a slight scoff as she stood at the entrance of her room, glaring at the plain pajamas Renner donned. Compared to her sultry outfit, the sight of the nightwear was nothing short of pathetic.

"W-what are you doing out here... wearing that...?" Renner added the last part as an afterthought.

Sia's curves and ample bosoms oppressed her to the point that the Elite girl had to turn her eyes away. Sia noticed this and flashed a confident grin.

"Why else, those tremors... you felt them too, right?" Her voice was icy cold.

"As for my attire... we're the only ones here, so it's fine."

As the only females in the Elite Ten, no one else was permitted to reach their floor. The vast, empty hallway was a testament to that fact.

"I-I see..." Renner mumbled.

>BOOOOMMMMM!!!<

The tremor occurred again, nearly pushing both girls to the floor, but they quickly regained their stance—refusing to be caught off guard again.

"What the heck is that? I swear, which retard is doing that?!" Sia hissed in frustration.

'You're speaking vulgarly...' Renner wanted to correct her, but quickly cautioned herself, keeping those sentiments to herself.

She couldn't say she wasn't upset, though. The annoying tremors were getting on both their nerves, and before they knew it... both girls were walking side by side to check out the cause.

They made sure to carefully tread down the stairs, picking up their pace and reducing it as they deemed necessary.

As they descended the floors, Renner could see many slightly opened doors, and a bunch of students poking their heads out.

"R-Renner Lebrious and Sia Telmunt...?"

"W-what are they doing on this floor?"

"They're not the ones at it downstairs?"

"If it's not them, then who?"

The last two sentences made Renner smile wryly, allowing why her juniors would think that to sink in.

Everyone in their Dorm—no, in the entire Middle Class—knew the strained relationship she had with Sia. They were sworn enemies/rivals. Sia previously held the position of Fourth Seat among the Elite Ten before Renner yanked it off after winning in another one of their battles.

Since then, their ranks were swapped. The current fourth-ranked knew that if she didn't stay on her toes, though, Sia would reclaim her title. This bad blood of theirs made the two infamous for causing a racket, both in class and also within the confines of their Dorm.

They had engaged in several fights in the building and caused commotion which made everyone wary of crossing their paths.

That was why, when the other students felt the violent tremors, they thought the girls were at it again. It was a surprise to see that they weren't the culprits, though.

The girls peeled their eyes through the little openings they had and watched the Elites walk side by side.

Sia's appetizing body in her negligee.

Renner's washboard body in her pajamas.

They headed down, obviously in foul moods, ready to deal with whoever was responsible for their discomfort.

The students silently cheered them on, happy to see that the girls were on the same side for once. Plus, they were going to put an end to a general menace—not constituting a menace themselves.

The hopeful, grateful watched the descent of their champions.

'They're looking at me so intently... are they comparing us? Why did Sia wear the negligee down? She could have changed to something more appropriate...' Renner's mind flew in multiple directions.

She was prettier than Sia and had a higher rank, but... the flat-chested girl couldn't simply compete with her rival's physique.

Perhaps there was hope for her in the far future... maybe...

>BOOOOOOMMM!!<

This time they felt the tremor surge through their bodies as it vibrated through the air. Renner ceased pointless thoughts, and so did Sia.

Their bodies shook violently, and they found themselves tumbling down the stairs which led to the ground floor.

As they fell, trying to control themselves with Magic, the girls heard something shatter—like glass, but not quite.

It was the noise of barriers breaking.

Renner and Sia, now at the bottom of the stairs, tumbled atop themselves, looked in the direction of the usually sparse ground hall... only to be met with the most unexpected sight ever!

—HORROR!

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Chapter 232: True Terror

A sight of gore greeted the girls.

Blood was strewn on the tiled, wooden floor. The dead body of someone they knew quite well was drowned at the epicenter of a pool of red liquid.

The woman was one of their Dorm Masters, but now she was just a corpse—one that was riddled with several holes and had been butchered in so many places. She could hardly be called human anymore.

"G-girls! What are you doing here?! RUN!!!" A voice rang out, jolting the girls from their momentary shock.

Their faces turned in the direction in the direction of another of their Dorm Masters—Mistress Aloe Vida.

One of her arms was missing and blood dripped from her body. Holes also riddled some parts, miraculously none seemed to be in vital spots. She had somehow clogged her wounds with Magic so very little blood leaked out, but...

... It was obvious she was already spent, on the verge of collapse.

"W-what is...?" Renner tried to make out the situation.

Were the two Dorm Masters fighting? Why would they go so far? One of them was already dead. Why? Why would they...?!

"GIRLS RUN!" The desperate cry of their usually easygoing Dorm Master rang out.

Sia, who was underneath Renner, tried to rise in response to the older woman's command. But, the stiff girl above her failed to budge. It was as though she was now stone.

The gore and blood petrified the two, but Sia was at least sensible enough to listen to her superior's instructions. No, it was all she could do! If she didn't shut her brain to obey, the girl feared she would give in to fright and vomit all over the bloodied floor.

"GRRRIIIIIKKK..." A hollow sound suddenly echoed through the area, causing both girls to cock their heads in the direction whence it came.

Their eyes nearly popped out of their sockets once the unbelievable entered their line of vision.

Inhuman creatures made up of darkness lurked. They were a lot of them, at least thirty... all scattered across the room.

They hadn't noticed before since the bright hue of blood and gore had been more noticeable compared to the darkness that shrouded the creatures that appeared. These beings could only be described in one word.

"D-D-DEMON!!!" Renner and Sia screamed at the top of their lungs.

As though taking this to be their queue to strike, all the shadow beings lunged forward. Most went after the wounded Dorm Master, but a few charged in their direction.

"NOOOO!!!" They heard the woman's screams.

The girls were petrified by fear.

The bloodlust of the monsters was too much to handle. It was as if they were drowning in an endless abyss, with thousands of creepers crawling around their bodies.

These were monsters beyond monsters, evil beings that didn't belong in the world!

Renner and Sia were both in their third years, so they knew about the history of the Kingdom, as well as the Demon War that occurred so many years in the past. Very little was known about it—almost to the point that it was treated as a myth.

Within their study books, though, there were few descriptions and illustrations that hinted at the existence of these sinister beings. The creatures that lunged at them were one of the monstrosities mentioned.

Shadow Demons—fiends of the night!

The girls braced themselves, realizing they could do nothing to escape their assured demise.

The end was nigh!

>SHIIIIINNNGGGG!!!<

Bright light surrounded the two girls, encasing them in some form of a dome. The few Demons that charged at them backed away right as they were about to strike, granting the powerless children within the barrier more time to live.

They were saved by a miracle!

No, it wasn't a miracle. It was Magic. Both girls recognized this Spell well. It was one of their Dorm Master's—Aloe Vida's—usual ones, which she used to interrupt the both of them whenever they took their fights a bit too far.

The dome seemed more powerful, sturdier than usual, but they couldn't mistake it. Their Dorm Master had protected them! Then that meant—

Both girls sharply turned at the woman they were grateful to, eyes lit in hope that they had a chance to survive thanks to her power. Unfortunately, despair set in.

>SQUELCHHH<

>SPURT<

>SPLURRGGEE<

Blood.

An endless stream of blood burst out.

Mistress Aloe Vida had been impaled on so many sides, pierced by the dark spears that the Demons generated. The pool of liquid that was her blood grew bigger as more fluids dripped from her near-dead body.

The woman managed to turn her head despite her weakened state, mechanically moving with her last strength. Her tired eyes were nearly shut as she looked at the two girls who were powerlessly cowering on the floor.

They were usually so full of energy, troublemakers in their own right. However, currently, they were nothing more than hopeless children who were filled with fright.

"R-Runn... L-livee..."

Her final voice was husky, heavy to the ears as her words trailed and she fell into eternal slumber. At that moment, Aloe Vida died.

The girls only shuddered, even more, watching as the woman's helpless body plopped into her puddle of blood. They were too surprised, too saturated with fear to properly grieve.

"Hicc... Hicc..."

Sobs leaked out and tears fell. Slowly, the death of their savior registered.

The Demons didn't give them the chance to properly mourn the woman, though. They simply turned their attention to the girls, having their bladed limbs ready to impale them next.

Renner and Sia gulped.

Their last vestige of hope—the barrier of light protecting them—began to flicker, and slowly faded away. Nothing existed between the powerless two and the monsters who were going to strike.

"Griikkkk..." Their oppressors cracked sadistic smiles through the broken slits on their faces.

The 'Elite' girls knew now, that it was truly over.

Even at the very end, they were unable to move. They still disobeyed their Dorm Master, even when it was her dying wish.

"M-mistress Vida... I'm s-sorry..."

"Hicc... I'm so sorry..."

They cried like little babes, scared but waiting for their deaths.

>VWOOOOOOSSSHHHHH<

A figure clad in light suddenly swept through the building, and in a flash, he cut down several of the Demons.

In seconds, the evil creatures who enjoyed their superiority got the tables turned on them—facing extinction as the being of light made short work of them.

The girls couldn't even trail the being's movements. All they saw were flashes of light, bright arcs, and swirls of power.

Not long after, the whole thirty shadows had been completely defeated. They turned into dust and faded away.

The being shrouded in light slowly dimmed the bright encasement that covered him and moved in the direction of both girls.

His blond hair and stern expression registered in their minds as their memories clicked after a few moments,

It was Jared Leonard!

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Chapter 233: Attempting The Impossible

I sensed the presence of several Shadow Demons in the dorm of the Middle-Class girls, causing me to infuse myself with more Mana and dash with greater vigor.

I decided to make this my first stop for several reasons—one of which was the intensity of the demonic assault.

Normally, the Lower-Class female dormitory would have been my goal since Anabelle was of more value to me than any Middle-Class student. However, considering the horde wasn't as concentrated in that direction, I simply decided to summon several automatons and send them her way.

A few had offensive abilities, but only for self-defense. My goal was to deliver a message to Ana—to use Light Magic and pure Mana strikes in her fight with the horde on her end.

There was a possibility that she would collapse under pressure. If that happened, I had another thing in mind. Still, I decided to put my trust in an ally and charged in the direction of the weakest link—the Middle Class.

Picking between the Boys' dormitory and the Girls' was a matter of priority and danger, in which case, the girls had the upper hand.

There were more Elites in the boy's dormitory than the girls', and I knew one of them could use Light Magic. Even if it was cruel of me to do so, I had to pick the option that led to the least casualty.

Of course, I didn't completely abandon them.

Using a Magic Duplicate, as well as several Automatons, I sent those to support the boys while focusing my energy on the girls.

'My clone can't use Spellcraft and only has one Mana Core. In terms of power, it's basically on the same level as... maybe Jerry?'

Still, I had to have faith that it would hold out until I arrived.

My eyes lit up as I observed a dim glow surrounding the girls' dorm. It took the shape of a dome and it covered the entire compound. The barrier was set up by me, and while it had no defensive feature to prevent anything from entering, it had the opposite effect.

'Nothing gets out!'

>SWOOOOOSSH HHH<

The air howled as I made my way into the building, refusing to hesitate as I brandished my bright blade. The Demons appeared surprised by my presence, but I gave them no time to even prepare for an assault.

One after the other, they were run through.

>SWOOOSH H<

My blade danced, cleaving any form of resistance they offered.

>SWISH<

I used Light Magic to increase my body's movement, while also utilizing Spellcraft to increase the air resistance against them, making the Shadow Demons slower in their movements.

In a flash, their dark bodies burst out.

>WHOOOMMM<

I dodged their strikes, making sure my blade returned the favor with just as much vigor.

Within about ten seconds... I was done with a little over thirty Shadow Demons.

"Haaa..." I heaved a bit, feeling exhaustion catch up with me.

Once the enemies were vanquished, my eyes took in the scene, capturing the image of two dead women... and two frightened girls. I walked up to the two, surprised that none were actually dead.

No one had died!

—well, other than the two staff.

'I'm surprised... how?'

I certainly arrived as fast as I could, but I expected to see more casualties. Could it be that these women put up more resistance than expected?

Middle-Class Dorms had two Dorm Masters, the same as the Upper Class, but I still didn't think they could put up with the Shadow Demons' attacks so well.

'Hmm...?'

I glanced at the two corpses, noticing a difference between the two.

One had been dead for some time, while the other seemed to have just passed away recently.

'So, she's the one who was responsible for fending them off for this long...!' My thoughts trailed, looking at the young and attractive young lady.

She didn't seem to be twenty yet.

'Does she know their weaknesses? Was it luck? Or maybe... her Affinity of Specialization is Light Magic?'

The latter seemed to be the most rational. If that was the case, then...

>WHOOOOSHHH<

My body sharply went to her location, and my suspicions were confirmed... as well as a faint glimmer of hope,

Something sparked in my eyes, my body trembled a little and my heart wavered. The thought that was surging in my head was impossible, but I knew better than to label it that.

The theory existed in my head, and I had the means to carry it out. It was just...

'I have to try!'

I steeled my resolve and knelt beside the dead woman, not minding the pool of blood that covered my trousers. They were enchanted, so the dark red hue was of no consequence.

"Huu..." I heaved, using every single ounce of concentration I had to perform my current operation—the impossible.

Using Five Cores at once, I allocated them properly. Using two to attract as much Mana as I could from the surroundings, I utilized two more by injecting pure Mana into her body.

While this was under effect, I used my Final Core to strengthen myself—enhancing my concentration and increasing my Mana output.

Quickly, I brought out a small bottle from my pocket and poured its contents on the corpse which was riddled with holes.

My Potion, a Recovery one that boosted healing to an unprecedented degree, began taking effect.

The wounds were closing, and I could see her lost flesh getting pulled together. The blood she lost would also get restored, though at a slow pace.

'This isn't enough... not yet.'

I put the Mana I injected within her to good use. The Pure Mana infiltrated the little vestiges of Mana Particles that remained in the woman's body,, quickening them.

Her body glowed; beams of light shot out of it.

'It's working!'

By utilizing the remnants of her Mana Particles, I could trick her body into believing she was still alive, offering vitality to a corpse. Since my Mana had practically fused with hers, I could also control her Mana Particles as I pleased.

Resonating with her body at a deep level, I connected with her nearly dissipated Mana Core and repaired it—forming a sturdy one in an instant.

The job was nearly done... but if I messed up at this point, it would all be over!

'I can do it... I can revive her!'

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Chapter 234: Resurrection

What Is a human?

Not who, but what?

All people are basically comprised of the Soul and Body.

One can not exist without the other, and without one, the other expires.

The Soul without a body simply vanishes; the body stops all functions without the Soul and rots away.

This process is known as DEATH.

But, if one looked at things from this angle... isn't it possible to solve either problem?

—Maybe even both!

These are deep waters, uncharted territories. There are many mysteries in this world, some of which elude even me.

However, ever since I reincarnated and started utilizing Magic, a whole new world has been opened to me... including several possibilities.

What I am about to attempt is one of them.

It is known by many names—Resuscitation, Restoration, Resurrection... REVIVAL!

Right here and now, I am going to achieve the impossible!

"Come on!" I gritted my teeth, sweating pouring out of all my pores as I spent all my concentration on the task.

Spellcraft became ready for use, so I ignited the second phase of my plan.

'Attraction!'

A Soul leaves the body once it is damaged beyond recovery. It is a defense mechanism, a last-ditch attempt to escape destruction. Once it leaves the body, it connects with the surrounding Mana and fuses with them—that is my theory!

It's incomplete, of course, but it rings true.

All I have to do now is prove it.

I had already repaired the body, placing it in perfect condition. There was no way the Soul would reject an optimal vessel—the perfect residence.

However, my Theory established that a Soul would need a strong attractive force to push it back into the body.

There were a few people capable of using Resurrection Magic, but they couldn't do so after a while passed after someone's death. Even the most skilled Mage would need to use their Magic an hour after death at the latest—of which the chances of revival were slim. Anything more would render the Spell ineffective.

A time limit meant there was a point of no return. The Soul would have completely fused with its surrounding, and—just like the wind—would be swept away.

However, not only did I arrive within the allotted time frame, but I also used Spellcraft to generate a barrier around the Dorm. It was dense enough to prevent the escape of Shadow Demons, there was no way Soul Fragments would escape!

I just needed one—just a tiny piece would be enough!

Every cell in a human body had all the genetic information on them; the same applied to Souls. Just a fragment would be enough to complete the equation.

That was where Spellcraft came in!

I was going to flood this body with the Mana of the surrounding. Doing so would kill anyone, naturally, but I was going to channel the flow to her Mana Core, ensuring she progressed as a Mage as a result.

Of course, it would all be pointless if no Soul Fragment made it in. Still, I had faith. I had laid the correct foundation. I just needed it to work.

'If my theory is correct... it will!'

>SHIIIIINNNNGGGG!!!<

Mana poured into the woman, surging through her whole body. The intensity was so much that I saw her throb, though she was still lifeless. The temperature of her flesh rose at an alarming rate, it felt like her blood was boiling.

'Not on my watch!' I gritted my teeth.

I conducted the Mana flow, making sure everything went in the direction I wanted. So many particles charged in and I felt like it was nearly beyond control.

Usually, a Core was only meant to take in the body's Mana Particles, but since those came from the Soul, there was no supply.

The Mana Particles in her body were being charged by my Mana to enhance her body and increase its absorption rate. I couldn't spare it for anything else. Instead, I relied on the fact that since the woman's soul had fused with the surrounding Mana, it basically meant that would have to do.

It was risky.

The Core could reject it.

But... I saw no other way out!

'Come on... come on...' I clenched my teeth as more beads of sweat poured out.

My whole body screamed in pain. I was at my limit, pushing all my cores and exerting my physical state to the point of straining it. But, I felt it was too close to give up now.

My bulging eyes widened even more, and I commanded the woman's perfect body to wake up.

Her body was fully healed.

Her Mana Core was present.

Her Mana Particles were active.

All that remained was the Soul!

>SHIIIIINNNGGGG!!!<

Suddenly, a golden light shone. The moment I saw this, my face brightened and tears welled up in my eyes. This was a first for me... the first time I would be seeing a Soul—well, a Soul fragment to be exact.

It was like a tiny firefly that fluttered and converged with the healthy body I prepared.

The body glowed golden, causing me to squint. A surge of energy rose, nearly pushing me out of sync, but I relentlessly struggled to remain in control. No surgery could be deemed successful without the finishing touch!

'The soul is present, finally!'

With that out of the way, I had to eject my Mana before it became registered as a foreign object.

>WHUUUSSHHH<

In an instant, I expelled my energy, allowing the golden piece of the soul to gain control.

Slowly, it repaired itself, absorbing its leftover essence in the body—the Mana Particles.

'This is what I've been saving you guys for. GO!'

The Mana Particles converged with the Soul and became a golden glow that filled the entire body with an invigorating light.

It was so amazing, so unreal that I wanted to let out screams.

Just then—right as I watched—the dead woman opened her eyes, crinkled her face... and—

"FUAHH!"

—She let out gasps of air.

She let out gasps and gave confused, flustered, totally puzzled expressions.

I could tell she was in shock, but nothing serious.

"W-what is... I..."

This would be similar to a near-death experience for her, I was certain.

'It's alright, Miss...' I calmed her down and placed my hand on her stomach, the other on her head.

She was perfectly fine... no side effects!

"You're safe now. It's fine."

It seemed bizarre to say such a thing when we were both in her pool of blood, but it was the only thing I could say amid my tiny streaks of tears.

"Everything is fine!"

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Chapter 235: The Cost Of Revival

My original purpose for erecting the barrier around the building wasn't for me to revive anyone.

Frankly, the process took too much time and energy. It also took a great toll on me, so even doing it once was my limit for now. Unless...

I actually established the dome to prevent any dead souls from dissipating, so when the school was stable, the Academy could deploy the appropriate authorities to cast Resurrection Magic on the dead. I didn't expect to actually utilize it myself.

Well, there was a reason for doing so. It was because of the woman's value.

She could prove useful!

"Welcome back." I smiled at the bewildered young lady.

"I-I'm..." She muttered in a slight daze.

It seemed she was slowly regaining her memories. Within moments now, she would.

"THE GIRLS!"

Her shout shook me, almost to the point of screaming myself. I sauntered back in shock, wondering what possessed her to take such a drastic change in tone.

"Miss Aloe Vidaaaa!!!" I heard two voices colliding.

From my line peripheral vision, I picked up two figures—girls—coming our way. Turning my head more, I noticed they were the two who were cowering on the floor just moments ago.

Tears streamed down their face as they charged at the woman who was slowly sitting up.

"G-Girls...?!" She seemed both surprised and relieved to see them.

They collapsed and dived into her embrace, wailing like babies while I simply watched from where I sat—completely spent.

'I should recover...'

I brought out a potion from my pocket and downed its contents, recovering my energy. Its effects were both immediate and continuous, so I would keep feeling more replenished until I regained an optimal state.

I didn't want to interrupt the touching reunion of the women, but we were short on time.

"You guys, come in." I raised my voice, calling the boys I led to the premises.

Slowly but steadily, they trailed into the girls' Dorm, looking extremely flustered. They were being babies, worrying about such a thing even in this dire situation. I watched as they observed the premises, taking note of the devastated surroundings.

The moment their eyes took in the corpse of the second woman, they went sober.

I ignored them and stood, drawing closer to the seated woman and her crying wards.

"Miss Aloe Vida..." I began, making use of the name the girls called her.

She looked in my direction, appearing unsure of how she would address me.

"I was the one who just revived you. I need to ask you a question, so answer as smartly as you can."

My tone no longer resembled a student's, but carried the weight of a superior speaking to a subordinate. My hopes were that she would understand and play her part.

"Y-you did that...?" The woman—Aloe—seemed to doubt my claims and looked at her girls.

They responded with nods, affirming my statements. They were witnesses, after all.

Even though none offered their thanks, I could tell that they were immensely grateful for my act. Perhaps their fear and relief drove the thought of gratitude from their minds. It wasn't like I required appreciation, though.

I prioritized relevance.

"You... can use Light Magic, can't you? Is that your natural affinity?"

I narrowed my gaze, telling her I wanted an immediate answer.

"Y-yes, that's correct." She quickly responds.

'It's a good thing she's not dense.'

"Good. Then, you're useful. That was the whole point of resurrecting you. I'm sorry to say, Miss, especially after you just died fulfilling your duty... but..."

My eyes narrowed even more.

"... Your services are still required. You need to fulfill your duty as a Staff of Ainzlark. Do you understand?"

I sounded rude, my tone was imposing; I was well aware. However...

"Those things, they're vulnerable to light... right?"

"Correct." I sharply replied.

"Which makes you indispensable to the plan. Now, can you stand?"

Aloe Vida nodded, and then retracted herself from the two girls and rose to her feet.

"Good. I take it you're prepared to do the needful?"

She nodded.

"Good, then. I'll be counting on you."

"I have one question." She blurted out, seeming a bit hesitant.

"What is it?"

"Those Demons... the one who killed them was...?"

"It was me. I also took the liberty of dispatching a lot of them on our way here. This campus is swarming with them. It's going to take a lot of effort and time to eradicate them all."

"Those things... what are they, really?"

"They're Shadow Demons. I'll explain more later. In the meantime, I'll need you to evacuate all the girls here. We need to leave this place and head to the next location in a hurry." I said, a bit impatient.

"O-one last question, please."

I paused and awaited her query, though it was evident what she wanted to ask. After all, her eyes had been trailing in that direction since we began our conversation.

"C-can you revive her too?"

Aloe Vida was referring to her colleague, the one that was practically a lump of meat on the floor.

"No." I harshly gave my response.

She was in an impossible state. Even my Potions wouldn't restore the body to an optimal state; and without an appropriate vessel, I couldn't complete the process. Plus, even if there was a chance... I didn't have the time and energy to spare on her.

"It's too late for her now."

She was a liability.

If even one of the students died, I wouldn't bat an eye—save for a few.

The most I could do had already been done. The dense barrier around the dorm prevented souls from leaking out. That meant if the conditions allowed it, I could prep a body for revival and simply wait for this whole event to settle before the experts used their Magic to save the ones they could.

Even though an hour was the time limit for casting Resurrection Magic, the body in question needed to be in a perfect state.

'That's why preservation magic is often used on body minutes after death—in hopes of Revival...'

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Chapter 236: Convergence [Pt 1]

Even in the case of this woman, Aloe Vida, if too much time elapsed after her death, then—even though her Soul still remained on the premises—her body would no longer be able to receive it.

It was better their bodies were in good condition... at least at my current level.

There was a reason I could neglect the Lower Class Dorm despite my connection with Anabelle.

Even if Ana were to die, I would stop at nothing to resurrect her.

An Automaton I sent there was equipped with Preservation Magic in case that was necessary. I also took the liberty of sending others who could cast the dense barrier spell on the buildings so no Souls would be lost.

At this rate... even if lives were lost, I could still save as many as possible.

Though it was certain that not everyone would survive.

"I... see..." Aloe's voice trailed in disappointment and sorrow.

Fortunately, it didn't last long.

"Alright! Then it's fine. Thank you for your help. I'll evacuate the girls. You too, come with me! Thank you for saving me!" Flashing me a smile, though forced, she urged the two girls beside her to follow as she climbed the stairs.

"T-thank you!" I heard the two Middle Class say, as an afterthought of some sort, and quickly followed their Dorm Master.

It was at this moment that I realized one was wearing a negligee. My eyes trailed her body as she climbed the stairs and frantically chased the woman in the lead.

'How improper...'

My eyes fell on the boys who stood at a distance from me.

They must have observed the whole resurrection process and even considered my actions to be unreal. They gave me gazes of amazement and awe. Most of them had lost the spark of fear; considering the lengths I had to go protect them, this was a given.

"We'll wait for the girls to mobilize. Afterward, we'll head to the boys' dormitory of the Middle Class."

Thoughts of the Upper Class flashed in my mind, but I perished the idea.

'They can handle themselves...'

Rationally speaking, I was supposed to place more emphasis on them since they were the most promising students—plus, they could be of most use in the aspect of pushing back the Demon forces.

But, just as was the case in the Lower-Class girls' Dorm, I decided to put my trust in them.

The Girls' Dorm would be more vulnerable due to their fewer numbers, but... I knew it would work out fine since Ciara was present there.

'Monsters already exist in both Classes. I guess it's fine.'

With that in mind, I began structuring my mobilization strategy.

So far, things weren't going so bad, but I couldn't get rid of the bad feeling that crawled within me. It was as if I was missing something, something major... and that irked me.

'The safest choice is to find the staff and inform them. It's better than risking our lives.'

Unfortunately, I had no idea where those people were. I used an Automaton scout to search the Staff Office and even some Staff lodges, but found them empty. There were many things going on simultaneously, various affairs that required my attention.

I couldn't rely on the school anymore.

"Huu, for now, let's just stick to the plan... we should head to the boy's dorm."

Once the females were done mobilizing, I kept them under the wing of Aloe Vida, splitting out teams into two.

I took the front charge, serving as the vanguard with my group, while she watched the rear. Our progress was quick, and I didn't plan on wasting any more time in our advance.

As soon as I saw a Shadow Demon surface, I used Spellcraft to generate dense light bullets and spikes to riddle the enemies with holes before they returned the favor.

And so, we crept through the night and finally arrived at the Middle-Class Dorms.

I had already sent a clone ahead of me, but I couldn't sense it anymore.

It had most likely perished already... figures.

I utilized Spellcraft to generate a dense barrier around the building, preventing any leak from within. The closer I got to the structure, the more I enhanced it until it got airtight enough to prevent the escape of even the tiniest of particles.

"Miss Vida, shall we?" I turned to the woman who had already merged her female students with mine at some point, and was already approaching my flank—just as planned.

She nodded, showing a bit of nervousness.

I had told her ahead of time that she would be assisting in the extermination of the Shadow Demons and further went to state their weaknesses. I knew it was irresponsible for me to do so—especially since there was a pact on the matter, and this woman would harbor suspicions as to how I came across such information.

Still, the circumstances called for action without hesitation. I needed to do whatever was necessary.

>WHOOOSSSHH!!!<

We both sped to the Middle-Class building and made our entrance.

As expected, even more Shadow Demons lurked in the area, and I saw several people dead—Two staff, and nineteen children.

'Looks like the clone wasn't strong enough to stop them...'

Blood was strewn all over the area as the corpses painted an image of carnage. I spotted a Shadow Demon about to make short work of another kid and leaped into action, brandishing a light sword to mow through it.

>SWISH!<

In one powerful swing, I generated enough light to blast away its body, securing victory. There were still any others around, though, and they started closing in on me and Aloe Vida.

"I'm climbing up, take care of the ones here!" I shouted in a hurry.

She nodded and prepared her Light Magic.

Seeing as I could entrust her with the affairs downstairs, I made my way to the upper floors—where even more Demons and corpses existed.

With my body coated in light, my speed increased to a phenomenal degree, and all my strengthened muscles charged upward.

From the corner of my eyes, I spotted Vida putting up a good fight and smiled to myself,

'Not bad...'

With that, I killed every thought of distraction and braced myself for the darkness up ahead.

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Chapter 237: Convergence [Pt 2]

>FWIISSHHH<

My blade sharply cut through my enemies, rending them into nothingness.

I kept killing as I ascended the floors, ensuring all my senses were being used to their limits so I wouldn't miss a single one.

Thanks to my heightened perception, I knew where the Demons were, all that was left to do was to use my blade to end them.

Magic was only very effective thanks to diversity and possibilities. However, to achieve the quickest results in head-on combat—especially when the options of usable Spells were limited—it was best to rely on Martial Arts.

My sword served as an extension of my body and my primary tool for laying waste to the opponents. I only used Magic to strengthen myself and also weaken them.

Creating many Light Particles around the bunch caused debuff effects that granted me leverage. I didn't have the luxury of concentrating more energy to make Spikes or bullets with Spellcraft, given my number of foes and the time that passed.

So, I simply chose the easiest, quickest option.

>FWOOSSSHSH!!!!<

Once again, I charged and killed.

I finally made it to the topmost floor, where I saw Shadow Demons attempting to penetrate a Light Barrier. It was sheeted like a wall, to protect the students at the other end.

I recognized them to be the Elite of the Middle Class, and the one responsible for the Light Barrier had an affinity with that element. It wasn't strong enough to hold off the monsters, so it seemed like the other students with him were boosting the shield's effects.

After all, if it fell... they would be going down in a flash.

'Not on my watch!'

I hurried and struck down the Demons. Since they were caught off-guard, and were only about five, I could use Spellcraft to generate a rain of light spikes to decimate them while going in for the finishing stroke.

>SWOOOOSHHH<

My foes fell, and I secured victory.

"You can release the barrier now." I spoke to the dumbfounded boy who already seemed to be hitting the limit.

The wall of illumination vanished into particles before fading entirely, leaving nothing between us.

"Round up the other students and take them to the ground floor." I spoke to my seniors.

None of them say a peep in complaint, especially after I had just mowed down the monsters they had so much trouble with. It was a bit distasteful that they cowardly hung here while their juniors were dying—I was certain they thought I would judge them for that.

But, I had no intentions to.

Humanity was a race driven by fear and instinct, so their actions of self-preservation was the natural, correct course to undertake. It was better than throwing their lives away for nothing.

Plus, they hadn't sworn to protect this Academy and their fellow students—unlike the Ainzlark staff. These students were well within their rights.

"Go. Now." I barked, and they frantically rushed to do as they were told—frantically thanking me as they made their way downstairs.

As I watched them descend, I also began taking steps down the staircase. There was still something I had to do. Something only I could do...

"Now, then... I should get started too..."

37 dead, 58 injured, 55 unharmed.

That was the number of students we found in the Middle-Class boys' dormitory—150 boys in total.

I used my potions to heal those who were injured, while also restoring the bodies of the dead and preserving them with Magic. Aloe joined me, making the work faster.

The students, though reluctant at first, carried all the corpses that were scattered around and took them to the ground floor. These actions would make it easier for Resurrection Magic to be used on them later on.

Once the job was done, I gathered everyone together; we were now a total of 283—too large as a group to move together.

Of course, I had already figured this out and was simply going to switch gears once the time arrived.

"What now?" Aloe Vida asked, most likely already sensing the same problem I did.

I glanced around the room and saw the faces of everyone. They were all relying on me, visibly shaken by the carnage and hoping I could offer hope.

It was a shame to say that I couldn't guarantee their lives.

"For now, we wait... and rest." I said to the group.

Edward and the others were sure to be tired—if not physically, then emotionally and mentally. Since this was their first time, they needed to catch their breath.

"As for me, I'll be heading out for a bit..." I muttered to everyone.

The moment I said this, the students entered an uproar and protested with all their might.

"P-please don't leave us!"

"We'll come with you!"

"Stay. I beg you!"

"What will we do without you?"

"You're the only ones who can take care of those things!"

Both seniors and classmates shamelessly begged me to stick with them. While their actions were understandable, it became annoying.

"Shut up!" I glared at them, exerting a pressure that caused them to obey my words.

The area fell silent and my audience shivered as I spoke.

"I'm currently heading to finish off more Shadow Demons and properly escort the girls of the Lower Class here. If you think you're more important than they are, then try stopping me. Or, do you want to come with me? I can't guarantee your safety, though."

The protesting crowd became mellow and none of them seemed to have any more strength to speak. As expected, they were mostly cowards who wanted to preserve their lives.

'I'm sure they want me to stay and protect them instead of going out to save more people...'

Humans were naturally self-centered, so it was no surprise to me. But, that didn't mean I had to indulge in their selfishness.

With that in mind, I made to exit the building, but a voice sharply stopped me in my tracks.

"W-wait! Let me come with you!"

"You're going to rescue Ana, right? Count me in."

Jerry and Edward stepped forward and had determined looks in their eyes. Unlike the others, at least they had some sense of duty. However...

"No."

... My answer remained unchanged.

"B-but—!" Edward stubbornly tried to argue.

"You're too weak. The both of you will only be burdens on me."

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Chapter 238: Upper Class [Pt 1]

My harsh statement seemed to rattle the two of them... which was good.

Edward bit his lip in frustration and I could see Jerry clench his teeth. They both knew their limits, especially in comparison with me.

I turned away and toward the door and prepared for my exit.

My thoughts were focused on the road ahead, as well as Ana whom I longed to see. I hoped she was fine, but the best way to know for sure was to actually find her and the girls in her dorm.

"I'm off."

In a flash, I moved from the premises and left the girl's dormitory. Usually, the barrier would have prevented me from leaving, but I temporarily disabled it to an extent, only allowing the area I was passing through to be open.

The moment I passed through the dome, it once again resumed its airtight form.

'Huu... I should hurry!'

>WHOOOOSSSHHHH<

Using such speed as I hadn't displayed throughout the night, I made my way to Ana's location. Having no one to slow me down turned out to be the best. With Edward, Jerry, and Aloe holding the fort, I could focus on other pressing matters.

'The Upper-Class Students should be done on their end... I wonder what they're doing...?'

I shrugged off the thought and decided to focus on my mission instead.

"Weak..." Muttered Kuzon.

His eyes were focused on the Shadow Demons that made their way to the Upper Class dormitory.

He had sensed them afar off and even took the liberty of dressing up and intercepting the group before they entered the building that was his residence.

Unlike the Middle and Lower-Class dorms, the Upper-Class students had three buildings within their vast compound. Each belonged to the respective Years that existed in Ainzlark

The buildings were lovely, attractive, and well-designed. Compared to the others, it was the epitome of perfection.

As a result of the buildings being segmented, the space each student had to themselves was quite large. A regular Upper Class student had even more space than an Elite of other Classes. Such was the disparity.

Kuzon, in his large room, had picked up a strange vibe in the vicinity and sprang to his feet. The aura he sensed baffled him, causing a bit of unease to lurk in his heart.

"This... shouldn't be..." He whispered with widened eyes.

Perhaps it was because of the vast cluster of emotion within him—a bitter memory he would rather not remember—Kuzon's usual ease completely dissipated.

No longer did he don the nonchalant and casual expression. Rather, the glint in his eyes were the opposite. Kuzon, for the first time in a while, made a grave face.

In a jiffy, he changed to his clothes and used Magic to summon the few Items he treasured most.

His necklace appeared.

A ring manifested on one of his fingers.

A bracelet appeared on his hand as well.

The three heirlooms he had—the only things that connected him to his previous life, when he was... someone else.

"What are 'they' doing here?" He murmured as he exited his room through the window and leaped to the vast compound beneath him.

There was no way Kuzon could forget those distasteful beings.

They were the ones who took everything away from him. No, that wasn't quite right. They simply allied with someone who did something of that effect. Even though his hate should have been channeled to the mastermind behind it all, the fact that he could sense even a vestige of the perpetrators was enough to make his blood boil.

The man he was after was currently out of his reach, and Kuzon had found himself slowly giving up on actively searching for him. But, the story was different this time. They had come to him!

'Are they here for me?' The golden-haired boy wondered as he landed on the grassy plains.

The moment his feet touched the ground, his face sharply tilted to the front... and then around him. He could sense them—they were coming in large numbers.

'At least a hundred. That's too much. I can't take them on, unless...!' His eyes squinted as the thought of his items he equipped crossed his mind.

No, it was too soon to decide that.

Kuzon kept a level head and decided to make the pre-emptive strike.

>WHOOOSHHH!!!<

In a flash, he ascended to the top of his building and stood atop the roof. With this, he gained a better line of sight. Since the Demons had taken the initiative of surrounding the compound, this was a vantage spot for him.

Of course, Kuzon had been using Magic for some time now. In fact, he never turned off his Magic usage. It started as a form of training, but developed to his special form of defense.

With enhanced eyes and heightened senses, he scoured the area and spotted multiple shadows approach the compound.

'Shadow Demons...?'

They weren't the kind he was familiar with. He had mistaken the miasma they exuded and their uncontrollable bloodlust for the ones from back then. Still, Demons were Demons. Why were they here?

Were they after him?!

The closer they came, the better he was able to perceive their ranks. Kuzon could tell their level of strength—the total amount of energy in their possession.

'What's this...? They're weak...'

If they were truly after him, then the Demons who would come were supposed to be stronger. With that out of the way, Kuzon could only conclude that the Academy had been breached somewhat.

"I always knew it would be a matter of time, but... to think they decided to invade now..." Kuzon whispered.

The Demons were already in the compound. They were one hundred and twenty-five. In terms of quantity, they were certainly not lacking. However, their quality left very little to be desired.

"Something's still not right, but I won't bother with that for now..."

With Kuzon's gaze narrowed and his eyes fixated on the bloodthirsty vestiges of darkness beneath him, he prepared for his assault.

'I should finish you guys off first.'

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Chapter 239: Upper Class [Pt 2]

'I should kill you guys off first...'

With that, Kuzon used his Original Magic [Marionette], and in an instant, the Shadows were decimated altogether

Like sharp strings cutting through solid matter, the multiple sturdy wires made up of pure Mana swiftly killed the enemies at once.

Even though they had surrounded the compound, even though they weren't lacking in numbers; in the face of true--overwhelming--might, faster than any Demon could respond to; they all perished and dissipated into dust.

"Not even worth my time..." The golden-haired boy mumbled, looking on at the vast campus grounds.

From his position, Kuzon could see a lot. He could see that there were more shadows lurking around. The Academy had really been invaded.

"This is bad... I suppose..."

Only one person flashed in his mind the moment he wondered how many casualties would ensue if so many Demons attacked the other Dorms.

"Jared Leonard... I certainly hope you're doing alright."

A sad smile played on his face for a moment, and then he made up his mind. If Demons were invading, he simply had to drive them out.

'Don't die!' Kuzon's final thoughts rang, and then he vanished into the Upper-Class Dorm building.

Ciara Epsilon hadn't gone to bed yet.

Why?

Because it was around this period that she took her occasional stroll down the campus and had her scheduled meeting with a 'special someone'.

Most people wouldn't understand their complicated relationship, so Ciara didn't bother telling anyone about it. In fact, she rarely spoke to most people.

Well, there was a girl among the First Years who recently approached her and asked for some mentorship.

'Maria Helmsworth, uh...'

Ciara had told the girl she would think about it, but she wasn't planning on being anyone's watchdog. Well, except for one person...

"Jerry should be asleep by now..." She smiled playfully at herself as she watched herself in the mirror.

She knew the boy was fond of sleeping very late due to his intense training--how cute it was that he was so desperately trying to catch up to her. He slept for short hours too.

Ciara wanted to scold him a bit for his unhealthy practices, but anytime she saw his determined face in bed, her anger melted away. The worry in her heart persisted, but it wasn't like Jerry would listen to her.

His stubbornness was also one of his most charming features.

The young brunette observed herself in the mirror. She was elegant in her nightdress. Of course, this wasn't the usual pajamas normies donned when they went to bed.

It was a dark bodysuit that she personally made by pouring tons of mana into it. Not only was it enchanted with several properties which prevented detection, made her invisible, and gave her more fluid movements--the black suit also perfectly accentuated her curves.

She was an epitome of both beauty and power, someone no one could even dare to imagine being with. And she belonged with Jerry.

Unfortunately, the object of her affection was too dense to notice anything.

Fortunately, though, his dense personality caused him not to get attracted to other girls. Ciara was at least grateful for that. The young, love-struck girl had no idea what she would do if her soulmate found himself trapped in another woman clutches.

It would probably be something... unsavory.

"I should go now." She gave one last beam at her reflection before gliding through her window.

The moment Ciara Epsilon landed on the ground, though, she felt some strange figures approach her dorm.

The outfit she had on improved her senses to a phenomenal degree. That meant she could sense things that approached scores of meters away. If she tried, she could notice a presence about two hundred meters from her.

This feature had allowed her to evade surveillance countless times and prevented any encounter with the patrol officers. Being caught would cause problems, after all.

Fortunately, she had never been caught even once. There were close shaves though, but that made her expeditions all the more thrilling.

Besides, if it was to see HER beloved Jerry, then the risks were worth it.

Back to topic, Ciara felt the strange presence of several weird beings. They didn't feel human and had some sort of murky nature shrouding them.

Ciara had never encountered these creatures before, but she deduced they were hostile based on the bloodlust they emitted. In only a few moments, they would close in on her location.

'Are they after me, or...?'

Either way, if she sneaked away, all attention would be placed on the girls' dorm.

'Should I just skedaddle?' A thought flashed in her mind.

She didn't want to miss her appointment with Jerry, after all.

The only problem was that these beings seemed dangerous--too dangerous for most of the students within the Dorm. If they really had hostile intentions, then her juniors and seniors within the buildings could probably get severely hurt.

It wasn't really a problem to her, but it caused a fuss, they could find out that she had sneaked out. If that led to further investigations and her secret was found out, then...

"Arh! How annoying! I'll just take them on, then!"

With that, she grouchily took to the air, ascending to great heights until she could see some shadowy figures around.

'So that's how they look like, uh? Creepy!'

With her mind already resolved on killing the clearly dangerous monsters, Ciara chose the most efficient solution.

--Original Magic!

"[Phantom Link]"

With her focus on the approaching Demons, the young girl sent invisible waves of energy flooding their area.

Instantly, she surged through them--well, their minds to be exact--and completely severed any form of neural links they possessed.

Unknown to Ciara at the time, these were Shadow Demons and were copies of the original. As a result, they shared a neural link with one another as well as their source.

By using [Phantom Link], Magic that interferes with the mind, Ciara cut off their connection. This caused the Shadow Demons to instantly crumble to dust and fade away.

Just like that... over a hundred of the Demons were wiped out--not that the Jerry-obsessed girl cared in the slightest.

"Since that's out of the way, I should start going..." Ciara smiled and pink hue covered her cheeks.

With widened eyes and an obsessive grin, Ciara glided through the air and made for the dormitory of her soulmate.

"Hihihihi... here I come, Jerry!"

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Chapter 240: Anabelle's Plight

Anabelle moved swiftly through the night—as quickly as she could.

Behind her were about a dozen girls, give or take. The darkness served as a good cover for the group, and with the sound elimination Spell they had going, no trouble had spotted them yet.

Two Automatons hung above the group, leaning further and behind them to scour their surroundings. The darkness was thick, and the lights that usually radiated around the campus grounds had been destroyed—most likely by the attackers.

Ana ignored the gnawing fear within her, giving no heed to the hard pounding within her heart. She simply followed Jared's instructions and made her way to the Middle-Class Boys Dorm.

It all began close to an hour earlier.

Her dorm had been assaulted by shadowy beings, giving off intense pressure and unimaginable bloodlust—the kind no one in the Dorm had ever experienced. Their Dorm aster met a cruel end at the hands of the monsters; Anabelle and the others were to follow suit not long after.

Anabelle, thanks to her rough training from Jared, was able to somehow fend off the Shadows that came after her. While she desperately struggled in her efforts, the rest of the girls were able to safely evacuate to the last floor.

With that, she also retreated there, and they secured a perimeter. Anabelle learned the hard way, how barriers were hardly useful against her opponents, so she focused on offense.

After trying several attacks, she found lightning to be especially effective, so she focused on that.

The young girl, despite the pressure and intense fear that pervaded her, was able to properly devise a means that proved effective.

Using a portion of the abilities of her Familiar, she was able to use Wind Magic to push the Shadows back and also combine Water with Lightning Magic to increase conductivity and damage.

It was difficult to manage on her own, so Ana enlisted the help of others and they followed her lead.

Unfortunately for them, most of them were petrified with fear that they couldn't move—talk less of casting complex spells.

The few who stood up to the challenge were not as skilled with Magic as Ana, so their combined efforts didn't even measure up to hers. It was like striking burning flames with a few splashes of water.

Ultimately, she did all the work, and they simply assisted one way or the other.

Still, Anabelle could sense that she—as well as several others—were at their wits' end.

Even after struggling for so long, Ana hadn't been able to put down even one of the ten Shadows that loomed around her and the other girls. She didn't want to admit it, but the struggling young girl knew it quite well.

It was only a matter of time before...

>VWOOOSSHHH!!!<

In a flash, five flying 'things' entered the area, sweeping past the stairway like frisbees.

Before Ana could make out what was occurring, two of them approached her—they were shaped like bats, but something about these creatures told her they weren't alive.

The two bat-things by her side hovered there, two more stood in front of her—like garrisons—and the final one...

... plunged into the midst of the Shadow Demons that were bewildered by the appearance of the strange flying bats.

The moment it lodged itself at the center of the crowd of Demons, the bat-like thing exuded a vast amount of Mana... and before anyone could say anything...

>BOOOOMMMM!!!<

Light beams gathered, and then dispersed, creating a blinding surge that decimated the area around. It was like a brilliant display of fireworks, but Ana could not take it in since the brightness caused her to shut her eyes—on reflex, of course.

The heat of the light didn't reach Ana, and when she realized it, the brightness of the explosion didn't seem as intense as she thought.

That was when she realized it—the barrier that was generated in front of her.

Yes, a seemingly translucent barrier was erected in front of her. Once she took a closer look, Ana found out that the two bat things in front of her were the ones who erected the shield.

Now, she was certain that they weren't mere bats.

One of them exploded as it collided with the Demons, two secured a barrier in front of her... and the last two—

"Ana, it's Jared." A voice rang out.

It was so familiar and comforting that Ana felt relieved beyond description to hear it. She felt like breaking down and giving in to her exhaustion once she heard the sound ring in her ears.

Finally, help had come. Jared was here!

Ana didn't know where the voice came from, but she was happy all the same. She didn't have to fight anymore.

A few moments later, she would come to find out that Jared hadn't actually come to save her. In fact, he wasn't even nearby. He simply sent the bat things—automatons—to aid her.

She was still tasked with protecting those in her charge

Ana nearly collapsed upon hearing Jared's recorded voice. How was she, who was hoping for a savior, supposed to handle the enemy all by herself? It contradicted all reason, and the task was far beyond her means.

Jared seemed to have thought about all that, though.

Not only did he tell Ana about the weaknesses of the Shadow Demons, the Automatons he sent also had potions with them. With those, Ana could restore her Mana and also heal her injured self—as well as those who had sustained grave injuries.

The Potions were limited, though, so not everyone got treatment. The rest had to bear with their injuries as they saved the few Potions remaining for emergencies. Since they were all deadweight, none of them could complain.

The Shadows that Ana thought had already been killed weren't completely vanquished; though she felt they were weaker now.

Now within the safety of a functional barrier that was too dense for the Shadows to traverse, Ana had a fighting chance.

'I can do this... everyone's counting on me!' Her thoughts rang as she prepared for impact.