

SPELLCRAFT 381

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

Chapter 381: A Friendly Spar [Pt 1]

We arrived at the Grand Coliseum and observed that a few people were already present.

The members of Elf Royalty were seated at the opposite end of the circular hall.

It was a massive structure located within the Palace.

The size was something that should have never been possible with the way the Royal building looked from the outside, which suggested that Magic was at work.

We sort of faced each other, separated by the wide gulf that was the stage itself.

Standing on the stage were the two contestants—Aurora and Serah.

I wasn't the slightest bit worried about the effects of their battle. After all, the defensive array the Elves had was impressive enough to block off the effects of certain Magic on the Transcendental Level.

This was protection given by the Sacred Tree itself, so I was guaranteed its potency.

'Besides, they're only having a Friendly Duel, so it shouldn't be a big deal... right?'

I would be a fool to believe that.

Both of these two women were scary.

Serah was a wild savage that had been craving a fight ever since we started this expedition—no, even before then.

As for Aurora, hidden behind her gentle smile and calm demeanor, was a monster in her own right.

She was more talented than her sister in Magic even though she was younger.

To be honest, this Elf was a prodigy in every way. It was no wonder she had been able to live so long and was even an active Queen to her people.

Though I was a bit curious about this fight, it was clear that Aurora had the advantage.

This was Elf territory, and Mana was densest in the Royal Palace, thanks to the Sacred Tree.

As a result, she had access to the Mana locked in the environment.

Humans didn't know how to tap into that, so in terms of Mana, certainly, Aurora was superior to Serah.

But, why did I have an unsettling feeling as I stared at the scene? Serah's confident grin didn't stem from ignorance.

It was as though she believed the match was going to end up in her win.

'Well, there's only one way to find out.'

With the abundance of Mana in their environment, their bodies naturally attracted the force of Mana, allowing them to strengthen their Spells and restore expended energy.

In a way, it was similar to Spellcraft.

'That's no surprise, though...'

After all, it was because of this discovery of the Elves that I could invent my greatest trump card.

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[A/N]

I need more reviews and interaction for this story. It's to encourage me and also get your suggestions.

So, please, I would like to appeal to the readers to give their reviews... and also comment more.

Thanks for reading!

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Chapter 382: A Friendly Spar [Pt 2]

Elves naturally attracted Mana, allowing them to retain their youthfulness and restore any expended energy with little effort.

In a fight, they could also employ the aid of environmental Mana to assist them, thereby increasing the power of their Spells, and also recharging any lost Mana.

That was so similar to the ability I developed—Spellcraft.

However, there was one fundamental difference between my principle and theirs.

The Elves couldn't control environmental Mana!

That's right.

Even though they could attract, sense, and decipher the Mana in the environment well, they didn't actually manipulate the Mana itself.

It was just something that occurred naturally, according to their physiology and natural evolution.

They could control the Mana once it entered their system, but no Elf could freely manipulate the Mana around them.

Perhaps they could, if they tried, but was there really a need?

He was a weakling that wasn't worth her attention, yet... he somehow managed to be at the center of it.

'Still, this woman is quite something.' Aurora reasoned as she stared at Serah.

She had thought humans were inferior to Elves, at least when it came to the volume of Mana they could employ.

But, this woman had broken that golden rule.

Even the most powerful of Mages would show hints of exhaustion after a few Peak-Level Magic Spell, yet...

'She's not even tired after all that?'

Aurora could feel herself getting more and more excited.

No one had made her want to fight this earnestly ever since her sister.

'She was always holding back, but... if she took me seriously, she could have been stronger!'

The fact that Aurora had never fought a proper with the only one who could have been a challenge still stung.

But, once the Queen remembered what would happen if she had lost, a weird calm came over her.

Her sister was simply being thoughtful of her.

"Then, should we switch things up for a bit?" Serah Crimson suggested, her eyes indicating an excitement that could only be accompanied by violence.

"Hmm. Fine, then. How about this... one Transcendental Spell from both of us. The one who wins will be declared the victor."

The moment Serah heard this, her grin widened and she screamed in agreement.

"But, no Original Magic. That rule still stands."

"Tch, fine..."

Even without the use of Original Magic, there was still a means of utilizing Transcendental Magic.

In simple terms, such Spells that were beyond the limits of normal people—Magic that could bend the normal principles of the world.

That was what Transcendental Magic was.

Arcanas stood above every other Transcendental Magic that existed, but that also meant there were a few others.

"I'll be using this, if you don't mind." Aurora stretched out her staff and smiled at Serah.

"Fine. Do what you want."

Transcendental Magic was beyond the limits of living beings so that usually meant to use one, you would need the aid of tools.

With the exception of a few users of Original Magic, if anyone even dreamed of attaining the Transcendent realm, they needed tools.

Despite how powerful Aurora was, only her Original Magic was at that Level.

If she wanted to utilize any other Spell, she would require the aid of the Staff Of Ages.

It was the Spirit Weapon passed among the rulers of her people—taken from the very roots of the Sacred Tree.

When Aurora became Elf Queen, she merged her personal Spirit Weapon with the Staff, just as her predecessors had done before her.

As such, what she held was the ultimate item of the Elves.

Transcendental Magic was possible with it.

"What about you? You're not going to utilize any item?"

All eyes were on Serah now, wondering what she would do.

It was common sense that people couldn't possess Transcendental Magic beyond their Original one.

Since that was the case, why wasn't Serah budging? The answer was simple.

"Why? I don't need any tool."

Serah Crimson had transcended the realm of common sense.

"I'll just up my Magic to the Transcendental Level."

It was that simple.

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Chapter 383: Queens Of Destruction

Serah Crimson's solution had always been simple.

—Destruction!

By raising her Magic beyond the realm within reason, Serah had access to the most destructive Magic that could lay waste to anything.

That was what Transcendental Magic meant to her.

"V-very well, then. Shall we begin?" Aurora spoke, hiding her surprise...

... And anxiety.

"Yeah! Let's do this!"

This fight began as a friendly spar between two friendly nations, but now... it had escalated beyond that.

Though no one directly said it, everyone knew that this was a turning point of the trite belief among both the Human and Elf Race.

A match to determine which among them was superior!

"Oi, oi, oi!" The Mana I was sensing was dangerous.

If I wasn't certain of the protection granted by the Sacred Tree's Magic, I would have definitely called this whole thing off.

As Aurora readied her brightly colored staff, Serah steadied her posture.

Both women were smiling like the nutjobs they were, and I could only powerlessly watch as they would decimate the area.

I had initially thought of how this match would go, but now I really had no idea what would happen next.

Glancing at both the Elves and humans, I could tell that everyone seemed to be wondering the same thing.

Who would win?!

>BOOOOOOOOMMMMM!!!<

Scarlet aura burst forth from Serah, covering her nearby vicinity with an oppressive heat that melted the very fabric of air around her.

The heat of Mana around was strong enough to vaporize anything that came even the slightest bit close.

The density was beyond ordinary, and this surge of energy kept swelling at an uncontrollable rate.

Rising and peaking to a phenomenal degree, it ascended far above the stage. Everyone watched the brilliant display of her beautifully deadly Mana.

However, this was only the beginning.

>VWWUUUUUUUSSSSSHHHHHH<

The entire energy began condensing.

It rapidly shrunk, swirling around Serah's hand.

Such dense Mana was already unbelievable. To compress it even further was downright impossible, yet that was exactly what was happening.

Reality seemed to be shattering, and the atmosphere couldn't handle its power.

If anyone was to step foot into the stage, they knew their deaths were imminent.

The only reason the two women were fine was because of the enhancements they had on them.

Their Mana was enough to protect them from the power exuded by Serah's concentrated energy.

It finally settled on her fist. Like flames covering her hand, the energy had taken a different color.

It was no longer scarlet. Instead, it took on a more malevolent color.

—Vermillion!

"Here I go!" Serah shouted, readying her body as she focused on the enemy.

Aurora hadn't been slacking off while Serah was preparing her attack.

She too was focusing her energy to resonate with the Mana dwelling within the staff.

Usually, the surrounding Mana would have come to her aid, but Serah's overwhelming energy had completely destroyed every trace of Mana around.

If not for the dense protection Aurora had on her, the defensive Spell would have also been eaten away.

'This is... even fiercer than Miasma!'

Demonic Energy was a corroding element that corrupted Mana slowly. But Serah's own simply burned them away.

The effect was instantaneous, therefore it was more dangerous than Miasma.

Aurora tightened her grip on the Spirit Weapon she wielded. It gave her the confidence needed to face the calamity head-on.

Any wrong move would be fatal, she was aware. Mana was no longer coming to her aid. That meant one thing.

'Here and now... I have to stop that myself!'

No, not just stop it. Aurora had to overcome the energy.

The amount of power it would take to achieve such a feat was incalculable, so she simply poured all she had into the staff.

>VWWWWWUUUUUUUUUSSSSSHHHH!!!<

Instantly, the crystalization of energy manifested, and an arrow appeared.

It looked more like a drill than an actual arrow, but this projectile was spinning Mana at an abnormal rate.

The more it spun, the more power it emitted. The blue glow was in direct contrast with Serah's vermilion fist.

The atmosphere swelled with the respective Mana of the two women.

A fist versus an arrow.

Two Transcendental calamities were about to unfold.

"VERMILLION Burst!"

"Looks like it's a tie."

And so, just as the battle had reached an overwhelming crescendo, the climax finally settled.

Everyone's anxious expressions dissipated, and their questions were ultimately left unanswered.

"We should stop here for now." Aurora smiled, taking a good look around her.

"I suppose. It is a friendly spar, after all."

Even though it was a bit too late to call their fight that, it seemed the two women insisted that was all it had been.

I didn't want to imagine what an actual fight would be like for them.

'I'm strong, but those two...'

They were on a realm higher than mine. As much as I enjoyed the match, everything I witnessed left a deep impression on me.

To be honest, I was humbled.

"There are such monsters in this world, uh?" Grateful they were both my allies, I smiled bitterly.

'I still have a long way to go!'

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Chapter 384: Private Audience [Pt 1]

'This woman is crazy...!' Aurora thought to herself as she stared at the human before her.

While the match had ended in a tie, the Elf Queen begged to differ internally.

The attack she had used—[Harbinger Of Rupture]—was the most powerful offensive Spell in her arsenal.

The Drilling Arrow that spun could pierce through anything, and it accumulated more power with every rotation.

The only restraining factor to this Spell was time.

If given enough time to rotate, it could build enough charge that had the capacity to destroy an entire Continent—no, probably the world.

That was why it was Aurora's trump card.

While she knew it wouldn't have been able to achieve its perfect state since Serah Crimson wouldn't let it charge for very long, the Elf still expected to come out victorious.

However... to think her attack got canceled out.

Serah had not even utilized the aid of any weapon or Magic Item.

It was simply her individual power.

'Yet, we tied...?'

Aurora Vindiel hated losing, but this feeling within her was something that felt far worse than defeat. It was the realization that she was inferior even though she didn't lose.

'That woman, Serah Crimson... she's definitely stronger than I am.'

Of course, for the sake of her people—as well as to keep her ego intact—Aurora didn't reveal her true thoughts.

Since everyone had agreed it was a tie, she would let it remain that way. After all, none of them had been going all out from the start.

It was nothing more than a friendly spar.

The match ended, and both women slightly bowed to each other to show their respects.

The look on Serah's face was ecstasy, and Aurora was matching the same look.

'I know she's sulking internally, though...'

This wasn't what I had in mind, but I was glad that Serah was able to blow off some steam by facing Aurora.

"This should calm her down for a bit..." I whispered to myself.

The two women exited the devastated arena, vanishing from sight.

The entrances/exits linking to the stage were not connected to the seats of the audience, so we lost sight of them.

'Ah, hold on... didn't Freya say the Queen wanted to see me?'

Just as I was having the thought, the Elf in question appeared before me.

"Come with me."

I nodded and followed her lead sheepishly.

We took a different route from everyone else, and before I knew it, we were on a strange path.

"That was an intense match, wasn't it?" Freya smiled as she led the way.

At some point, she slowed down her pace, so we were walking side by side.

"Indeed. I truly couldn't tell who would win." I responded, glancing at the smiling Elf.

For some reason, she seemed awfully pleased.

I had thought her pride as an Elf would be hurt a little for seeing her mother draw with a human.

'She is Aurora's daughter, after all...' I nearly smirked.

"Well, I have to admit, it was surprising. I've never actually seen my mother use her staff before. To think she resorted to that..."

The Staff Of Ages was something passed among the Queens of the Elf Kingdom.

I heard a bit about it from my lover in my previous life, but even she couldn't tell me the details.

"Well, Serah is very strong. I can only imagine what would happen if she decided to use her Familiar or Original Magic."

"Familiar? Oh, you mean Bond Souls?"

I nodded.

For Elves, they operated differently from humans.

Rather than utilizing Familiars the way we did, they made contracts with certain Magic Beasts and Bond Souls. These contracts allowed their linked partners to come to their aid at any time.

It was also a symbiotic relationship, so the Elves and their partners both benefited.

However, a major difference between our method and theirs was that they utilized living Magic Creatures as their Partners.

It was the obvious choice since Bond Souls were weaker versions of their living selves. So, rather than utilizing Bond Magic, they formed contracts with actual living Magic Beasts.

That gave them a massive advantage.

"I guess that's why using Familiars was also restricted." I smiled and Freya nodded.

If both women had gone all out, it was a wonder what would actually happen. However, with what I had seen so far, my opinion was leaning toward Serah Crimson.

To be honest, I wasn't expecting her to have so much raw power.

A Transcendental Spell with enough force to match a Harbinger Of Rupture—albeit incomplete—was something no human should have been able to produce.

It made me realize just how true Neron's words were.

"Haa. Well, the results were certainly interesting... I gained quite a lot. You?"

"Yeah. Me too." Freya smiled, slowing down as we approached a large door that stood right in front of us.

"The Queen is right behind this door. She says she wishes to meet you here." Freya said with a slightly more appropriate tone.

Even though we had been conversing as friends just earlier, her tone now was quite formal.

"Thank you, Freya." I smiled.

Even though it would have been more appropriate to add her Princess Title, such actions were unnecessary at this juncture.

"I'll be heading in now." I quickly chimed in after seeing her slightly stunned expression.

"Y-yeah. One last thing, though..."

I turned back just as I was about to open the door and spotted her giving a serious gaze.

"Don't try anything stupid."

Her tone and expression were back to her causal mode, but something about her warning seemed weirdly personal and dangerous.

"O-okay...?"

"Perfect. Then, I'll see you later."

With that, Freya walked off and I entered the Elf Queen's supposed office.

But...

"I am coming in, your Majesty."

... It wasn't until I entered inside...

"Oh? You're here already? Then, do come in."

... That I truly understood the meaning behind Freya's words.

A warm, pleasant feeling permeated my body as I opened the door.

It was accompanied by a lovely floral aroma, tickling my nose as I entered the room, and I found myself in a place I didn't expect.

'T-this is...!'

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Chapter 385: Private Audience [Pt 2]

A large curtain covered a large portion of the room, allowing only silhouettes of what was behind it to be visible.

But, even seeing the shadow structures was enough for me to recognize what was going on.

I was currently in the Queen's bathing area—at least one of them.

A Hot Spring.

And, behind the thin curtain that separated me from the pool of water beyond was the Elf Queen herself.

"Welcome, Jared Leonard. Please... give me a moment."

'Shiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiit!'

Why were Elves like this? This was something very inappropriate. Didn't they realize this?

'I'm a delegate, you know? Shouldn't you have some common sense, Freya?'

I knew that there was no way to see through the curtain, no matter how thin the layer was.

It must have been fortified by the highest kind of Magic—or at least very close.

Even if I tried to see through it, I would have to use incredibly strong Magic.

There was no way the Queen wouldn't be able to sense my intentions. Who knew what would happen then

'Should I risk it...?'

It wouldn't be my first time seeing Aurora naked, but... she had advanced in age. She was much larger now than in the past—in more ways than one.

As I contemplated what to do, a certain Elf's words came ringing in my ears.

"Don't do anything stupid!"

'Ah, so this is what she meant.' I sighed, wondering why Freya would think I was that sort of person.

A respectable delegate like me wouldn't actually stoop so low. At the very least, I never gave off that impression.

'If anything, it's their fault. Why would they set up a meeting here?'

I rolled my eyes and began scanning the room.

It was furnished with polished stones, and the atmosphere gave off a warm feeling that relaxed my muscles.

Seats were present, despite it being a Hot Spring, but I decided to remain standing.

Mana Gems served as light sources, and they filled the room in their glow.

>SPLASH<

I heard the water stir, and watched from the curtain that a certain silhouette was emerging from the large pool beyond.

"Haaa..." The sound of the Queen came forth.

'Let's not do anything implicating.'

Even though I was seeing nothing, my deductive analysis allowed me to make much meaning from the mere sight of a shadow.

As a result, if I kept looking, I would be doing something shameful.

Turning my back from the curtain, I waited for the Queen to ready herself entirely.

My heart beat fast and the heat seemed to be rising. I heard splashing footsteps, and then the curtain parted.

A stronger floral scent overpowered my nose, and the heat that accompanied it nearly made me feel dizzy.

'Urgh!' As I still recovered from the recoil, someone approached me.

It was none other than...

"I apologize for keeping you waiting, Jared Leonard."

... The Queen herself.

>Drip<

>Drip<

>Drip<

I heard splatters of water on the ground. Her Majesty was still wet, at least that was what I surmised.

It pained me to have shameful thoughts, but there was something about Elves that seemed provocative.

'Haa, Jared calm down.'

Since it would be rude to show my back for too long, I turned to face her.

Aurora was covered in a lire white robe, completely covering any seductive part of her body.

Still, as I surmised, her face and body had water oozing from them. Her hair was wrapped in a towel, so it was absorbing the water quite well.

"I-it was no problem, my Queen." I forcefully opened my mouth to utter words.

"Is that so?"

Aurora was smiling at me with a faint smile. I recognized that look.

'What is she up to?'

"Well, I need to change first. Please follow me to my room."

'Ngh!' I nearly clutched my chest.

This Elf was pushing it.

'Deep breaths, Jared.'

"If that is what you wish, your Majesty."

"Haha, alright then." She laughed heartily, and then, after wearing her slippers, we both took another door by the side and began moving to her room.

It was a silent walk.

I made sure to maintain my distance and keep my gaze low.

"So, what did you think about my earlier match with Serah Crimson?"

'Ah, I knew you'd ask this Aurora!' Which was why... I had already prepared well.

In my mind, I readied one of my powerful moves. It was a technique many knew, but not a lot could execute well.

The Sacred art of ass-kissing.

"I believe your Majesty would have won if the match dragged out even further. Utilizing more Transcendental Level Magic would have been to your advantage since there's no way Serah would be able to launch two of those attacks at the same time."

While she was still recoiling, Aurora could simply utilize the Staff Of Ages to launch more attacks.

"Hoho, is that so?" The Elf Queen laughed slightly.

'You're still so childish. To think hearing someone praise you would make you happy like that.' I almost rolled my eyes at the woman, but controlled myself.

"But, wouldn't you say it's unfair to use a Magic Item against someone without one? That doesn't make the match even."

'Ah, she's trying to find a hole in my praise.' It was too bad for her that I was already well prepared for this outcome.

"According to what I heard, Serah Crimson doesn't utilize any Magic Tool. Perhaps her body is already enough for her. I don't know too much about the Elven heritage, but Spirit weapons could also be considered a part of an Elf. In that sense, the Queen wasn't unfair in using your staff."

"Huhu, is that so? You also learned that from Lewis Griffith's Memoirs?" Aurora smiled.

"Indeed, your Majesty."

"Very well. Thank you for sharing your thoughts."

Afterward, we walked to her room.

I insisted on waiting outside until she fully changed, and fortunately, Aurora agreed.

Then, after a while, she appeared with a splendid gown befitting her status.

Once again, we walked down the hallway and found ourselves in a lounge.

It was still within the private residence of the Queen, and according to her, it was only for the most special of guests.

Judging by how luxurious it was, I knew it had to be true.

In my past life, I never got to see something like this, after all.

"Do you know why I called to see you?" Aurora asked with a smile.

With the snap of her fingers, teacups, cookies, and a teapot appeared.

We sat opposite each other and helped ourselves to a cup each.

"Not at all, your Majesty. However, I too have something I want to ask you."

It had been bugging me ever since entered the Elf Kingdom, but I was always removing my mind from the thought.

However, after seeing Aurora, there was no way I could resist the question any longer!

'What happened to your sister, Emilia?'

[A/N]

This begins the flashback into Lewis Griffith's past

I certainly hope you enjoy the story. Many will see a different side of the MC, and I certainly hope you learn to appreciate him more.

Don't worry... it doesn't take too long.

Let us begin!

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Chapter 386: The Strange Elf [Pt 1]

Emilia was an oddball.

For an Elf, a superior Race, she often liked my company for some reason.

I was nothing but a dense man who was buried in research and the study for Magic back then, so I didn't notice her true intentions on time.

Still, I never thought she was a nuisance. After all, she was the one who opened my eyes to so many things I know now.

We first met when the Heroes Party traveled through several continents to seek the Aid and Alliance of the other Races.

Back then, it was only me, Gawain Lenard, and Ford Zesshi who were members of the Party.

Sent as delegates from the Eastern Kingdom, we had to address the uncontrollable scourge of the Demons.

An Alliance was the only option.

The Elf Kingdom was our first option, and so we ventured there.

Thanks to our stubbornness—especially Gawain's determination, my wits, and Ford's power, we were able to finally gain an audience with the Queen.

During the meeting with the Royals, my head was faced down the whole time.

As an Inept who couldn't sense or use Mana in the slightest, I had already gotten used to my life.

I also had the opportunity of being among many Mages and powerful individuals. My achievements had even earned me a place in the Hero Party.

However, it was the first time in my life that I was encountering such overwhelming pressure.

The Royals were all gathered in the Throne Room, and their presence was enough to diminish my existence.

I truly felt small throughout the meeting.

Perhaps that was why I was able to address them with the appropriate respect that allowed them to hear us out.

Of course, the decision wasn't made in an instant, so we had to stay as guests for some time.

Lingering while awaiting the decision of the Elves, my friends passed time doing many things.

Gawain trained, as usual. His outdoor exercises gathered quite the attention since Elves didn't practice Martial Arts at all.

Ford Zesshi spent his time isolated, meditating and advancing his Mana Core.

He was about to break through to Gold Stage at the time.

For a man who hadn't even approached thirty yet, his talents in Magic were considered extraordinary back then.

As for me, the Sage, Lewis Griffith, I did the only thing I could in such a strange land filled with new concepts of Magic.

"Please show me your Magic!"

"J-just a little... I'll do anything!"

"Please, come on. Help your fellow living being here!"

I shamelessly begged every Elf I could to guide me on the path of their Magic.

A different culture meant unknown approaches to Magic, and new things to learn. I wouldn't have been able to warn my title of Sage if I simply held onto my pride and wasn't willing to utilize such an opportunity.

From dusk till dawn, I observed the Elves. I also directly begged many to show me, teach me, or even attack me, with their Magic.

I was that desperate.

Unfortunately, thanks to their view on humans, many weren't exactly cooperative with me.

Those who at least gave some consideration—since I was the Queen's guest—simply ignored my pleas.

As a result, I was stuck as a spectator, only allowed to watch the Elves live their daily lives.

I learned a few things, but I knew I was missing out on a lot more.

"Ahh, this sucks..." I could only wallow in my misery.

However, everything changed one fateful day... when I met her!

"You're a weird one."

Yeah. That was the first thing she ever said to me.

"Well, I get that a lot..." I had murmured, not even realizing who I was speaking with.

It took me a moment, 2.76 seconds to be exact, to realize that I was in the land of Elves. And since only Elves were around, it meant the one who was speaking was also an Elf.

And, this Elf in question approached me first. That meant this could have actually been my chance.

In a flash, I swiftly turned in the direction of the being, bowed in her presence, and pleaded with all my might.

"P-please show me your Magic!!!"

It was the very height of shamelessness, I knew. But, to get what I wanted, I would do whatever it took.

That was the kind of guy I was.

"Hahahaha. You're so funny."

She laughed at me, instead of returning my pleas with scorn. That alone showed me she was different.

'Maybe... I should increase my appeal a bit!'

And so, I prepared my puppy dog eyes and raised my face to beg even more.

'... Eh...?'

The first thing that caught my eye was her violet eyes.

Then, her charming smile drew me in.

Her clear face and flawless skin blew my mind away.

She was the epitome of perfection. Her beauty was otherworldly.

Such a perfectly lovely Elf couldn't approach me first! My mind refused to believe it.

Just as my brain was getting fried just from looking at her, I noticed something—her hair.

'White...? That means...?!?!'

So far, I had only seen the hair color on a particular kind of Elves.

—Royalty!

"Hahaha. You look so weird right now." The otherworldly beauty laughed as she stared at me.

My body stiffened and I instantly turned into a dried fish.

I had acted so shamelessly to a Royal. Many worried thoughts rang through my mind.

'Am I screwed? She could vaporize me in an instant. No, what of the plan, the Alliance? Will my actions cause everything to go up in smoke? Ah, I'm gawking too much! This is such a mess! Spare me, pretty Royal Elf Lady! Please...!?!'

As I still kept staring like an idiot, the white-haired Elf drew closer to me until her face was barely an inch apart from mine.

Her smile seemed all the more dangerous at this point. Merely the sweet flora scent coming from her was enough to overpower my will to resist.

"Sure... I'll show you—Magic, that is."

Her reply was unexpected.

No kind of mental analysis or planning ahead could have led to this sort of development. It was so bizarre, yet... I didn't find it unpleasant in any way.

I knew I was supposed to apologize for my actions that very instant.

She was a Royal Elf. If she so much as lodged a complaint, our mission would be thwarted. I couldn't afford to be rude or imposing on such an important person!

However... I didn't know what sort of madness caused me to respond the way I did.

Rather than apologizing and running as far as my legs could carry me...

"R-really... you will?"

... I furthered our conversation.

"Sure. Why not?"

In retrospect, I had to give my past self kudos for that dumb reply—

"By the way, my name is Emilia. Emilia Vindiel. May the spirits bless our meeting."

"A-ah, my name is Lewis Griffith."

"Yeah... I heard your introduction a while back."

"O-Oh... I see. Haha..."

—After all, that was what set the ball rolling... on a new and exciting adventure that I couldn't have dreamed of.

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[A/N]

This begins the Mini Arc: Sage's Past [Pt 1]

I certainly hope you enjoy it.

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Chapter 387: The Strange Elf [Pt 2]

"And so, that's why we're able to live so long. You get it?"

After a few hours with this strange Elf, I was already learning so many things.

As I had predicted—no, even better than that—I was being exposed to new horizons.

The Elf Princess, Emilia Vindiel, was answering so many questions of mine, smiling throughout as though enjoying herself.

"Whoah. That actually makes sense. That means..." I stared at her with a suspicious gaze

After spending a few hours with her, I had finally gotten used to staring at her utterly mesmerizing face.

"Hm? What is it?" She asked in utter cuteness.

However, that cuteness could fool me no longer.

"That means... you're actually... older than me?" I stated.

"Eh?" The Elf sounded surprised, but I wasn't going to let her get away with acting so cute.

I knew her secret now! Even though she physically appeared to be younger than me, Emilia was probably as old as my mother—no, even older.

"Just how old are you?" My eyes narrowed as I stared into the violet abyss of her irises.

"S-stop that. It's rude to ask a lady her age, you know?"

Yet, another cute side of the Elf appeared. Her pout made my heart nearly jump out, causing me to clutch my chest tightly.

I was in my youth. It was the normal reaction for a hopeless virgin like me.

Yes, I was a dense idiot who only pursued Magic. However, it was only when I was with Emilia that I began to feel something else lurking within me.

Something that was beginning to grow at an alarming rate.

Emilia found a way around the subject, plus I also had so much to learn about the Elves and Magic, so we eventually forgot about the 'Age' issue.

By the way, I was twenty-nine at the time.

The next day, we met again.

Then, the day after that.

We only talked about Magic. The wonders of Elf culture, their relationship with Mana, and the concept of Spirits.

I had never had such a fulfilling conversation with a woman before.

I had quite a handsome face, so oftentimes when I talked to ladies, they would be more interested in fields outside my area of interest.

The rate of those useless conversations was growing at a rapid rate as I was getting older.

Yet, with Emilia, it was different.

I truly felt at ease with her, and I could tell she was the same.

Unfortunately, nothing in this world lasts forever.

Even though I was having the time of my life, the reality of the situation was that we needed the Alliance of the Elves.

And so, after a week elapsed, our group was called back to have an audience with the Queen.

The Alliance proposal... was rejected!

We weren't able to secure them as Allies. Not only did we fail our mission, but during the week we were away, the Demon onslaught had gotten increasingly severe.

The Elves we were counting on as potential allies had rejected us.

When I asked for their reasons, the Queen said this.

"I can see through you all. Do not bother our Kind with your selfish interests."

It was at that moment that I realized... the error we had committed.

The week given to us was a test phase.

In essence, they observed all our actions.

Even though we had spent so long among the Elves, none of us actually cared for them.

Gawain was busy with training.

Ford was busy with his personal growth.

I was... also busy with something—or rather, someone.

"You humans are always the same. Ultimately, you desire only for yourselves."

The Queen wasn't wrong.

We were inherently selfish creatures. I was the very same.

The reason we sought an Alliance with the Elves was simply for our merit.

Humans weren't as strong as the Demons. There was no way we could win against them. And, with the passing of each day, they were growing stronger.

Our Kingdom, as well as our only Allies, The Northern Kingdom, were the ones suffering the brunt of the Demonic Assault.

Both Kingdoms were predominantly comprised of humans—the self-proclaimed dominant Race of the world.

But, with the assault of our nemesis, we realized just how weak and small we were.

That was the sole reason we reached out to our other neighbors.

We didn't want to die.

We wanted to survive.

Even if it meant shamelessly asking for the aid of others.

The Elves saw right through that... and so they rejected our proposal.

"You will be leaving this place tomorrow. There is no room for negotiation."

I didn't even have the strength to argue. Every word the Queen spoke was spot-on. Trying to wiggle my way out of this would only lead to more misfortune.

'Besides...'

I silently glanced in the direction of Emilia. She was standing beside her mother, along with her little sister—Aurora.

Despite the despair and fear that coursed through my body, the expression on Emilia's face... was a pure and gentle smile.

She was looking at me. Her violet eyes lacked any malice. I could tell that she understood just the kind of tough spot I was in.

I wanted to plead with her to help me—help us. It was shameless, but that was the only path I knew to take.

If I wanted something, I had to get it no matter the cost. Even if... even if I had to use someone who had done nothing but show me goodwill.

In the end, I couldn't do it. I couldn't ask her for assistance.

Emilia just kept smiling at me. Her expression didn't change in the slightest. It was the innocence in her eyes that caused me to look away in self-loathing.

'This is it...' I resigned myself to the consequences of my selfishness.

We paid our respects to the Queen and returned to our residence.

The mood was heavy, but there was nothing to be done.

We equally shared the blame for our choices, so we simply had to accept what had happened—hoping we had better luck with the next Kingdom we visited.

However, the very next day...

"I have changed my mind after further thought."

... As we were supposed to bid the Elf Queen farewell...

"The matter of your Alliance has been reconsidered."

... Everything completely changed!"

"We will ally ourselves with the Eastern Kingdom."

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Chapter 388: The Strange Elf [Pt 3]

I had no idea why, but the Queen rescinded her earlier decision.

All of a sudden, we became the Allies of the Elves.

"Leave one member of your Party here to serve as an Ambassador, while the rest may return to your Kingdom."

It was a miracle!

"Tell your King to set an appropriate meeting date, so we can directly converse."

It was completely unprecedented.

"You may leave."

And it was all because of someone!

My eyes darted in her direction, and I saw Emilia smile the same way she always did. However, this time... the Elf gave me a conspirational wink.

'N-no way... it was you? H-how did you do it? I didn't even ask...'

To be honest, I had thought I would never see or talk to her after that day.

Since she never even came to visit or bid farewell, I really thought we had already broken ties.

My idiot mind had no idea that she had been tirelessly working to ensure that our Alliance succeeded.

I had no idea how she achieved it, but...

"THANK YOU! THANK YOU SO MUCH!"

... It meant the world to me.

"Lewis, you'll be the one acting as Ambassador."

As expected, I was the one left behind. The rest of my comrades returned to the Eastern Kingdom that very day.

I saw them off, watching as their Magic carriage sped away.

Surprisingly, I wasn't the only one. Someone else was beside me.

"Looks like everything worked out well in the end!"

Yes, it was none other than the strange Elf.

"Gah! You scared me. How long have you been standing there?!"

"Haha. Who knows. Since you can't sense Mana, you can't even detect my wavelength at all."

"Ouch..."

"Hahahaha!"

Just like that, the link that I thought was broken, was bound once more.

As I stared at her fluttering white hair and her alluring face, the feelings within me grew even more.

"T-thanks, Emilia."

"For what?"

"You know... for the whole thing with the decision of the Queen."

"Oh? Who says that has anything to do with me?"

"Come on, Emilia. Do I really look like an idiot?"

"Yeah. You do."

"Okay. Fair enough."

The conversation was a back and forth, but she eventually admitted she had a role to play in the Queen's decision.

"W-why...?"

I didn't know when the question popped out of my lips, but my curiosity and also the inner emotions within me forced those words out.

"Why?" She repeated.

"Why did you help us? The Queen was right. We only need your assistance for our selfishness..."

"Well, maybe that's true." Emilia smiled at me with a hidden truth in her eyes.

I couldn't decipher it.

"But, is it so wrong to desire to protect that which you cherish? The Elves simply have a different philosophy from Humans, so we might not adopt the same method. However... I believe striving hard, no matter the cost of one's pride and ego, to reach that which is precious to them is admirable."

I had no idea at the time, but Emilia meant two things when she said that.

One was about the general idea behind our offer for an Alliance.

The second was about me.

She had been watching as I shamelessly asked her fellow Elves for their help in my Magic research.

According to her words... she became interested in me from that point on. I thought of it as silly at the time.

However, that was because I was stupid.

"Besides, when you stared at me back then... I knew you wanted my help." Emilia told me as we walked.

She was referring to how I had curtailed my desperation despite how badly I wanted to beg her for help.

"Is that why you helped?" I asked her.

"No. If you had begged me, I wouldn't have assisted you. But, even in that moment of desperation... you didn't take advantage of my kindness."

I didn't quite understand her reasoning.

"Selfishness only becomes evil or despicable when you manipulate others and try to take advantage of them to satisfy yourself. It's especially disgusting when you do it to someone who cares about you."

My eyes widened as I stared at her. Ignoring the fact that she practically professed her care for me, I was more astounded by her peculiar rationale.

"You could have begged me, but didn't. That shows you're not as selfish as you think, Lewis. It's just the right amount, and there's nothing wrong with that."

My heart fluttered as she stared at me with sincerity.

"In fact, I quite like that." Emilia's lips parted as she drew closer to me.

I hadn't realized, but our walk had led us to the Palace's courtyard... and we were alone.

"I have to say, Lewis... for a human, you're very appealing."

At this point, her hand was on my chest, and her face was close to mine.

My back was pushed against the wall, and I was completely helpless.

When it came to Magic or physical abilities, Emilia had me beat. She was vastly superior, and I felt like a child being harassed by an older, more experienced woman.

I could only watch as she licked her lips and stared at me intensely.

"I really like you, Lewis."

My eyes widened when I heard this.

It was a confession. A literal one!

I was frozen.

I had gotten so many confessions in the past as well, but none shook me as this did.

My heart was racing now as I watched her face draw closer to mine.

'This doesn't make sense! Why me? I don't get it! Is this another test? Will I be taking advantage of her? I don't... understand...!!!'

I panicked, but I could feel desire rise within my heart, and also in between my legs.

I was only human, after all.

And so, as the atmosphere was alit with passion, I let myself go with the flow.

"Emilia, what are you doing?"

But, everything was ruined by yet another Royal Elf.

"You should get away from that human!"

I recognized the incoming Elf. Her white hair flowed as she approached us. Even though she had an impudent attitude, she looked younger than Emilia--closer to a child than an adult.

I didn't know it back then, but that was my first direct encounter with Emilia's little sister--Aurora Vindiel.

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Chapter 389: Metamorphosis

Emilia did the opposite of what she was told despite the impudent Elf's harsh tone.

Drawing closer to me until her chest touched mine, and her lips were close to my ear, the Elf Princess uttered words to me.

"Looks like we were interrupted. Another time, then."

I gulped, feeling awfully excited and fearful at the same time.

With a sigh, Emilia began to pull away. She turned in the direction of the seething midget.

"You should stop this, Emilia! Someone like him dares to..." The newcomer eyed me with disgust.

I didn't even do anything wrong, yet I was the one being discriminated against.

"Please, Aurora. Your attitude is not befitting of Royalty, you know? You should comport yourself more."

"And you should stop talking to him!"

"Yeah, yeah. Now that you're here, I might as well introduce the both of you."

"I already heard his introduction before."

"So you know his name?"

"Why would I remember the name of an insignificant human? He doesn't even have any Mana, so he's basically worse than the average one. Doesn't make him less than an insect?"

Yes, the girl was very mean—enough to break a grown man like me.

"Be nice, Aurora. Now, just introduce yourself. Come on..."

Grudgingly, the white-haired Elf stood a distance from me, folded her hands, and spoke with childish authority.

"My name is Aurora Vindiel, Second Princess of this Kingdom. The spirits have nothing to do with this, but you better remember my name!"

She had an extremely cute appearance. It was a shame that her imposing attitude ruined her child-like allure.

"M-my name is Lewis Griffith, and—"

"Ah, I remember now. You were that guy who was shaking and groveling when mother first granted you audience."

'Shiiiiiiiiit!'

"Hahahaha! What a funny sight that was. I thought you were going to soil yourself. At least you were aware of our superiority, so I had no real problem with you then."

Her words were so hurtful, but I kept my shattered pride to myself.

I had lived a life of shamelessness, so this much had to be tolerated

"A-ah, that's a relief then—"

"But, you're overstepping your boundaries now, human! You better stay away from my sister! Hmph!"

With that, she dragged—or, more like she tried to—dragged Emilia away.

Her small stature made her efforts to pull her sister away meaningless.

"Well, I have to go now, Lewis. We'll meet later, right?" The only silver lining in the thick dark clouds looming over me gave a brilliant smile.

It was enough to mend my broken heart and crushed spirit.

"Y-yeah..."

"Well, bye then."

"Bye, Emilia. B-bye, Auro—"

One deadly look from the Elf Princess told me never to attempt that. Even though she was small, I could tell...

'She can easily kill me without batting an eye.'

... Princess Aurora was dangerous.

Afterward, Aurora and I kept hanging out. We grew closer and closer.

Our relationship evolved beyond the topic of Magic, and we truly enjoyed one another's comedy.

It was as though the genre of my life had completely switched. I was in a new world entirely, much like the storybooks I used to read when I was younger.

I, the Male Lead, and Emilia, the Female Lead, were bound by fate.

Of course, there was also the Villain—or rather the Villainess—of the story.

It was none other than Princess Aurora.

Ultimately, I deduced two things from the girl.

The first was that she didn't like me.

The second was that she didn't like the fact that Emilia liked me.

I struggled to understand why she was so annoyed at me. I tried everything I could to convince her I meant well.

It wasn't until a fateful day when I grew tired of her incessant bullying and verbal assault that I finally asked.

"I know you don't despise all humans. You just don't like me! Why?! What have I ever done to you?"

My tone was rude, but I didn't care any longer. My desire to be with Emilia without getting interrupted by Aurora was too much.

It was enough to cloud my common sense.

"Who do you think you're talking to?"

Her pressure alone forced me to kneel before her, cowering like a shivering dog.

I could sense a cold gaze in her eyes. She truly despised me.

"It's all your fault..."

"I-I don't understand... what did I do...?"

"Silence!"

My lips were instantly shut out of fear.

"You... don't you know it's because of her that your Alliance proposal was accepted?"

"Y-yeah... of course, I know that..."

Even though Emilia had been coy about it, she eventually revealed that she had a part to play in the whole thing.

"Did you even bother asking how she was able to do it? You think it's so simple to change my mother's mind? Don't be ridiculous!"

'E-eh...?'

I didn't fully understand politics, so it was difficult to grasp what Aurora was talking about.

Apparently, the situation wasn't as easy as a child begging her mother to change her mind.

"That idiot didn't tell you, did she?"

At this moment, I was confounded with various thoughts.

Doubts and a hint of fear.

"W-what did she do...? How was she able to...?"

"You think I'd tell you? Why don't you ask her since you're so close!"

With those words ringing in my ears, Aurora left me and stormed off.

"W-what did you do... Emilia...?" I muttered to myself, still kneeling on the grass.

I never found out what she had to pay in exchange for the Alliance.

"Don't worry about it, Lewis. It's all in the past."

Even when I tried to press her on the issue.

"Stop it, Lewis. I said you should let it go."

No matter how hard I tried to let her divulge the details, she never did.

And so, I only wondered and wondered.

For Emilia's sake, I stopped asking about it, and so our relationship progressed as usual.

However, from that moment on, I decided to give more consideration to Emilia.

Slowly, our relationship progressed from that of mere friends... to something a little bit more.

Then, we eventually shared our first kiss.

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Chapter 390: Allies Of The Past

"Was this your intention from the start? Making me stay behind while my comrades returned to the Eastern Kingdom?"

Emilia and I were walking together one fateful day, so I asked.

It had been almost two weeks since my allies left for the Eastern Kingdom, and we got news that they would be arriving today.

That was the reason I even remembered how we separated, in the first place.

"Maybe..." Emilia smiled, and then licked her lips in a dangerously seductive way.

My crotch tingled, and the memory of the kiss we shared the previous night appeared in my head.

'Nngh!' I fought to regain control.

Emilia was a great manipulator of emotions, far more skilled than me.

I wasn't even in her league.

We kept discussing as we awaited the arrival of our comrades, holding hands every step of the way.

Fun, casual moments like these soon became a rarity as time went on.

After all, thanks to being sheltered by the Elf Kingdom, I was able to escape all the horrid hardships of war.

And so, while I was basking in love and desire... Demons had advanced to a terrifying degree.

The King of the Eastern Empire arrived with his entourage.

Thanks to the pride of the Elves, it couldn't have gone any other way. As a result, a diplomatic conference was held, and we successfully formed an Alliance.

I, as well as my comrades, were present.

After the whole Treaty was over, I took some time to catch up with my friends.

They told me of the horrors that were occurring beyond the borders of the Eastern Kingdom.

"We need to act fast." Gawain even murmured with a stern face.

I understood that the situation was deadly, but that was all the more reason why we couldn't act rashly.

And so, I proposed a two-pronged plan.

Firstly, our joint forces with the Elves would form a resistance against the Demon Forces. But, seeing as they were growing at an uncontrollable rate, it was best to increase our manpower quickly.

Which was when my second plan--World Alliance--came into play.

We had to seek the aid of the other Races.

Since I was the instigator of this plan, I needed to execute it. And so, the time finally came to leave the Elf Kingdom.

For the future of the world, I was to journey to the other Kingdoms and secure their aid.

But...

"You're leaving, Lewis?"

... I had my hesitations.

"Come with me." My words were selfish, but, I had gotten too attached to the point of letting Emilia out of my sight.

She was slowly becoming my everything.

Of course, she readily agreed.

And so, I came up with a strategy that involved an Elf Representative coming with us. Since Emilia was the oldest and most mature, it was certain that she would be the one chosen.

Fortunately, the plan worked, and Emilia joined us--much to the dissatisfaction of Aurora, her sister.

Even though she never became an integral part of our Hero Party, Emilia journeyed with us as a representative of the Elves.

"You know, I've never left the Elf Kingdom before." She told me as we prepared to leave.

"Eh? Really? Why?"

"Well, as a Royal, you end up being confined to your duties. Most Elves also prefer to remain within the bounds of the Kingdom."

Emilia even went on to say that my group was the first set of humans she had ever seen.

It was a new experience for her, which was why she grew curious.

She wanted to know more about us.

After observing the three members of the Hero Party, the one who seemed the most approachable was the man shaking in his boots--A.K.A. me.

"Well, I've been traveling for some time. So... I can always show you the ropes." My confident grin was a sharp contrast to the first impression the Elves had of me.

But, humans are creatures of habit. As I slowly became accustomed to the Elves, I began to see them for who they were...

... And they also slowly began to view me differently too.

At least, they didn't hate me--well, almost all of them didn't.

We traversed the Elf Kingdom and approached the land of the Fairies.

We passed the mountains and harsh seas until we came upon the Kingdom of the Therianthropes.

Crossing their Borders, we soon encountered the Nation of Dwarves.

In a span of a few months, while the war ensued with the Elves and Humans forming an Alliance, our Party successfully allied itself with the members of the other Races.

The Fairy King had been bought over by some innovations I developed thanks to merging my knowledge of the Human and Elf Kingdom.

It was a technology the Fairies didn't possess, so he coveted it.

As a result, he offered his assistance in exchange for even more innovations.

Since we would be allies anyway, I readily agreed.

The Beastfolk valued strength above all else. As a result, Gawain had to fight with their best warrior--The Leader.

It was a pretty much even match, but Gawain was slightly on the losing end.

In terms of raw power, the Beastfolk reigned supreme. The only reason Gawain had an advantage to even the odds was because of his Martial Arts techniques.

As a result, it ended in a stalemate.

As a bonus for joining our Alliance, we offered the Beastfolk access to Martial Arts Techniques.

The Leader, who was impressed by how a weaker Gawain was able to win thanks to Martial Arts, readily accepted.

And so, we won them over.

As for the Dwarves, I simply offered them some blueprints of certain innovations--like a special Golem, as well as a Spellcasting sensory device.

Dwarves were obsessed with creating new technology, so they soon succumbed to the temptation of my ideas.

I had help along the way. If not for the aid of Ford Zesshi, Jane Ursula, as well as Emilia, I wouldn't have been able to figure out even a quarter of what I did.

They helped a blind man like me to see the wonders of Mana and its mechanics.

It was thanks to our joint efforts that we were able to achieve Alliance Treaties with every major Race.

And so... the perfect front was formed in history.

We all rallied against the enemies that threatened our existence.