[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)
Chapter 271: Final Thoughts

My weak body could barely move and I could hardly make a sound as I watched Kahn approach me with bloodlust.

I wanted to glare at him, but my facial muscles were all spent.

Many questions welled up in me--questions I shoved down in my fight with him. Why would someone like Kahn do something like this? He wasn't my favorite person back then, and we never saw eye to eye on anything, but...

'He obeyed the Demon King with absolute loyalty...'

Was this an order from 'him', then? No. He was a much more sensible person than that.

Then why?

The only thing I could think of was some sort of interference from some sort of third party--most likely a group to whom my killer belonged to. There was no way a single person would be enough to make Kahn--no, the Demon Race--betray the Pact.

'Still... why am I having these useless thoughts?'

I was going to die here.

This time, I had no tricks up my sleeve. I was completely powerless.

While there was one backup plan I devised, it still wasn't quite ready yet. Using it now would also put me in danger.

'No, I'll die if I resort to that.'

Though, even if I wanted to, my body wasn't in any shape to retaliate. This was truly the end.

'Shit... despite all the big talk I made... the promises I made to everyone...'

The Shadow Demon loomed closer.

'... If I die... who's going to take responsibility for the casualties--the ones who followed my plan with trust in their hearts?'

It brandished its blade, and I could already feel my life nearing its end. Just a few seconds more, and it would all be over.

'It's all my fault... it's because of me...'

The enemy wanted to get rid of me. If I wasn't here, none of this would have happened.

I knew there was a possibility that harm would have fallen upon Ainzlark even if I wasn't present. After all, the enemy had another agenda other than killing me.

Even though I was able to save so many people from certain death and even managed to revive someone... even though so many more would have met their ends without me... even then--!

I still blamed myself bitterly.

At my last moment, the juncture of truth... I found myself in regret again.

'I finally got what I wanted more than anything, but... even with Magic... I'm still going to die like this, uh?'

Regret. Pain. Sadness. Agony. Worry. Fury. Confusion. Frustration. More regret.

Torrents upon torrents. Myriads upon myriads.

I felt a mix of various things... but...

'I don't... I don't want to die...'

Not like this! Not here, not now!

I knew there was no way for me to fight back. There was no miracle to pull off now. It was foolish to hope for another alternative, but...

'I DON'T WANT TO DIE!!!'

With that single thought being my last, I covered my eyes as tears fell, awaiting my end...

... But, it never came.

"You did well, Jared..."

I heard a voice.

"... But, you didn't listen to what I said, did you?"

My body trembled as I heard the sound.

It was so calm and casual, yet the depth was without question.

Without realizing it, my eyes opened by themselves, and I saw a person standing in front of me.

"I told you to take care of yourself..."

His dark cloak fluttered with the wind, giving off a faint sound of flapping wings. I saw his large back, dyed in the all-black outfit he had on. The man's dark hair danced as he turned to face me.

With a warm and gentle smile, he glanced at me.

"... Look at the poor state you're in. It's not good for an Apprentice to disobey their Master, you know?"

In an instant, all the flurry of negative emotions that assailed me evaporated. My fatigue melted... my despair was lifted.

Replaced by those was a single thought--the name of the man who stood in front of me.

'Neron Kaelid!'

"I have to say, Jared... you've surprised me again." Neron smiled at me.

I wanted to warn him about the Shadow Demon.

I wanted to tell him not to turn his back on the enemy.

I wanted to scream.

However... I knew better than to do that.

So far, I had been dealing with immature students who needed guidance. But now... this man was here.

There was no longer any need to do anything.

"Kid... you've made me proud. Now, just sit back..."

'Sit back? But, I'm--'

Before I could complete my thoughts, I felt my body being soothed by something warm. I was being raised by some unknown, yet familiar energy.

Multiple colors were radiating around me, and I could feel my strength getting restored at a phenomenal rate. I didn't feel any pain or anxiety. No... in fact, I felt bliss.

"... and enjoy the show." Neron finished his statement, flashed me a brilliant smile... and turned in the direction of the enemy.

I glanced at Kahn for a second with my blurry vision.

He hadn't taken a single step forward since Neron showed up. Was it just my imagination, or was he further away?

'Ahh, I can't tell... I'm losing grip...'

The soothing feeling that permeated my body made it easy to succumb to unconsciousness.

'N--Neron...' I looked at the broad back of the man, seeing a phenomenal, unquantifiable amount of Mana swirl around him.

A smile formed on my face... and I heaved in relief.

Neron's hair turned white, and his body seemed to be emitting a faint glow I wasn't sure of.

Before I completely lost consciousness, I heard a faint voice that sounded like my Master.

"... I'll show you my Original Magic..." Or something like that.

But, I was already too far gone to return. Still wearing a smile on my face, I made a final thought before finally drifting away.

'... Thank you...'

And then everything went dark.

Chapter 272: All The Time In The World

'Who the hell is this guy?' Kahn asked himself, glaring at the man who stood in his way.

When he first appeared without warning, the first thing Kahn's instinct told him was to flee. Though it shamed him to admit it, he had leaped away on reflex—only to regain his senses later on.

'… To flee from a human just like that…'

Still, he couldn't help but be wary. He hadn't even sensed the man until he appeared and spoke. That spoke volumes of his skill.

'Damn it… if only I wasn't weakened like this…'

The mysterious man began talking to his prey, Jared Leonard, completely ignoring Kahn.

Usually, this would be enough to upset the Shadow Demon and drive him into a fit of rage, but he couldn't afford to do that now.

He was weakened, and also wasn't certain of the skill of the young man who had shown up.

'He's showing so many openings… I can attack him now… I can—'

Kahn didn't know why, but he felt like an invisible barrier made it so that he couldn't reach his foe.

It wasn't a physical or magical barrier, but… it existed in his head.

Kahn's instincts—no, his every being—showed a large gulf that existed between him and the man who was currently talking casually to the half-dead child.

The child wasn't so half-dead anymore once the man snapped his fingers and brilliant sparks of different hues enveloped him.

'I—is that healing…? He's healing the brat? In my presence?!'

Did this man not consider him a threat at all?!

Every human he had met—with the exception of the shady one—had been surprised and appalled by his presence.

Was this perhaps an acquaintance of his partner? No. That couldn't be. Why would he heal the kid if they were on the same side?

The man finally turned to Kahn, causing his dark skin to jump in apprehension.

A smile was on his face—his expression told the Shadow Demon that he was confident.

'He's… how strong is he?'

The aftereffects of Jared's magic made him quite imbalanced. He couldn't get a proper read on his Mana levels, or the extent of the man's strength… so he could only rely on instinct.

And instincts told him that his opponent was dangerous.

"… Jared, just this once… I'll show you my Original Magic. Keep your eyes peeled, okay?" The man spoke, still keeping his eyes on Kahn.

>VWUUUUUUUMMMMMMM!!!<

Kahn felt like he was crushed by the pressure that was suddenly released. No, he was certainly getting flattened.

The Shadow Demon didn't know when he knelt on the floor, feeling his body tremble before the majesty of a presence that far surpassed his own.

The man before him was shrouded in white particles—light fragments that seemed to emit such radiance—enough to obliterate him. His hair also turned white—same with his pitch-black eyes.

Kahn shuddered upon witnessing this transformation.

"Oh, crap! He fell unconscious already! For real?"

Kahn willed himself to rise. The enemy was distracted by the boy behind him, so the pressure that restrained him had loosened a little.

The Demon glared at his target hatefully, and then determined to take advantage of the man's carelessness.

'I have to strike now! I have to—'

"Not so fast…"

>VWUUUUUUUUMMMMM!!!<

The immense pressure returned—this time stronger than before.

Kahn gulped in fear.

'Shit! I'm too weak… if only I was at full strength!'

"…Do you know why I decided not to attack you, even though you've been emitting such bloodlust for some time now?"

The Demon didn't know.

He had thought the man was acting strangely—not paying any mind to his enemy—while revealing many blind spots.

"… It's because there's no point. You're too weak."

That statement hit Kahn like a sledgehammer.

When was the last time anyone had told him that? How low had he sunk to receive this sort of treatment from a mere human?

'Don't spout such nonsense! It's because I'm weakened! If I wasn't in this sorry state, then—!!!' Kahn growled internally.

"It seems you're not convinced. Then…"

The man lifted his index finger, and atop it stood a ball of pure azure energy. It was so bright and condensed with Mana that Kahn felt like it would kill him.

"Let's try this…"

The swirling orb made its way in Kahn's direction before the Demon could even respond.

'SHIT! I'M GOING TO DI—!!!'

Before he completed his thoughts, the bright blue orb made impact, and then…

>SHWUUUUSHHHH<

… A bright explosion covered the area where Kahn stood. No, it wasn't exactly an explosion. It was simply a surge of power that surrounded everything around the scared Demon.

"W—whu—t?!" Kahn was surprised.

What was this that he was experiencing?

He was still within the explosion, but he wasn't harmed. Instead, a strange sensation filled him up. It felt bizarre—like his power was returning to him, but not quite.

'I'm beginning to feel… the same way I felt before… I feel whole… what's this…?''

Before he knew it, the azure light died out, and a new Kahn emerged from the area of impact. No, perhaps it was more accurate to say the old Kahn.

'This is… me… before I attacked this place… what? How…?'

Kahn was beyond confused by what was happening. It was almost as if he had traveled through—

"—Time. That's the simple answer." Neron interrupted the dark being's thoughts.

Kahn was now whole—at full strength—yet he still felt entirely threatened by the man who casually stood.

"W—what are you saying? Time? But that is only…"

"I reversed your time. Do you understand? Currently, you should be at a form before you ever suffered any injuries. In essence, your prime."

Kahn didn't want to admit it, but the man was right. He was overflowing with so much power that his previous—or would he call it future—self felt pathetic in comparison.

"This is my Original Magic: [All The Time In The World]."

Kahn gulped now.

A man who could control time… just what kind of monster was he?

"I made sure to patch you up to your best form. Do you know why?"

The Shadow Demon was frozen. He couldn't make a single sound. In his mind, a name began surfacing. The name of someone who was supposed to be invincible.

"It's so I can inflict as much pain on you as possible. By reversing your state every time you take damage—as long as you're not dead—I can keep you in suffering."

Kahn shuddered, but the thought wouldn't disappear. This man…

"… Are you… Neron Kaelid…?" He croaked.

In response to his question, the white-haired, absolutely powerful being smiled.

"Yes. And you… are going to pay for what you did here."

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Chapter 273: Neron Kaelid

>BOOOOOOOOMMMMM!!!<

Kahn felt his body get torn into a million pieces.

>BOOOOOMMMM!!!<

It happened again.

>BOOOOOOMMMMM!!!<

And again!

The Shadow Demon was at the edge of insanity, but every time he was about to lose his mind—as well as every semblance of life—everything got reversed… and he was good as new.

It was torture!

It was horrific!

The very concept of going through unimaginable pain over and over and over again drove Kahn to the point where he would have begged for death.

His very atoms were dismembered and he felt even greater agony than anything he had experienced so far—greater than even Jared's final Spell.

"GUARRGHHHHHH!!!" Kahn screamed.

"UWAHHHHHHH!!!" Kahn cried.

He prayed for it to stop, but it didn't.

Over and over again, in repeat—an endless cycle of violence.

Neron Kaelid hadn't even moved a single spot from his location.

All he kept doing was sending highly dense orbs of Mana to Kahn—like Mana Bombs.

Each blast decimated him and the area around.

Of course, with every reset, the area around Kahn was also restored. This occurred for times beyond count.

It was a miracle that no time seemed to pass at all.

'How long has it been? How many times have I neared death? A million? Two million? I don't know…'

Why did time seem to be stuck in the same position? He seemed to have been suffering for an eternity, yet the moon still hung in the sky and his torturer didn't seem the slightest bit exhausted.

'W—why—?!'

>BOOOOOOOOMMMMM!!!<

Once again, Kahn was blown to smithereens… and then the process repeated itself.

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"I wonder how long he has spent there…?" Neron mumbled as he smiled at the foe before him.

Kahn—the mighty Shadow Demon—was standing still in a purple dome. No, it was more similar to a sphere instead.

"Time loops are scary things, after all…"

Neron removed his gaze from Kahn, already certain that the Demon was not going to be a threat.

His eyes went to the boy who floated in a cocoon of dancing light.

Jared Leonard was unconscious, but his injuries were healing rapidly. It was fast enough to be called a miracle—even by the standard of Magic.

'I could have simply reversed all your injuries, but…'

That wouldn't have been the best.

Thanks to the battle Jared had with Kahn, his body had been forced to adapt to more power. In essence, the boy grew considerably in the span of some minutes. If Neron reset everything, Jared would be returned to a state before all that.

'… his efforts would have been for nothing, then.'

And so, while it seemed somewhat cruel to heal him with a slower method, Neron was certain it would be what Jared desired.

"Alright, I should also take care of everything around here… it's quite the mess…"

With that, Neron raised his index finger again, and a massive azure surge of energy burst forth.

He pumped more power into it, and then the orb expanded, soaring high into the sky. Once it reached the required height, the orb exploded, enveloping the entire Campus of Ainzlark.

"This should reverse the effects of their invasion…"

The damaged properties would be restored, and any lost infrastructure would get fixed. It was going to be as though nothing ever happened.

'What about the kids…?'

Neron was conflicted. The ones who fought back would have certainly improved a great deal and learned from this experience. To reset them to a state before now would be detrimental.

However… considering there could be injured students among them, Neron wasn't sure if he should leave them in that state.

"Well, as long as they can be fixed… then I have nothing to worry about."

Ultimately, he decided to ignore the students and only focus on the non-living structures around. Of course, Neron didn't completely abandon them.

"You guys, go. Heal those who are injured, and if any enemy is still present, protect the kids. I don't sense anyone around, though…"

With that, a few hundred glimmers of light surged from the Lecturer's body and vanished into the dark night. One could hear them mumbling many things, but their voices were so tiny that only a very perceptive individual could make out the contents.

"It's unfortunate that some people died… and it seems there's only one person to blame…" Neron eyed the Demon before him.

He could do many things with his Original Magic, but reversing death itself was an area he hadn't yet breached.

Neron's Original Magic, [All The Time In The World], had many functions. One was the reversal of the physical state of something—even down to the energy expended. Another was merging both past, present, and future events and tieing them to form a loop.

—A Time Loop.

Other applications of his Magic existed—such as ensuring all things invading his immediate area were instantly paused, or even placing his body under a loop so he never aged.

Even in the extremely unlikely event that he received damage, his body would replay the loop and he would be completely restored.

These abilities came at a price, though—Mana.

Interfering with something as grand as Time was something that required an immense amount of Mana. However, this was also another reason why the power to do something like that fell into the hands of Neron.

The amount of Mana he had was stupendously bountiful.

"It seems I used up a total of twenty thousand cores in this whole venture…"

That would take some minutes to restore.

Now that he was done with his chores—taking care of the Academy premises and ensuring the safety of the students, the only thing left for him to do was deciding the fate of the Demon before him.

Neron stared at the monster who remained in stasis.

"Hoo, how bothersome… what should I do with you?"

There were several options—one would be to capture him alive and extract information concerning his objectives and intentions.

However, Neron was aware of the existence of a mole in Ainzlark—no, not just the Academy, but also the Eastern Kingdom as a whole.

If he spared this Demon, there was a good chance that the enemy would be allowed to prevail yet again. Besides, the Lecturer had already figured out what he wanted for the most part.

"I suppose I'll just kill him."

With his index finger raised, and a bright crimson sphere now circling atop his fingertip, Neron stole his last glance at the pitiful creature, before—

>BOOOOOOOMMMMM!!!<

SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar
Chapter 274: Curtains Fall

Kahn could feel his body dissipating.

'E—Eh…?'

Was he dying? At long last?

He had no idea how long he had spent receiving the same monotonous pain from his adversary.

It could have been hundreds of years—no, it was most likely more.

During that period, he had tried everything he could to win. He took the first initiative, lunged at the enemy with all his power, but…

He couldn't reach!

He stopped midway, unable to continue.

It was like his body had slowed down… and then inevitably paused. Before Kahn could understand it—

>BOOOOOOMMMM!!!<

—He had died again.

At some point, he gave up and made peace with his weakness. Unfortunately, he couldn't get used to the pain.

Since his body kept being repaired, it felt like a new sensation of agony every time Neron struck.

Pain. Pain. And even more Pain. That was all Kahn knew for so long.

He yearned for salvation. He prayed for release.

And finally, it was coming to him!

Kahn no longer felt any pain. He simply felt his consciousness fading. He was dying—returning to the abyss of death.

Wasn't this relief? Wasn't this pleasure? Nay, it was both! This was bliss!

'Milord… My master… oh great Demon King….'

Even in death, only one person came to Kahn's mind. And with the thought of that person flooded in regret.

'I made an error… I do not know why I attacked these people despite our Pact… I… truly do not know…'

But how could he explain it? He simply did what he did.

Now that it was all over, it almost seemed like a dream—how Kahn slaughtered all those humans despite the peace that had existed for so long.

More regret seeped in.

'My King… if I only I could return to your side. If only I could continue serving you…'

Deep regret formed.

'I shouldn't have come to the human world… I should have…'

Kahn's thoughts went to Neron Kaelid, Jared Leonard, and the denizens of Ainzlark Academy. The students put up more of a struggle than he had expected. Jared Leonard was completely unpredictable and his abilities were extraordinary.

But, the man called Neron Kaelid? He was impossible!

Yet, Kahn had made an enemy out of them.

'They're sure to blame the Demon Race…'

They would strike the Demons in retaliation!

'What have I done?!'

This would be a fuse that would ignite the flames of yet another war! Was this what the shady man wanted? Did he plan things to turn out this way?

'My king… I have made a terrible mistake!'

Kahn pictured Neron Kaelid against the Demon King.

'He… will lose…'

It was blasphemy to think this, but…

'… My King will lose…'

… Kahn knew the truth.

His master had grown old and weak. His master despised violence. His master wasn't capable of defeating Neron.

Yet, he had made an enemy of such a man—of such a Kingdom!

'My people… my race… my King…!'

They were all in danger because of this.

If only he could warn them!

Unfortunately, it was too late, His life had expired. His body was fading away rapidly. He was going to meet his end.

—DEATH arrived…

…

… and a new LIFE sprang forth.

A new Kahn… a being without a SOUL—extremely small compared to his past self.

The Soul knew not of his existence. It simply sought a HOST… and a MASTER.

Yes… this was a BOND SOUL.

Kahn had become a FAMILIAR.

****

"Hm?"

Neron saw something spark from Kahn's nothingness.

He had used a Spell to turn Kahn's docile body into nothing but char—[NOVA] —yet, something else was forming.

It looked like a flickering flame of black and purple light. The energy seemed corrupted and malevolent. Neron monitored it closely.

Once the flame fully manifested, it turned to the area opposite Neron and began flying away.

"Oh, no, you don't…" Neron grinned and snapped his fingers.

Instantly, he created an orb around the purple-black flame, containing it in an instant.

With a single flick of his finger, Neron drew the prison of the fleeing target closer to him, until it floated directly opposite him.

"Oh? It turned into a Bond Soul. That's quite something. I wonder what desire it had…"

When living beings had a deep emotion before death—strong enough to preserve their Soul from flickering out—they became Bond Souls.

"I should have some use for you…" Neron grabbed the orb, and then looked behind him to see Jared's sleeping form.

"… Or maybe he might…"

****

Neron Kaelid, having completed all he set out to do, looked in the direction of the exposed Meeting Hall of the Lecturers.

Ever since Jared's Spell was detonated, the Cloaking Magic used on the building and its surroundings were forcefully deactivated. This was one of the things Jared relied on when he used that Spell.

He had hoped a Lecturer would hop out to confront Kahn, but he gave up, realizing that he would die before that happened.

And he was right.

Neron arrived before the Lecturers could mobilize themselves.

Currently, the building was covered in amber light—Like a dome that surrounded the building and everything around it.

This was yet another one of Neron's abilities.

"I should undo the <Pause> Effect I used now…" He murmured.

He realized that the enemy must have been within the hall, so Neron decided it was best for the other Lecturers to sit the whole thing out while he handled everything. Once he had done all he could to his satisfaction, they were going to be released.

>SHUUUUUU!!!<

The amber light cleared away—like mist—and the individuals who were within poured out.

They had panicked looks on their faces. Many of them had entered Mage Mode, while others were preparing Spells.

The disturbance that was strong enough to break their barrier—what could it have been?

"N—Neron? What are you doing here? What is going o—"

The Vice Head of Ainzlark Academy stopped in his tracks. He had spotted something even more surprising than the presence of their Lecturer who was supposed to be on a long trip.

Surrounding the area was a massive, circle-like hole that dug deep into the ground. Like a fissure—like a chasm—like something that defied logic, completely engraved upon Ainzlark soil.

It was the after-effect of Jared's Spell, something Neron intentionally left out of the other renovations he carried out.

"—What is this…?" The older man asked, and the other lecturers followed him in marvels and gasps of shock.

Neron simply smiled, and his eyes went to the unconscious boy who was still recuperating. With a rush of pride—though mellowed out by his usually stoic expression—Neron answered the curious faces before him.

"It's a long story."

Chapter 275: Awake

"U—urgh…"

My body stirred as I was pulled from the realm of unconsciousness.

It felt so surreal, like I was in a daze. My body felt sublime—like it was brand new. I didn't feel any sensation like pain.

With this feeling of bliss, I opened my eyes to reality.

"U—uh…?"

I was currently lying down on a bed.

'Why am I here?'

I looked around, getting a good grasp of my surroundings. It looked like an infirmary, but something about it seemed more grandiose than the one I was used to.

Curiosity got the better of me, and I unconsciously activated Spellcraft to get a feel of everything around me.

Mana gathered and dispersed at my whim, and just as I was about to detect what was beyond the room…

>BRRRRRIIIIIINNNNGGGGGGG!!!<

A loud alarm rang that completely disrupted my focus.

"Argh! What the—?!"

I turned to glare at the source of the sound.

It was an object that was placed on the wall in a far corner from where I slept. It didn't take a second for me to realize what it was.

'A Magic Sensory Device, uh?'

More questions surged from within me. The usual Infirmary didn't have this device, so why was one here?

>CREAK!<

Before I could contemplate the reason any further, the opened door drew my attention and my eyes darted in the direction of the only visible entrance—and exit—of the room.

"Looks like you're up already. Not even long since you awoke and you're already using Magic, uh?"

My eyes widened as I saw my Lecturer—Neron Kaelid.

He was smiling gently, and his usual casual gait wasn't absent.

'Was he the one who brought me here? That explains the Magic Detection Tool…'

Though this only wrought more questions in my mind,

"Relax, Jared. I had to suppress your memories to stabilize your condition. You'll get them soon…"

'What is he talking about? Stabilize my condition? In the first place, why am I in the Infirmary?'

Those questions were interrupted by a sharp sensation that coursed through my head.

It felt surreal, like I was hanging between a dream and reality. I was lucid, but also drowsy.

Multiple fragments of memories rushed in at once, nearly overwhelming my consciousness.

Fortunately, there was no pain—at least not physically.

However, many other emotions caused me to clutch my chest tightly as I went through all that happened—all I experienced.

Fear. Anger. Anxiety. Confusion. Resolve.

Multiple feelings swirled in my heart as the final sequence of my memories played—Neron rescuing me as I fell unconscious.

The last thing I remembered was his hair turning white and his talk on 'Original Magic.'

"Haa… haa…"

"Looks like you've regained them…"

Neron walked across the room to fetch a chair while I panted as sweat began popping from my pores.

From the corner of my eyes, I spotted him taking the lone chair that was located by the corner of the room. He brought it close to my bedside and sat on it, looking at me with a smile.

I had lots of things to say to him, but…

"Why are you smiling?"

… I didn't know why I asked that question first.

He didn't respond, but his grin got wider instead.

Judging from the fact that I was still alive and Neron was smiling at me, the plot of Kahn and his ally was foiled. Neron arrived at a critical juncture and most likely turned things around.

I would have joined him to laugh if that was the only thing that went on in my head, but…

"… How many people died?"

Neron's smile froze.

He appeared dazed by my question.

I looked him in the eye and repeated my question. Compared to his deep dark retinas that brimmed with life, mine was sullen and low. It was weighed by guilt.

"Seven. Five boys and two girls."

Silence reigned the moment he said that.

"… I… see…"

A sharp, searing pain surged through my heart and I felt like breaking down into tears. Seven students lost their lives thanks to my incompetence. They were young and innocent.

'They didn't deserve to die…'

It was all my fault.

"I heard the number of casualties was over a hundred. If not for the barrier you placed around the dead ones, as well as the Automatons you enforced to protect their corpses, there would have been more deaths." Neron spoke.

From his tone, it didn't seem like he was trying to comfort me. He didn't appear to be lying too. The man was just stating facts.

"Losing seven people is unfortunate, but the fact that we were able to save almost everyone thanks to your efforts… is nothing short of a miracle."

Resurrection Magic wasn't omnipotent. It had flaws—and the success rate wasn't a hundred percent.

I did all I could to raise the odds to be as favorable as they could be, but… it still wasn't enough.

"Shit!" I let out without realizing it.

I clenched my teeth and tightened both fists in frustration and uncontrollable rage. Guilt pounded in my brain, but it was easily doused by the emotion of wrath directed at the culprit.

"Jared, listen—"

"Stop!" I interrupted Neron.

While I respected him to a high degree, and was also grateful to him for saving my life, I simply didn't think he could comprehend the inner turmoil I was going through.

"If you want to console me… or tell me that I was beyond amazing in all I did, then don't. I don't… I don't want to be patronized right now…"

I was nearly breaking into sobs.

It wasn't as though I had any personal ties with most of the students in Ainzlark—neither did I have any idea who died and who didn't. However… it still hurt like crazy.

"Jared… I say this, not simply as a lecturer or your master, but as a fellow Mage—no, a fellow person—you did well."

'Why is he saying this? What is he talking about? This isn't what I should be hearing. I failed! I failed miserably!'

"That's all I have to say about it. You did well."

His words were short, concise, and unfettered. One could read a dozen meanings into them.

As I stared into his eyes, all that they showed me was sincerity. Neron meant those words from the depth of his soul.

And—even though it was utterly selfish and conceited of me—that made me happy.

"Thank… you…"

After shouldering the burdens of everyone for the first time in so long… and failing to meet their expectations, perhaps… this was what I longed to hear.

It was childish and stupid of me, but…

"T—thank you… so much."

… Neron's words made me really happy.

[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)
Chapter 276: Choice

Neron told me everything.

He explained how he was able to arrive on campus despite having to investigate a massacre occurring in the remote regions of the Eastern Kingdom.

The Magic Barrier that surrounded the Academy's Secret Hall—where all the Lecturers were holed up—was linked to him.

The moment it got destroyed thanks to my Spell, he instantly realized something was off and made his way back. Of course, after hearing this, a sensible question popped up in my mind.

"How were you able to get here so quickly?"

Much to my frustration, Neron didn't answer that inquisition.

Was it Space Magic? Did it have something to do with Original Magic? I always knew he was fast, but… how was he able to arrive so quickly? It seemed almost unreal—no, it probably was.

Back to topic, Neron told me what happened after I fell unconscious. After killing Kahn, the Lecturers came out of the Hall and he explained the Invasion to them. The incident required a long meeting, but considering the situation of the Academy—the state of the students, and also the confusion among the Lecturers—the meeting was postponed.

Of course, a state of emergency was enacted in Ainzlark, and no one was to leave their respective premises—not even the Lecturers.

The only ones granted free access were Neron and the Vice Head.

According to Neron, Imperial Mages were being dispatched from the Capital, along with a Grand Mage, due to how serious the incident was.

I was surprised.

Only a total of three Grand Mages existed in the Eastern Kingdom. One was the Head of Ainzlark Academy. The second was the Imperial Court Mage, and the final one was the General of the Imperial Forces.

The current whereabouts of the Head of Ainzlark Academy were a mystery, so the Vice Head ran the institute instead. It was no wonder things got messed up as a result of the abrupt change in the system.

"Until they arrive, this institute is on lockdown," Neron told me.

Those in the know must have already realized that there was a mole in Ainzlark. The only way to fish them out was for the Grand Mage of the Kingdom to show up. Once they arrived, the situation would be resolved.

I asked Neron why he couldn't just act on his own, but even I knew better than to raise the question.

"It has become a national matter, and since the Capital is involved, the matter has gone out of my hands. Besides…"

A dark gleam appeared in Neron's eyes.

"… I already have a good idea who the culprit is."

'Oh? So him too, uh?' My mind rang and I began to smile slowly.

"Are you sure you should be telling me this?"

"Oh, please… I'm sure you must have a good idea too. Besides, even if you don't… I believe you would have figured it out by now."

He wasn't a man I respected for nothing. As expected of Neron.

"Well, there's really nothing we can do about it since the Capital has decided to handle matters with their Jurisdiction powers…"

I understood Law to a considerable extent—though politics wasn't particularly my forte. Still, considering how deep this issue had festered, I had to let out something that ate at me.

"Can they be trusted…?"

Neron's eyes narrowed and our intense expressions sank into the other.

"No. I don't think so. Regardless, it doesn't matter at this point. Our opponent knows what he's doing. The fact that they were able to orchestrate an Invasion of this scale meant they could also foresee an outcome where success wasn't achieved."

'True… the mastermind must have predicted this…'

"They must have figured out a way out of this situation. So, there's not much we can do but wait…"

"What do you think their objective is?" I asked Neron after hearing his take on the matter.

It was surprising how well we conversed, despite our gap in age and status. I suppose Neron must have gotten the gist of all that happened during the Shadows' invasion—how I calmly handled everything and gave a strategy that would have been flawless if not for Kahn's unprecedented presence.

Adding the fact that I pulled off a Peak Level Spell, the highest kind that all Mages—except maybe the Grand Mages—could pull off.

Even Grand Mages needed a great amount of time—or more than one person—to achieve a realm of Magic that exceeded the Peak Level.

Putting all those into consideration, it was obvious Neron wouldn't consider me a regular student.

"Hm… the enemy, uh? If I had to say… it's…"

Neron's sharp gaze pierced me. His look was so intense that even before he opened his lips to speak I already knew what would be said.

"… You. Their objective is you—though I don't know why…"

'So, he knows!'

That must have been why he didn't bother praising—or consoling—me. He realized the enemy was after me and surmised that I was experiencing guilt for dragging the students of Ainzlark into the whole mess.

"How did you find out?" I gave a tired smile, not even willing to hide a thing.

At this point, Neron felt more like a friend I could open my heart to. I wasn't sure if he felt the same, but… that didn't matter for now.

"It wasn't too difficult, really. Everything has been revolving around you lately. Plus, considering your capabilities and the identity of the culprit, it became even easier to connect the dots"

'As expected of him…'

"I see…" My mumble faded into silence.

Once again, no one spoke. Finally, the man seated before me asked an unexpected question.

"So, what will you do now?"

My eyes widened and I looked at his curious, yet calm, expression.

Neron had just told me about the lockdown situation, as well as the Kingdom's interference with the investigation procedures. Even if I wanted to take action, I shouldn't have been able to do anything…

... Theoretically.

Yet, he was asking. And he was serious!

Common sense told me to be quiet about the whole thing; that it didn't concern him—or anyone for that matter.

But, I had found a place within me to trust Neron. So… I revealed it to him… my objective.

"I'm going to face the culprit… and kill him…"

Neron's face remained unfazed. He must have expected this much. However… I wasn't finished yet!

"After that, I'm going to drop out of Ainzlark Academy… I'm leaving the Eastern Kingdom."

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Chapter 277: Destination

"I see…"

We both looked at each other in silence. I wondered why he gave such a bland reaction, but didn't say anything. Was he going to—

"Don't worry. I won't try to stop you… I just… want to know why."

Neron Kaelid was one of the smartest and strongest people I knew. If he was telling me to explain my rationale, it must have meant my decision was flawed. Still, this was the only route I had to take…

… To minimize losses.

'I can't tell him everything, but…'

"Ainzlark Academy is no longer safe. I thought those after my life wouldn't be able to act as rashly as they did with the invasion, but that was a mistake on my part. Plus, with what you've said, the entire Kingdom doesn't seem to be on my side."

It was unwise to rely on them any longer.

"I understand your point. But, with me around… you don't have to worry about those guys." Neron further retorted.

'What is he talking about? I can't rely on him for everything.'

"That's not the only reason too. After my exchange with that Shadow Demon, I've come to realize just how weak I am."

Within this learning environment, I was quite strong, but… in the outside world, would I really pass in the parameters used to identify the powerful?

"I came to Ainzlark to learn more about modern Magic and its applications. It was also my intention to make comrades that would be essential for me… and also to have fun…"

However, I had misplaced my priorities.

Ultimately, even though the Academy had tons of knowledge on Modern Magic, it wasn't entirely geared toward making one more powerful.

Unlike the past, this was a peaceful era.

Technologies for war had dwindled, and many other Magic Fields were developed with the purpose of making the daily life of people much easier. With that in mind, even though I learned Modern Magic, it wasn't guaranteed to make me more powerful than those I knew in the past.

'I better build on what I know, strengthen my foundation, and then…'

Once I became powerful enough, I would have time to learn Modern Magic. For now, though, Ainzlark Academy had little to no value.

It wasn't safe.

It didn't guarantee me more knowledge and power.

It was corrupt.

The time it would take me to solve these issues would be better spent bettering myself. I wasn't supposed to be held back by circumstances like this. Rather…

"What about your friends? You'll just abandon them?" Neron interrupted my train of thought.

Once he said that, I gave the man a wry smile. Seeing my expression, he chuckled to himself and shrugged.

"Oh, I forgot… you don't have friends."

"No. That's not it…"

My response was immediate—almost cutting Neron's words short.

"The last time we conversed, I really did feel that way. But, now, things are different."

'They say times of adversity make the bond of people stronger. I suppose that's true…'

After fighting the Demons and protecting everyone, I realized just what kind of preference and attachments I had to certain individuals. Perhaps I was just being unnecessarily stubborn when I refused to acknowledge them as friends.

But, now…

'Edward. Ana. Stefan. Kuzon. Jerry. Ivan. Maria… maybe even Ciara.'

"… I truly consider them as friends."

Neron smiled the moment he heard that, and I saw a satisfied expression permeate his face.

"I see…"

"I'm leaving this place to protect them. It's the same reason I left my parents' Manor. The enemy's goal seems to be me alone, so I plan on using that to my benefit. As long as I'm not around those I care about… they won't be harmed."

"Are you sure about that? A hostage situation could be tricky."

Once Neron mentioned that, my smile grew broader… and then a dangerous expression covered my face. My eyes narrowed and a sinister look took over.

"Let them try it!"

A hostage situation would be useless against someone who had witnessed the horrors wrought by it. Unless one was determined to lose a few in order to save many, they would be swayed by the circumstances.

I prioritized efficiency.

As much as I loved a person, the greater good would always come first.

And, as for the culprit… if they did take a hostage to threaten me, I would ensure I did everything in my power to destroy them and anyone related to their existence. I was currently powerless, but that wouldn't be the case for long.

My enemies probably understood this, and so, they never resorted to such a meaningless tactic. If they wanted my life, they would come to get it directly. Still…

'… I don't plan on dying just yet!'

The fact that I messed up not long ago made me shiver slightly.

Never again! Never again would I be so miserable!

"I see. It seems I can't change your mind. Very well…"

This was what I liked about Neron. He understood things well.

I was sure he was weighing the pros and cons in his mind, trying to understand my rationale properly. It was a relief that he saw my side of things.

"Indeed, staying in Ainzlark's educational system will only stunt your growth, but… it'll be different if I remain your Master."

True.

To be honest, this was one of the reasons I didn't want to leave. I truly needed a tutor like Neron to help me in the ways of Magic. However, compared to what I needed to do personally… this one could wait.

"Leaving now may raise some suspicion on you… especially after this entire incident."

"I don't care. The system is rotten anyway. Besides, it'll be troublesome dealing with diplomatic activities."

The Capital would probably want to offer some Royal Reward to those who contributed the most. Most people saw that as an honor, but it would only be a leash to me.

Besides, there was the tendency of being dragged into matters I wasn't interested in.

My best bet was to leave everything behind and start from scratch. I already had the perfect area to begin in mind.

"Where will you be going, though?"

Once again, I smiled—no, laughed—at Neron's question.

He sounded almost like a doting father.

"Hm… I think I'll begin with the Lost Lands… to the Northwest area."

The location had become a deserted area on the modern map, but… I knew something most people weren't aware of.

'It's time to start using my past knowledge properly!'

[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)
Chapter 278: Opposing Elements

"Looks like you've made up your mind, and I can't stop you…" Neron's voice trailed.

His face depicted a soft smile that seemed to have a tinge of sadness within.

'No, you can't!'

"… Then, to better increase your chances, I think I'll give you a present."

I was a little surprised by this, considering someone like Neron wasn't the kind of guy to go so far for a rebellious student. What manner of present was I to expect?

Before I fully thought of an answer, something dark appeared out of nowhere and hovered atop Neron's palm.

"Here."

My eyes bulged, and a mix of emotions surged from within me. As I gazed upon the bubble—no, what was within the transparent object—in front of me, I had both nostalgia and leftover rage.

"KAHN!" I unconsciously leaked out the name.

Neron seemed surprised to hear this, but he hid it well.

"It seems it became a Bond Soul. Its attachment to life must be strong, considering all I did to it."

I had an inkling of what drove him to remain alive—even as a Familiar.

'So, he still has that obsessive loyalty, uh…?'

Then why did he break the pact? It still didn't make sense to me.

'Maybe it will… soon…'

"You're giving him to me… why?"

Neron shrugged and gave the most ridiculous answer.

"I don't need it."

Kahn was a being who was a Demon Lord. His resistance was so high that Peak Level Magic wasn't enough to completely kill him.

Of the beings out there, he was as strong as they come. Yet, Neron didn't care for him at all.

'As expected of this guy… what a monster…' I smiled while shaking my head.

"Besides, since this thing is a Demon, it uses negative energy instead of the positive one we use. Miasma is the opposite of Mana. As a result, it's basically impossible to use those two at the same time…"

He wasn't wrong.

"… I thought you would also reject it, considering this guy will be useless to any Mage."

Mana was the source of Magic for Mages. They used Familiars to better channel this energy and become stronger in the process.

A Familiar like Kahn—who used Miasma instead—would not only interfere with a Mage's Mana, but would also attack it.

In essence, it was dangerous!

Which Mage would keep such a Familiar—who reeked of Miasma—in their Mana Core? They would have to be crazy, suicidal, and desperate!

"You're right, Neron. However… this guy… will be useful." I smiled at the squirming darkness within the orb.

"Oh? Looks like you have yet another technique I do not know of."

I recognized the tone Neron just used. It was the kind that showed interest.

'He wants me to tell him another one of my closely guarded secrets, eh?'

"It's simple. I will merge the use of Miasma and Mana to form another form of power."

Silence filled the room for a moment.

I was sure no one was overhearing us, considering Neron guaranteed that. Still, an air of unease crept upon me thanks to the black-haired man staring intensely at me.

"… Is it really possible?"

I nodded.

"… How…?"

'How shameless is this guy? He wants me to tell him what I never revealed to anyone else, even in my past life.'

However, Neron was a powerful man, and he was also an ally. Giving him this information would be beneficial for me in the future.

'That said, I won't be delving too far into it. A surface-level answer will do.'

"Oil and Water never mix. Yet, when one applies enough heat to make a meal, they become interwoven with other ingredients and form something different… a combination that is only achievable by perfect harmony."

Mana and Miasma didn't have to become entirely one entity to be useful. Even as separate sources of power, by applying them properly… good results were bound to occur.

"I see…" Was all Neron said to my explanation.

"So, have you tested out this theory of yours?"

I was silent for a while. Not because the question took me by surprise, but because I was remembering something.

In my past life, I had the opportunity to interact with a good deal of Demons, and also humans. Of course, this was how I came up with this theory. However, I had never tested it.

This new life brought me an opportunity to try it out, though.

"When I fought with Kahn—this Demon… I used a special technique to mix my Mana with his Miasma that covered the area."

It was Spellcraft.

By ensuring my Mana particles and their density was higher than Kahn's, I was able to bury his within mine, further enhancing the power I packed in that final Spell.

Kahn couldn't control his Miasma around because I had already used my Mana to coat it all over. Kind of like how a small quantity of oil was in a pot of water.

'Of course, it was easier to control since I isolated the Miasma into smaller quantities and my Mana output was higher…'

If Kahn's Miasma was more than—no, even equal to—mine, then it would have been impossible for me. Thankfully, I had all those Potions and Mana Stones. The Magic Tools I equipped also helped me a great deal.

"Amazing. Simply amazing. You're an exceptional one, Jared."

I smiled tiredly.

'Not exceptional enough...'

"So, I take it you'll be taking the Demon with you as a Familiar. Do you want to bond with it now?" Neron asked with an excited gleam in his eyes.

"No way! I haven't gotten to that level… yet."

But, it wouldn't be very long before I did so. All I had to do was learn!

"Alright, then. There's one final thing I want to ask. If you don't give me the answer I want, then I will have to stop you from leaving."

'Seriously? After all this? He's threatening me?'

Sure, I knew Neron was capable of stopping me if he wanted to, but… why? Our relationship had been built on trust. Why would he sully that now?

'Is he going to ask for another secret technique?'

"The culprit… how do you plan on defeating him? Tell me!'

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Chapter 279: Hidden Card

If anyone else had asked me that question, I would instantly be wary of them.

In fact, Neron had already pried into so many of my secrets that it was downright suspicious. However, I had no problem revealing any of those to him for a simple reason.

I trusted him!

"How do I plan on winning?"

"Yeah."

A smile formed on my face.

"Do you doubt me? You don't think I can win?"

"Maybe. You could say that..."

I didn't blame him.

Even though I spoke all big about killing the culprit, it was still no secret that I lost to Kahn, barely clinging onto life.

It was safe to assume that the mastermind would be a bigger threat than the Shadow Demon.

"After you nearly died back then and I patched you up, I noticed something that had changed about you. You've noticed it too, right? How much stronger you've become." Neron spoke calmly.

He was correct.

All my Mana Cores, except the White One, had all reached the Red stage. Jumping past blue, green, and orange, I had made considerable progress. However...

"That still won't be enough to beat him, you know?"

... I was still not on the level required to safely and conveniently use Peak-Level Magic.

The only reason I achieved it back then was due to the surrounding circumstances, and the inferior intelligence of Kahn.

If it hadn't been for that fact... I would have died many times over.

"You've gotten strong enough to give a lot of Lecturers a run for their money, but... he's different."

I smiled and nodded.

"I know that already..."

Which was why I was even more certain of my victory.

Mages relied on their Mana Cores and the Spells in their arsenal to grow stronger. However, only the foolish ones solely utilized those.

In the world of Magic, there were several things one could use to augment their abilities. Familiars were an example. However, another crucial element--one that could be obtained as long as a Magic User had the means and expertise--was Magic Tools.

My body was too weak and immature to handle the strain of a great deal of power weighing down on me, so I had to resort to developing Magic Tools.

Mana Stones.

Enhanced Attires.

Magic Items

... And 'that' particular one...

"When I faced Kahn circumstances didn't allow me to utilize all I had in my arsenal."

Neron's eyes bulged in shock.

"You mean... you have more tricks up your sleeve? More impressive than that Peak-Level Magic Spell you used?"

I nodded.

"A--amazing. But, wouldn't that mean that even if you win... you would be in an even worse state than before? Plus, you won't make it very far with a beat-up body."

Usually, I would have no choice but to agree, After all, everything he said thus far had been correct. But, if he could think about that now... wouldn't I have already considered it?

"My ace... the 'trick up my sleeve' poses no risk to me at all. I don't need to buy any time. Neither do I need to overexert myself."

It sounded too good to be true. Even Neron seemed doubtful... and more curious. But, I had entertained enough questions.

'Even an old man's patience has limits...'

"Why don't you see for yourself? I'm certain you intend to observe my actions--at least until I leave this Academy. So... just sit back and enjoy the show."

My confident smile seemed to win him over, because Neron--despite his doubts--sighed and let the matter go.

"Fine. I trust you. Even though this brings up a lot of questions... I will concede for now."

Bowing slightly, I thanked him for his consideration.

While it was nice to have people who worried about you ceaselessly, it was better to have an Individual who trusted you wholeheartedly.

'At least one person doesn't doubt my capabilities...'

Unlike before, I was completely caught off-guard and had to compensate. Plus, there were so many burdens and disadvantageous conditions. But, right now, I would play this second round by my rules.

"This should be fun..."

****

After discussing for a little while longer, Neron left Kahn in my care and went about his other businesses.

Apparently, other than Ainzlark and the Royal Family, no other person had access to the information concerning the Academy's breach by Demons.

I understood the rationale behind that decision.

Not only would the prestige of Ainzlark Academy plummet once people knew what had happened, but the invasion of Demons would drive the public into a state of confusion and unrest. So, until the matter was stabilized, most denizens in the Kingdom would be left ignorant.

My mother, my grandfather, my household... none of them would know a thing. That was probably for the best.

My father was another matter entirely.

As a Duke who worked closely with the king in administrative matters--last I heard--he was bound to find out soon.

While I didn't know what his reaction would be, it would be good if I didn't stick around to find out.

The day was Sunday--the day I was supposed to receive my sanction.

It was afternoon already, and considering all that had occurred, the idea of something like that was most likely obsolete.

'I wonder how everyone is doing...'

It pained me to do this, but I had no other choice. To become strong enough to protect myself and those I cared about... it was best to leave everything behind--at least for a few years.

I needed freedom!

'To think I would be resorting to this so early...'

The Lost Lands would be my first goal... and then, the hidden Garden... and then the Towering Mountains...

'Ah, so much to do...'

I considered taking this journey earlier, but there was no sense of urgency. I thought I could take things slow in this life.

My motive was to enjoy my brand-new life as I explored Magic. However, enjoyment was a privilege only given to the strong or the ignorant.

Since I belonged to neither of those categories, I didn't have a right to enjoy such bliss--at least not yet.

"Now, then... I should start getting ready for tonight..."

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Chapter 280: Reminiscing

After the Demon Invasion on the Academy, the students were taken to safe zones within the premises.

Since these 'shelters' were made before the Class System was implemented, there weren't separate spots for those of different standing. As a result, even if it was only temporary, the students enjoyed equal treatment.

Naturally, the boys' residence would be different from the girls', so there were two large faculties that served the purpose of an emergency shelter.

These shelters were underground, but they were not uncomfortable in most ways.

The cooling system was fully functional, and luminous stones made it easy to see. It wasn't much different from being in a building above ground. However, despite the amenities provided for the students, there were a few things most weren't expecting.

Four people were assigned per room, and they would also share a bathroom and toilet. This came as a shocker to a lot of nobles and rich folk who had never shared their sleeping space with anyone--talkless of a place they bathed.

Still, no one could complain.

It wasn't out of fear for their lecturers or out of a sense of gratitude. No... it was trauma.

They had just been through hell.

A few of them died, and even the many who survived had either suffered terrible injuries or even experienced death before being revived. As a result, they were shaken to their core.

They accepted their rooms without complaint.

The assignment was random, so even Lower-Class dregs found themselves in the same room as the Upper-Class kings.

The only ones who were given special treatment were those that achieved phenomenal feats in the crisis.

Kuzon, Ana, Edward, Ciara, Stefan, Maria, Jerry, Ivan, etc. Fabian and the other Rankers also had the V.I.P. treatment. While Aloe contributed a great deal, compared to the other Dorm Masters, she was busy handling staff duties.

Though there was a decision to have her rest properly, she vehemently refused to sit idly since she was a staff. As a result, Aloe was mobilized to earn her keep.

The exceptional students had a lounge to themselves, and also stayed in two-man rooms. They could even pick their partners.

Coincidentally or not, Edward ended up with Kuzon, and Stefan was with Jerry. For the girls, Ciara was in the same room as Maria.

This state would remain until the envoys from the Capital arrived. As a result, the roomies were bound to get comfortable with one another.

Many anticipated the presence of a Grand Mage and those from the Capital, while others--no, maybe only Fabian--dreaded it.

He had only achieved the barest minimum--same as most Rankers--to enjoy special treatment.

People like Ciara, Kuzon--even Edward--were supposedly higher in terms of contribution.

Since Jared had recorded everything with his Automatons, there was ample proof to support this. Fabian, as a Prince of the Kingdom--had disgraced his family. He was sure of it.

And he could only direct his dissatisfaction at someone--Jared Leonard.

Speaking of the devil, the brat was currently in a separate room from everyone else. He wasn't even in the Shelter--but another structure entirely. No one knew the details, not even the staff that attended to them.

His achievements earned him that much.

This pained the bitter heart of Fabian. His roommate was Richard Novo, who also had quite the beef with Jared, so they both got along swimmingly.

While their hatred for Jared festered, concern for the same young boy was growing within the hearts of many.

No one had seen him since they began the mission to recapture the Academy Grounds from the Demons. Tension was high, and feelings bloomed.

"How is he doing?"

"I hope he's safe..."

"He must have heard of those deaths... is he letting it weigh him down?"

"Jared..."

"He'll be fine..."

"You think he's the one who activated that explosion we all saw? That's insane!"

"He said he would take responsibility, but he's not here... hmph!"

"... Please be well..."

"... Jared..."

And so, the mixed emotions of everyone in the Shelters reached out to a single soul who was oblivious of that fact.

****

"Alright... looks like that's about it!"

I smiled, looking at my reflection in the mirror.

It was already dark, but that didn't affect me in the slightest. Usually, my room would be illuminated with Magic stones if I desired, but this wasn't my newly-given room, but the old one in my Dorm.

I came here to retrieve some decent clothes... and something extra.

'It's a good thing no one came here before me...'

It wasn't like they would be able to gain access to my secret stash even if they did show up, but still...

"Haa... I'll miss this place..."

Looking around the small room, I smiled and recalled the many experiences that I went through there.

Alchemy. Research. Augmentation.

It had only been a span of three months since I arrived here, but... it had been an unforgettable experience.

Unfortunately, there would always be an end to everything.

My stay here was short-lived, but maybe that was for the best. Despite all I achieved here, it was incomparable to the level I would have gotten to if I left earlier.

It was just... my selfishness.

"Looks like this is it..." I murmured and left the room.

Walking down the dark hallway, and being reminded of the Shadow Demon invasion, I smiled wryly.

It was something unexpected, but it had been handled better than expected. While I played an integral role in the survival of everyone, it would have been impossible to do everything alone.

'I can now understand what Alphonse meant by that statement...'

Being alone was never the answer.

Not in my past life nor in this one.

To reach the heights I desired... I needed comrades--powerful ones!

Which was why I left behind a legacy for my friends... something that would help them in their endeavors.

'I hope that the next time we meet, you'll be strong enough for me to rely on once again...'

With that final thought, I vanished into the darkness... leaving the premises.