

SPELLCRAFT 391

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

Chapter 391: Miasma

Gawain Lenard the Sword God.

Jane Ursula the Mad Witch.

Ford Zesshi the Grand Mage.

Raphael Noel of the Thousand Songs.

The Indestructible Immortal, Dom!

These were my allies, as well as the members of the Hero Party.

Gawain and Ford were friends of mine from the Eastern Kingdom. We attended Ainzlark Academy together as well.

Jane Ursula was a Fairy—an extremely crazy one at that.

Her specialty cut across Magic Mechanics and Soul Magic

Still, Jane's knowledge of Mana was deep, and she sought even more knowledge to the point of obsession.

To be honest, I felt a strong sense of comradeship with her because of our joint interests.

It was too bad that Emilia often stared daggers at me whenever she found me talking with Jane for too long.

Still, as friends, we certainly had fun moments.

Raphael Noel was a member of the Dwarven Race. His nickname was due to the multiple sounds he made whenever he built something.

>CLANG!<

>SHIIIIIIIIII<

>KRIIIIIIIIIII<

From hammering, to drilling, to sawing. His hands were extremely gifted, and his works were immensely valuable.

I was happy to have him as an ally since he brought many of my theoretical innovations to life.

He once brought up the issue of Automatons—Golems that could function independently.

At that point in time, it was impossible, but... with the way Automatons had already become so widespread among everyone in the Eastern Kingdom, I was certain Raphael was able to achieve his goals.

Emilia Vindiel was not a member of our team, as she soon returned to the Elf Capital once our assignments as delegates ended.

I also had the pleasure of making three other close friends who weren't members of the Hero Party.

If it hadn't been for them, I would not have reached the heights I did.

That, though, would be a story for another day.

The battle against the Demons was fierce.

Even with the joint forces of all our Kingdoms, we were at a stalemate.

And that was simply because of one critical factor.

—MIASMA

It was a unique kind of Mana the Demons possessed.

Since Demons had not been very active before the war, we had very little information on them.

Demonic Energy was a new phenomenon, so it took us some time to figure it out.

Miasma corrupted everything that had Mana. It devastated the lands, killed a good number of our allies, and it didn't stop spreading.

It was at that point that we came to the realization—

"If we don't find a way around this, it could truly mean the end."

As a result, we began pooling our heads together to figure out the solution.

However, no matter how hard we tried, it was a tightly shut door. Even I couldn't figure the concept out completely.

But, was that really surprising?

I was merely an Inept individual who was gifted with an amazing intellect and a strong interest in Magic.

Even with Elven Magic, as well as the other kinds, I had to study them carefully and learn how they worked.

Miasma was a different ball game altogether. There was indeed no way I could figure out its mysteries.

And so, the problem festered.

With every second wasted, more of our forces died.

If nothing was done, the war would drag on for much longer—causing more despair.

'I-I have to do something!'

The thought of watching Emilia writhe in pain as Miasma consumed her body sprang up in my head.

My parents were already dead, but I still had family in the Eastern Kingdom. I also had allies—close friends.

We had already come this far. There was no way I was going to let everything go up in smoke.

Which was why... I made a bold step.

It was one of the most reckless moves I ever made, but, desperation drove me crazy.

So crazy, in fact, that I ventured into the heart of our misfortune.

—The Nation of Demons!

There were two reasons for my decision to venture in alone.

One was the fact that I was inept, so exposure to Miasma had no reaction on my bodily system.

While it gave me a terribly intense feeling of fear, I could manage it.

The second reason was that my allies were all vulnerable to the effects of Miasma. They also wouldn't let me go on my own.

So, I secretly stole away into the night... and invaded the settlement of Demons—all by myself.

I wasn't terribly strong—but Gawain taught me some Martial Arts, and I picked a few things along the way.

Plus, I had a few Items that I could utilize—though most would be nearly useless before Demonic Energy.

Still, I believed that if I could get closer to the source and observe the Demons... I could find the solution to everyone's problems.

How foolish I was.

"You're a pretty dumb human, you know?"

Not long after I arrived in the land infested by Demons, I was caught by a Crimson Demon.

It was a monster above monsters, and from its grin, I could sense my end.

I shivered in my boots. All my Martial Arts were rendered useless in an instant, and I was completely at the monster's mercy.

"Well, I suppose having a pet like you will be somewhat fun."

Two years.

I spent two years with the Crimson Demon.

Was it hell?

Did I suffer?

Did I regret every moment of my stay there?

The answer was... no.

Karlia, the Crimson Demon, was a Succubus.

She belonged to the minority race of Crimson Demons, but she actually despised violence.

It was one of the reasons why she lived on the outskirts of the Demon Settlement.

Her black hair and purple eyes echoed forbidden pleasure, and this Demoness was quite the seductress.

She had a unique ability—her Original Magic—that allowed her to increase the natural abilities of both herself and anyone she had sexual relations with.

In essence, some form of 'Dual Cultivation.'

She had quite a number of visitors, even though she lived away from everyone else.

Many would come to have their abilities enhanced by her, in exchange for a fee.

To be honest, I felt she was ripping them off, since she was enjoying both the sex and money.

Her abilities also increased, as a result, basically causing her to profit in more ways than one.

I served as a caretaker under her for those two years.

As a result... I was able to learn all about Miasma.

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

Chapter 392: The Succubus [Pt 1]

"Ang! Ang! Ang!"

I often stayed in my room whenever these moaning sounds reached my ears.

"Harder! Faster! Deeper!"

Those words weren't directed at me... but the customer.

"Yessshhh. Ahhhh...."

Every night.

Every morning.

I heard the sounds of mornings and groans. That was my punishment for deciding to come to the Demon Settlement on my own.

It was a kind of hell, especially for a virgin like me. But, that didn't last long.

"Why don't I try it on you, my Original Magic?" Karlia, the Succubus spoke on a fateful day.

It had been a few months since I was being held captive by this Crimson Demon.

Though I wasn't exactly treated as a prisoner, more like a housekeeper, it was a strict rule that I couldn't leave her abode.

As such, it was clear that I was a captive.

"W-w-what??!" I bellowed in surprise.

It was a natural reaction for a virgin like myself.

"Come on, aren't you curious? Whether it'll work for you or not."

I had to agree with her words.

Karlia had been teaching me about Magic and Miasma for the few months I had been with her.

She initially didn't say anything, but after I asked, the Succubus answered my questions.

It seemed she was also kind of lonely, due to the kind of life she lived, so Karlia always enjoyed my company.

As we talked about Demons and Miasma--along with their connection to Miasma--I was making theories and also raiding various hypotheses.

Surely, the copulation between a human and a Succubus had to have been one of the things I wondered about.

"You're inept, so Miasma doesn't have any negative effect on you. It's just foreign energy--same as Mana. At least, strictly speaking."

I knew what she meant by that.

It wasn't as though Miasma wasn't deadly to me.

Since my Soul still considered Miasma as a foreign entity, it would be dangerous to expose such a core of myself to such energy.

Still, my physical body wasn't exactly rejecting the energy since I had no Mana Particles.

So, it stood to test, that Inept individuals could actually have relations with Demons.

My stay with Karlia proved that.

The major issue was... just how far could we go?

"W-we're not sure if your Magic will work on me. I'm Inept, remember? There's nothing to raise there..." I used my crafty words to escape the frightening reality before me.

"Is that so?" She grinned.

It wasn't that I was scared of Karlia, neither was she a non-ideal choice.

The Crimson Succubus was an extreme beauty. Her body was captivating beyond description.

Besides her red skin, the retractable wings behind her, and the tail that dangled above her buttocks, Karlia could pass for the most attractive human I could ever see.

He had a foxy grin and a devilish charm to her, so I doubted any man would find her repulsive.

However...

'Emilia! I have Emilia!'

... I didn't want to lose my chastity to another woman besides the one I loved.

"I see. It's a shame, then."

And so, I refused her offer.

The hell continued after that.

Day after day.

Night after night.

Sexual tension was building up within me, but I fought it with every ounce of my being. The fading image of Emilia kept my will from breaking.

Ever since that day, Karlia never mentioned the topic of the both of us having sex again, but I couldn't stop imagining it.

Still, I endured with all my might. I really did!

That was probably why I was able to last eight months without doing anything.

But, every man had a breaking point.

I was no exception.

"K-Karlia... remember that one conversation we had...?"

My crotch was bulging, and my body fidgeted as I spoke to her.

"Hm? What conversation? We've had many."

It was obvious that she was teasing me.

Karlia was an expert at reading people, especially simple-minded men. When it came to the topic of arousal, she could sense it a mile away.

The Succubus knew what I wanted, yet she wanted me to spill it myself.

"I-it's for research... I want to know the results..."

It wasn't completely a lie. Magic Research was important, and it would really help with the work I was doing in compiling all the information I could concerning the Demons.

But, who was I kidding?

I also wanted to have a taste... of Karlia's enthralling body.

"I see. This guy, you just can't be honest, can you?"

I gulped and steeled my resolve--the resolve of a virgin.

"I'm also curious... as to what kind of power I'll obtain after having SEX with you..."

And so, Karlia drew close to my trembling body.

I gulped several times.

The image of Emilia was banished from my guilty mind.

I had replayed the scenario in my head over and over again. My thoughts were an immoral wasteland that someone as pure as Emilia couldn't dwell in.

"Very well." Karlia grinned, pulling down my pants in a flash.

It revealed my bulging appendage underneath.

"Oh? Is this the usual size of humans?"

"I-I'm not sure..."

"Hmm. It's quite small..."

"Ngh!" I definitely felt that one.

"Looks like I'll have to restructure my body a bit." Karlia smiled, touching my throbbing lump of meat with her bare hands.

"A-ahh...!"

Succubuses had a special trait that allowed them to alter the shape of their bodies to a limited extent.

It wasn't exactly shapeshifting.

Their technique was more akin to muscle augmentation--involving enlargement or retraction.

That way, they were able to take in huge tools, as well as smaller sizes.

It only took a moment for Karlia to adjust her body to the size of my equipment, and so she rubbed it even more.

"A-ang...!"

"I see. I see. Alright then. Looks like we're good to go."

At this point, I was aroused beyond any form of reason.

"Come, now, Lewis. Let's do research with our bodies!"

Indeed! I wholeheartedly agreed.

And so, I lunged at Karlia and we both crashed into the bed.

Her body was soft and completely captivating.

She was gentle, guiding me every step of the way.

It was difficult at first. The hole I was plunging into was tight--too tight to casually insert myself into.

And so, utilizing every ounce of force in my body... I went into the forbidden cave.

"Aaaaaahhhhhh...."

Once I did, I realized two things.

One, this research was the best I had ever engaged in.

Two, my hell had suddenly turned into absolute bliss.

And so, I never wanted to come out of the cave.

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

Chapter 393: The Succubus [Pt 2]

The night I spent with Karlia was one of the most memorable of my life.

It was amazing beyond description. All my pent-up tension was released, and I became a brand new man once everything was over.

According to her, I passed out after doing it four times.

"Is that a lot?" I asked her.

"No. Pretty average."

As someone who had spent so much time with many men, Karlia probably thought I wasn't anything special.

It hurt my pride a little, but I had gotten what I wanted.

The research ended with the results I already expected.

Her Original Magic didn't work on me.

She said it was the same for her.

Neither of us became stronger thanks to the sex. With that out of the way, there was no longer any need for sexual relations.

The problem with memorable incidents, though, is that one often tended to think about them a lot.

And so, barely a week after my first time with Karlia—or with anyone for that matter—I was back in her room.

"What is it now, Lewis?"

It was shameless of me, but... I was beyond redemption at that point. My thoughts and body had sunk into depravity.

Was it love? Not really.

It was simply uncontrollable lust. This immense emotion forced me to go further into something I had initially wholeheartedly avoided.

"W-we can't be sure it's a failure!"

"What?"

"Your Original Magic! Let's try it again. It's too early to judge its effects."

"Lewis, my Original Magic's effects are instant."

"Ngh!"

She wasn't wrong. However... I couldn't accept that at this point.

"J-just cus it hasn't happened before doesn't make it less of a possibility!"

"Lewis..."

"I'm an Inept, right? An exception! Maybe it takes longer. Who knows if—"

"If you want to fvck me, just say it straight!"

I instantly fell silent.

"Jeez..." Her exasperated voice was filled with disinterest as she looked away.

Her words surprised me, making my timid self realize just how roundabout and selfish I had been.

No, I probably realized that a while back. I just didn't have the resolve to go beyond what was convenient for me.

Based on her stance, Karlia wasn't going to budge unless I fulfilled her condition.

She was right, though. I truly wanted to fvck her.

"... F-fvck..."

"What was that?" Her voice echoed in my ears as I stuttered with my speech.

Everything was at stake. And, even though I had thrown away my pride many times to get what I wanted, doing this was extremely difficult.

However, no pain, no gain!

"P-please let me fvck you!!!"

I was surprised by my earnest and desperate words. They were loud, and echoed throughout the room.

Silence filled the area and I returned to my senses.

'Shit... what have I... what did I just say?!'

My body shivered even more as I felt the uncomfortable decorum reach a climax.

However...

"Kekeke."

... I found out my worries were not necessary.

"Finally. You've finally said it, haven't you?"

Karlia looked happy, and then she stared at me with her seductive eyes, stripping me down with every gaze.

"Very well, then. Let's do it again!"

And so, we did it once more.

It initially started as something I would do once in a few days—as a means of releasing my sexual tension.

However, it soon became a daily routine.

Every day, I would go into Karlia's room... and we would have sex.

Day after day, I became one of her customers. But, unlike those suckers, I was getting everything free of charge.

Karlia taught me many things.

Magic. Demon Culture. Miasma... Sex!

We tried various positions, and she showed me a new world I never knew existed in the realm of intercourse.

No moment was boring, and I found myself learning new things as the times progressed.

It didn't take long for my memories of Emilia to start eroding.

I hadn't forgotten her entirely, but, it was simply easier to let her go.

Maybe it was cowardice that caused me to so easily abandon the memories I had with her, or perhaps they were simply overwritten by more exciting ones with Karlia.

Either way, it happened.

Slowly, my feelings began aligning with Karlia... until I was certain it became love. I found it a bit difficult to believe, but before I knew it, I had fallen in love with the Succubus.

A Human and a Demon—who would have thought?

I never told her this, of course. Knowing someone of her caliber, she must have noticed it.

Thankfully, she never mentioned anything about intimate feelings or love.

And so, time elapsed, and two years went by since I first met the Succubus, Karlia.

I got used to my life there.

And, to be honest... I had completely given up on returning home.

My life of Magic research and blissful companionship was the pinnacle of fulfillment.

Each moment, as Karlia got new abilities from new customers, she would show me.

We would study it together, and explore the possibilities.

There were some days when business was slow, but I didn't mind.

That only meant I would have Karlia all to myself.

Many would feel uncomfortable with the idea of having to share the one they loved with others, but I actually didn't mind.

I would be a hypocrite if I did.

It was business. Besides, her interactions with other Demons brought me information concerning the ongoing War, as well as more Intel on Magic.

The latter was more important, as I had given up on ever returning.

According to what I heard... the battle was still at a stalemate.

Usually, Demons gained sustenance by feeding on the corrupted souls of other Races.

Their habitat had grown desolate with the absence of sources of food, so they turned their gazes on the other Races.

That was what caused the war.

Unlike them, Karlia could simply gain sustenance by having intercourse with the Demons who patronized her, so she never lacked her meals.

Since it was necessary, I couldn't exactly complain about her relations with other people.

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

Chapter 394: The Succubus [Pt 3]

"Maybe the Demons aren't so bad, after all..." At some point, I had this thought.

They were simply another race who were trying their hardest to survive.

I learned the Demon culture, their language, and their values.

They were also living beings who felt and bled like all of us.

If only there was a solution to their problems, the war wouldn't be necessary. And so, I worked towards that goal.

I hadn't forgotten about my comrades, neither did I wish them evil.

But, as one who had seen both worlds, I couldn't take a side.

"If I solve the problem of sustenance, there will be peace. Humans can even form an Alliance with the Demon Race." That was my thought.

Karlia supported my cause, and so she diligently taught me more about what she knew.

It was a fun and exciting moment in my life.

Since Karlia was paid in several kinds of items—like Magic tools or rare gems, I never had any shortage of resources for my experiments.

I developed technologies for Demons, using Miasma as a base.

I went into further research, all amid my pleasurable times with the Succubus.

Unfortunately, fate couldn't allow such moments to last.

Everything comes to an end sooner or later. It was the same for our relationship.

"I was careless!" Karlia spoke to me with dismay on her face.

I had never seen her so worried or flustered. The confident and sultry grin of the seductress was nowhere to be seen.

"They're coming! The Demon Lords are coming here!"

Her words landed as a bombshell.

Demon Lords were at the very top of the hierarchy—with the exception of the Demon King.

What were they looking for with someone like Karlia?

"One of my customers figured out your existence thanks to his extremely high sensory abilities. He works as a direct subordinate of Kahn—a Demon Lord."

I remembered the Demon she was referring to.

His name was Kyron, and he had been especially rough on Karlia.

He was one of the only few people I detested to see going into her room.

Perhaps I had been too fixated on my anger that he noticed negative emotions being directed at him.

"He's a Demon General at the front lines. He must have somehow sensed your unique trait. It's bad, Lewis!"

Apparently, by the time Karlia was speaking, we were already being encompassed.

The Demons would most likely kill me—or use me as some form of bargaining chip.

Either way, the end that awaited me wasn't a good one.

"C-can we talk to them? Maybe if we showed them what I have been developing, then—"

"NO!"

"B-but if we—"

"You don't know them as I do, Lewis! They will kill you!"

That sent shivers down my body. I was forced to accept the ugly truth.

The Demons were still enemies of humans. It would be the same if a Demon was caught in human territory.

They would most likely be killed.

I had been too naive.

"S-so, what now? What do we do?" I was ready to do as Karlia asked.

She was far wiser and more experienced than I was with Demons, after all.

"We flee. That is the only way!"

"B-but, you can't survive outside the Demon World for long. How will you—?"

"I'm sure you'll figure that out once we leave. Besides, with your inventions, I can at least survive for a few months. If you develop a solution before those months are over, then we won't need to worry."

I was sure Karlia didn't mean to put any pressure on me, but she simply wanted to let me know our only viable means of survival.

She was doing this out of consideration for me.

I bit my lip upon realizing she was right, as always.

I was already Thirty-two years old, but Karlia was far older and more experienced. The only way out was for me to trust her judgment.

We escaped as fast as we could.

Karlia carried me and lunged into the darkened sky as we moved at an immensely fast pace.

She could have gone faster, but if she did, I would die.

Unlike a powerful Succubus like her, I was simply a regular Inept human.

As a result... our enemies eventually caught up with us.

They surrounded us with their large forces. I trembled at every moment, feeling the gathering of powerful people that could kill me many times over.

But, I soon realized that my fear was unwarranted. And that was because of one hard truth.

Karlia was overwhelmingly powerful!

She singlehandedly defeated all the Demons that surrounded us.

Even though she hated violence and was not very skilled in the art of combat, she decimated her opponents with ease—all while protecting me.

All the years of her stockpiling abilities had made her into a monster above the realm of Demons.

The only limiting factor was her consideration of me.

"Lewis... it pains me to say this, but... you're in the way."

She was holding back, suffering recoils and counters, thanks to me being with her.

"Escape without me. I'll catch up soon."

I bit my lip powerlessly upon hearing those words.

It was a bitter pill to swallow, but it was the most efficient method. After all, I was weak.

Never had I wished to be capable of using Magic in my whole life.

"Go now!"

And so, I ran off, skittering away like a powerless rat.

The enemies that tried to assault me were all blown away by Karlia's power, and she was able to successfully guarantee my escape.

I went further and further away from her. Looking back would only slow me down.

It would be terrible if I wasn't fast enough to escape on my own.

Then—just as I reached a good distance from the battle that raged on—I climbed a high mountain and used a specially enchanted pair of binoculars to see the ongoing battle.

This item could see a distance of at least a mile.

If I had Magic, I would probably be able to see even more. Since I didn't, my limit was only the minimum distance.

Still, it was enough for me to get a good grasp of the fight.

Karlia was easily dominating everyone.

She was outnumbered, hundreds of thousands to one, yet she defeated all of them.

That was the strength of the Succubus I had spent two years with.

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

Chapter 395: The Sage's Return

"She's crazy strong. I don't think I've met anyone more powerful!"

My old comrades couldn't hold a candle to Karlia. It made me realize just how small I was, and how fortunate my life had been to have someone like her by my side.

Then, just as I was basking in silent victory, the tide of the battle completely changed.

Why?

It was because 'they' appeared.

The Demon Lords!

All six of them assembled, floating in the air as they stared down at Karlia.

As I watched their multiple colors in a blur, my body trembled. I was shaking violently, feeling their power from the distance I was in.

'No. Run, Karlia... RUN!'

I wanted to hurry back, but my actions would be completely useless.

As I was still contemplating this, I felt the gaze of one of them shift.

It was the one who was colored black--the Demon Lord of Noir.

He glanced in my direction, and for a moment, I felt my insides tingle. He saw through me in an instant.

At that moment, I knew it was over.

However--

>BOOMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!<

Just as the Demon Lord was about to lunge at me, Karlia intercepted him and took the brunt of his hit.

I saw her cough out in shock, but she still managed to push him away.

Quickly, she turned to me. Even with our distance, I knew she could see me.

Our eyes locked... and she spoke some words to me.

I didn't hear them, but I could read every single syllable loud and clear.

Those words made my heart ache--especially because I felt the same way.

"I... I love you too." My lips moved of their own Accord, and I silently wished she would be able to hear me.

Then, Karlia smiled. Her expression turned dark a moment after, and then she nodded in my direction.

"RUN"

Those were her next words.

She told me to run.

And so, I did.

I ran as fast as my legs could carry me.

Even when I felt the earth rumble.

Even when I heard mountains crumble.

Even when blinding sparks of light flew in the sky.

I didn't stop running.

My breath was heavy, but I made sure to keep moving.

It was hard.

My heart was heavy, and my lips were quivering.

I neared exhaustion several times over--especially due to the bag behind my back.

It contained the most valuable of my research. I couldn't abandon them after dedicating so much of my time working on them.

Besides, they were vessels that held the memories of the time I spent with Karlia.

They were the product of both our efforts. There was no way I would leave them behind.

>BOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!!<

And so, with utter devastation occurring behind me, I successfully escaped the Demon Nation.

What happened afterward was a blur.

I had kept running despite my consciousness being hazy.

It wasn't until I saw the clear skies and oddly familiar landscape of the Humans that I was able to peacefully pass out.

My strength was used up, and I was probably going to die from exhaustion eventually.

But, I didn't.

Thankfully, some patrolling members of the Alliance's Forces saw me. I was taken to the Battle Camp, along with my luggage.

That was how I was saved.

And also how I reunited with the ones I never thought I'd see again.

"U-urhhhh..."

Stirring on my bed, I opened my eyes and found myself in a different place than I last remembered.

The white ceiling was completely different from what I had been used to for two years. My surroundings felt strange.

The energy in the air--Mana, rather than Miasma--felt foreign.

'Hold on... I can feel it?!'

How was it possible that I could feel Mana? That thought was enough to rouse me from the bed.

"A-arhh!" I winced when I sharply rose.

My body was still exhausted, after all. Still, I fought to sit upright and collect my thoughts.

It took a while, since my mind was still hazy, but... I eventually realized what happened.

"It wasn't a dream... it wasn't..." I nearly broke down, remembering the last expression Karlia made before our farewell.

I shivered, overcome with emotion.

But, before I could fully delve into those feelings, the white fabric that served as the door to the tent was removed--and a group of people entered.

"Y-you guys...!!!" With widened eyes, I saw people I hadn't laid eyes on in two years--comrades I left so abruptly.

My close friends and members of the Hero Party.

And so, despite my sense of loss for Karlia, a new emotion formed as I stared at the unruly bunch who were all looking at me with various expressions.

Tears fell from my eyes a

"Lewis... you bastard."

"It's been a while."

"Where have you been, you dolt?"

"I actually thought you were dead..."

"You reek of Miasma. You actually went there?!"

"Idiot! idiot! I'm so glad you're back, you big idiot!"

Tears fell from my eyes as I watched them speak.

"You guys..."

My aching heart raced, and then, just as I was about to calm myself, one final person entered the tent.

"Is he awake already? Let me in!"

As the sound rang in my ears, a face I had long relegated popped into my head.

'N-no... no way...'

The tent door opened, and the last person I was expecting to see appeared.

"Lewis... you're awake. You're alive... you're here..."

The whimpering voice came from a white-haired Elf. Her ears shook and her face turned red.

Uncontrollable tears fell from her eyes as she stared at me.

"I... E-Emi..."

My lips couldn't utter her name.

Even though she was looking at me with such love, devotion, and utter relief, I couldn't call out to her.

Guilt.

Immense guilt came over me. Then regret. Then anger. Then loathing.

I hated myself.

I couldn't bring myself to look at her, or any one of my comrades.

Thanks to my foolish recklessness, I left everyone on a quest to be the savior. Yet, I had returned... after so long... an utterly broken man.

I was going to wallow in this abyss forever--or so I thought.

"LEWIS!"

My body jumped once I heard the loud voice of an Elf I loved.

"Look at me, Lewis!"

Her words were met with no resistance. Hesitantly, I raised my face.

'I don't deserve to look at you. It's all my fault. I betrayed you. I'm despicable. I'm horrible. I'm useless.' Those thoughts swirled around my heart as my weary eyes looked at her.

But!

The moment I stared at her completely clear face...

"Lewis..."

The very second my eyes gazed upon her...

"... I'm so glad..."

Every single one of my doubts and grief dissipated.

"... That you're back."

Her warmth encapsulated my horrid self, and I found myself deeply wrapped in Emilia's love.

Once again, the light within me bloomed once more.

"E-Emilia..." For the first time in years, her name came out of my lips.

More tears fell as I stared at her. My comrades smiled. Some cried.

"... It's good... so good to be back."

The emotions displayed in that tent were enough to last a lifetime for me.

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

Chapter 396: The Celestial War [Pt 1]

War is a terrifying occurrence.

Sorrow and misery seep through the body and soul of those that experience it.

Countless innocents become victims and needless sacrifices are made.

No one desires war, but it can not simply be avoided.

As a result of two clashing interests, for the noble cause of both sides, War becomes inevitable.

Such was the nature of the conflict that drowned the entire world and destabilized all our affairs.

Countless victims on both ends weighed on our hearts as the terrible stench of blood and corpses lingered in the air.

It was a hellish landscape filled with nothing but broken hopes and despondency.

However, even in such a hopeless and despairing world, something beautiful formed.

—Love.

And with that emotion came hope.

It took some time for me to embrace my new reality, but I did.

Karlia was most likely dead—sacrificed in order to save me.

That was the only conclusion I could arrive at after waiting for so long, yet seeing no signs of her return.

"You don't know them as I do. They will kill you!" Those words of hers rang deeply in my heart.

Since I couldn't wallow in pain and regret forever, I decided to bury the past and move with the future.

Still, I did not despair. Why?

It was because I had 'her' by my side.

Every step of the way, she helped me, and while I often felt pangs of guilt for what I did with Karlia, those emotions faded away with time.

A year passed after I returned to my comrades, and the war intensified beyond normal.

The Demons were growing more desperate due to the absence of resources for sustenance.

They pushed our Forces to their limits, and even the Demon Lords began directly engaging in battles.

Fortunately, thanks to my research on their kind, we were able to counter their assaults with ours.

Defensive Magic specifically geared against Miasma was developed, and several tools were created with Demonic Energy resistance in mind.

It was especially good to have an Alliance comprising various races, so we could all rely on one another.

Magic developed a great deal during this period, and new technologies were developed to combat our common enemy.

I served as the Military Advisor and Grand Strategist in battle, successfully cornering and countering every action made by the Demons.

Soon, it only became a matter of time before their kind was eradicated.

However, for some reason...

'I can't do it!'

... I hesitated.

It was certain that if we were willing to sacrifice a little bit more, the War would soon meet a decisive end.

After spending a total of seven years facing the Demons, the long and weary war was finally going to come to an end.

We would take a major hit, but I was sure victory could be achieved.

Despite that, I couldn't push through with my plans.

'What happened to... our plans?'

Thoughts of the times I spent with Karlia would often surface.

'Was it all for nothing?'

Not all Demons were bad. No, it was probably fair to say that none were inherently evil.

Just as humans, Elves, Fairies, and the other Races had their flaws and values, the Demonic Race was no different.

My time with Karlia had taught me that it was indeed possible for our kind to coexist.

I had even spent two years of my life devising methods and theories to solve the problem the Demons were facing—thus creating a strong basis for ending the war.

"Those moments, were they for nothing?!"

I couldn't accept it.

Karlia made the ultimate sacrifice for my sake. Certainly, it wasn't so I could utterly annihilate her people.

I couldn't, in good conscience, do that.

There had to be another way to finish the long-held conflict between the two opposing forces.

And so, I ventured deep into my journals and old research materials.

'The device I was developing back then... it was close to perfection!'

Spending my time sourcing through the project I had abandoned, as well as cross-referencing everything with the new information I currently had, a new path opened up.

"That's it!"

My project was dubbed the Miasma Generator.

It was supposed to pump out and disperse Demonic Energy over a wide area, ensuring everyone under the cloud was constantly receiving a constant infusion of Miasma.

Just as people naturally breathed air, it would work with Miasma.

The Demons, in their allocated patch of land, would be able to survive as long as they were pervaded by the effects of the device.

It was the perfect solution.

Unfortunately, there was a major problem.

"Fuel..."

We needed a strong power source to generate, process, and disperse the Miasma.

However, no such thing existed.

Or... did it?

As a result of my desperation, I resorted to the last straw that seemed like nothing but a fairy tale.

That was the beginning of my journey—no, our search—for the most powerful objects in the world.

—Arcanas.

"No."

"Surely, you don't believe that story."

"We have a chance to end things decisively. Let's do it and out a close to this terrible war."

"Lewis, why are you hesitating now?"

"Those bastards don't deserve understanding or mercy. They just need to die."

"I have to say, I'm quite interested..."

As expected, I was faced with resistance.

None of my comrades—or the leaders of the respective Races—wanted to give my suggestion a try.

They had lost too much to the Demons.

The sacrifices were too extreme.

Even if they would have to lose even more, everyone was determined to see things through to the bitter end.

Ultimately, the Demons would be entirely destroyed.

'... I can't allow that...'

Only I was obstinate about this.

After spending so many years watching both sides slaughter each other, I couldn't take any more.

Karlia's sacrifice and our moments together couldn't have been an illusion. I truly believed that.

"I will search for another way! That's the decision I have made."

As expected, many turned against me.

But, one person never doubted the choice I made, even when my friends were hesitant about it.

"If that's what you believe... then I'll trust you."

Emilia—my wife at that time—supported me with all she had.

I was already 35 Years Old.

During the chaos and amid the calamity, we had been bonded in matrimony.

Even as I fought well on the front lines, Emilia supported me every step of the way.

And even as I made my decision to honor the moments I spent with my previous lover, she sided with me as well.

As a result, I had enough confidence and resolve to tread down that path.

Eventually, my comrades did as well.

Together, we began our search for the Arcanas.

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

Chapter 397: The Celestial War [Pt 2]

The Alliance never stopped their efforts to end the Demons.

However, with the Hero Party absent, both sides eventually drew a stalemate.

As a result, it bought us enough time to traverse the world.

How and when we discovered the Arcanas is a tale for another time, but our Party ventured into the most amazing and deadly of places in our search for an alternate.

As a result, after a year elapsed, we were able to find three.

And, of those three... I was able to obtain the perfect catalyst for my Miasma Generator.

"The Devil."

An ominous Arcana that only I could wield without being absolutely corrupted—thanks to my Inept Status.

Also, while I didn't discover it until a pivotal point in my life, Karlia's Original Magic [Dual Cultivation], actually had an effect on me.

My body's physiology had been slowly altered thanks to copulation between myself and a Demon such as her.

We did it so many times, so the change ran deep—until it became irreversible.

As a result, my body became extremely resistant to Mana.

Not only could I somewhat sense it, but the positive force was also repelled by my body.

As a result, Magic cast using Mana, below the Advanced Level, had no effects on me whatsoever.

Even Advanced Level Spells had only minimal effects.

That was Karlia's final gift to me.

It served as both a blessing and a curse.

Most offensive Magic would leave no scratch on me—considering the fact that most Mages could use beyond Advanced Level Spells at that time.

I was somewhat invincible.

The disadvantage was that Healing Magic was also rejected by my body, so unless countless Advanced Healing Spells were performed—or a Peak Spell was used—I couldn't magically recover from even the slightest injuries.

Miasma-based Magic could also affect me, so it wasn't a total buff.

Still, I was able to survive many things thanks to this ability. In addition to my Mana Rejection, I had Martial Arts, Magic technology, and unmatched intelligence.

That allowed me not to fall behind my other powerful comrades.

As a result, during our adventures, my inability to use Magic never bothered my friends. It was something I intentionally made sure of.

After all—

"Lewis... it pains me to say this, but... you're in the way."

—Those were words I never wanted to hear again.

"Let us make a truce!"

After gathering the appropriate materials to make my project a success, we returned home—to the ensuing chaos.

Due to the current state of the war—as well as the clear stance I and my comrades took in opposition to further conflict, the higher-ups had no choice but to agree.

Since we realized that they would change their minds if they knew of our possession of the other Arcanas, every member of our team swore not to mention it to anyone else.

As a result, their existence was kept a secret.

After settling matters with everyone on our end, the next step was to deal with our adversaries—the Demons.

...

Somehow, we managed to do that.

I personally sought an audience with the Demon King.

I and my comrades appeared before the noble ruler of the Demons.

As I thought, he wasn't the villain everyone painted him to be. He was the same as any leader.

The Demon King simply wanted the best for his people.

Once we revealed the cards up our sleeves, including the Arcanas in our possession, and our plans to settle things peacefully, he had no choice but to accept our plans.

"I... do not want to see any more of my people perish."

And so, the war came to a conclusion.

All thanks to the resolve of one man, and the aid of many, we were able to prevent the extinction of a whole Race—as well as any further sacrifices of our people.

It truly was the happy ending I desired.

Emilia and I moved to the Eastern Empire, and I planned on us spending the rest of our lives there.

But, strictly speaking, only my life would be expended.

I noticed something after spending much time with Emilia.

Even though vestiges of wrinkles had slowly begun to form on my face—normal and symbols of advancing age—her skin remained smooth and fair.

She never aged in the slightest.

Emilia would go on to live for a few hundred years, even after I died.

It made certain dark thoughts linger in my mind. However, even before those thoughts fully manifested, our life together was interrupted by the most unexpected incident.

I was already 37 Year Old.

The Celestial War was over; Emilia and I had just moved into our home.

The affairs with the Demons had completely stabilized, and the machine was working perfectly.

My comrades returned to their respective homes to spend time with their families and loved ones.

We were happy.

I... was happy.

Until—

>BOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMM!!!<

An explosion occurred within the massive courtyard that surrounded the large mansion where Emilia and I resided.

It was in the middle of the day, and I had been taking a stroll in my compound when the explosion occurred right in front of me—a small distance from me.

It was as if something heavy and powerful had just descended from the sky—no, that was actually what happened.

The quaking ground forced me to fall to the ground, and I groaned as my buttocks hit the smooth surface of the floor.

Even though the area before me was partially destroyed, whatever fell made sure to have enough consideration of me and my immediate vicinity.

But, much to my error, it wasn't a 'thing' that fell.

From the thick smoke and likes of dust that gathered around, I could decipher the form of a being within.

It didn't look like a regular human, but it was definitely a person.

"W-who's that?!" My body instantly took an offensive form and I drew the sheathed sword strapped by my waist.

I felt no bloodlust, but, certainly, an intruder who so rudely charged into my territory didn't deserve a warm welcome.

As I focused my gaze, a voice emerged from the smoke.

"Jeez, that's awfully cold, Lewis..."

My heart nearly stopped when I heard it.

Instantly, my eyes widened, and I shook. The voice that echoed in my ears was something I couldn't forget no matter how hard I tried.

'Could it be? N-no, that's... not possible!'

Just as my mind struggled to comprehend what could or could not be, the figure completely emerged from the pillars of smoke and revealed herself to me.

"N-no... it can't be..." My whisper contained so much emotion that it almost felt like I would break apart.

The red skinned, exquisitely dressed, and inhuman-looking being smiled at me.

Her wings flapped behind her, and her tail danced in the air. The curved horns on her face and her black hair added even more to her allure.

Yes, this most certainly wasn't a human. However, she had touched a deep spot within me that no member of my Race had ever arrived at

"... Karlia...?"

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

Chapter 398: Painful Reunion

I thought she was dead.

Before then, I had spent months waiting—hoping for even the littlest signs of her existence—to no avail.

Those were one of the most miserable moments of my life. I caused pain, not only to myself, but also to Emilia and my comrades.

They couldn't understand my obsessive fixations, but they couldn't bear it either.

Eventually, for their sakes and mine, I had to let go... and accept Karlia's fate.

It had been years since I accepted her death. So, why...?!

"Did you really think I died? Hahaha, you know nothing!"

The Succubus was laughing at me like everything was perfectly normal.

It would have been easier to believe if I was hallucinating or having a dream, but neither seemed to be the case.

Everything I was seeing and experienced was real.

"H-how did you... they didn't kill you...?"

"When you say it like that, it almost sounds like you wish I was dead!"

"N-no, t-that's not... I just—"

"I'm just messing with you. No need to be so tense. Hahaha!"

And so, Karlia narrated her ordeal to me.

It turns out they didn't kill her. No, it was more like she was too valuable to be disposed of too easily.

As a result, she was forcefully trapped and imprisoned using Magic.

Using the influence of drugs and Magic, they forcefully made her have constant sexual relations with several Demons.

Every day, even more than the amount she had been used to, Demons flooded her room and she had to service them.

That was how they bred soldiers for the War.

Even Demon Beasts were forced upon her, and she was in no position to refuse—both physically and mentally.

This continued for years... until the war finally ended.

After it was over, she was released from her compulsory mating duties, and was freed.

Having her mind and body broken over and over again, there was only one person—one reason left for her existence.

Me!

My lone existence was enough to bring her out of the abyss that she had been plunged into.

And so, after recovering her mind and body, Karlia only had one place to go—one person to see.

She left the previous Demon Settlement where she was held prisoner and journeyed to the Human world.

"B-but, your constitution! How did you get sustenance? D-don't tell me you—?!" I had been initially worried that she was forced to take the Souls of humans as sustenance.

However...

"Hey!" Karlia gave a cute pout, then sighed in disbelief.

"What do you take me for?" Those words crushed my heart.

"I-I'm sorry..."

"Hmph! As long as you understand!" Her cherry personality never broke.

Despite the horrors she narrated to me—Karlia never changed who she was.

Unlike someone so weak-willed as me, she was a true gem who only glowed brighter under pressure.

As for how a Demon like her was able to freely interact with me—even with Mana pervading everywhere—it was the same reason behind my Mana Resistant Body.

Our multiple sexual escapades caused a new surge of abilities that went both ways.

As a result... Karlia was completely immune to Mana Poisoning for some reason.

Her body was completely halted from deteriorating. The Mana that came into contact with her instantly transformed into Miasma and was processed.

As a result, she never really lacked sustenance and was always being fed by the surrounding Mana.

It was absurd, but I had no choice but to believe it.

After all, here she was, standing right in front of me.

The one I had loved with all my heart.

The very person I cherished so much that I chose the most difficult—seemingly impossible—path, so I could save her kind.

"So... here I am, Lewis. Sorry I'm late, but..."

Karlia approached me slowly. Her seductive body swayed casually as she drew closer to me.

I knew what she wanted. That was because I wanted the same thing.

However...

"Karlia, w-wait..."

... It was already too late.

"What is it, Lewis? Are you mad at me for arriving so late? Please understand. I... I had no choice. But, I'm here now."

As she approached me, I moved backward. The distance between us never closed.

"L-Lewis... why are you being like this? Even after... after everything..."

My heart ached beyond description. Still, I couldn't make the same mistakes. As much as I loved Karlia, it... simply wasn't—

"What's the problem, Lewis? I-I'm here now. W-won't you even look at me? Won't you embrace me as you did in the past? Have I become so disgusting and unsightly to you? Is it because of what they did to me? Are you repulsed by that? You never had a problem with it before! Besides, I don't have to do that stuff again. As long as we're together! Remember our promise? Hey, Lewis, look at me. Lewis? LEWIS!"

I bit my lip and couldn't even utter a single word.

Why was I a coward when it counted the most?

"If you want to fvck me, just say it straight!"

Weirdly enough, those words of hers popped into my head at that point.

It gave me the resolve I needed.

Even as she was about to break down before me. Even as she fought back tears and looked at me desperately. Even as she yearned for me.

I determined within my heart to be completely honest with her.

Unfortunately, before I could say anything...

"Lewis, what's going on here? Are you alright?"

... Yet another complication occurred.

Emilia glided to my side in a flash, traversing the long distance she had been previously the moment she spotted Karlia in front of me—as well as the massive hole in our compound.

"Who is this?" Emilia asked, readying her Magic.

Even if we were currently at peace with the Demons, having one invade our compound and looking at me with such emotion wasn't a good sign for my wife.

Besides, even though I didn't notice it until she stared at my hand, I was still tightly gripping my sword.

"Who is she?" Emilia asked once more, staring at Karlia with hostility.

The Crimson Succubus and the Elf Princess stared at each other with both surprise and a sudden sense of enmity.

At that point, it felt like all hell would break loose. And, the worst part was...

... I was at the center of everything!

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

Chapter 399: Choice [Pt 1]

"Who is she?"

I was utterly speechless.

"Lewis... who is this?" At this point, even Karlia was asking me.

Both women sharply stared at me, demanding an explanation.

But, what could I say?

This was not at all what I had imagined my newly established peaceful life to turn out. Their stares turned into glares, and my heart squeezed in response.

'What should I do? What do I say?!' My brain was in overdrive, wondering how to handle the situation.

As the algorithms ran in my head, the only paths I saw in front of me were incredibly bleak.

All routes literally led to doom.

Fortunately—or, rather, unfortunately—I never got to answer that question.

"I am Lewis' wife! Who are you?" Emilia took the lead instead, stepping forward to challenge the equally attractive, but more seductive Succubus

I could only watch in timidity.

"What? I-is that true? It's not true, right? Right?" Karlia looked at me with disbelief.

My heart nearly crumbled from her gaze. I truly wished I didn't exist as her eyes begged me to deny the truth.

"I-it's true..." I was forced to admit.

Those words of mine seemed to break Karlia.

For someone who had endured unimaginable pain—horrors I could not even begin to fathom—and who only had me as her tether...

... Hearing me affirm that I was no longer hers was something that would ruin her.

"N-no... it can't be. You're lying... you're lying..."

Watching such a beautiful and perfect woman break down before me was something that only brought more sorrow to my heart.

And so, I could only watch... and endure.

"Lewis, you're lying, aren't you? She's lying! You're not hers! You're mine! You said so, remember! Those moments we spent together... those years... I endured everything for you! You... you..."

At this point, Emilia was already casting glances at me.

I knew I was in serious trouble, but the most important matter to deal with couldn't allow any more distractions from me.

"K-Karlia, calm yourself. The truth is—"

"You two-timer! Cheat! Traitor! Liar! Bastard! You..."

The atmosphere grew intense, and even Emilia was pushed back by the pressure being emitted by Karlia.

The compound trembled, and the surging power coming from the enraged Succubus only increased.

"Keuk!" My wife bitterly groaned as the wild energy pushed her further back.

For some reason, I felt none of the lashes caused by Karlia's outburst. Was it an intentional effort on her part?

Or perhaps it was subconscious. Either way, everything else was devastated except for me.

"You... you're mine, Lewis... you said so. We promised. We bonded. I love you, Lewis! You said you love me too!"

Her overflowing emotions were getting too dangerous. If I didn't do anything, it was going to escalate beyond my control.

"I did! I truly loved you, Karlia! B-but..." I fought with all my energy to shout, straining my voice despite the strong howling of the heavy wind.

"But what? You love me, Lewis, right? That means I'm yours and you're mine! Hey, let's get out of here! Let's leave and do what we've always done—what we wanted to do!"

Karlia began saying so many things that I had told her in the past.

Even conversations that I hardly remembered were brought up by her.

"I never forgot any of them! We are meant for each other, Lewis! You think so too, right?"

Emilia was already feeling suppressed by the level of Miasma Karlia was releasing, but none of that bothered the Succubus in the slightest.

Her attention was on me and nothing else.

"Urgh... Lewis... stop her... she's... she's out of control." Emilia whispered as she fell weakly to her knees.

Elves were extremely weak to Miasma, and Emilia was no exception.

My wife was powerless before Karlia, and if this went on, she would most likely die.

Perhaps that was even what my previous lover wanted.

Still, I couldn't have that!

It became a decisive moment in my life, and I had to choose—once and for all—whose side I was on.

"Karlia, stop it! I don't love you anymore! I love Emilia. She's my one and only wife. Stop hurting her!"
With trembling in my voice, I raised my blade and pointed it at the woman I loved with everything I had.

No matter how much I loved Emilia, I couldn't deny the throbbing in my heart as I stared at Karlia as well.

However, no matter how one tried, they couldn't possess everything. There was no way fate would allow me to have the two of them.

As such, I was forced to choose.

Rather than stretching my hand for something, it was better I kept holding onto what I already had.

I made my choice as a result of this rationale.

"N-no... Lewis. You don't mean that. You don't..."

"I DO!"

Rushing to Emilia's side, I embraced the coughing Elf tightly, burying her in my arms. My blade was still pointed at Karlia as I comforted the wife I had.

"I... see..."

The look Karlia had on her face... I could never forget it.

A cold gaze, filled with an immense pressure I couldn't fathom suddenly took over.

"... So, you chose her..."

It felt like I would die—as though it was truly the end.

"... You don't love me anymore."

I tightly embraced Emilia, awaiting whatever justified action Karlia would mete out on me.

However... the attack never came.

>FWOOSH<

The Succubus' wings flapped as she took to the sky.

"Farewell, Lewis..." I lifted my face to the sky as she said those final words.

After that, she flew beyond the blue and white expanse above me, disappearing from sight.

I never saw her again after that day.

I never heard of her as well.

Not until the final moments of my life...

And, even if the pangs of my heart didn't cease as I watched Karlia go, my wife was the top priority.

Her shivering stopped, but I never let her go as she crumbled into my arms.

"I'm sorry, Emilia... I'm so sorry!"

With trembling emotions, and tearful eyes, I sat there with the love of my life.

Tightly locked in an embrace with Emilia, I never let go, even until I passed out.

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

Chapter 400: Choice [Pt 2]

"I'm sorry, Emilia."

The next time I saw Emilia after that incident, I bowed my head and apologized to her.

The guilt plaguing my heart finally surfaced, and I felt like shit for not telling her of Karlia—and my experiences with her.

"Lewis, it's alright. I just... I was just confused." She said with a soft smile.

Clearly, she wasn't entirely fine.

She was worried. I could tell from her slightly pale face that she wasn't completely fine.

'I owe it to her. I'll explain everything...'

And so, I did just that.

I told Emilia about my relationship with Karlia. Explaining, without excluding some questionable details, I revealed how I enjoyed my time with my Succubus lover.

How we talked and enjoyed each other's company.

How we fucked like rabbits.

How we built Magic Items and technology together.

I told Emilia everything.

"I... that's a lot to hear. I always thought you suffered during those two years..." Apparently, she never brought it up because I was in so much pain for quite some months after my return.

Anytime my disappearance for two years was mentioned, I always gave a pained expression or a sad smile.

As a result, even Emilia thought it was something rather left unsaid.

But, hearing everything now... she was shell-shocked beyond measure.

"So, that's how you got your body's special constitution."

I could only nod as her violet eyes probed me.

"I need some time to think about this..."

I knew her decision was warranted. To be honest, I had known for some time now... how oddly fit together we were.

I was growing older and older—becoming less attractive and less fun as I used to be—but Emilia never changed.

The creeping fear within my heart manifested once more, and it soon turned into more self-loathing and an immense inferiority complex.

'I don't deserve her! I don't deserve this...'

As a result, even the love that I had tightly clutched, slowly began loosening from my grasp.

To distract myself from the constant pangs of my heart, I returned to the embrace of Magic—burying myself into learning more about it.

I found comfort in it, and began spending more and more time studying and writing.

Even though I was meant to draw Emilia closer during this period, I didn't.

She had said she wanted some time to process all I told her, but, I simply used that as an opportunity to distance myself.

Eventually, the love we both enjoyed turned sour.

The home was nothing but an empty shell of forlorn lovers.

Silence filled out days.

I studied earnestly, experimenting in my special room, completely distanced from Emilia.

I hardly saw her during those days.

I couldn't even look at her.

Then, time passed... and I turned 38 years old.

Even though I had only advanced a bit in age, the constant load of work I often had—as well as the countless sleepless nights—made me look ragged and miserable.

I was thinner than before, having a rough appearance and the very look of a destitute. Being drunk on Magic Research had morphed me into something... ugly.

I looked at myself in the mirror... and hated the man I saw.

Then, Emilia passed me just at that moment. And then, for the first time in a long time, I glanced at her.

She was still the same!

As beautiful and lovely as ever. Not a speck of flaw could be seen on her.

That was the last straw. I couldn't contain my insecurities, fear, self-loathing, inferiority... and slight jealousy.

So, I made the worst mistake of my life.

"Emilia... let's go our separate ways."

As usual, she gave me her smile. It was a bit different from the previous times. It had hints of pain hidden within, but perhaps I was too absorbed in myself that I failed to notice.

"Have I... become a burden to you?"

My heart bled profusely.

I knew those words were supposed to be said by me. Emilia was still beautiful, charming in every way.

Her face was paler than usual, but it never took away her perfect form. Unlike her, I was...

"I just... don't see this working out any longer. So, please..."

I probably thought she would argue things with me, like how Karlia had. If she had fought till the very end, I would most likely have rescinded my decision.

I didn't have that strong a will to reject a woman I loved twice.

"Okay, then. I understand..."

She didn't argue.

I was more surprised at that—the fact that she so easily let go. Somewhere in my heart, I thought she probably felt the same all these years.

That I was only being a shackle holding her down.

And so, with my twisted sense of love, I drove Emilia away.

She left the very next day.

The faint smile she had on her face remains with me to this very day. After all, that was the very last time I saw Emilia.

I was able to return to my Magic Research uninterrupted.

Perhaps it was a stroke of luck. The grief I had was channeled into more productive work—and it turned out to be a very good motivation.

I started developing Spellcraft and quite a few other lovely innovations during this period.

Wasn't this what I wanted? A deep exploration into the world of Magic!

This was the pinnacle of my existence, right?

I was finally living the dream, right?

Magic was all I needed, right?

WRONG!

Eventually, burnout soon caught up with me and everything I did seemed so meaningless—like garbage.

The higher one is, the harder they fall.

My despair and misery were terribly immense once I came to myself.

Just what had I done?!

I wept for many nights. I felt utter misery every single time.

For a great deal of time, I didn't do anything but mope around in my home.

It would have probably been like that for a few more years—perhaps even forever.

But...

"What the heck, Lewis?!"

"Get up, man! Don't waste away like this!"

"We decide to visit you for a reunion and you end up like this? Crazy bastard!"

"How the mighty has fallen!"

"Get over yourself, retard. We need your help!"

... My comrades saved me from that darkness.

Perhaps the idea of being needed by someone once again moved my heart. And so, my useless body stirred to their words.

"What do you want?"

As we sat at a round table, I stared at all of them. I hadn't seen them in so long, yet... they all looked the same—at least almost the same.

Even Gawain never lost his youthful glow.

I was the only one different. Why?

"We discovered the existence of another Arcana. But, everything is still scrambled, so we need your help in piecing together the records and discovering where it is. Think you're up to it?"

Arcanas were objects of transcendental power.

Perhaps... they could hold the answer to my constant grief.

If Arcanas could do anything—alter the very principle of the world—then...

Maybe one could restore my youth.

Maybe one could permit me to travel back to the past and fix my mistakes.

If that was possible, then... I would be able to return... to 'her.'

"What do you take me for? Show me what you've found out!" I grinned with determination.

The Arcanas became my hope at that time, and my friends were my support.

I was 39 years old at that time.

Together, we later went on adventures to discover three more of those transcendental objects.

For three years, we journeyed together... until I turned 42.

That was when we built our base, hiding each of our various treasures—like a time capsule—and hoping the future generations who were worthy enough would find them.

Afterward, we went our separate ways once more.

That was the end of an adventure... and the start of a new one.

The journey where I met the two other individuals who changed my life—as well as my view on Magic—completely.

Unfortunately, I never found the Arcana I was looking for.

I never corrected any mistake; neither could I restore my youth.

And so... I wasn't able to return to Emilia.