

SPELLCRAFT 531

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

Chapter 531: The Mysterious Swordsman [Pt 1]

A man walked on the fine grassy plains.

His long auburn hair flowed like an endless stream in the wind, and the blue kimono he wore danced as the breeze beat it.

He had a blade strapped on his waist—nothing too fancy.

As he kept walking, he laid eyes on a faraway place.

It was a large city located at the center of massive mountains. That was his destination, yet his movements were calm and precise.

He enjoyed the walk as he slowly, yet steadily approached.

Anticipation built up over time, and this Swordsman didn't want to rush things.

Finally, after a while, he arrived at the settlement.

His unsheathed blade was now in his grasp, and his gaze was locked on the most important building in the entire settlement.

It belonged to none other than the Beast King.

>VWUUUUSSSHHH<

Instantly, blue particles of power burst forth from his body and passed through his blade as a conduit.

This happened so seamlessly and naturally, yet the power caused everything around the man to tremble.

"#01: Rend."

A single swing.

All it took was a single casual swing... and the building came crashing down—no, the entire compound was sliced cleanly.

>BOOOOOOOOMMMM<

The swordsman watched the destruction from afar, satisfied that he had given his greeting.

The next thing he did was to seat atop high ground and await the retaliation that the nation would offer him.

Thankfully, he didn't have to wait for long.

Like a meteor, the current Beast King known as Gerard came crashing down a distance from the swordsman's position.

The atmosphere suddenly became tense, and a surge of rage-filled emotions was stirred within the Beast King.

"Who the hell are you? How dare you strike at us? What the heck do you want?"

Upon hearing the question, the swordsman finally stood on his feet and faced Gerard. Usually, he would have communicated with violence, but it would be rude to do that out of the blue.

Courtesy demanded that introductions were made. Besides...

"I am known by many as the Martial Blade God. Upon sensing a great distortion here nearly three weeks past, I come to seek a strong opponent."

The swordsman looked no older than thirty, if not thirty-five, but the way he spoke connoted maturity.

His blade was in its sheath, and he was completely defenseless. Other than the fine clothing he wore, the man had nothing else going for him.

Gerard's glare didn't disappear, though.

"My family nearly died because of that attack. If you wanted to say this, why couldn't you just have knocked?" The Beast King's teeth were now grating as his hateful frown deepened.

"But... that was a greeting. I was certain I used the weakest of my techniques. Besides, isn't your kind motivated by dying at the hands of a stronger opponent? Besides... such an attack is nothing to you, right? The kind of energy I sensed back then... that clash and distortion was the strongest I had perceived in a long time."

The swordsman began unsheathing his blade and used his right hand to grip it tightly.

"Now, then, I've said enough..." He didn't have any particular form.

His stance was simply upright. A step slightly back, and his body balanced by his bladed hand being forward.

"... Let us exchange words with our blades."

Gerard didn't waste any time. He quickly assumed his most powerful form and roared with unimaginable power.

"I don't care who you are! You're dead!"

Compared to the time with Jared and Serah, Gerard was now stronger.

He had mastered the use of his abilities better, and he was more determined to win than ever before.

"I'll rip you apart!"

With that, Gerard brought his mighty hand swooping down.

However—

"Hmm..."

It was stopped before even reaching the swordsman.

"... Are you underestimating me? I should have you know... I'm quite strong. It wouldn't do you any good to hold back."

Gerard looked at the dead serious expression of his enemy and realized he was being honest. The Beast King needed to take the fight more seriously.

There was one problem with that though...

'I'm already in top form! How is this even—'

"Maybe I should start first?" The swordsman pointed his blade in Gerard's direction, the latter still being stuck with his earlier attack.

A sharp blue light sparked, and before Gerard could even interpret its power, the energy burst and consumed Gerard's body.

"GUAARRRRRGHHH!!!"

With a pained scream, Gerard found himself being consumed by the blue energy.

Quickly, he leaped backward, using everything in his power to douse the power that ravaged him.

'Mana isn't effective? What's going on? My healing... can't keep up?!' Gerard's body was throbbing with pain and fear.

—The FEAR OF DEATH!

Who would have thought that a Beastfolk who once sought after death would grow to despise it?

Now that he had found a purpose, and also the ability to grow stronger, Gerard did not want to lose his life.

Not now, and certainly not for a while.

"No... I can't die yet. Not until I at least..." The image of Serah Crimson flashed in Gerard's head and he gritted his teeth, pumping every power he had to the limits.

"WUUUAHHHHH"

Finally, the blue energy dispersed, causing Gerard's charred body to start healing.

"Hmmm... what's going on with you? I'm even talking more than necessary. Our abilities should communicate. A fight is like a conversation, and it's like you're not responding to my messages. Frankly, it's a bit hurtful."

Gerard was nearly out of breath, yet this man had barely even started.

His gaze was calm, and he didn't look the slightest bit disturbed.

'What kind of person... what kind of power...?!' Gerard tried to understand, but he couldn't.

>VWOOOOOMMMMM<

Gerard's body moved on its own as he lunged at the swordsman, baring his fangs at the monster who would kill so many people so seamlessly.

"No..."

With a light flex of his hand, Gerard found himself being pushed back, crashing into one mountain and destroying it in an instant.

However—

"GUROOOAAHHHHH!!!" His rage and uncontrollable sorrow did not let him remain down.

Once again, Gerard pushed himself toward the enemy, aiming to do nothing else than tear him apart.

His speed had reached a new pinnacle, same as his strength.

Gawain was bursting with so much power that he put his past self to shame.

Yet—

"No..."

He was flung to another mountain.

And then another.

Also... another one.

It mattered not how many times Gerard stood to fight, it still wasn't enough.

After a series of one-sided battery, Gerard was finally down for the count, completely exhausted.

"It seems I mistook you for the perpetrator of that incident. Since this is your territory, and you're the Beast King, I assumed..." The swordsman sheathed his blade and sighed.

Gerard could barely move, so he could only throb as uncontrollable pain assailed his body.

He felt like dying, but there was no way he could be able to reunite with his family without killing the man before him.

"Why... why are you doing... this...?!" Gerard asked in a wheezing tone.

"Well, let's just say you wouldn't understand. You're not a Martial Artist, after all." The swordsman looked in the direction of the devastated Beast Kingdom, and his eyes flickered a bit as he noticed something.

"It seems someone survived that attack. Perhaps that's the one I am looking for."

"N-no! He's not! They're not here! The true perpetrators are not here!"

"Hmm... you don't appear to be lying. Still, it's curious. I'll be heading to check it out."

The swordsman made to leave, but there was no way Gerard could allow the man to make contact with the only survivor of his people.

Most especially, the survivor was none other than Gerard's son.

"ASAAAAA!!! HIDE AS BEST AS YOU CAN!!!" With that final scream, Gerard launched himself toward his enemy, aiming to buy as much time as possible.

Even if it was five, or ten—maybe more—seconds, then he would have at least fulfilled his role as the father of a brilliant child.

Unfortunately for him—

"I said I was done with you. But, if it is death you seek..."

—The swordsman didn't even turn to look in his direction, or even flinch.

Blue energy surged forth and consumed Gerard, turning him to dust.

"You are not worthy to die by my blade." With that statement, the swordsman sharply moved to the point where he sensed the survivor.

It was instant, almost like teleportation.

"So... you're the survivor? This is intriguing." He spoke to the air—after all, it appeared as though no one was present where he was looking at.

"No need to look so scared. I won't hurt you. I find your ability interesting, but you'll most likely not be a match for me at this point..."

The swordsman could see a child crying and trembling.

"You must have survived because you became one with your environment. That is a good move. I can't even touch you as you are now, unless..."

Suddenly, the man's hand turned incorporeal, and he placed it gently on the shaking boy's blue hair.

"You're injured. It must be because you've not perfected it yet. Still, this is good. You have potential."

A bright blue light shone from the Martial Artist, consuming the young boy with its power.

However, rather than destroying the kid, the boy's scathed body became restored.

"You should rest. Help will soon come. I can already sense distortions..."

The boy still couldn't help trembling as the man stroked his hair.

"By the way, I killed your father and everyone else here. There won't be a chance for revival too, since I utterly broke down their souls. They're not coming back..."

The boy's eyes widened and tears streamed down. Even though he was experiencing such sorrow and pain, the man didn't stop stroking his hair.

"You have to grow stronger to avenge them, don't you? Grow very strong. The thing is, I'm quite powerful, so you need to become even more powerful. Enough to beat me someday... for your family."

Asa, the blue-haired boy couldn't explain his emotions. He was supposed to utterly despise the man in front of him, but he couldn't help but agree with him.

The boy wasn't sure why, but he simply couldn't hate the man in front of him.

Was it perhaps his gentle smile, or the calmness he exuded?

But, the swordsman was right... he had to grow stronger. For his family... for himself.

Having that thought, even though Asa still trembled in fear, his eyes showed a different emotion—if only just for a moment.

Upon seeing that, the swordsman smiled. Once again, he had managed to secure another potential opponent.

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

Chapter 533: Neron's Assessment

"That's good. Good boy. I'll be taking my leave now." The swordsman retracted his hand, and it returned to normal.

"Till later..." The Swordsman looked in another direction and gave an amused smile.

"How curious... someone has been watching everything this entire time."

>VWUUUUSSSHHH<

In a gust of blue energy, the swordsman vanished, and a distortion appeared immediately after.

Within the distortion came a group of people who sought after the truth... only to meet the Beast Kingdom in ruins.

"Amazing... simply, unbelievably amazing," Neron murmured, watching in his Timeless State.

He, who had witnessed every single thing that happened, had no better word to use in describing what he saw.

"That power..."

Neron couldn't interact with his surroundings during [Time Immersion], so he wasn't able to use his senses.

However, he understood how Mana and Miasma functioned, and the energy being used by the swordsman was neither.

"... Just what is it?"

Neron found his heart racing after experiencing everything. What got his excitement peaked was when he was noticed by the swordsman.

He and the swordsman actually made eye contact.

Whoever the mysterious man was, he knew Neron had been watching everything all along. It was a mystery, yet...

"I'm getting excited."

... Neron couldn't help himself from trembling slightly.

It would seem that he found an object of interest. Still, the young man was bothered about something... something darker.

His expression turned grim, and he gazed high into the sky.

"Is it going to happen soon? Had it happened already? I have no idea..."

He was referring to something only he could understand.

With a sigh, Neron placed his hand in his pocket while using the other to scratch his black hair. There really was no use in asking questions that got him nowhere.

"I should be returning now."

With that, he vanished from the past and claimed his place in the present.

"What?!"

After Neron told us what he saw, I found myself thrown into a sea of questions.

We were all astounded by the strangeness of the situation, and the man who just appeared to destroy the Beast Kingdom.

"At this point, we can't even be sure he's a part of the Organization, since his goal didn't seem to align with theirs..."

Of course, there was also the possibility of that all being an act.

He knew Neron was watching him, after all.

"...Crazy..." Someone behind me murmured.

I recognized that sound well.

Out of everyone here, he was probably the most surprised by Neron's sudden revelation and our current predicament.

"This is crazy... another swordsman practicing the Martial Blade God Technique..." Edward couldn't stop mumbling to himself.

Edward had thought he was the only one left who inherited the Martial School, yet he was now hearing of some other existence.

Not only was he slightly frightened, considering there seemed to be a gap in their abilities, but Edward also felt a strong sense of curiosity.

He truly wanted to meet this person.

"Neron, be honest with me here, based on all you've seen..." I asked, looking at the empty expanse around us, as well as the devastated area beyond the massive crater.

"... Who's stronger? You or him?"

Neron's expression was stoic, and calm. Despite the fact that I had known so many people, none were even close to this man in terms of power.

I was also far behind as well.

His abilities were simply too powerful, and he was growing stronger rapidly.

The obvious answer to my question would be—

"I don't know..." Neron's response caught me off guard.

"Eh...?"

"... To be honest, I don't know."

This was the first time I had seen Neron unsure about anything. Was the swordsman that powerful?

"He used a different kind of energy... almost similar to the Arcana in Serah's possession."

"Ah... so you think he's using an Arcana too?"

"No. It didn't seem like the work of an Arcana. I couldn't sense anything, since I was only a spectator in the stream of time. But, I could watch how it was manifested. It looked like it came from him.

"I see."

Someone with a unique energy... this was becoming more than I bargained for.

Still, some good news came out of Neron's shared experience, and that was Asa's special ability.

If we could all learn how he achieved that, then we had a better chance at withstanding the enemy's assault.

"Is this truly the end, though... the end of the Beastfolk Civilization?" Serah Crimson murmured.

I knew she had a complicated relationship with Gerard, the Beast King—well, it wasn't so complicated.

Still, our group had stayed here for a few days back when we were preparing for the war.

It was only natural that she would grow attached.

I glanced at Neron after Serah asked her question, and he simply shrugged.

"Haa, I guess I should show you guys." With another teleportation Magic, I teleported everyone to another location.

A few of my Automaton were left behind for reconnaissance and surveys. Of course, all of them had the [Unknowable] Spell on them.

>VWUUUUSSSHHH<

In a flash, we appeared in a white hall, surrounded by blank walls, tiles, and ceilings.

The smell of disinfectant swirled in the air, and I could feel my body being cleansed by Magic and science.

'It's probably the same for the others...'

"Where are we?" Ana asked first, observing the nitty gritty of her surroundings.

"It's a disinfecting room. I could have teleported directly to the main area, but this is simply protocol."

"Main area? Where are we going exactly?"

"Just be patient. You'll soon see for yourself." I sighed.

My reasoning was getting calmer now that more time had elapsed since the Soul Shock.

'It's just as Neron said. I just needed to calm myself a little.'

The agitation and impatience I was feeling were most certainly still present—and they weren't manifested due to the Soul Shock.

However, I usually kept my emotions in check and acted as the situation demanded. For me to lose a grip at that crucial moment... it was pretty lame.

>DDDRRRRIINNNGGG<

[NOTICE!]

~Disinfection Done~

[You May Proceed]

*

*

*

[A/N]

Happy Mass Release, everyone!!!

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

Chapter 534: Soul Project: Omega [Pt 1]

[NOTICE!]

~Disinfection Done~

[You May Proceed]

>SHUUUUUU<

A white door opened by the side, inviting us to leave the white room and pass through it.

Everyone moved, and before long, we were out of the blank room.

Now in a tube-like contraption, a different ping sounded, and the construct began to move.

It took us below, moving at enough speed to keep everyone comfortable.

The journey took only a few seconds, and then after we arrived at our destination, the tube opened and another door was shown in front of us.

"A white door again?" At this point, Ana was exasperated.

However, after everyone shot her dirty looks, the girl decided to shut it.

"Now, then, let's all be cool about what we're about to see, okay? No freaking out."

My audience nodded.

Though Neron was already aware of this place, everyone else would be seeing it for the first time.

In fact, only two people knew about what was going on down here. The only reason I was bringing in this many was to clear a misunderstanding... and also because they were people I had grown to trust.

'Well, I trust a few others, but these ones will be with me henceforth. I can monitor them, at least.'

With that in mind, I passed through the door in front of us, followed by Neron, then Serah.

Finally, the rest awkwardly moved behind us.

Upon arriving at the vast room, I smiled. It had progressed even more than last time, and it seemed everyone was hard at work.

I glanced behind me, looking at the newcomers.

'Let's see what kinds of expressions they'll make.'

It was a vast white auditorium, having no windows or exposure to the outside world.

Lighting was brought by glowing gems, and the coolness of the atmosphere was maintained by Magic.

However, these weren't the impressive aspects of the massive room.

Within the room, there were several pods—numbering thousands.

They were placed in cadres and floors, and each had name tags on them.

The pods were being maintained by Automatons, and while at least one Automaton was assigned to each pod, a few others were running about, floating in the air as they did one activity or the other.

The room wasn't rowdy, though. Far from it!

Every action that was being taken was organized, and each pod was provided with adequate care.

System Panels were atop each pod, displaying the condition of whatever was inside.

The Automaton's interfaced with a system of their own, and they interacted with several buttons at inhuman speed.

A large System Window was also erected at the top, close to the ceiling. It displayed several algorithms, and conditions of the facility.

All in all, it was a world beyond the realm of imagination.

"W-what in the world...?" Ana's voice croaked as she took in the brilliance manifesting before her eyes.

Lemi's eyes glowed as well.

Compared to her Workshop, this was nothing. It had only the best technology, and the Automatons were working together, in absolute sync.

"My god..." Maro was rendered speechless.

This far transcended what he thought was achievable in his generation.

Just how far had the world progressed?

He had heard that the Fairy Republic had a great deal of technological advancements, but the specs he was seeing far surpassed the stories he had been told.

Those who knew nothing about Magic Technology, though unable to gawk at the advancement of technology before them, still had surprised looks on their faces.

They never knew such a place could exist.

"What are you guys doing here?" A feminine voice came from above, and a flash of light zoomed in.

"Ah, I should have informed you beforehand," I said with an awkward smile, addressing the fairy before me.

She didn't seem especially angry, but I knew Jane more than anyone. The lady was certainly not pleased with having strangers invading her workplace.

"You think? I knew you two would be arriving soon... you just didn't tell me you were coming with guests." Her gaze met mine and Neron's.

"Well, stuff happened... it was a kind of like a last-minute decision.

I glanced at Neron to back me up, but he swiftly looked away.

"It was Jared's idea. He didn't even tell me before doing this. I'm just as surprised as you." Neron said.

'Traitor!' My eyes widened at the man's shamelessness.

So much for a friend's support

"Is that so? Looks like you have some explaining to do, Lewis."

Jane still called me Lewis, and not Jared. She probably felt more comfortable with that, and I had no problem with that. Well, there was one issue.

"Jane, not in front of the kids..." I smiled awkwardly.

'Ah, I slipped.' Realizing my mistake, I turned to see some suspicious gazes on me.

Things were getting a bit out of control, so it was better to clear the air up fast.

"Alright, let's just get down to business, Jane. I imagine you have a lot of work to do."

"You have no idea. There's more work now that they got killed. I thought you said we had more time."

"Yeah, I miscalculated. I didn't think they would attack that soon... or it could even be a third party."

"Hmmm, sounds convenient. In any case, you're right. I am busy. So, what is the matter?"

'I'm glad that she's too busy to get mad at me. Whew!'

With a nervous smile, I decided that it was time for introductions.

"Everyone, meet Jane Ursula. She's the leader of the Fairies, and also a notable friend and partner of Lewis Griffith."

Everyone—well, except for those who had met her before—was surprised, and I could see Ana especially shrieking with delight.

It seemed she was going to burst and start something that would get me into more trouble, so I had to quickly nip it in the bud.

"Since there's no time, I'll just explain what is going on here," I said, signaling Ana to control herself.

"This place is called The Soul Haven, where Neron, Jane, and myself are working on something that will change your concept of life and death as you know it."

Jane initiated it for her people, but I took it to another level. Neron helped with achieving the mechanics, thanks to his Magic abilities.

Thanks to that...

"We call it Soul Project: Omega."

... There was a second chance at life, even after death.

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

Chapter 535: Soul Project: Omega [Pt 2]

"S-soul Project?" Anabelle leaked out her voice, but sharply zipped her lips when I glanced at her.

This wasn't the time for questions.

Everyone would understand once I was done explaining.

"By infusing the soul with an artificial body, you can ensure the continuity of life."

I decided to go further and break it down for everyone.

Jane never forbade me from telling it to anyone, considering we still needed her expertise—or mine—to make the project work.

Besides, this was my trusted circle of friends.

"Now, how does this relate to the Beastfolk incident? I'll explain."

It all happened weeks ago, when I realized just how much of a threat the Beastfolk would be to my enemies.

Considering they were a valuable military asset, I couldn't bear to lose them in an unforeseen situation.

Also, I had made them my vassals, and as such, was responsible for their safety. That was when I decided on the groundwork for the current Soul Project.

Still, transferring consciousness from one body to another was not exactly the same as dying and coming back to life in a different body.

These were factors I put into consideration when thinking of the plan.

After discussing with Jane, we arrived at a consensus.

I would need to use two Arcanas for this venture. 'The Hermit' and 'The Hanged Man'.

The Hanged Man was supposed to utilize the information gotten from the soul to make a body, just as I did when resurrecting the Fairies.

The Hermit was meant to quicken the process with time manipulation.

Since I estimated the enemy to strike at us after a few months—after they had exhausted the means to obtain any other Arcana aside from the ones we possessed—the project had to be completed as soon as possible.

I decided to bring Neron into things, since he was more adept at manipulating time than I was... plus he had a larger pool of Mana.

Together, the three of us initiated the project.

My Automaton were used to replace actual workers, and they were efficient in their work.

Neron's Magic pervaded the entire building, causing the achievement of so much work in very little time.

Just as I was able to train for a century when only three years passed, Neron also replicated the effects on this place.

I could only imagine the amount of Mana he was burning every moment, yet he didn't seem troubled.

According to him, he could create Mana Cores every second—that was simply insane.

In any case, our work was perfect. There was only one thing to consider...

... How to obtain the Souls of our targets.

Souls reside in the body, and unless a person died, their Souls would remain there.

Now, how would we obtain the Souls of our targets to prepare a body for when they died?

The answer was simple.

—Soul Brand.

Every Beastfolk had a Soul Brand which connected them to me.

As a result, I was able to siphon a small quantity of their Soul Essence and store them in various pods, tagging them according to the name of the Beastfolk.

Souls were like cells, and even the smallest piece had the full information of an entire being.

As a result, we simply had to cultivate the newly isolated Soul, until it reached maturity, and then create the body from scratch.

That was the plan—for when our allies died.

Fortunately, we had already started this project a short while back, so the deaths of the Beastfolk weren't the end.

While it was painful and tragic, it wasn't over. They had a backup supply right here.

"When will it be completed?" I asked Jane.

"I already told you, about three months."

"Can't we speed up the time ratio? That will make the work faster."

"No way! There's a limit to how much an entity can live in warped time, especially adjusting to the new time rate."

"I did it, though." My voice interrupted Jane's complaint.

"Well, the time ratio of your Arcana wore out slowly, but we can't achieve that here. Besides, this is a delicate project. I know you need it as fast as you can, but there's no need to rush."

"You're right."

"Of course, I always am."

Despite the temptation, I couldn't exactly argue with that.

"You know what would be fun? Making a replica of you, Lewis! That way, I could have a partner for myself."

"H-hey! You're not doing that, are you?"

Jane was connected to me with a Soul Brand. Since she was an expert in that Soul Magic, it wasn't exactly impossible for her to achieve something like that.

She was even in possession of 'The Hanged Man' Arcana, so she could replicate my body.

"Hahaha! Maybe. You'll never know for sure."

I was panicking a bit, glancing at Neron for a little assistance.

Once again, he glanced away in betrayal.

"Well, now that you've shown them what they want to see..." Jane's smile was already wearing out.

I already knew what that meant.

"... GET OUT OF MY LAB!"

"YES MA'AM!" Neron and I spoke in tandem, and we ran out of the room.

Teleportation was forbidden inside the Soul Haven, considering it warped space, and an already sped-up time was already in effect.

If I used 'The Tower' while within the Soul Haven, a singularity could occur, and that would be bad.

Because of that, everyone returned to the tube that brought us to the location.

Once we arrived at the Disinfecting Room, I activated my Teleportation Spell, and we all went our merry way.

'I sure hope Jane was joking...'

"I was kidding. Did he really believe I would do that?" The Fairy smiled, now flying to her office.

There was no way she could use Jared's current Soul to create a person. If she did, it wouldn't be the Lewis she wanted.

Not only had Jared changed a great deal from the Lewis she knew, but he also wasn't as close to her as before.

Now that he was surrounded by so many friends and people of interest, she only had the role of a supporting character in his life.

There was no way she could wish for such a partner.

[A/N]

Am I the only one who feels for Jane?

SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar

Chapter 536: Gaining The Upper Hand

Within Jane's office, several things could be seen.

As she went inside, she smiled sadly, remembering her earlier conversation with Jared.

"I'll never be number one in his life, will I?" She laughed slightly.

A tinge of pain reflected in her eyes as she laughed, but the Fairy maintained her composure.

"But you... you're different, aren't you?" Jane glanced at a warbling orb within a tube.

It was on her desk, and the orb glowed ever so brightly.

It had a partly purple and partly golden ambiance, and it kept dancing in the contraption that kept it stable.

"Well, I have all I need now. Putting the current time we have, I can start working on this side project." Jane smiled as she sat on her desk and longingly stared at the orb in front of her.

"It won't be long now, Lewis..." Her smile was a bit sad and nostalgic, but her eyes were now brimming with determination.

"... I'll definitely bring you back."

We returned to the Eastern Kingdom—specifically our training area.

Thanks to the events that had occurred thus far, we were interrupted. However, now that a good number of it was resolved, it was time to return to the main issue.

"Serah, we should probably explain things to Asa when he wakes up. He'll stay with the Elves pending the time we work things on our end." I glanced at the Grand Mage, and the child she carried.

'Though, it would be nice if I figured out how he was able to become one with nature... that sort of thing.'

With a soft smile, and a downcast eye, I apologized to everyone for being forward back at the ruined Beast Nation.

Perhaps it was due to my unsettled heart, or the impatience that losing to Legris did to me. In any case, I had to control myself more.

"Let's get straight to the point... I was wrong. Rather, I miscalculated. It seems the Cult is moving faster than expected."

After they realized that I was listening to their conversation, they must have taken drastic measures.

I understood that much, but still... finding Arcanas wasn't easy!

'The only other person who can pull that off, except me, is Jane. But, she's busy on her end, and we even share a Soul Brand...' I couldn't doubt her.

Perhaps there were brilliant people within the ranks of the Cult, so I had to let go of my bias. Still...

'Even after the Hero Party disbanded, I still continued my search—alone. The only person I made contact with was Jane, thanks to our bond...'

As I thought of the good days, I realized how much I had relegated my closest friend to the sidelines.

It was because the situation called for it, but wasn't I being too selfish by leaving her all alone to handle so much work—where she would spend a very long and accelerated time?

'Jane enjoyed research, but she likes it better when she has a partner...'

I really wished I was there with her, but I was needed on the field.

'I guess I'll make it up to her later on...'. With that thought, I sighed.

Now wasn't the time for frivolities.

"Alright, here goes."

Space instantly warped, and I summoned a particular box that manifested in midair.

The black box remained suspended in the air, coated by my Mana.

"This is the only edge we have against our opponents," I said to everyone, noticing how they looked at the box.

I touched it, and after infusing enough Magic in key areas, like solving a puzzle, the box began to open, like a safe.

Eventually, the work was complete, and the black contraption finally granted me access to the contents inside.

"This..." I dipped my hand inside the box and brought out a book.

It looked a bit rugged, but it was quite large, with several notes sticking out of various positions.

It has a dark brown hardcover, and each leaflet was made to be extra sturdy. Anyone who saw this would realize that it didn't come from the modern era.

'Yeah, that's right. It's something I had in my last life...'

"I had Edward get this for me in a particular location," I said, addressing my audience's curious face.

'... My Memoir!'

When I was 42 Years Old, our Hero Party split up.

This was because of the death of one of us—Dom, the Indestructible Immortal.

After we parted ways, I couldn't return to the Eastern Empire.

Not only was it full of bittersweet memories, but my heart wasn't at rest.

I still sought after the Arcanas, probably to right the wrong I had wrought in the past.

It was absolute foolishness on my part, but I had already gone so far.

There was no way I could stop at my current point.

And so, I resumed my journey—alone.

Maybe it was because of guilt, but I didn't tell anyone. I just went on my own path.

It was at this point that I started to write my Memoir.

I documented my adventures with the heroes, who were my friends, and also the adventures we had.

But, most importantly, I wrote down every single result of my research on the Arcanas. Clues, texts, anything I could find that pointed me in any direction.

I did extensive research on the Arcanas, but without Magic, there was no way I could have solved the mystery myself.

That was also when I sought after the knowledge of more Magic.

And that was when I met another friend... someone who changed my life forever—at least in the brief moment we met.

"So, you're saying you somehow found clues that led you to believe that Lewis Griffith's Memoirs were in a particular location. That's why you sent Edward to retrieve it... is that right?" Ana spoke with a suspicious eyebrow raised.

"Y-yeah. That's right." I smiled.

Now that I heard Ana say it, my excuse was quite silly.

'But, it's too late to turn back now.'

"In any case, this is something that places us at an advantage."

'There's no need to start researching the Arcanas from scratch.'

With the knowledge in this book, and my current capabilities—as well as the aid of my friends—we would be able to gain the upper hand.

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

Chapter 537: Labyrinth Of Despair [Pt 1]

[One Week Later]

"Despite saying we were pressed for time, and that we had to hurry... this much had to be done." I smiled at my comrades.

They were all outfitted in different clothes and Magic Items.

Not only that, but their level of power had drastically risen—thanks to the one-week intensive training we did.

They looked like strangers, compared to their past selves—well, some looked just the same.

In any case, I was proud of how much had been achieved so far.

'While they were training, I was compiling all my research and developing a route. I'm still not done, but it's time we begin.'

I had no idea how long the enemy would take in finding out the positions of all the Arcanas, but for it to take me this long when I was simply building upon existing information, they couldn't have been able to get very far.

"We'll be going on our very first mission. Legend has it that the Heroes of the past actually challenged this one and they failed." I said.

In the past, a few of them would have made troubled expressions, but none of my comrades seemed the least bit shaken.

"The true nature of the Arcana is unknown, but one must overcome trials and tribulations in the process of obtaining it."

It wasn't easy on them, or me, but we had made it this far.

It was time we began our journey for real.

As we all readied our hearts, I felt a surge within my heart. Watching them all, I realized—

Neron Kaelid

Serah Crimson

Lemi Vindiel

Maro Smith

Aloe Vida

Edward Karl Leon

Anabelle Frederick

Jerry Keller

Ciara Epsilon

Maria Helmsworth

Ivan Smith

And finally...

... Asa.

—This was my team.

'If I add myself, we're thirteen. That's more than the Hero Party's numbers... and we're definitely surpassing them!'

"Let's get this show on the road."

>VWWUUUUSSH<

The blue warbling portal flashed, and then disappeared after bringing us to our destination.

The environment looked like the thick of a jungle, and several tall trees filled the area, nearly blocking out the sun from view.

The vines and dried branches on the ground were trampled upon by the soles of our feet, and the entire environment gave off an eerie vibe.

Thin fog pervaded the area, and there was a massive Mana disturbance everywhere.

If not for my heightened degree of Mana control, I would have been disoriented.

I observed my companions, and I found that they were all fine as well.

'They've all erected a Mana Field... good.' I looked around once more.

This place wasn't very strange to me, and that was because I had come here within the past week to scout.

However, even before that, this was the one place that the Hero Party gave up on in the search for the Arcanas.

It bugged me every time, but I knew we couldn't clear it.

In simple terms, we weren't strong enough.

"Well, we're here everyone....welcome to the Labyrinth of Despair."

Using his Mana, Neron cleared off the fog that surrounded us, creating a massive Mana Field that encapsulated all of ours.

As a result, our vision was restored.

Right in front of us was a very massive monument.

It resembled the stone face of a Dragon, and it had beads around its neck.

However, the neck and head were the only parts visible, as the remaining parts seemed to be buried in the ground.

"There..." I pointed at the gaping mouth of the sculptured Dragon.

It was the entrance to the place we were heading to.

'Here goes...'

"Should I use [Time Immersion]?" Neron asked, looking in my direction.

True, if he utilized his very convenient Magic, it would make the work easy for us.

All Neron would have to do was survey the area and show us the right path.

Once that was settled, we would reach our destination in no time.

However...

"No, you can't."

... That method was forbidden.

"You can't use Magic. None of you can... at least, not while we're in there."

"E-EHHH?!" The comrades that I had previously praised for being calm and collected were now sounding panicky.

It wasn't like I couldn't understand their logic, though.

'They've been training their Magic and several abilities in preparation for this day. To say they can't use any of that is... well...'

"The purpose of your training isn't for this Labyrinth, but for the others," I said calmly.

There was a reason this one was a different case, and why even our team couldn't resolve it.

"The Labyrinth Of Despair changes with respect to the challenger. It observes those who come into it and offers a challenge that is impossible for their level of strength."

If a challenger was at the Intermediate Level, it offered a challenge at the Advanced Level. If one was at the Advanced Level, it brought up obstacles that were at the Peak Level.

That was how annoying this place was.

"If Neron uses his Magic, there's no telling how the Labyrinth will respond. That's why none of you are also allowed to use Magic. If you do, the difficulty of this place will exponentially increase." I explained, making sure everyone grasped the implications of their actions.

"So, how do we handle it? If we go in without utilizing Magic, we'll be safe, right?"

'If only that was the case...' I smiled wryly.

"No. It's still plenty difficult. Even without using Magic, the Labyrinth is impossible to beat."

That was why it was called The Labyrinth Of Despair. No matter what we tried, nothing seemed to work.

"How do you expect us to win, then? If it just gives us challenges that are impossible to overcome, we'll never win." Ana chimed in, now looking annoyed by the whole thing.

"Relax. I didn't say we can't win."

"But isn't that what you're implying?"

Well, maybe I put things too much in a pessimistic view.

'I must have been reliving the past frustrations I had with this place...'

"There is actually a way to overcome this place. That's why I had us challenge it first."

It seemed like the most difficult place, but, if my plan was correct, then...

"This could potentially be the easiest one yet."

SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar

Chapter 538: Labyrinth Of Despair [Pt 2]

"Listen closely, everyone."

A smile spread across my face as I addressed my somewhat concerned audience.

A surge of excitement surged through my palpitating heart. After so many centuries, I would finally be clearing this place with my friends.

It was a shame that Jane wasn't here, but I would simply have to regale her with the tale of how we succeeded later on.

'Everyone, please watch over me!' With that merry feeling in my heart, I went on to explain what we would be doing.

"The Arcana is most likely at the center of this underground structure—and it's also responsible for creating anything and everything we encounter inside."

Well, it was possible that the Mage who designed this place had set a few trap Magic in place, but unless a Spell was connected to a source of energy, then it would die out.

"We should be prepared to see an artificial Mana Core, or perhaps it's the Arcana itself that's responsible. In any case, since it's an intricate system, I pick the latter."

My friends nodded as I continued.

"The Labyrinth Of Despair is as the name sounds. It's a maze, and the goal is to reach the center and claim our prize. The true problem is the obstacles that will be in our way."

However, I had a way to overcome that part as well.

"The solution is simple... to utilize as little Magic as you can, and focus on using your Magic Items instead."

"U-uh? I don't understand. You mean...?" Lemi was the first to break the chain of silence.

She looked confused, but I could see a spark of excitement in her eyes.

"Yeah. You can use Magic Items. That's the point of this Labyrinth."

After testing several things out, I realized that it was meaningless, no matter how powerful a person was, to reach the center.

The difficulty was simply ridiculous.

However, since the Labyrinth only took a person's power into account, it was possible to boost one's capabilities with tools.

In that vein, if we decided to keep our power levels on a low level and concentrate wholly on Magic Tools, we would be able to win.

"Alright! It's about time!" Ana yelled with excitement.

She hugged Lemi, and both of them shrieked excitedly.

During our short time together, these two girls somehow managed to become quite close.

Maro was also fuming with exhilaration—most likely because he also shared their sentiments.

'Well, out of everyone, these three still modified the Magic Items I gave them, so that makes sense...'

In any case, it was about time we went in.

"Let's do our best."

'If everything goes well, this can simply be like a field trip...'

>WHOOOOOSSSHHHH<

With lightning-fast speed, we tore through the Labyrinth's defenses and began advancing deeper into the place.

The Labyrinth Of Despair had a very massive interior, and its wide space was almost enough to house an entire civilization.

The power surging from everywhere was also incredible—enough to cause anyone to succumb to unconsciousness.

Fortunately, everyone had their Mana Field on, so there was no danger of that occurring.

"Now then..."

As I watched everyone hack down the monsters spawned by the Labyrinth, I raised my head and closed my eyes.

'...Is it because I didn't have Spellcraft in my past life? I can clearly feel the path.'

The energy's flow, I could completely read it, and it was directing me in a particular direction.

'Ah, so that's the center.' I smiled, realizing that our journey would be much easier than I initially thought.

"Such good news." With that in my mind, and a grin on my face, I beckoned everyone to take the right path.

"ROAAAARRRRR!!!"

Not far down the line, a massive monster stood in our path, and it was once again time to do battle.

"I'll leave this to you." With my arms folded, I watched Ana and Maria, donning their respective Magic Outfit, launch themselves into the air.

Their bodies elegantly surfed the vast expanse above, and a constant stream of Mana surged through them.

For Ana, she was accompanied by her three drones, as well as a protective bracelet and Mana Boosting necklace.

Maria, on the other hand, had enough power for offensive measures, so I focused on giving her defensive and supportive features.

Ultimately, both girls were able to kill the beast effortlessly.

"Guark!!!" With a heavy thud, the massive furry beast fell to the floor and died.

"GRRRRRRRRRR..." Two others took its place, growling at us uninvited guests.

They looked stronger than the fallen one—who had turned into Particles by now.

"Hey, who used Mana there?" I looked at everyone with a slight glare.

"A-ah, sorry." Lemi laughed, pulling her finger down.

Apparently, she was goofing off, playing with the Mana and Miasma at her fingertips.

'This girl...' I nearly sighed, moving in her direction.

"Hey, I said I'm sorry." She shrieked, stepping away as I walked closer.

"Relax, I'm not going to do anything..."

"No! I don't trust you."

"Wait."

"Noooo!!!"

Lemi fled instantly, giving me both a headache and heartache.

I brought her with me, and taught her personally, just so we could deepen our bond a bit.

But, it seemed I was too hard on her. After all I did, she now avoided me anytime I wanted to get the slightest bit close.

'Was I too strict?'

Everything was for her benefit, though. After all...

"Fine. I won't get any closer. In exchange, defeat those two." I pointed at the dark brown furies.

"Fine. I will." She warily glanced in my direction, and then gave the monsters a determined glare.

It broke my heart that Lemi didn't trust me enough, but even worse... that she preferred dealing with monsters to spending time with her own father.

'Did you experience something similar, Emilia?'

Making our daughter have the same face as her was cheating. I doubted Lemi could have treated Emilia harshly, considering they looked the same.

Then again, it could have been my bias.

I looked at the two monsters and watched as they were each taken down, one by another, by Lemi.

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

Chapter 539: Labyrinth Of Despair [Pt 3]

Lemi held a gleaming white wand and used it to draw specialized Spell Patterns in the air, causing them to manifest.

'Just like my Magic Cards, I designed Lemi's Wand to store Mana. But, unlike the former, she has to chant the spell herself.'

By drawing a pattern in the air, she could manifest whatever Spell she wanted—as long as the wand had enough power left.

The good thing was that she could charge the item with Mana, but since I forbade the use of that, unless where necessary, she had no choice but to rely on the stored power.

'She also has the Miasma version of the wand...' I smiled, looking at the holster on her hip.

The purpose behind the tools was to help Lemi understand how to use Magic faster, and also to control her output.

"Thankfully, it's going well."

We decimated the enemies in our way and made it to the center of the Labyrinth without much to do.

'It's somehow meaningless to call this a Labyrinth Of Despair, at this point...' It simply felt like we were cheating our way through the journey.

It was almost ridiculously funny that my friends and I struggled so much to take this place down.

'Well, there was no way we could have made so many advanced Magic Tech back then...'

At the moment, with the existence of Spell Cards, there was no need for a person to even use Mana or Cast Spells.

'Inepts will be capable of using Magic, and even those with low affinity can use high-grade Spells...'

I was getting closer to my goals, but something still gnawed at me. The whole concept of Inepts... seemed inconsistent with my most recent discoveries.

'Not now, Jared. You're at the final hurdle...' I pulled myself back to reality and looked at the structure before me.

Everyone was around me, and we were finally at the center of the maze—directly before the Labyrinth's source of power.

'My friends and I never got this far in my past life.' I smiled with satisfaction, though a tinge of sadness lingered.

"There." Lemi beamed, pointing in the direction of a glowing card that warbled in the air.

It was slowly spinning, emitting energy that was hard to describe.

The power surrounding it felt like a culmination of multiple types of energy, and it was so fluid and malleable—like water.

I felt the energy density, quality, property, and several other elements shift as I observed it. The more I watched, the less I understood.

"Should we grab it?" Edward grinned with excitement, stepping forward.

"H-hey!" Jerry protested, hugging the big man by his muscular stomach.

I sensed a harsh glare from Ciara for some reason, and I also noticed Maria glancing in my direction.

Her expression remained blank, but she had been doing the same thing for a long time now, and I was beginning to feel... uncomfortable?

No, it was more like being self-conscious.

'Ah, I don't like this...'

Maria and I hadn't really spoken since that incident in her room, and I didn't want that. She was a fun girl to be with, and I truly enjoyed her company.

But now... it seemed like she didn't want to talk to me at all.

'Neron is always with Serah, Ana is with Lemi, Jerry and Edward have guy talks all the time. Ciara is either stuck with Jerry or talking with Maria. Asa is an overactive kid that can get into any of the social circles and blend well. Maro would rather work than talk...'

I almost didn't have anyone to talk to. But, it wasn't like I was totally friendless, though. After all...

"It looks beautiful, doesn't it?" A feminine voice rang in my ears.

... I had Aloe Vida.

Her beautiful blond hair swayed as she looked above her with a lovely smile.

She pushed her hair slightly backward with her hand, causing me to notice her brilliant earrings and dazzling necklace. Her lovely skin accentuated their glow, and I was happy they suited her well.

"You should stop looking at me so intensely... even I get embarrassed, you know?" She responded, glancing in my direction.

"Haha, sorry about that." I laughed slightly.

Aloe Vida and I had been talking a lot lately, mostly about our experiences and what happened at Ainzlark while I was gone.

On a few occasions, I told her a bit more about Magic, but we mostly discussed personal affairs.

It made me feel closer to the young lady. And, one thing I noticed about her was...

"Maria is still staring. She likes you, doesn't she?"

"Ah, you figured that out too?"

... Aloe was very perceptive.

"Has she confessed yet? She has, hasn't she?"

"How do you know so much? Do you maybe have a mind-reading ability I don't know about?" I asked, taking a step back in an attempt to accentuate my point.

"Haha, of course not." Aloe burst out laughing.

It made me happy that she laughed at my silly attempt at a joke.

Truthfully speaking, I was feeling a little left out in terms of social engagements. Since I was the leader and teacher, it seemed like I was not welcome in everyone's social circle.

In a way, they somewhat isolated me—or did I do this to myself?

Thanks to Aloe, though, things were different. I had a cheerful person to keep me company, and while she was very enthusiastic about certain topics, I found it refreshing.

'Sometimes it's nice to just listen, rather than speak.'

"I don't have any ability like that. It's just... I know how it feels to like someone, confess, and get rejected."

"Eh? You do? You never told me about that."

"Well, it's an embarrassing story."

"Come on, spill it. Who was it?" It didn't feel strange at all that I was a fifteen-year-old, teasing someone in her twenties.

We were both just very compatible at conversing.

"Well..." Her eyes moved in a particular direction.

My jaws dropped in shock and my eyes bulged. This was a shocking revelation I never expected.

"No way... Neron?!"

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

Chapter 540: Truth About Jared

"N-no way... Neron?!"

"Shhh! Not so loud!" She quickly placed her hand on my mouth, drawing closer to me in the process.

I felt her chest touch mine slightly and she was so close that her hair danced around my body.

"A-ah, sorry about that." She quickly slipped away, blushing very hard.

Well, she wasn't the only one.

I felt some stares, but chose to ignore them.

'We should probably continue speaking through telepathy.' I connected my thoughts to Aloe, and she nodded.

'Still, I never expected you to actually like Neron.'

For the record, I didn't forget about the Arcana before me.

I was still analyzing it with my Original Magic and Spellcraft.

There was a likelihood that it had traps, or that it was a fake, so it was better we understood what it was before retrieving it.

My perception was also widely ranged, so I was aware of my surroundings to a terrifying degree.

That didn't mean I had to pause my conversation with Aloe, though.

I could simply multitask.

~Well, it was something I had since I was a student at Ainzlink. Neron was a part-time instructor before he became a Senior Lecturer. He taught an Elective that I offered, so I found myself falling for him.~

This was news to me.

I knew Neron was a stud, but I wasn't aware it was to this degree.

~It wasn't just me, though. Many girls in our class liked him. We were young then, so we would often talk about it... our forbidden feelings for our teacher.~

I gulped upon hearing that, feeling surprisingly more intrigued. I wondered why the topic interested me so much.

~Well, at that point, I was going through a delusional phase, and I believed so much in destiny and romance, so I confessed to him.~

"Oof..." I unconsciously leaked out my thoughts.

~Yeeaahhh... it didn't go very well.~

Aloe went on to tell me how Neron was worried about how and why she liked him, and how many people felt the same way.

He warned them to kill their emotions for him... and that it was for their own safety.

'It must be because of Serah. Hahaha!' I laughed after hearing the whole thing.

~Yeah. Haha, that's true.~

I glanced at Neron and remembered our first meeting.

'He must have started dressing so shabbily to avoid any romance too... what a classic guy.'

Conversing with Aloe just made me realize there was a lot I didn't know--about people and their feelings especially.

I was too buried in the serious aspects of life that I always forgot to take people into account.

'Maybe even Maria... has so many things that I don't know about...' I glanced at the girl and our eyes met.

She instantly looked away, but I kept looking at her for some time.

'I keep forgetting the fact that I currently look like a young boy... and that she's a legal adult.'

It was natural for people our age to engage in romance.

'But, she knows my answer to that...' I turned away.

~You also have feelings for Maria, don't you?~ Aloe's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"What? No way!" I unconsciously spoke out loud.

I felt my cheeks redden a bit, but I quickly subdued the feeling.

'What the heck...?'

~I can tell, you know? You might think you don't, but your body says otherwise.~

'Ah, stupid teenager body... I should have known.'

I couldn't deny it any longer. It was true that since the first day I saw Maria, back when we were taking our Ainzlark Academy Enrollment Exam, she had caught my eye.

Since then, her image would always appear in my head for some reason, and I found her to be very attractive.

It was stupid and weird, but I knew I couldn't change a young boy's impression of a fellow young girl.

Still, I had managed to keep those emotions far from my rational self.

~Well, I won't inquire further, but... there's a chance that you could end up regretting not saying anything. She told you her feelings, but you can't say yours... it almost makes you look cowardly.~

Aloe's words stung for some reason.

~You know... I've idolized you for some time. Especially after you saved my life, I really felt a strong attachment to you that I couldn't explain. If I'm being honest, those feelings are yet to disappear. But, the more we talk, the more I realize... you're just an ordinary boy in the end.~

'Me? Ordinary?'

Many people would argue against that logic. Nothing I did was ordinary, and I was certainly not your average teenager with memories of a past life.

What was Aloe referring to?

"Not there..." She used a finger to tap my head, and then, brought her hand lower, until it touched another spot on my body.

"... I mean, right here."

My eyes widened and I trembled slightly.

Her finger was now on my chest, and I felt my heart beat ever so quickly.

"Your heart beats just like the rest of us. You're very special Jared, but... in the end... your human too."

I felt like I was grasping what she was talking about. Had I been denying it all this time?

"No one likes being alone. We all want to love, and be loved back."

'Ah...'

Come to think of it, how did I feel when no one interacted with me, except Aloe? I didn't get it then, but...

"Deep down, you also seek that form of emotional intimacy."

Was that why I was been trying so hard to get close to Lemi? Trying to force the whole father logic?

'Is that why...'

I glanced in Neron's direction.

He was currently making out with Serah in a corner of the Labyrinth.

Neron must have used Concealment and Sound dispelling Magic, but since we were connected through a Magic device, I could hear every moan that Serah leaked out as they kept kissing--if that was all they did.

As weird as that had been, it made me feel somewhat jealous.

That's right...

... I was jealous of Neron.